

IS MUHAMMAD ﷺ TRULY A PROPHET OF GOD?

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Is Muhammad ﷺ Truly a Prophet of God?

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In the beginning was the question

I must admit that I am not great at recollecting memories. There is not much in my life that readers would find noteworthy, let alone entertaining. Nevertheless, I would like to begin this book with a fleeting mention of my journey with faith. This might help shed some light as readers traverse the passages of this book.

My previous book was on the proofs for the existence of God; it has not yet been rendered into English. Consequently, one might be forgiven for believing that this book was written for the sole purpose of defending my faith, as if I were clinging onto the fables carried in scriptures produced by simpletons. It is as if I were in my own bubble, aloof to the universe that carries a swirl of ideologies and is host to the heated debates of conflicting theologies. Some readers might conclude that I am a prisoner to my own wishful thinking, as I blindly follow tradition. If there is one thing I can guarantee the reader, it is this: I did not grow up in an environment that was conducive to following Islam. I was not raised in some religious sanctuary. Rather, my environment was the complete opposite. I was raised in a place governed by a materialist environment that considered even the phenomenon of sunlight as meaningless décor, which stemmed from secularist forces waging war on religion.

I was brought up in an environment in which nothing was off limits. People's passions could be aroused by any idea. In the pursuit of material discovery or newfound treasure, no stone was left unturned. However, the only red line was to speak in defence of Islam. Crossing this line was feared because of the state apparatus. Hell could freeze over, but there was no chance for Islam—beyond some hollow customary rituals and seasonal festivals—ever being presented in society as a beacon of hope and a motivator for good.

The accusation of being 'Muslim' was an accusation like no other. It signalled the beginning of a journey of suffering inside dungeons. Even being a Muslim in its lowest form—to believe in Islam as a faith and to accept that

the status quo was one of corruption—triggered this experience. Ideas on Islam were to be condemned, even if they were mere whispers in the heart.

One of the things that animated me during those days was religious experts coming on television and speaking about the separation of people from religion across the Muslim world. I myself used to say, ‘May their ignorance and insolence perish!’ These experts did not have a clue about what religious disenfranchisement meant. They had not experienced what it felt like to be imprisoned, where the atmosphere was stifled to the extent that there was no breathing space to be religious.

Whenever I used to go outside (other than the mosque nearby my house), I would return mentally and spiritually shattered. I would not be able to breathe until I threw myself on my bed. The feeling of spiritual isolation would pierce right through me, as if my body—out of frustration—was being hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Both public and private libraries were replete with the books written by secularists, atheists, and any person wanting to tear down the religion. In short, books of every single ideological movement, whether Arab or Western, had an unencumbered presence in Tunisia; only those calling to Islam were conspicuously absent. The country was gripped by darkness, with no prospect of light on the horizon.

The greatest calamity was the fact that the educational system underestimated the pupil’s cognitive capabilities. It stifled them from thinking of themselves existentially, such as asking probing questions on the meaning and purpose of life. This imprisonment of the mind is far more destructive than any physical prison. Nothing speaks louder than the voice of intellectual impoverishment.

When we were at school, we were accustomed to some teachers’ crudeness and vulgarity when speaking about Islam, whereby they would mock its most sanctified aspects. We were accustomed to their open calls to atheism. My eyes will never forget the day when the female teacher of ‘Islamic studies’—a subject presented in an utmost hollow and soulless manner—entered the classroom with a trilby hat on her head. She was sad and tearful as she was banned – by law—from covering herself with a headscarf. Her only option was to hide her headscarf under an unwieldy hood, making her appearance rather miserable.

Islamic proselytisation was completely out of vogue, and its adherents would either never come out of prison or never return from exile in Europe. The communist and modernist movements would compete for the pulpits of university and media, effectively monopolising all existing channels of mass communication. In such a tribulation, the greatest achievement one could hope for was that one’s mind could conjure the strength to start

asking those existential questions on life and the world. Choosing Islam was a tribulation, the likes of which were not seen since Europe in the Middle Ages.

In those two decades of darkness, my solace was the library. Apart from the mandatory lessons, I stayed away from university so that I could benefit from the library and nourish myself from its soul. In doing so, I regained the breath of my life.

I read fervently. There was an excitement when I searched for books; perhaps I would come across something meaningful. I had a continuous desire for reading what I feared could be taken away from me at any time, despite the fact that those years of suffering had left scars on my soul—scars that could not be erased or healed. Even in the absence of any external factor motivating me, this untameable desire for books had taken root in every cell of my body.

My soul's existential angst was contained in a profound question that ignited bewilderment: How could all these people walking in front of me live without any such affliction? How could they carry on their lives so normally when the path ahead is long and arduous? And if Islam—with its truly universal outlook and its meaningful ritual practices—was the religion of the people, why is it that Islam was not represented in their daily life? How can the soul of any Muslim relegate its religion to ritual appearances, void of any substance?

Who is in the wrong? Is it my anxious mind, or the sorry existence surrounding me?

Communist and modernist movements had taken advantage of the Islamophobia taking root to empower their institutions and propaganda across the world. This was particularly the case given the fact that this tyrant's¹ anger was of the subtle type, thanks to French colonial rule and human rights organisations, or 'the markets of human rights' according to the expression of some Egyptian journalists.

Such was the climate in which I was raised. It was an environment that was in no way designed to encourage the soul to consider Islam as a universal ideal and a sacrosanct reality. It was against the collective mood and the status quo² that my adoption of true Islam came about. I began viewing it as a universal ideal and a complete life system. During this period, I read up on various religious beliefs—especially Christianity—as well as modern ideologies. Whereas other faiths failed me miserably and could

¹ Translator's note: Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, former President of Tunisia.

² Later on, the situation changed—praise be to God—with the rise of broadcast channels and social media platforms that tore down the walls of this great prison. I ask God, through His Bounty, that He brings us all back to truth and guidance.

offer nothing but incongruent answers to the major existential questions, Islam had those simple yet far-reaching solutions. That is the story of my origins of around two decades.

Why this book?

In the first of the two-part ‘Why am I a Muslim?’ series, we examined the Islamic affirmation of monotheism, namely establishing God’s Existence and Oneness in Lordship. Now is the time to discuss the second half that completes the Islamic testimony of faith, that is, the basis upon which Islam stands. It separates the one believing in it from people of other faiths. That second half is: “Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”

One might enquire why we need more material on the proofs of Prophethood, given that so many books have already been written—from the 2nd century AH³ onwards—on this topic. What is the point of writing on this topic when it has already been dealt with from all conceptual angles? It would most probably end up nothing more than a regurgitation of the same old ideas without anything original.

Granted, I have benefitted from previously published material. But even though this book does not depart from much of what has been written before, it seeks to revive this subject on two fronts: a) an original presentation of the subject matter, and b) bringing the content to a contemporary setting.

What is meant by an original presentation of the subject matter? It is to set out both the Muslim and non-Muslim opinions found in relation to the truthfulness of the Prophet of Islam, then scrutinising the Muslim view in light of the criticisms from his adversary. When drawing a conclusion to resolve the debate at hand, we would identify the stronger position while upholding a degree of fairness.

The purpose behind this exercise is to dispel the notion that the proofs of Islam have not yet been convincingly laid out, or that it does not analyse or attempt to touch upon adversarial critiques. I believe that the adversary has every right to elucidate a critique of Islam; the Muslim, in turn, must have a response.

3 Translator’s note: From the Latin “Anno Hegirae” i.e., “In the year of the Hijrah (Emigration of the Prophet ﷺ)”.

But we are not sufficing with simply proving the veracity of Islam. We shall touch upon Christianity and analyse—according to the same standards—the rigour of its proofs on the topic. We will uncover a chasm between the proofs of the two faiths and how their respective positions are mutually incompatible. It is also known that much of what can be said of Christianity is also true for Judaism, as they share a belief in the Old Testament (Tanakh).

In this context, we must also discuss the need for Prophethood itself, and address the particular cognitive and dialectical problems faced by a Deist, who affirms the Creator yet denies He ever revealed anything to man. In relation to the existence and Oneness of God, the order of debating Deists would be after atheists, agnostics, and polytheists.

On the second point of bringing the subject to a contemporary setting, this book covers historical, epistemological, and philosophical issues. There is a focus on the most significant criticisms against the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, as circulated by Orientalists⁴ and Missionaries. It also focuses on the most interesting conclusions that critical studies have produced on the Bible.

The purpose of this book is to present realistic proofs and reason-based determinations that I have reached. That does not preclude the requirement of objectivity when presenting arguments both for and against a proposition. But the fact is that no author pens a book on a theological matter without having already arrived at a position on the topic.

Objectivity is not achieved by merely adopting a devil's advocate approach. Rather, it is by judging how truthfully the positions are described, how accurately the most salient criticisms are represented, and how ideas are played off one another. The ensuing friction of ideas fires up the ignition of the truth, and positions with the weaker foundations are eliminated in the process.

Having bound myself to a healthy dose of scepticism with any claim whose proofs cannot stand on its own feet, it is my honest belief that respecting the intellect and submitting to the call of the Qur'an are inseparable associates; in fact, believing in their mutual cohesion is both proper and robust.

I do not ask that readers subjugate their intellect to mine, as that would be a characteristically unintellectual thing to do. The readers are far more important to me than that; I could not ask them to blindly follow me. But what I hope for is that they rise above lazy and unfounded blind-following without proof in favour of inquiry and evidence-based conviction. Likewise,

4 I employ the terms 'Orientalist' and 'Orientalism' in this book, though they are considered by some authors as being 'outdated' terms for the orientalist studies.

I invite readers to scrutinise the content of this book based on what their discerning selves feel. They should feel comfortable to examine it with a just mind that seeks the truth.

The book is written to discuss all possible angles that examine the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, presenting first the Muslim's point of view, then that of the adversary. This is then compared with a true depiction of Muhammed's personality, message, and the Holy Qur'an.

The book maintains a high degree of scepticism and does not default to accepting Islamic claims at face value. It incorporates adversarial criticism wherever feasible—neither prodigally to the point of paranoia that casts doubt for the sake of doubt, nor parsimoniously so as to take away the adversary's right to highlight his reservations and doubts.

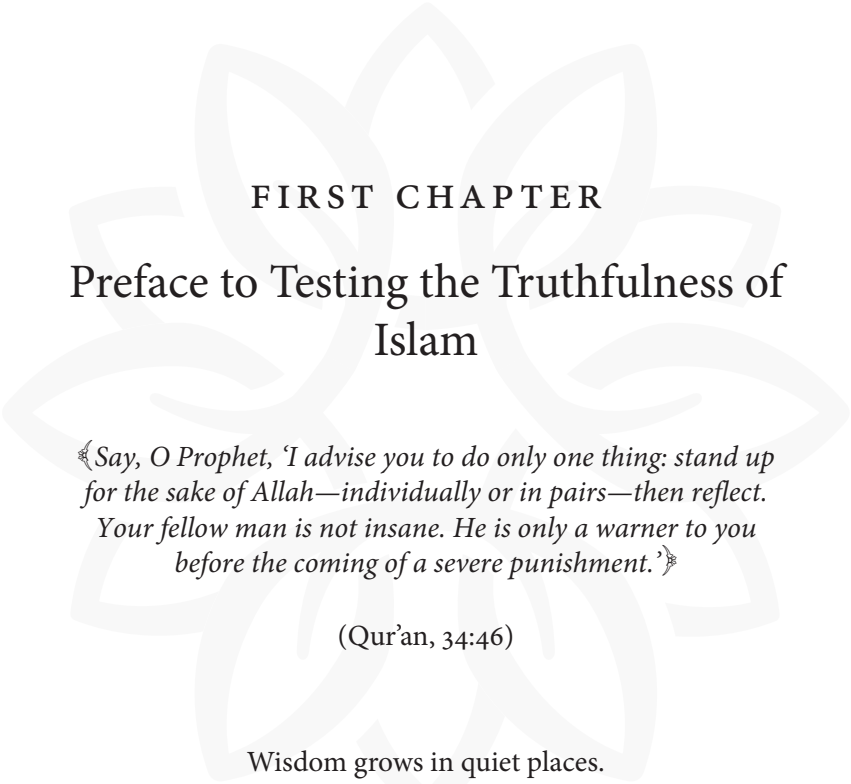
As we move from topic to topic in this book, the most pertinent advice I can share with the reader is to collate the corroborated historical material, and not to merely submit to a confused conspiratorial reading. One must also avoid an emotionally charged appraisal, as is the case with some Muslim preachers. Our research should look at the reality as it is, without embellishing facts or finding fault therein without reason.

Our first method for researching God's existence when analysing the human self and the cosmos was *astonishment*. As Aristotle put it regarding the philosophers, "It was their wonder, astonishment, that first led men to philosophize and still leads them." In analysing the Prophethood of Muhammed ﷺ, who lived in the 7th century, the basis should be complete objectivity. This means any researcher must divorce themselves from any tangible cultural pressure to the utmost degree possible, effectively imagining themselves living in the Arabian Peninsula and in an Arab culture fifteen centuries ago. I am not telling readers to adopt the moral norms of the 7th century Arabs or their aspirations; rather, one should try to position themselves in that era of Messengerhood so that they can gain an acceptable interpretation of the advent of the last divine message, which is none other than the Qur'an. This approach can help answer a pertinent question: Can the phenomenon of the Muhammadan Prophethood accept a natural and material interpretation as per the cultural norms of that era, so that this Messengerhood becomes a product of its environment and society? Or does it disallow that interpretation, in which case it can only be understood by accepting its miraculous nature, manifesting in the Divine Command that tore down ordinary universal norms?

The way to test the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is through the means of *historical objectivity*. Imagine your heart and mind is

in the 7th century AD, and then assess the proofs of Prophethood according to the standards of that era, its circumstances, and the aspirations of its people and their capabilities.

This is a quest of researching the reality of the final Messenger. We hope to maintain fairness in critique, and balance in assessment and judgement.



FIRST CHAPTER

Preface to Testing the Truthfulness of Islam

﴿Say, O Prophet, ‘I advise you to do only one thing: stand up
for the sake of Allah—individually or in pairs—then reflect.
Your fellow man is not insane. He is only a warner to you
before the coming of a severe punishment.’﴾

(Qur’an, 34:46)

Wisdom grows in quiet places.

(Austin O’Malley)

Preface

The proofs demonstrating the Prophethood of Muhammed ﷺ are not assessed in light of intellectual, psychological, and historical realities without first encountering some *preliminary questions* and answering basic criticisms that face any case of Prophethood. These questions deserve a balanced review and a robust counter.

The first adversary to Prophethood is the Deist. He acknowledges God but rejects any Revelation from Him. His god is disconnected from the world. Deism overlaps with atheism insomuch that they both reject divine providence and God guiding creation after having given them life on Earth.

The most salient criticisms that may obstruct a person from the path of affirming Prophethood, and thus prevent him from analysing the truthfulness of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, can be summarised as follows:

1. Man does not need Prophethood. The path to existential reality—in terms of its beginning, end, and the journey in between—is attainable for any person with intellect, without the need for any assistance from revelation.
2. The cosmos is indicative of a ‘Great Architect’ who created and shaped the universe. It does not give any indication of an all-loving God that most religions claim via Revelation.
3. The sole evidence for the truthfulness of divine Revelation is the miracle. In the scientific era, miracles are an absurd and primitive proposition that should not be taken seriously. Even if miracles occurred, knowing whether they ever happened would still be impossible. We would most certainly not reject scientific testimony and human experience in the cosmic order just to believe some rumours circulated by a few people.

4. Acknowledging the need for Revelation, the possibility of miracles occurring, and knowledge thereof do not offer Muslims any monopoly over the path to God. If Revelation is proven, that does not default to the Muhammadan Prophethood being the truth. Fairness and objectivity would dictate that every religion claiming to be from Heaven deserves investigation. Research should not be directed primarily at dealing with the truthfulness of Islam to the exclusion of, say, Christianity or Judaism.

It is with these questions that our discussion in the first chapter of this book commences.



SECTION 1

The Need for Prophethood

﴿And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light.﴾

(Quran, 24:40)

The more the people are in need of something, the more generous the Lord is with it.

(Ibn Taymiyyah)



Prophethood: Bestowed? Or earned?

In our previous book, we established that the cosmos necessitates a Creator Who is all-knowing and infinite in His wisdom. One would then be naturally inclined to learn the purpose intended by the creator in giving man life on Earth. How should one proceed with this thesis?

The mind can conjure up a number of ways in which the Creator connects with mankind by communicating to them the divine purpose of sending them to the Earth. This can be done through two ways:

- Heavenly guidance via Prophethood (or what resembles it), i.e., God chooses a wise and truthful sage to convey His message to the people.
- By way of personal acquisition.
 - ♦ An example of this is that one acquires knowledge of God via spiritual exercises, as is the position of Gnostics⁵ whereby internally acquired knowledge (*‘ilm ladunni*) is the gateway to gnosis. In this, man takes a deep dive in his own self so that he—in his belief—can acquire closeness to the Being that is free of the limitations and flaws of the material world.
 - ♦ Another example of this is intellectual deduction. This is the position of some ancient philosophers.

5 Gnosticism is derived from the Greek for realisation. Due to historical reasons, there is no agreed-upon definition of the term. However, broadly speaking, it points to two things: a) the locus of gnosis is enlightenment driven from within, either via unveiling (*kashf*) or intuition (*ilhām*), not by intellectual derivation; and b) man has two competing elements in him: a physical body that drags him downwards, and a soul pushing for ascent that is trapped within his body (King, 2005).

Knowledge of God via acquisition and reason

There are rival approaches proffered to explain the greatest existential reality and the ultimate purpose of life. Each strives to prove it possesses the keys to heavenly information, or that it is the primary pathway for learning that cannot be grasped by the minds of the laity.

The notion that the pathway to learning the Wisdom of the Lord in His creation of mankind is by way of hermitage⁶ is widespread. It entails refraining from worldly pleasures and keeping one's limbs and heart in check from entertaining worldly pleasures until the soul becomes pure. Once it becomes pure, existential realities open up to the soul and a barrierless knowledge of God settles in the heart.

There is no proof for the veracity of this approach, nor does it proffer evidence that there is a tension between the soul and the body. There is no explanation on how abandoning worldly pleasures is the way to gnosis. We are thus faced with a vacuous claim that is void of substance.

In addition, Gnostics are found in almost all religious groups. In every creedal designation, one can find a group of people who have trod on its path. It has led them to conflicting conclusions and beliefs. How is it possible that the path to the truth is one, yet its manifestations are in mutual conflict?

Some philosophers chose inductive reasoning as the path to attain universal principles and founding concepts of existentialism. They believed that deep contemplation is sufficient to remove the veil that stands between man and reality. A philosopher, through the proof of intellect, thus claims to see the realities of the universe that the laity does not. The philosopher accordingly sips from the fountain of Prophethood by way of intellect and deep thinking. Other philosophers denied Prophethood altogether. Establishing that the philosophers alone have knowledge of the Divine is based solely on their cognitive feats and capabilities.

The notion that the philosophers' approach in attaining what is usually hard for the intellect to gain is a fanciful one. It is belied by the fact that philosophers themselves cannot agree to one view. This position is also

6 Translator's note: Isolation and seclusion for religious purposes.

dismantled by the fact that the intellect cannot attain knowledge of the metaphysical world other than that to which the indicators of this world point. That is why the intellect alone is unable to cognise the metaphysical realm—or the wisdom behind creation for that matter. In fact, the intellect is unable to attain the details of legislative and behavioural realities, which are even more granular-level issues. The most that philosophers may claim to possess is the greater realities of the physical world, and even that is without granular level details in most cases. They most certainly cannot claim knowledge of the metaphysical world's greater realities. Intellect can lead to truth, but it cannot guide to the knowledge of every single truth. Jean-Jacques Rousseau⁷, a Deist philosopher, admitted this: 'We have no standard with which to measure this immense machine; we cannot calculate its various relations; we neither know the first cause nor the final effects; we are ignorant even of ourselves; we neither know our own nature nor principle of action; nay, we hardly know whether man be a simple or compound being. Impenetrable mysteries surround us on every side...'⁸

7 Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). A leading figure in the Age of Enlightenment. He was famed for his political philosophy that influenced large parts of Europe. He called for greater devolution of legislative powers to citizens. His works include *Du Contrat Social*.

8 (Rousseau, 2012), pp. 27-28.

Salvation and the way to understanding

In and of themselves, spiritual exercise regimes and intellectual research have not provided a way to salvation. Most statements coming from Gnostics are ambiguous, and without direction. Gnostics are of different factions that are not united by any set of principles. On the other hand, the mindset of a philosopher is, in reality, comprised of a multitude of mindsets due to the different conceptualisations of theory, and the external factors that influence them when lining up evidence to explore the reality. With all of this playing in the background, it is not possible that the philosophical method results in a single flawless method free of contradiction.

Man needs Divine assistance for a number of reasons:

1. Many issues are naturally beyond the realm of what is attainable by the intellect, such as the resurrection, accountability, and whatever else is absent from the intellect and the senses. These are matters that require an external answer, such as information coming from above, not merely an idea conceived after some thought.
2. There are no clear-cut answers for many nebulous issues due to an evidence-based approach to determine one position being impossible. For this reason, the intellect—which is always seeking to acquire truth, virtue, and felicity—needs something that can lead it to the safety and assuredness it desires.
3. People's need to have their lives organised, their disputes resolved, and their rights and obligations systemised is a matter that is far more complex than any human intervention seeking to achieve the same. The interwoven fabric of life; the influence of cultural and customary bias on people when they devise their laws; conflict of interest; unconscious bias; and the desire to protect the legacy of a society's important and elite when drawing out the parameters of rights and obligations all mean that the human mind falls short of connecting life's dots in the safest manner.

The hope for justice is part of the unique system of creation. The idea that God would create mankind, flora, and fauna in all their beauty, only to abandon them without guidance and leave them in darkness, negates the whole point of beauty. In fact, this negation turns the very act of the creation unpleasant. Things of beauty, when organised in an unattractive and confusing fashion that does not lead to any harmony, are actually injurious to the meaning of beauty that is carried in its purpose and goal.

Prophethood is a necessity to make up for the intellect's deficiency. In an existence engulfed by every type of darkness, shrouded by doubt at every turn, the faculty of intellect is a light. But even that cannot do away with the lantern of Revelation. Intellect is always in the purview of predilection conspiring against it, as well as the causes of tribulation that would cause man to slip up. Revelation broadens the narrow expanses of the intellect to new horizons, quenching the thirst of the soul by supplying it with what is beyond its reaches.

4. Knowledge of God breeds obedience and love. There is nothing like Prophethood that can explain the vast glory and beauty of God. Intellect can attain some part of that, but the message coming from the Creator Himself, which informs man of Him through His Own Glorious Speech, is far broader in the pursuit of its attainment, clearer in its explanation, and better in relieving a heart quenching the thirst it has for knowing its Lord. It is known that mere philosophical knowledge of the Creator does not bring about the deeper meanings of life and existence to the heart, which would entrench within it the sober sense of the meaning of divinity.
5. The self (*nafs*) quickly inclines to predilection. It carries a kernel of arrogance that defies the truth. That is why it needs an external entity that stops it from denying that truth and embracing falsehood. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ said, 'My example and the example of the people is just like that of a man who stoked up a fire. When it lit up what was around it, moths and other insects began falling into the fire. He tried to prevent them, but they overpowered him and still rushed into the fire. I am holding onto your belts to prevent you from falling into the Fire, yet you insist on falling into it.'⁹
6. For the creation, establishing proof via a Messenger is more lucid in the explanation of truth, and is more equitable in informing people

9 Reported by Bukhārī, Book of Tendering the Heart, chapter on desisting from sins (hadith no. 6118), and Muslim, Book of Virtues, chapter on the Prophet's compassion for his nation (hadith no. 2284).

as there are great variations and differences among them. That is why, in relation to leaving the misguided no excuse on the Day of Resurrection, the Qur'an says, 'Had We destroyed them with a torment before this Prophet came, they would have surely argued, "Our Lord, if only You had sent us a Messenger."' (Qur'an, 20:134)

7. The fact that a Prophet is assisted with supernatural acts better facilitates the acceptance of truth and establishing the proof against the adversary. The signs of Prophets compel the informed and conscious intellect to sign up to it, so it does not fall wayward into the battleground of opinions that cannot guarantee accuracy.
8. Prophethood is a practical method to pursue the pathways of life and its opportunities and challenges. A Prophet is the role model. The need of a role model for the creation is well known in all walks of life. In a life of hardship and test, the easiest path to success becomes clear through the role model, and the heart is filled with the hope of salvation being a realistic prospect.

We can envisage a number of different scenarios where the Lord conveys to His servants what He wants *from* them and *for* them. However, the scenario of conveying the message via the path of a man of intellect, who happens to be the best of his people, and who combines honesty, an abundance of intelligence, and supernatural acts that are indicative of his connection with the Ultimate Owner of the cosmos, is the most befitting. This is so that the purpose of the message—to convince people and explain the Revelation to them in detail, with wisdom and justice—is achieved.

In summary, man needs Prophethood. He cannot dispense with it just by using his intellect. Without Prophethood, man's intellect can falter, the character of a person seeking to remain steadfast can become distorted, and the soul can decay by falling into misfortune even as it fervently seeks to discover its Creator.

Alternatively, one may say: Without Prophethood, man would lose his unique characteristic of being 'man'; he would relapse into just being a 'thing' that is without purpose, goal, or meaning. Man would still be the most beautiful creature in a subtly balanced universe, but he would be tantamount to a nonentity—a physical body without purpose.

This is a repudiation of the Deists, who believe that God ﷻ made the creation but then left them without purpose, care, or instruction, while the existential questions and self-doubts eat away at them. A Deist might indeed be guided to the existence of a Creator of the world through observing the uniquely balanced and beautiful system of the cosmos; a Creator that has the

power to innovate and construct such a wonderful structure. Yet, it is indeed strange that this same Deist would then take a leap in the wrong direction just to claim that this great universe is created for nothing. In essence, his claim is that divine superior wisdom can overlap with pointlessness.

Deism and its theoretical problems

The Deistic position is predicated on a number of principles that, together, push its advocates to see the greatest manifestations of the universe in a particular way. The most salient of those principles are:

- God is one without partner. He is a supernatural being; a being that does and wishes.
- The universe operates with a set of embedded mechanical laws that are free of divine providence.
- The universe is the sole manifestation for the gnosis of God. The universe itself is His Holy Book. For man to know his god through this method is similar to how we get to know a painter and their tastes after observing their canvas.
- It is not that miracles do not occur because God is unable to make them happen. Rather, they do not occur because the laws of the universe either do not change or because He does not want them to.
- Most Deists believe in life after death for recompense, which would be either reward or punishment.¹⁰

The main deficiency in Deistic theology¹¹ is that it believes God perfectly created what He innovated (although some Deists would refuse to associate suffering in the universe with Him), then He turned away from this existence and left it idle as He turned away from the issues facing the creation. This is an infantile conceptualisation of God. One such display is that it

¹⁰ (Geisler & Watkins, 2003), pp. 177-179.

¹¹ 'Theology' is a technical term that is an amalgamation of two Greek words: Λογία (logia) 'knowledge', and θεός (theos) 'God'. Their literal meaning is 'the knowledge of God'. It covers the branch of knowledge related to the study of God's reality and divine issues.

is similar (or in fact, equates) to pagan conceptualisations of the ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, and Greek gods. This conceptualisation is not entirely dissimilar to when a man manufactures a chair or a clothespin and does so well, but thenceforth hides it in a drawer or places it in a storage to be forgotten. It is a senseless, lifeless, and soulless conceptualisation.

On the other hand, the theist who anticipates the heavenly message from the gateway of Prophethood is the one who traverses on the easy path without any sharp upward or downward incline. Armed with the knowledge of the Lord's Existence, he pushes himself to seek the knowledge of His reality and the objectives He may have issued. For him, the rule is this: Complete wisdom does not lead to self-despondency, but rather to purpose and hope. For him, the perfection of Divine Attributes is a way into believing that the Divine Self is perfect.

As for the Deist who believes in the sanctity of the human intellect, and that it is the source of knowing the creator, the creation, and man's ultimate destination, then he is a prisoner to his own haughtiness over the few corridors of gnosis that may have opened up for him. Intellect only possesses a few gateways to the gnosis of the Lord—like His act of creation and His power—after which it moves away and does nothing else. That is why his conceptualisation of the Lord actually renders him ignorant of Him, just as his conceptualisation decrees the Creator to be less than generous in allowing the creation to better know Him. In the process, this flawed conceptualisation accuses the Creator of taking gratification from the confusion of man.

In reality, Deists are in a worse place than atheists. An atheist comprehends the universe as an accumulation of things and random systems in the world, all without a purpose. Based on that, the universe is without purpose or wisdom. As for the Deist, he can see the wisdom in the creation of atoms and galaxies, and he can detect the manifestations of Divine Greatness therein, but he then regresses to the position of the atheist, which is that everything in existence is involuntarily living out its life to its natural end.

Deism is a manifestation of agnostic laziness. It is to stand at the border between faith and atheism. Such a person researching these issues would not have completed the mind-boggling journey of realising the objective behind creation, nor would they have gone the other way to deny the value of things that have accumulated in the realm of existence.

Such Deism in recent history is a remnant of disbelief in Christianity, its beliefs, and its religious institutions that caused havoc on Earth. Disbelief in Christianity during the Enlightenment¹² gave rise to disbelief in every

¹² The Enlightenment was a period in which a number of ideological movements appeared in 18th century Europe. These movements spanned philosophy, the arts,

faith; Christianity's corruption—in the eyes of many—would necessitate the corruption of all faiths because the Eastern religions—especially the 'religion of the Turks' (the term for Islam during the Enlightenment)—could not have been any more superior to Christianity. This is an appeal to ignorance on the part of the Enlightenment philosophers. It is the result of the superiority complex that has taken control over the Western mind that subconsciously thinks the Orient must be inferior to the Occident in any given issue.

I cannot fathom how a soul can view this universe and its great edifice, gifts, the sweetness of its taste, its beauty, and its subtleties, yet suffice with merely believing in a 'Great Architect', as if He created and moulded it and then simply left. Being awestruck by the universe is thought-provoking for the sober Deist, and will invariably lead him to the source of the concealed light. His ever-discerning mind will encourage him to see into the remote horizons, enabling him to quickly decipher the origins and purpose of life.

reformation, politics, the economy, and religious affairs. Under a non-religious secular framework, this umbrella movement called for intellectual freedom, placing human rights—in its various forms—front and centre, and abandoning blind following and heredity. Its most prominent figures include Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The special feature of Prophethood and divine justice

Some may object that the definition of Prophethood restricts God's Mercy, thereby making it akin to injustice. This would necessitate that God selected some humans for Messengerhood and provided them with divinely-inspired knowledge (*'ilm ladunnī*), but left everyone else in need of research and analysis, which may appear to be problematic.

This definition of Prophethood lacks the understanding of both Prophethood and the reality of being tested. Prophethood is not an arbitrary act, void of wisdom and justice. God selects only those humans who are truly His chosen ones. They are the elite. Their souls, minds, and hearts are pure. God knows what is inside the hearts and the actions of people's limbs. He knows what humans have done and what they will do.

Ghazālī said, 'Realise that Messengerhood is an inspiration from above, a lordly patronage, and a godly gift. It cannot be acquired by effort, nor can it be earned:

- "Allah knows best where to place His message." (Qur'an, 6:124)
- "And so We have sent to you, O Prophet, a Revelation by Our command. You did not know of the Book or faith before..." (Qur'an, 42:52)

Its determination is not based on geographical coincidence that can be attained by all and sundry. Nor is it issued on the basis of effort and attainment, such that its acquisition is possible for anyone who puts their mind to it.¹³

Dispensing 'Revelation' (in its technical and specific sense) to all mankind would be unwise. The path to Paradise is based on belief and action. The foundation of belief is faith in a report that can be rejected as false. Had people been compelled to believe based on Revelation sent to each

¹³ (Ghazālī A. H., 1975), p. 130.

and every one of them, most elements of the test would have become redundant, and people would have become equal in an issue where some should have been able to stand out from others.

The prevention of specific Revelation for non-Prophets does not negate the fact that God made mankind participants in what Deists refer to as ‘general Revelation’, or ‘natural theology’. This was achieved by way of reason and the natural order of the universe being indicative of the existence of a creator, a fashioner, a bestower of bounties, and one whose existence is necessary. On the Day of Resurrection, man will not be held accountable on his original faith disposition (*fitrah*) alone, nor on the basis of natural theology alone. Rather, he will be held accountable for his actions in the world after evidence reaches him by way of a Prophet or Messenger.

The entire root of this false notion—that it would be superior for specific Revelation to be given to all mankind, rather than just a selection of Prophets who would convey the Divine Message—is based on the errant belief that the perfection of God ﷻ should mean that the creation must never commit any error or sin, or that they must be compelled onto the path of piety without enduring any challenges (which would essentially mean they are forced into salvation).

Theism, as per the correct position, does not entail that the creation does not have free will. Justice simply means that the Divine will not punish someone who has not erred, and that He elevates the pious over those who deviated from the path of truth. Recompense is based on the actions of the servants, except when the Creator—out of kindness—unilaterally forgives or decides to grant an increase in reward.

When man possesses reason, free will, and able limbs to carry out action, and the report of a Prophet reaches him, he must believe the aforesaid Prophet in what he is saying and act in accordance with the rituals he brought and what he legislated. If he falls short, he would be a sinner—the administering of punishment for such a person would be justice.

Deism and its problem with the credibility of reason and moral perfection

One of the main criticisms raised against atheism is that the negation of God's existence necessitates that the brain is a substance that in terms of its composition and function—as per the conceptualisation of evolutionary biology—was built for the need of man to survive and work against the causes of his extinction. That is why the mind cannot be trusted to reach the truth, as the brain is not designed to understand the reality of any given situation. Rather, it evolved into what it is now to secure its share of food, drink, shelter, and participation in procreation. Such a notion is admitted by the atheist philosopher John Gray¹⁴, who said, 'Modern humanism is the faith that through science humankind can know the truth—and so be free. But if Darwin's theory of natural selection is true then this is impossible. The human mind serves evolutionary success, not truth.'¹⁵

In spite of the Deist's acknowledgement of the existence of a Creator, their belief in Lordship is not immune from what the atheists have been critiqued of here. With such a theological outlook, the Deist—with his dull conceptualisation of a God that is detached from the world and has a negative outlook vis-à-vis the evils of the universe—cannot guarantee that the Creator is perfect in mercy or justice. In fact, most of the time, Deism is built on the denial that there can be attributes of perfection in God, and it uses the existence of evil as a way to attack the image of the Merciful and Just God.

If God is without justice and mercy, there cannot be any confidence in reason either. This is because a negative or evil god cannot be stopped from creating minds that are unable to guide themselves to what is correct;

14 John Gray (born 1948). British philosopher and political philosopher. He was Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His works include *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*.

15 (Gray, 2002), p. 26.

correspondingly, in such a case these minds will build every one of their beliefs on faulty principles.

In establishing human conviction from zero knowledge, Descartes¹⁶ realised that there is no pathway to rationalism without having faith in God first. When he cast doubt in rationalism by stating, ‘What man believes to be true thanks to what his logic leads him to might just, in reality, be Satan playing his brain’¹⁷, what he attempted to do was disprove the corrupt nature of human logic by proving that a perfect god exists—based on his ontological argument¹⁸—before he could regain confidence in his logic. Through this, he based his confidence for believing in reason on the confidence in God being good and just. In other words, were it not for the perfection of God, and were it not for the goodness that is a result of His perfection, trust in reason would have been impossible. That was his proof in establishing the inability of trusting logic without an ontological knowledge that is predicated on the goodness of God.

In his third philosophical meditation, Descartes says, ‘I must inquire whether there is a God...and if I find that there is a God, I must examine likewise whether he can be a deceiver; for, *without the knowledge of these two truths, I do not see that I can ever be certain of anything*.’¹⁹

Therefore, trust in the mind of the Deist is contingent on proving the existence of a perfect god. As belief in Deism—for the large part—does not include belief in perfection in the attributes of God, the Deist’s argument in defence of his position would be based on a rational defence on his part that is not founded on any solid ground. As part of a universe that was created by a creator possessing imperfect attributes, Reason would thus be untrustworthy proof. This is because, assuming the Deist position, believing in the tool of contemplation (reason) would be predicated on the idea that the one who created it is fair.

The issue can be summarised as follows:

1. (Most) Deists believe that God, the Creator, is imperfect in His attributes.

16 René Descartes (1597-1650). French philosopher and mathematician. He was a pioneer of modern philosophy and the school of rationalistic philosophy. His most important works include *Discours de la méthode (Discourse on the Method)*.

17 (Descartes, 1724), pp. xl-xli.

18 Translator’s note: Descartes’ ontological argument—which has been both critiqued and developed—is as follows:

Premise: Our idea of God is that of a perfect being.

Premise: Existence is perfection compared to non-existence.

Argument: Therefore, God must exist.

19 (Descartes, 1724), pp. 11-12. Emphasis added.

2. The veracity of the Deistic position can only be achieved by way of rational proof.
3. There cannot be any confidence in reason without having confidence in its Creator.
4. Denial of God's perfection prevents trust in reason.
5. Therefore, Deism is philosophically impossible.

What further underscores the Deists' angst here is that they believe (except for very few of them) in a randomised process of man's chance evolution. Their angst in submitting to logic is twofold: the problem of the tool of logic that evolved without the need to know the reality of the world, and the problem stemming from the belief that the Creator is not of the level of perfection. In fact—according to them—it is not concerned with goodness and truth in the universe to begin with. In both situations, the Deist should have no trust in human reason.

Furthermore, the standard understanding of Deism (in the Enlightenment) necessitates the perfection of God. This is because man draws his motivation to achieve moral completeness from the perfection of God. Thomas Paine²⁰, one of the greatest apologists for Deism, said: "The only true religion is Deism, by which I then meant, and now mean the belief in one God, and an imitation of his moral character, or the practice of what are called moral virtues..."²¹ As such, a philosophical explanation for God's perfection is indispensable to the Deist, as he too wants to achieve higher morals. God's perfection is from the perfection of His Attributes; it is from the perfection of knowledge, mercy, and power that the Lord speaks to His servants to make them aware of Him, inform them what He wants from them, and impart to them that which will ensure their felicity.

20 Thomas Paine (1737-1809). English philosopher, political activist, and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. He took part in the French Revolution. He is considered one of the most important figures in the Deistic movement.

21 (Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 1819), part II, p. 74.

Deism and the problem of evil

Though its adherents are in a state of perturbation, and confusion, the Deistic position finds solace from two issues:

1. The corruption of institutional religions, which gave rise to Deism during the Enlightenment in the 18th century.
2. The problem of evil, which distorts the beauty of this world and prevents it from reaching perfection. This is a problem for many Deists in our times. However, this was not considered a problem by a number of leading Deists, such as Thomas Paine and Martin Gardner²².

The rejection of institutional religion during the Enlightenment was directly a result of the corruption in the Church's beliefs, its ignoble history, and its rule.

As for the problem of evil, it is an objection first constructed by Epicurus²³, the Hellenistic philosopher. Yet, we deny that it is properly attributed to Epicurus, as he himself was a believer in deities. In fact, he considered this level of faith to be cognitively self-evident²⁴ as we have detailed in

22 Martin Gardner (1914-2010). American thinker and author. He specialised in rendering the sciences into simple terms for the public. He wrote on philosophy and religion.

23 Epicurus (BC 341-270). Hellenistic philosopher, to whom Epicureanism is ascribed. He was an advocate for knowledge being empirical in nature and not innate. His philosophy is founded on the idea that the purpose of man's life is felicity in the sense of removing physical pain and intellectual chaos. His works include *On Nature*.

24 This is what Epicurus mentioned in his *Letter to Menoeceus*, when he told him the first thing he must do in order to live a peaceful life: 'First of all believe that god is a being immortal and blessed, even as the common idea of a god is engraved on men's minds, and do not assign to him anything alien to his immortality or ill-suited to his blessedness' (Epicurus, 1926).

another book.²⁵ For now, it is sufficient to mention some pertinent issues concerning the usage of the problem of evil as proof to deny the intervention of God in our world in the form of sending Prophets:

1. The denial of God because of the existence of evil. This is because God is perfect in goodness, knowledge, and power. His attributes would completely rule out the possibility of evil. This is what is referred to as *the logical problem of evil*.

Most prominent atheist philosophers who focus on the problem of evil have concluded that this objection is improper as it presumes that evil can never be a pathway to good, which may ultimately be of benefit. This is why William Rowe²⁶, who is one of the most prominent atheist philosophers who wrote on this objection in recent decades, said, 'No one has succeeded in producing a statement which is known to be necessarily true and which, when added to 1 [God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good.] and 2 [Evil exists.], enables us to derive explicitly contradictory statements. In view of this, it is reasonable to conclude that the logical form of the problem of evil is not much of a problem for theism. Its central thesis, that 1 and 2 are logically inconsistent, is a thesis that no one has been able to establish by a convincing argument.'²⁷

Man, as per what Rowe is saying, should not find any contradiction between the existence of a Perfect God, and the fact that He allowed evil to exist. He has the power to manufacture a means to a greater good out of this evil.

2. About his outlook on existence and evil, man has one of two choices. Either evil exists out of wisdom, or all of existence has no value whatsoever.
 - a. In the theistic (Islamic) conceptualisation, in which:
 - i. God creates man to test him, and positions imperfection as indicative of the need for a perfect entity and for the sake of other wisdoms, and

25 (Ameri, *The Problem of Evil and the Existence of Allah*, 2016).

26 William Rowe (1931-2015). Philosopher who specialised in the philosophy of science. He commenced his studies in divinity to become a priest, but he then left Christianity due to problems he saw in the Bible. His works include *The Cosmological Argument* and *Can God Be Free?*.

27 (Rowe, 1978), p. 117.

- ii. the knowledge of man is exponentially and infinitely less than God's Knowledge,

what is necessarily expected is that:

- there is evil in the universe, and
- man can attain the understanding of wisdom from some forms of evil, though not all.

The existential and Islamic conceptualisation of divinity is not at loggerheads with the existence of evil in the universe. Taking into consideration the Islamic viewpoint holistically, a Muslim does not see evil as mutually exclusive with God's Perfection. Rather, he sees it as something that achieves a greater wisdom as part of the existence of life. It is a provision for the journey of life—nay, for understanding life itself. That wisdom can be gained from some forms of evil—which may admittedly be missed by man—cannot be denied, as man was only given a small part of all knowledge. The necessary implication of having lesser knowledge—which no Muslim nor atheist can deny—is that our conscience may miss the meanings of wisdom that bind events together within the tapestry of the universe.

- b. In the atheistic conceptualisation, there is no good or evil, as existence is really just mass and energy in a sustained random flux. As such, there is no evil or good in a world that has no fundamental values in items and actions.

This is something that is acknowledged by the leaders of New Atheism, headed up by Dawkins²⁸ who says, 'In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has the exact properties we should expect if there is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil and no good; nothing but blind and pitiless indifference.'²⁹

- c. In Deism, there is no meaning to good or evil. This is because the Creator is not morally perfect. He may be the Great Architect, but He simply does not care about the evils in the

28 Richard Dawkins (b. 1941). Ethologist and evolutionary biologist. He is the most famous figure within the New Atheism movement. His works include *The God Delusion*.

29 (Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*, 2008), p. 133.

world. He would have plunged the life of man in these evils for no wisdom.

- d. In both atheism and Deism, existence and life carry no fundamental or personal meaning. There is no evil or good. This is despite the fact that Deism differs with atheism in that it states the material universe is the effect of an intelligent and calculated case of engineering. Until they acknowledge the existence of the Perfect God, the problem of evil simply should not exist for the atheist and the Deist.
3. We are unable to identify the specific wisdoms embedded within every evil in existence. However, rational analysis and the clear scriptural texts of the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition tell us a collection of wisdoms that should satisfy the human mind. This includes freewill, fostering self-development and cultivating one's personality, knowledge of the Attributes of the Lord, the need for universal norms from which both good and harm come about as a result, punishing the corrupt, alerting the heedless, and other aspects that we already covered in detail in our book dedicated to the problem of evil. Looking at the individual cases of evil in existence, we are compelled to say that, in spite of our shortcomings in comprehending the wisdoms of the totality of God's Actions, we do possess the fortitude of telling the atheist, 'You cannot bring a particular category of evil in which it can be conclusively asserted that there is no wisdom contained therein.'
4. In order to achieve meaning for his earthly life, evil is indispensable to man in his current composition. Life without evil—as represented by deficiency and pain—would be bitter and not handled well by people; its sting would push souls to the brink of spiritual suicide. This forced Nietzsche³⁰ to rush and accept evil in order to manufacture some meaning for life, as a disguise for his nihilism. According to him, *Übermensch*³¹ is the one who rejects the meanings of lavishness and laziness. He is the one who mounts danger, assumes

30 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Philosopher and a scholar of German linguistics. He was famous for his views on postmodernism. His most important works include *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Antichrist*.

31 Translator's note: Commonly translated as 'superman', although other words like 'overman', 'superior man', and 'beyond man' have also been used to describe the concept.

the stations of the undesirable, and builds his home at the foot of a volcano. That is why he discussed *amor fati* (Latin: love of fate, or love of one's fate) to demonstrate that man is satisfied with the good and the evil of his fate, as he can then—through it—derive from the depths of the soul the meanings of strength and transcendence. He said, 'Only great pain, the long, slow pain that takes its time—on which we are burned, as it were, with green wood—compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths and to put aside all trust, everything good-natured, everything that would interpose a veil, that is mild, that is medium—things in which formerly we may have found our humanity. I doubt that such pain makes us "better"; but I know that it makes us more *profound*.'³²

The sweetness of success is, in reality, the result of triumphing over pain and evil. Pain is what incentivises us to progress and overcome deficiencies in our lives and what the universe wants to do to us. Every victory presupposes an obstacle or a block that has been overcome. Assistance in the face of adversarial circumstances requires pushback and contention before victory.³³ The angles of deficiency in life are what motivate the soul to feel existence, and they make life wonderfully colourful and appetising.

We are not bound by following Nietzsche in his love for pain. However, we cannot find a way to oppose his statement, which essentially means that pain uncovers the richness of our souls, the depth of our inners, and the enjoyment of bliss in the form of experience and adventure. That process of uncovering is what is one's life provision.

In spite of his nihilism (or perhaps because of it), Nietzsche concluded that the loss of appreciating the value of evil and pain is a curse. He wrote, 'The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* the suffering, was the curse that has so far blanketed mankind.'³⁴

The inability to grasp the value of evil in our existence is a detrimental curse. Evil cannot wash away from itself the burden of being damned until man believes that the universe has a god. If he believes in God like theists do, one—in an existence far greater than a pointless material matter—will have the comfort of knowing that there is success that lies beyond over-coming evil.

32 (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1974), p. 36

33 (Copleston, 2016), 7/511.

34 (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1989), p. 28.

What about Christianity?

The above discussion on the definition, importance, and benefit of Prophethood is specific to the religions that believe in the concept as a mode through which the Lord conveys His Message to people.

Christianity believes in the need for Prophethood, and that it is a path to explaining the reality of the Lord and the wisdom of creation. However, the Pauline Epistles would suggest that Prophethood was a failure, as the Prophethood of earlier people was based on obeying the Law, not the sacrifice of the Son of God.

The Messengerhood of Prophets post-Moses ﷺ is based on the fact that people's steadfastness in the world and their salvation in the Afterlife is predicated on faith in God and implementing the law of the Torah, with an emphasis on the eternal nature of this law.³⁵ However, the Church selected the statement that says, 'The old path to salvation is improper and void, as mankind is unable to commit to righteousness and acting on the commands of God. That is why God the Father elected to send God the Son to atone for people's sins, so that they may attain deliverance and salvation. This is what appears in Paul's statement: 'The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.'³⁶

35 Psalms 119:160.

36 Hebrews 7:18-19.

Summary

- There is no path to acquire the station of Prophethood, or to achieve its aims, without divine selection.
- The horizons of human intellect are limited.
- Without faith in the existence of a fair god, there is absolutely no chance of having any confidence in human intellect being able to attain existential knowledge.
- As per the Deist and atheist philosophies, evil cannot be used as evidence to negate the existence of God. According to Islamic theology, the existence of evil is at harmony with the existence of the Perfect God.
- From Christianity's theological standpoint, all the Prophets before Jesus failed to bring up the way to salvation.

Further reading

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SECTION 2

Miracles and the Proof for Prophethood

﴿This is how Allah makes His Revelations clear to you, so perhaps you will reflect.﴾

(Qur'an, 2:266)

Compared to those of previous Messengers, the signs and evidence indicative of the correctness of his Prophethood and truthfulness are manifold. There is not a single faith-inducing miracle belonging to any other Prophet except that Muhammad ﷺ would have one similar to it.

(Ibn al-Qayyim)



Before studying the proofs for the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ in the *sīrah* (biography) and the Qur'an, we should tackle the issue of miracles. Due to the confusion in its status as an authority and the possibility or knowledge of its occurrence, many people have erred as they constricted something vast; in doing so, they denied what was evident. In this debate, there are two objections to miracles and the truthfulness of Prophethood.

Those advancing the first objection state, 'We do not submit to a man's Prophethood unless we can grasp the supernatural events that challenge the natural order.' Not only did the objectors here constrict the vast meaning of the supernatural, but they also disregarded every other mechanism (i.e., other than the supernatural) that would have led them to understand the truthfulness of Prophethood.

The second objection is more destructive. Those advancing it chose to follow the path of later sceptic philosophers. They can be split up into two camps:

1. **Outright denial of Prophethood.** It posits that 'science rejects miracles because universal norms are fixed and cannot falter or delay. Based on that, there is a fundamental tension between miracles and science. As we have not found anything that would make us deny or reject science, miracles must be denied as they are the weaker of the two competing options.'
2. **Denying the possibility of knowing whether miracles ever occurred.** The implication of believing miracles is to disbelieve in the immutable laws of nature, which are known on a mass scale throughout human history.

Our discussion here is based on the aforementioned items.

Are miracles a condition for Prophethood?

What is Prophethood? At its essence, it is conveying the message of the Lord to His creation. It is to guide them out of ignorance and misguidance. It entails rectifying their state, and straightening their crookedness. It is to remind them of prophecies that they encountered in person or were told of. As such, Prophethood is about conveyance of a truthful report.

The stipulation of accepting any report is that its source is truthful, that it is something logically possible, and that it is in correspondence with reality. That is why any proof whose source is truthful is acceptable evidence, so long as the report is compatible with logic and reality.

Evidence indicating the honesty of the one conveying the report is not confined to one type. We believe the one whose honesty we have tested as long as something else dispelling his report does not prevent us from doing so. The proof of truthfulness is a Prophet's every moment—no impostor who falsely ascribes his sayings to the Lord ﷺ can share this aspect with any Prophet. This includes the habitual actions of a Prophet in the form of his steadfastness, and his dislike for deception and lying in matters large and small, during good and bad times alike. Likewise, this includes the signs—referred to by later scholars as 'miracles'—that emanate from him; they are the supernatural statements and actions that are beyond the power of humans and demons, regardless of whether they are linked to a challenge or not.

The stipulation for miracles is baseless. For a Prophet's Prophethood, the miracle itself is evidence, as it would reveal that God responds to his requests, that He wants to show people his status, or that He is assisting him through supernatural signs. It is not necessary that any of this is connected to a challenge, as the very nature of the sign and its association with a Prophet and the propriety of his Message are evidence for the authenticity of the sign and that it is evidence for Prophethood. In fact, it is not even a stipulation for the proof—which a Prophet employs as evidence—to demonstrate his Prophethood, for merely using some evidence does not strengthen it.

In light of the above, it is therefore clear that the route to studying the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is to look at a) his *sīrah* and determine whether it incorporates the biographies of the truthful, and b) his signs, and whether they are aligned with other true proofs of a supernatural nature. Looking into the *sīrah* alone would be sufficient, as it is standalone evidence for Prophethood. Known for his extremely sharp intellect, Ibn Ḥazm concluded, ‘For the one contemplating it, the *sīrah* of Muhammad ﷺ necessarily requires that he be believed, and attests to him actually being the Messenger of God ﷺ. Had there been no miracle other than his *sīrah*, it would have sufficed.’³⁷

37 (Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Mīlāl wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥāl*), 2/231.

Are miracles possible and observable?

The possibility of miracles occurring to break natural laws was introduced in the great religio-philosophical debates by two philosophers: Spinoza³⁸, followed by Hume³⁹. The ancient world was fully invested in the belief of the supernatural nature of the world coming into existence, as well as its subsequent order.

SPINOZA'S CRITICISMS

In the 17th century, in his famous book *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza objected to the possibility of miracles and the scriptural supernatural events. It gained resounding notoriety for its influence in the movement critiquing the Jewish Bible. However, his argument against miracles did not gain traction in Western theo-philosophical critiques of the supernatural due to the evident weakness in his argument's foundations and deduction. This is showcased in the following points:

1. Spinoza stated that, compared to miracles, the laws of nature are more strongly positioned to prove the existence of God. He considered resorting to miracles to be the influence of intellectual naivety within ancient Judaism.⁴⁰ However, this is not correct as the ancients considered both the laws of nature and the supernatural to be evidence for the existence of God. As such, there is no tension

38 Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). Dutch philosopher of Jewish origin. He is said to have believed in pantheism. Nietzsche considered him a milestone for modern philosophy. He had a special focus on the theory of knowledge, ethics, and the philosophy of religion. His most important works include *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (*The Ethics*) and *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*A Theologico-Political Treatise*).

39 David Hume (1711-1776). Scottish historian and philosophical empiricist. He was famed for his tendencies for extreme scepticism. His works include *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

40 (Spinoza, 1862), pp. 12-122.

between the laws of the natural and the supernatural in their ability to reveal the being with the highest jurisdiction over this realm. The law of nature points to a creator of the universe and his innovation; the miracle points to someone able to bring about change in the universe after having created it, someone who—through his dominion—has complete power over nature.

2. Spinoza thought that miracles cannot reveal the essence of God, nor can they prove His existence. According to him, miracles are not indicative of divine providence, as opposed to laws of nature.⁴¹ However, creating this conflict between the law of nature and miracles is conjecture. Miracles in and of themselves point to an all-powerful entity that can put a stop in the natural ebb and flow of nature; it can also be proof—albeit in a limited fashion relative to the indication of the law of nature—for divine providence. This would typically be in the form of help given to a Prophet or a nation of believers during a tribulation, honouring them with a special gift, or assisting them with a clear sign. Helping believers in the face of adversity is the default of the divine providence that upholds justice in this realm.
3. Spinoza positioned the weight of his evidence on the notion that the laws of the universe are immutable, and that miracles go against the immutability of God. From the Islamic theological viewpoint—and in fact from the general theistic viewpoint—this objection is not credible as God has a will that is separate from the workings of nature, which can cause change in nature via both the natural and the supernatural. The laws of nature, like supernatural events, are effectuated by God's Will.
4. In its most famous reading, Spinoza's position states that God and nature are one (which is pantheism). This would necessitate the prevention of believing in miracles, as they are an effect of a controlling entity that has external power over nature. The position that God and nature are one did not gain traction in Western history. It is in fact one of the numerous faces of atheism.
5. Spinoza believed that miracles are proof that God created a faulty universe, requiring someone who would repair the errors of the material world on every occasion.⁴² This is a baseless objection.

41 (Spinoza, 1862), 124-128.

42 (Spinoza, 1862), p. 123.

The Prophets' miracles are not designed to rectify the faults of the universe; they are rather to demonstrate that the One Who sent the Prophets is the Creator of the universe and its laws, that He is the One Who causes the natural order to operate as it should when He pleases, and that He is the One Who renders that natural order redundant when He pleases.

6. Spinoza believed that the reason why events were placed under the 'miracle category' was down to the ignorance of previous nations vis-à-vis their natural causes. This objection is affectatious. The switching of the staff to a slithering serpent, the healing of the congenitally blind, and the splitting of the Moon are all events that are far removed from the natural order of the universe. The burden of proof is on the one denying their supernatural nature.
7. Spinoza believed that the Bible does not mention miracles; rather, the position of the miracles occurring was influenced by Jewish commentaries beyond the original scriptural text.⁴³ In its attempt to refute the clear texts from the Bible, this objection too is sheer affectation.

Due to the evident incoherence of Spinoza's objections on the true nature of miracles, the real debate on the logical nature of miracles and the possibility of knowing whether they ever occurred did not start with his book *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*; it was rather deferred until Hume released his book, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

43 (Spinoza, 1862), pp. 130-134.

HUME'S CRITICISMS

Hume defined the miracle as a 'transgression of the law of nature'.⁴⁴ He discussed at length the incorrectness of stating that miracles have occurred. The majority of his discussion refers back to the following notion: since the laws of nature are constant, and because their processes auto-repeat themselves, the position that these laws can be broken is unworthy of being believed. Man believes in the truthfulness of the constant, not the rule-breaking isolated event.

Hume also pointed out that supernatural events require supernatural proof to be established. Because supernatural proof is absent, the position attested to by the law of nature must be maintained, which is that they cannot be broken by miracles.

44 (Hume, 1772), p. 130.

The testimony of natural law against miracles

Hume's fundamental objection to miracles is predicated on the notion that nature's system is constant, and that accepting the report of a miracle is not possible, as the strength of testimony in its favour does not rise to the testimony of what is well known: the immutability of nature. We know—by way of mass acknowledgement, which offers certainty—that the laws of nature are not subject to change and do not fall into imbalance. So, how can this certainty be overridden by isolated reports of miracles that supposedly broke these laws?

This can be repudiated in a number of ways:

1. The debate surrounding miracles starts by delineating the conceptual framework by which a researcher can perceive what is possible, what is necessary, and what is impossible as per his understanding of the reality of the universe and its constituent parts.

In theistic thought (which includes Islam), miracles are not any different from the constant laws of nature. Both are 'normal' insofar as God's creation is concerned. The universe was made with God's Will, and its laws operate in accordance with God's Command; likewise, supernatural events occur with God's Will. God intended to showcase His Existence and His Magnificent Attributes through the medium of spellbinding, beautiful laws of nature, just as He showcased His Attributes and the truthfulness of some of His creation by breaking these laws through wondrous acts.

On the contrary, a materialistic atheist operates from the philosophical framework of metaphysical naturalism. According to him, the universe is nothing more than matter, energy, and random movement, after which there is nothing. In this framework, there is no room to discuss inimitability or miracles, as the law of the universe and the supernatural can only be explained through the mechanisms of matter within the confines of the cosmos, beyond which there is nothing. This is because, in his view, nature is a self-explanatory system.

This is why we propose that any discussion on miracles be made contingent on actually believing in God. The existence of God is the fundamental shaper for the conceptual framework of the universe. Once the position of believing in God is established to be true, the possibility of miracles can also be proven to be correct.

The whole order of things⁴⁵ is as outrageous as any miracle which could presume to violate it (G. K. Chesterton).

2. The laws of nature are but one of the many effects of God's Will in the universe. God's Will is not restricted by any external factor; through His Power, God can do as He pleases and can rule as He wills. He can maintain a law as it is, or He can suspend a law either temporarily or forever.
3. Miracles are *contrary* to the experience man has with nature, but not *contradictory*. They fall under the scope of logically possible events that most people have not witnessed. Based on this, proving miracles would be a historical issue, not a philosophical one. As a historical matter, this would be done by assessing the veracity of historical accounts, not by the investigation of essences.
4. Hume believes that our experience informs us that the laws of nature do not break.⁴⁶ The reality is that there is no definitive proof that nature is immutable. Rather, such a supposition would be a faith-based one that is rooted in the repetition of experience, not on complete induction or logical necessitation. We are not negating the concept of causation (which is the classical reading of Hume⁴⁷); what we are negating is the necessity of causation's universal consistency, or that it cannot be disrupted by an external factor.
5. Laws are *descriptive* of nature's operations. They are not *prescriptive* with the universe. We conjure up an image of these laws in our minds as per how nature characteristically operates. The characteristic

45 i.e., laws of the universe.

46 (Hume, 1772), p. 130.

47 There is a difference of interpretation in Hume's actual position vis-à-vis the principle of causation. See (Garrett, 1997); (Beebe, 2006); and (Ameri, *Fa-Man Khalaqa Allāh?*, 2015), pp. 30-32.

nature of something does not preclude the potential for any change to it, or that it may be disrupted altogether by an external factor.

6. Hume is arguably the most famous philosopher in history who is ascribed to the position that negates the law of nature and believes in the necessity of material causation being linked (as per our experiences) to the effects that must emerge as a result. This begs the question: How can the position of negating the law of nature due to the lack of causation be reconciled with the law of nature being used as evidence against miracles? If correlation of cause and effect is not evidence for the impossibility of the natural order breaking in the future, how can this same correlation be evidence to negate the possibility of miracles occurring in the past?
7. Hume believes that nature's testimony for its laws being immutable is a perfect testimony.⁴⁸ By this, he is starting from a preconceived notion he wishes to establish, as he is assuming that (1) nature is matter (which is all things), and (2) its laws do not break. With this, he is attempting to prove that the laws of nature do not break. This is the logical fallacy of begging the question, as it assumes the conclusion in its premise.

Hume's argument is based on the notion that nature is all things, and there is no possibility of having universal constants broken. Yet, the entire debate surrounding miracles is that it is predicated on the position that there is an entity that is completely separate from nature, causing change within nature as it wishes, and that logic—armed with all its philosophical principles and scientific discoveries—is indicative of the existence of such an entity.

Furthermore, the assumption that universal laws cannot break is the logical fallacy of begging the question. As C. S. Lewis⁴⁹ puts it: 'Unfortunately we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.'⁵⁰ In other words: 'We cannot be certain that the laws of the universe are consistent and can never be broken, until we know that anything that would break this consistency never happened. That is why it is not valid for us to argue for the impossibility of the system of nature

48 (Hume, 1772), p. 130.

49 C. S. Lewis (1898-1963). British writer and scholar of literature. He is considered to be one of the top-ranking Christian apologists of the 20th century. His works include *The Problem of Pain* and *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*.

50 Translator's note: (Lewis C. S., *Miracles*, 1947), p. 123.

breaking by starting from its conclusion, i.e., that the breaking of these laws has not been proven.'

8. If the laws of the universe are representative of everything that occurs therein, there would be no reason to suggest that miracles break the law of the universe, as this law would be descriptive of everything that occurs in it. As such, both systemic and isolated events would be part and parcel of the laws of the universe. This is why Hume's understanding of the laws of the universe is, analytically, not at odds with the concept of miracles.
9. Considering that the breaking of the laws of the universe is not logically impossible but instead deemed to be merely rare events, believing in miracles would be based on the honesty of those who witnessed them. Events can be considered truthful based on eyewitness testimony or by true reports about them and their effects. Acknowledging that reports are admissible as evidence, Hume was of the position that experience is our sole source of learning issues that have occurred.⁵¹
10. Hume acknowledged that reason must place its faith in proof.⁵² However, he regressed from that and stipulated that the proofs for supernatural events must also be supernatural.⁵³ We say that the default position in believing in miracles is that the following conditions are met:
 - a. The event should not be interpretable through natural causes.
 - b. The supernatural interpretation should not be logically impossible, e.g., that it leads to a mutually contradictory idea, or to an entity that cannot be in existence.
 - c. The chains of transmission reporting the event should correspond to its rarity. Therefore, if something is reported to have occurred in front of a large crowd of people but is then only reported by one person, in spite of such an event having normally motivated a lot of people to report it, it would not be believed. Conversely, a large quantity of reporters would not

51 (Hume, 1772), p. 126.

52 (Hume, 1772), p. 127.

53 (Hume, 1772), pp. 131-132.

The phrase 'Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence' was popularised in recent times by the atheist American astronomer, Carl Sagan (d. 1996).

be stipulated if there are other indicators for the report being true, even if it is a report of an unfamiliar occurrence.

When these three conditions are met, rejecting the report of a miracle would be unsubstantiated affectation. If the sole interpretation for any particular event is that it is miraculous, it must be resorted to as the preliminary interpretation and should not be cast aside from the array of plausible explanations.

Furthermore, the position that *the evidence of a supernatural event in history must also be supernatural* is begging the question. This logical fallacy is perpetrated by the opposing side that rejects supernatural events as part of their materialistic understanding of the universe. What is required from them is to prove the impossibility of a supernatural event occurring. The logical fallacy here occurs in its premise: Only supernatural proof is admissible to prove the possibility of the supernatural occurring. As such, its premise is based on the notion that the supernatural cannot be proven, which is precisely the point of contention. There is therefore a difference between:

- a. the required evidence being robust and capable of interpreting the miracle competently without blemish (we believe this is sufficient to affirm miracles), and
 - b. the interpretation of supernatural events being itself supernatural itself (this leads to infinity, which is void due to its impossibility).
11. Hume believed that the occurrence of miracles cannot be established even after supernatural proof for a miracle is found, because we would reach a stage where the laws of the universe and miracles are in mutual conflict. Inevitably, one would triumph over the other⁵⁴ and there would be no middle ground, as each would be claiming flawlessness for itself. However, this is an affectatious and obstinate claim by Hume. It is possible to reconcile the laws of the universe and supernatural events by proposing that the latter is an exception to the rule of the laws of nature. As such, the relationship between the laws of nature and miracles would be one of *rule and exception*, not *contradiction*.
 12. Hume assumed for argument's sake that all indicators proving any one miracle are present. He then said, 'Nothing is esteemed

54 (Hume, 1772), p. 131.

a miracle, if it ever happen (*sic*) in the common course of nature, because he believed that the scheming and stupidity of people are the cause for the appearance of this news.⁵⁵ With this, Hume reveals that his rejection of believing in miracles is not because testimonies in favour of miracles are not present, but because he simply does not want to believe them. We say that reality must be believed, as testimony in favour of it is indicative of it.

13. Hume believed it is improper to believe in one-off non-repetitive incidents. This is an absurd claim on his part. For example, the universe and its arrival into existence was an individual incident—in spite of that, both logic and science attest to it.⁵⁶ Furthermore, there is no testament—either from a logical framework or from empirical necessitation—that is in favour of the rule of knowledge that Hume places in this matter. In other words, logic does not suggest that unfamiliar events can never be found, nor does past experience dictate that the status quo cannot change due to an unforeseen event.

In fact, scientists do not acknowledge the taxonomy that Hume claimed. This is why Stanley Jaki⁵⁷, a physicist and scientific philosopher, refuted Hume by saying, ‘Luckily for science, scientists relatively rarely brush aside reports about a really new case with the remark: “It cannot be really different from the thousand other cases we have already investigated.”’⁵⁸

14. The natural sciences are unable to prove the veracity of miracles, as their rarity casts them outside the scope of scientific observation. This is likewise contrasted by the natural sciences’ inability to negate their occurrence, as their lack of inclusion in the field of scientific study necessitates their inability of making judgement on whether miracles ever occurred. There is no potential to affirm miracles without being in a position to negate them.
15. Hume believes that miracles cannot be proven, as the experience of mankind testifies to the systemic nature of the laws of the universe at work. Apart from a few witnesses, the opposite testimony is not found. This conflict, as presented by Hume, was never the focus

55 (Hume, 1772), p. 145.

56 For a refutation on Hume, see (Geivett & Habermas, 2002), pp. 59-196.

57 Stanley Jaki (1924-2009). Author of Hungarian origin. He gained a Doctorate in physics and another in theology. He had a focus on the relationship between faith and science. He was a Templeton Prize laureate. His works include *God and the Cosmologists*.

58 (Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 1989), p. 100.

of the debate. Rather, the debate is about the testimony of a group of people in favour of a miracle having occurred versus that same miracle's denial by another group. It is here where judgement either way would be offered.

16. Hume conflated the *quantity* of evidence with the *value* of evidence. In order to assess the veracity of a claim in any discipline, evidence is *weighed*, not *counted*. That is why the attestation of a group of people for a miracle cannot be rejected just because it goes against the testimony of many nations in favour of the systemised nature of the universe. Rather, what is necessary is to assess these testimonies, determine the uprightness of their advocates, and pinpoint the circumstances of the event.

Richard Whatley, a theist and logician, wrote his treatise *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte*⁵⁹ to deride Hume's hyper-sceptic approach, which is rooted in doubting the historicity of stories and personalities when conflicting reports of them are passed down to us. He applied the same methodology on the reports of Bonaparte, forcing extreme sceptics to deny the historicity of this famous French leader—something that Hume's supporters themselves would not dare claim.

17. Hume believed that there is not a single miracle in history attested by a sufficient number of people whose faculties and morals were uncorrupted.⁶⁰ This is a lack of awareness on his part: Scholars of *hadith* have authenticated the Prophetic miracles based on narrators whom they stipulated to be trustworthy, i.e., distinguished with moral uprightness and precision in memory. We shall discuss this at a later stage.

59 (Whatley, 1871).

60 (Hume, 1772), p. 132.

Summary

- Prophethood is a station for conveying the truth from God via a human being. That is why any proof in favour of the honesty of the conveyor is evidence for his Prophethood. Miracles are but one sign of his Prophethood.
- The laws of nature and miracles are both from the creation of God. Neither is God incapacitated by the two, nor does any one of them defy logic.
- The denial of miracles is a result of atheism, not the root of it.
- Belief in miracles is a result of having faith in God. The root to the denial of miracles is, generally speaking, a philosophical concept that is rooted in materialism and the rejection of the unseen beyond matter, energy, and blind physical forces.
- Judging the veracity of the miracle is by assessing the nature of its report (e.g., does it mention or contain anything that is logically impossible?) and the honesty of its transmitters. Such reports are not harmed by the notion that a miracle is rare compared to the mass recurrence of the laws of the universe. There is no conflict between those laws and miracles, but rather the latter is an exception from the former. Had it not been for their rarity, miracles would not have been evidence in a regimented universe.

Further reading

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SECTION 3

Putting the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ to the Test

﴿Say, O Prophet, 'Show your proof. Here is the Qur'an, the reminder for those with me, along with earlier Scriptures, the reminder for those before me.' But most of them do not know the truth, so they turn away.﴾

(Qur'an 21:24)

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.⁶¹



61 John 8:32.

Muhammad ﷺ? Or someone else?

One might ask: Why begin the quest to God by investigating the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ? Why not start with a faith other than Islam? In an issue that requires investigative impartiality, is this approach not partial to Islam right from the outset?

WHY SHOULD THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUHAMMAD ﷺ BE PUT TO THE TEST FIRST?

The above objection is based on the methodological assumption that, when starting analysis, a researcher must treat all unassessed options as equals. For our discussion, this is an unacceptable assumption, because we are not starting out from the point of zero knowledge.

From our investigations⁶² on God's Existence and His Attributes, we concluded that He exists and is perfect. As such, any universal conceptualisation that does not believe in God's Existence—such as atheism, Buddhism, or any religion that does not acknowledge a god—is eliminated. Likewise, proof has demonstrated to us that God is one, thus eliminating the religious conceptions of any polytheistic faith. On the way, we looked at the One God and found that the best path to Him, as we understand it, is through Prophethood. If we look at all cases of Prophethood being claimed, we will find that there is no realistic way to critically assess them, as there is no original documentation for those that have been kept safe from either gross distortion or complete loss. This is with the exception of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, as its heritage has been preserved. As the possibility of knowing the details of Prophethood (i.e., divinity, outlook on the universe, legislative system, and framework of ethics it brought

62 This is in my first book of this two-part series.

forth) of all other Prophets has been eliminated, the possibility of success in assessing their veracity and holiness would also have been eliminated due to their inability of being subjected to scrutiny.

Yet, the Prophethood of the man known as Muhammad ﷺ cannot be assumed to be automatically true just because the reports of all other claims to Prophethood cannot be assessed. Truth cannot be established by the mere failure of the opposite side, or the failure of alternative options. It is, however, simply the weakness of the data on other Prophets that pushes us to attempt learning God's wisdom behind granting Prophethood to Muhammad ﷺ. Starting to analyse the truth of Prophethood of every other Prophet would simply be randomised guesswork, as we do not possess much knowledge of their proselytisation activities to begin with. Tracking down their relics to access knowledge of the truthfulness of their Prophethood is futile.

Furthermore, the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ presents itself for scrutiny in more ways than one (which will be discussed later on in this book). In fact, it tells us to assess its veracity from all angles and challenges people to disprove its evidence with any available counterproof.

**DOES RESEARCHING THE PROPHETHOOD OF
MUHAMMAD ﷺ RENDER INVESTIGATIONS OF OTHER
PROPHETHOODS REDUNDANT?**

However, does investigating the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ render the investigations into the Prophethood of others redundant? In other words, after having assessed the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, do we have to investigate every other Prophethood so that we are content that we have indeed reached a level of certainty?

The answer to this question lies in the fact that truth is singular, not plural. The idea of the plurality of truth makes the notion of there being an aggregation of mutually contradictory items an impossible proposition. As such, when reality outside our minds is singular, namely that any one thing and its opposite cannot coexist, and that the truth is singular and not plural, this would necessitate that the reality that is perceived from that truth by our minds is singular as well. This is because plurality of truths negates the characteristic of truthfulness from all. Reality means that whatever is in the mind corresponds to the actual world.

Speaking in practical terms, since the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is truthful, every Prophethood that goes against this Prophethood would indeed be considered void. That is a given. However, the Prophethoods that do not conflict with his Prophethood and are rather aligned to it would not be considered void; they would be considered complementary. The obvious example for this is the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ attesting to the truthfulness of the Prophethoods of Jesus ﷺ and Moses ﷺ.

Once the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is established, the need to research every other Prophethood would become redundant, as the truth is one, not pluralistic.

SIGNS THAT REVEAL A TRUE PROPHET

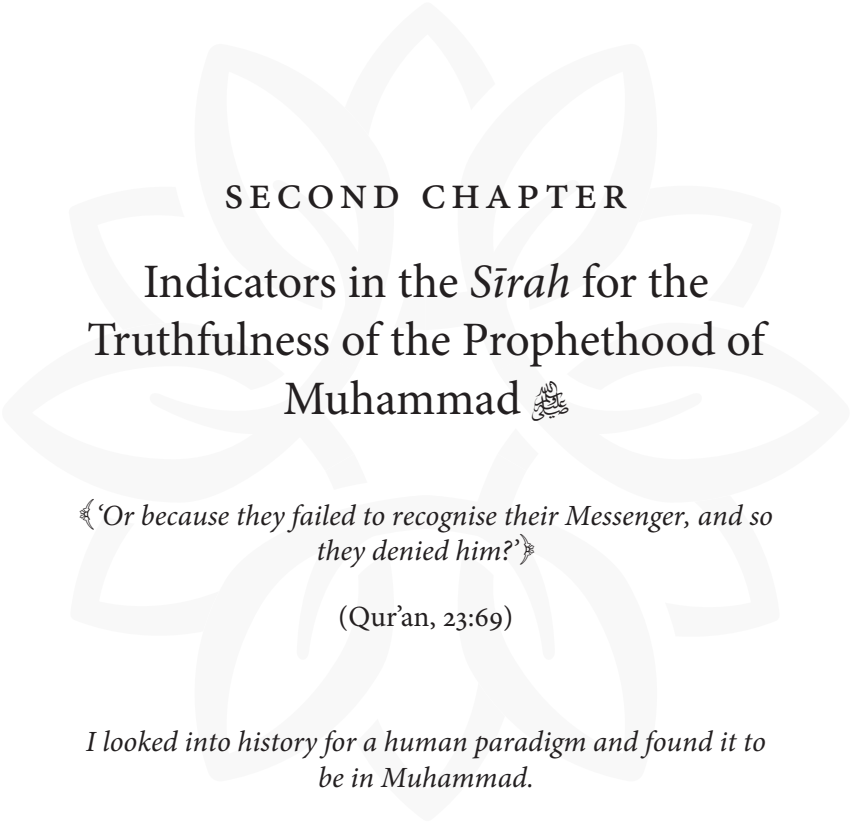
Before we look at the details of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, we should first set out some rigorous and objective conditions to assess the claim to Prophethood, so that we do not subjugate ourselves to our emotions or inherited beliefs when passing a ruling on this momentous issue. Perhaps the most important stipulations can be summarised through the following points:

- We should know the life of the Prophethood claimant in all its particular aspects, so that the signs of deception or deceitful plotting in his life—if found—do not go undetected, and the signs of honesty and truth—if found—become apparent.
- The proofs of his Prophethood should be clear cut and offer contentment to the heart, for faith cannot take hold without belief being firmly set in the heart.
- The Prophetic message in contention must stand head and shoulders above the intellectual, cultural, and religious status quo. The divineness of his message would be evidently superior to the circumstances it is placed in, just as the message would be dominant over the status quo, instead of being a by-product of it. Of course, the message would take into consideration the circumstances of its environment vis-à-vis how to invite people to God and the divine law.
- The beliefs of this person, and his ethical and moral stances, should not be contradicted by self-evident truths or man's natural disposition. Sound logic is the creation of the Lord Who sent messages and revealed the precise verses (*muḥkamāt*). Logic is a path to knowing Prophethood and its reality.
- The invitation of this man should be sound in itself, and it should be reformative. It should not be based in fantasy, nor should it be so idealistic that it would render it unsuitable for where he is situated, the limits of his capabilities, his natural inclinations, or his innate instincts.

When investigating the truthfulness of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, it is necessary for us to remain divorced from a number of problematic attitudes, which include:

- **Extreme scepticism.** Even when proofs are present, this attitude seeks to wriggle out of acknowledging the truth merely due to the position of the side opposite being *logically possible*. A seeker of truth follows the evidence wherever it leads him; he does not internalise a strategy of rejecting proofs from the outset on the flimsy notion that an open mindset is the be-all and end-all of research.
- **Entrenched materialism.** This attitude makes a person reject any and every supernatural interpretation, even if the proofs in its favour pile up, and even if materialistic objections fall short of satisfactorily explaining the Muhammadan nature.
- **Baseless theological objections.** This attitude seeks to coerce God to speak directly to His creation in a very specific and limited manner. The default course of action should be to investigate the Muhammadan mission and the reality of the non-human higher power it points to, so that one can grasp his mission's divineness, all without delving into pointless argumentative and metaphysical debates.

Researching the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ ultimately leads to one of two conclusions: his honesty, or his imposture. But it is not sufficient for the opposing side to reject his Prophethood. Rather, they must also repudiate the negativities associated with the alternative choice. We shall present those elements of negativity at the beginning of each section.



SECOND CHAPTER

Indicators in the *Sīrah* for the Truthfulness of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ

﴿Or because they failed to recognise their Messenger, and so
they denied him?﴾

(Qur'an, 23:69)

*I looked into history for a human paradigm and found it to
be in Muhammad.*

(Wolfgang Goethe)

Preface

Understanding the themes of the biographies of well-known, historically influential personalities can be achieved by answering the following three questions:

- How did he live?
- Which proofs did he present to establish his truthfulness?
- What did the people gain from his efforts?

In the following pages, we shall do a deep dive into history and unearth bygone facts. We shall scrutinise and uncover the innermost realities contained within the Prophetic biography of Muhammad, and how the inner and external states of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ were like. Let us therefore pay heed to this long-forgotten discourse and listen to the rustle of whispers from an era long gone.

The way to assess the *sīrah*—in order to test the truthfulness of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ—is to look at him as someone who called to a religious faith and assess the evidence and veracity of his claim, as well as the fruits borne by his message.



SECTION 1

The First Condition for Prophethood: Preservation of His Career and the Substance of His Message

﴿... Verify... ﴾

(Qur'an, 49:6)

Were it not for the chain-backed transmissions and that they were sought by this cohort of hadith scholars, the same religious distortion that appeared in other religious nations would have appeared in this nation as well. There has been no nation of any Prophet that assisted in protecting his religion from distortion like this nation.

(Ibn Ḥibbān)



A preserved corpus? Or a mass of ignorant utterances and fables?

Muslims affirm the rule that states, ‘The judgement that is formulated concerning a matter is based on how it is conceived.’ Passing judgement on a person and his religion, and what pleases those who affiliate themselves to him and his ideology, is predicated on actually knowing the man and his call. That is why the principal argument employed by Muslims to establish the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is that his career, message, and the signs he displayed as evidence for his Prophethood have been preserved in the annals of history with great diligence. Based on this, Muslims state that the careful preservation of the Prophetic legacy in accordance with parameter-defined scientific principles necessitates that the accuracy of this Prophethood be affirmed.

On the other hand, Islam’s adversaries believe that the Prophetic legacy was concocted by generations of Muslims that came after via the courtroom of history; this implies that what has been preserved is not admissible as evidence.

A fair judgement in this dispute would be determined by looking into the Islamic methodology of *sīrah* preservation to scope the possibility of distortion or factitiousness that may have seeped into the scriptures of the Islamic tradition. Prior to that, however, we should look into the claim of Muslims that ‘the preservation of the Muhammadan *sīrah* necessitates the accuracy of Prophethood’, for it is a provocative assertion that bears huge implications.

Preservation of the *sīrah* does not open the debate—it ends it

The majority of Orientalists agree—even though it is not explicitly mentioned among them—that accepting what has been preserved in the *sīrah* as evidence must result in accepting his Prophethood, regardless of whether hadith-level scrutiny is applied to it. That is why the preservation of the Prophetic *sīrah*—in the sense of its status as historical evidence—represents the end of the debate, and it would be the conclusion of any research conducted on the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

In fact, Orientalists and Missionaries have reached a boiling point vis-à-vis the value of the preserved *sīrah*, as per the Muslim tradition books. Instead of scrutinising it with robust evidence and narrations with chains, they subjected this heritage to overly harsh criticisms, mistrust, conjecture, and surmising. This phenomenon has in fact caused some to deny the existence of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ altogether, treating Islam as an extension to the ancient Christian sects, or considering the name ‘Muhammad’ as a title of Jesus and not the name of a man who lived in the 7th century.⁶³ The depravity of these claims is sufficient for their invalidity.

We say with all confidence, ‘If you can accept the honesty of the person mentioned in this section, you would by extension—by the affirmation of most Orientalists and Missionaries—be compelled to accept the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ.’

The issue here is not connected to the dispute surrounding the existence of differences or even false reports in the body of *sīrah* literature that were concocted by actors in the first generations—this is an issue that all scholars of hadith would concede to the Orientalists. The process of ascertaining the truthfulness of narrations had already appeared in the 1st century AH. This occurred when a number of sects and groups who permitted lying to be lawful emerged. They did so in order to shore up their own respective belief systems or in the belief that this would ‘help’ the religion. The existence of

63 This is the position of the German Orientalist Karl-Heinz Ohlig.

fabrications in the Islamic heritage is a matter that was uncovered by the early scholars of hadith, well before Orientalism even came onto the scene; it was most certainly before Islam's adversaries found literature critiquing the traditions of the Prophetic *sīrah*. The only reason why the discipline of hadith appeared in the first place was to discern authentic reports of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ from weak and fabricated ones.

The Prophet of Islam—a known man among unknown men

Many historians have testified that, among all Prophets, the sole personality that history can speak of in some considerable detail is that of Muhammad ﷺ. This is due to the presence of historical documentation about him that can be scrutinised and cross-checked with external truths. Relative to this is the statement of the British researcher and the most famous sceptic on the historicity of the Christian Gospels, George Albert Wells⁶⁴: ‘...The evidence concerning [the life details of] Jesus is so unsatisfactory. If his career were as well attested as that of Julius Caesar, Mohammed, or Queen Anne, no one would need to denigrate the relevant evidence as establishing mere probability and to look elsewhere for certainty.’⁶⁵

There is no route to establish the historical existence of any of the Prophets in whom the Jews and Christians believe via neutral sources—with the exception of Jesus and John ﷺ.⁶⁶ Even in the case of these two, attestations are limited to their mere historical existence; even in the case of Jesus, it is not as much as definitive as it is based on preponderance. As

64 George Albert Wells (1926-2017). British researcher. He was one of the most prominent people who defended the notion that the Messianic personality is a myth that never existed. He then changed his view and stated that Jesus did indeed live in the 1st century, but that most of what is ascribed to him is mythical. His works include *Cutting Jesus Down to Size: What Higher Criticism Has Achieved and Where It Leaves Christianity*.

65 (Wells, 1991), p. 121.

66 The 1st-century Jewish historian Josephus mentioned Herod's assassination of John ﷺ (Josephus, 18/5). The details of the narration there differ from Mark 6:17-29. Mark states that the reason for why John ﷺ was killed was because Herod feared a revolt could be spearheaded by him; he was already famous and accepted among people. However, the author of the Gospel of Mark claimed that the reason for his murder was that Herod's stepdaughter—who was pressured by her mother (who also danced for him)—asked Herod to do so after John ﷺ refused Herod from marrying his sister-in-law. Most scholars are of the view that the biblical version is incorrect. See (Eisenman, 2012), p. 22.

for Muhammad ﷺ, any fair-minded person who has read the books on his career, and has analysed the chains and texts, would be compelled to testify that he knows more about him than what he knows about many of his own contemporaries.

There is no pathway to assess the truth of the religious invitation conducted by Jesus ﷺ. It cannot be subjected to any assessment due to the loss of the chains of transmission and the weakness of all other testimonies for his life and message.

Benjamin Bosworth Smith⁶⁷, an Orientalist who was an Episcopal bishop⁶⁸ in America, attested to the unique preservation of the Prophetic *sīrah* out of the history of all Prophets. He said, ‘And, what is true of religion generally, is also true, unfortunately, of those three religions which I have called, for want of a better name, historical and of their founders. We know all too little of the first and earliest labourers; too much, perhaps, of those who have entered into their labours. We know less of Zoroaster⁶⁹ and Confucius⁷⁰ than we do of Solon⁷¹ and Socrates⁷²; less of Moses and of Buddha⁷³ than we do of Ambrose⁷⁴ and Augustine⁷⁵. We know indeed some fragments of

67 Translator’s note: Benjamin Bosworth Smith (1794-1884). American Protestant Episcopal bishop.

68 A bishop is an appointed member of the Church who is entrusted with authority and oversight over a number of churches.

69 Translator’s note: Zoroaster. An ancient Iranian spiritual leader and founder of what is now known as Zoroastrianism. His exact birthplace and dates in which he was alive are not ascertainable.

70 Translator’s note: Confucius (BC 551-479). Chinese philosopher.

71 Translator’s note: Solon (BC 630-560). Athenian statesman, lawmaker, and poet.

72 Translator’s note: Socrates (BC 470-399). Greek philosopher. He is considered to be the founder of Western philosophy and the first moral philosopher of the ethical tradition of thought. He was sentenced to death for not believing in the official Athenian gods. His teachings were preserved by the Greek philosophers who came after him.

73 Translator’s note: Gautama Buddha (circa BC 5th century). Considered the founder of Buddhism.

74 Translator’s note: Ambrose of Milan (340-397). Bishop of Milan, theologian, and an influential ecclesiastical figure.

75 Augustine (354-430). Church Father. He was a theologian and philosopher whose writings deeply influenced the Catholic Church. He served as Bishop of Hippo Regius in Numidia, Roman North Africa. He was one of the most important

a fragment of Christ's life; but who can lift the veil of the thirty years that prepared the way for the three? What we do know indeed has renovated a third of the world, and may yet renovate much more; an ideal of life at once remote and near; possible and impossible; but how much we do not know! What do we know of His mother, of His home life, of His early friends, and His relation to them, of the gradual dawning, or, it may be, the sudden Revelation, of His divine mission? How many questions about Him occur to each of us that must always remain questions!

But in Mohammedanism everything is different; here instead of the shadowy and the mysterious we have history. We know as much of Mohammed as we do even of Luther⁷⁶ and Milton⁷⁷. The mythical, the legendary, the supernatural is almost wanting in the original Arab authorities, or all events can easily be distinguished from what is historical. Nobody here is the dupe of himself or of others; there is the full light of day upon all that that light can ever reach at all.⁷⁸

Ernest Renan⁷⁹, a renowned French Orientalist and historian, wrote a controversial book, *Vie de Jésus (Life of Jesus)*⁸⁰, in which he catapulted the critical reading of the Gospels' historicity to a new level by dispelling many of its presuppositions. He says in this book, 'The birth of Islam is, in this respect, a unique and truly invaluable fact. Islam was the last religious creation of humanity and, in many respects, the least original. Instead of this mystery under which other religions wrap their origins, this one is born in full history; its roots are flush with the ground. The life of its founder is as well known to us as that of any reformer of the sixteenth century.'⁸¹

philosophers in the early centuries of Christianity. His influence remains on the various denominations of Christianity today. His most important works include *Confessions* and *The City of God*.

76 Martin Luther (1483-1546). German priest. He was an important player in rebelling against the Catholic Church and establishing the Protestant movement.

77 John Milton (1608-1674). English poet and author of the famous poem, *Paradise Lost*.

78 (Smith B. B., 1889), p. 47.

79 Ernest Renan (1833-1892). French Orientalist, linguist, and historian. His Doctorate was on the philosophy of Ibn Rushd (Averroes). His works include *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme*.

80 (Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 1863).

81 (Renan, *Mahomet et les origines de l'islamisme*, 1851), p. 3.

The original French text reads: 'La naissance de l'islamisme est, sous ce rapport, un fait unique et véritablement inappréciable. L'islamisme a été la dernière création religieuse de l'humanité et, à beaucoup d'égards, la moins originale. Au lieu de ce mystère sous lequel les autres religions enveloppent leurs origines, celle-ci naît en pleine histoire; ses racines sont à fleur de sol. La vie de son fondateur nous est

Key sources of the *sīrah*

Popular discourse among the opponents of Islam in the West reduces the scope of the debate surrounding the veracity of the Prophetic *sīrah*. It claims that discussions on the history of the life of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ began with later writers in the 3rd century AH, who were motivated by the desire to glorify their Prophet. According to them, these are the writings of men who either wrote based on their own fantasies or were merely parroting the then myths in vogue without any verification process. In other words, these writings are a) later sources and b) unverified.

A person who reads history and diligently refers back to the original data and understands the reports carried therein will find the aforementioned claim far from reality. History testifies to its baselessness. Here are the most important sources of the Prophetic *sīrah*.

aussi bien connue que celle de tel réformateur du xvi siècle.’

I. THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Qur'an provides a wealth of data that assists researchers on when the call to Islam emerged, its adversaries, its evolution, and other issues that cast light on the path pursued by a reader of the *sīrah*. For this reason, regardless of whether a reader believes in the Qur'an's divineness or not, it is the greatest historical source on the life of the Prophet of Islam. The Qur'an paints a picture of events in real time by describing their sequence, consequences, and drivers, while also juxtaposing the Prophet of Islam with these events.

- We find the state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ pre-Messengerhood:
 - ♦ 'Did He not find you as an orphan then sheltered you? Did He not find you unguided then guided you? And did He not find you needy then satisfied your needs?' (Qur'an, 93:6-8)
- We find vivid details regarding his state during the first episode of Revelation:
 - ♦ 'O you wrapped in your clothes, stand all night in prayer except a little. Pray half the night, or a little less, or a little more, and recite the Qur'an in a measured way. We will soon send upon you a weighty Revelation. Indeed, worship in the night is more impactful and suitable for recitation, for you are occupied for long periods during the day. Remember the Name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him wholeheartedly.' (Qur'an, 73:1-8)
- We find the first thing he was commanded of:
 - ♦ 'O you covered up with clothes, arise and warn all, revere your Lord alone...' (Qur'an, 74:1-3)
- We find the state of the adversaries of the message and their obstinance:
 - ♦ 'For whenever it was said to them, "There is no god worthy of worship except Allah," they acted arrogantly and argued, "Should we really abandon our gods for a mad poet?"' (Qur'an, 37:35-36)

- We find the state of the hypocrites and their routes to stirring up trouble:
 - ♦ ‘Surely the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but He outwits them. When they stand up for prayer, they do it half-heartedly only to be seen by people, hardly remembering Allah at all.’ (Qur’an, 4:142)
- We find the sadness and distress that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ felt in his heart:
 - ♦ ‘So do not let the life of this world deceive you, nor let the principal deceiver deceive you about Allah.’ (Qur’an, 35:6)
 - ♦ ‘Now, perhaps you, O Prophet, will grieve yourself to death over their denial, if they continue to disbelieve in this message.’ (Qur’an, 8:6)
- We find the troubles that kept the minds of his Companions pre-occupied:
 - ♦ ‘...then your courage weakened, and you disputed about the command and disobeyed, after Allah had brought victory within your reach. Some of you were after worldly gain while others desired a heavenly reward. He denied you victory over them as a test...’ (Qur’an, 3:152)
 - ♦ ‘Whatever new reminder comes to them from their Lord, they only listen to it jokingly, with their hearts distracted. The evil-doers would converse secretly and say, “Is this one not human like yourselves? Would you fall for this witchcraft, even though you can clearly see?”’ (Qur’an, 21:2-3)
- In a similar fashion, the Qur’an mentions the accusations levelled at the Prophet of Islam ﷺ:
 - ♦ ‘When the truth came to them, they said, “This is magic, and we totally reject it.”’ (Qur’an, 43:30)
 - ♦ ‘Yet they say, “This Qur’an is a set of confused dreams. In fact, he has fabricated it. In fact, he must be a poet. So, let him bring us a tangible sign like those Prophets sent before.”’ (Qur’an, 21:5)

- ♦ ‘Indeed, this Qur’an is the recitation of a noble Messenger. It is not the prose of a poet as you claim, yet you hardly have any faith. Nor is it the mumbling of a fortune-teller, yet you are hardly mindful.’ (Qur’an, 69:40-42)
- It also mentioned the harm meted out to him by the polytheists:
 - ♦ ‘When the disbelievers see you, they only make fun of you: “Is this the one who speaks ill of your gods?” while they disbelieve at the mention of the Most Compassionate.’ (Qur’an, 21:36)
- The Qur’an also contains an exposition of the People of the Book, their dispute with the call of Islam, and the challenges they laid out for it.
- The Qur’an discusses the dawn of the call to Islam, the estrangement of Muslims and their weak social status, their relationship with the polytheists and the Jews, their patience and afflictions, their state of being constantly knocked down, the colluding of conspirators against them, their religious discernibility, their rejection of their adversaries’ beliefs, and their migration.
- In addition, the Qur’an carries information on the theological, political, and economic landscape of Makkah and Madinah, and the gradual progress of the call to Islam to the stages of proselytising and gaining a foothold in the land.

Connected to the Qur’anic discussions to the *sīrah* are the books of exegesis (*tafsīr*) with chains of transmission that report narrations on the interpretation of verses, the background to their Revelation, and their historical circumstances. Such books include the *tafsīr* works by Ibn Wahb (d. 197 AH), Yaḥyā ibn Sallām (d. 200 AH), ‘Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211), ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd (d. 249 AH), and Nasā’ī (d. 307 AH).

Orientalists, generally speaking, accept the Qur’an as a verifier for events in the *sīrah*. Its status as a resource was stated by the harshest of Orientalists who object to the Prophetic tradition. Such people include Henri Lammens⁸², a Jesuit and Belgian Orientalist, who was so sceptical of the Prophetic tradition that he considered all the hadith books to be concoctions designed to glorify the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.⁸³

82 Henri Lammens (1862-1937). Jesuit Belgian Orientalist. He was extremely bigoted against Islam. His works include *L’Islam: croyances et institutions*.

83 (Badawī, *Mawsū‘ah al-Mustashriqīn*, 1993), p. 503.

II. BOOKS OF HADITH, *SĪRAH*, *SHAMĀ'IL* (SUBLIME CHARACTERISTICS), AND *DALĀ'IL* (INDICATORS OF PROPHETHOOD)

The largest source of data on the Prophetic *sīrah* consists of the records that focus on the life of the Messenger ﷺ—whether in totality or some parts of it—and his attributes. From the beginning of Islam, scholars carefully passed down the reports pertaining to this; they also placed rules and principles to assess them. Their intention was not to aggregate reports for the purposes of entertainment, or to stir up the excitement of the Muslim masses.

Islam's distinction in the preservation of the *sīrah* was attested to by Bernard Lewis⁸⁴, a Jewish Orientalist known for his negativity towards Islam. He said, 'From an early date Muslim scholars recognised the danger of false testimony and hence false doctrine, and developed an elaborate science for criticising tradition. "Traditional science", as it was called, differed in many respects from modern historical source criticism, and modern scholarship has always disagreed with evaluations of traditional scientists about the authenticity and accuracy of ancient narratives. But their careful scrutiny of the chains of transmission and their meticulous collection and preservation of variants in the transmitted narratives give to medieval Arabic historiography a professionalism and sophistication without precedent in antiquity and without parallel in the contemporary medieval West. By comparison, the historiography of Latin Christendom seems poor and meagre, and even the more advanced and complex historiography of Greek Christendom still falls short of the historical literature of Islam in volume, variety, and analytical depth.'⁸⁵

As for the Christian Lebanese historian Asad J. Rustum, he was far more equitable. In the introduction to his book *Mustalah al-Tārīkh*, which is on the science of hadith, he said, 'The first people who systemised the scrutiny of historical narrations and set rules for it are the scholars of the Islamic faith. They were compelled to take an interest in the statements and actions of the Prophet in order to understand the Qur'an and dispense justice... So they set out to gather the narrations, study them, and scrutinise

84 Bernard Lewis (1916-2018). Jewish professor who taught at London (SOAS), Princeton, and Cornell University. He had an interest in Islamic history and Islam's relationship with the West. He was allied to right-wing neoconservative lobby groups. His works include *The Jews of Islam*. (with additions from translator).

85 (Lewis B., 1993), p. 105.

them. They thus gifted rules—which still remain—towards the study of the science of history. In their foundations and at their core, these rules are well respected in intellectual circles even today.⁸⁶ In the same book, he tackled in detail the Islamic method of scrutiny of chains and contents, in both literal and qualitative terms.

Far removed from the actual objective study of hadith is the position adopted by most adversaries of Islam in the West. They parrot the most salient Orientalist objection: ‘The compilation of the Prophetic *sīrah* was delayed until the 3rd century AH, which is why a lot of fabrication seeped into the *sīrah*.’ Such an objection is undermined in three ways:

1. As has been explained before, the *sīrah* is present in the Qur’an. Likewise, it started to be compiled from the 1st century AH, not the 3rd.
2. This Orientalist objection gives the impression to the Western reader that men in the 3rd century decided to write up the *sīrah*, so they aggregated baseless reports and statements from far and wide, after which they forged them in a template of narrations (like the Gospels).

The reality is something else. *Sīrah* is rooted in chains of transmission. Those who wrote in this field exerted their utmost efforts to collate narrations in relation to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. Given that this is the case, the issue is not that authorship of the *sīrah* began in the 3rd century, but rather this was the time period that saw the aggregation of reports about the Messenger ﷺ flourish in the form of specialist scholarly writings, topically arranged with chains ending at the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. Prior to that, narrations were collated without a specific theme-based sequencing methodology (i.e., first the reports on law, then reports on ethics, etc.). As for the *sīrah*, narrating with chains of transmission therein was the norm right from its inception.

1. The existence of weak and fabricated reports in the *sīrah* corpus is known. It is not the Orientalists who uncovered this, nor is it something that is of a surprise to contemporary Muslims. From the very first Islamic generations, the science of hadith founded rules to discern authentic reports from rejected ones, either due to the invalidity of their chains or their content.

The compilation of hadith began in the 1st century AH, quickly evolving to the topical sequencing of hadiths. The highpoint was reached when a number of scholars started mentioning only the acceptable authentic

86 (Rustum, 2002/1423 AH), pp. 5-6.

narrations. Most of the important hadith works were completed by the beginning of the 3rd century AH.

Chain-backed hadith works that are confined to the statements, actions, approvals, and descriptions of the Messenger ﷺ encompass the majority of his reports pertaining to the call to Islam and social, family, and personal matters. It is a body of historical content that is so rich it creates a feeling within its readers' hearts that they are living in a time period extremely close to when the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was alive, like the era of the Companions. They would become aware of the most minute details of his life and his innermost thoughts. This is something that cannot be associated with any other figure in the history of humankind. In addition, the statements, actions, and approvals of the Messenger ﷺ are the heart and soul of the hadith writings, and scholars in their compilations dedicated chapters to mention the special features, sublime characteristics, miracles, battles, and many other pieces of information about the Messenger ﷺ. With this, the books of hadith are direct transmitters of the Prophetic *sīrah* that do not leave those questioning or investigating aspects about it in need of searching for anything else.

Let us take as an example the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī. The actual name that he chose for the book was *al-Jāmi' al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Mukhtaṣar min Umūr Rasūl Allāh ﷺ wa Sunanih wa Ayyāmih—The Comprehensive Chain-Backed Authentic Concise Book of the Affairs, Traditions, and Times of the Messenger of God ﷺ*. The title of this book uncovers its deep and direct connection to the Prophetic *sīrah*. It falls under the *jawāmi'* (plural of *jāmi'*) sub-genre of hadith works. A *jāmi'* is a book that is not limited in its hadith reports to a specific theme, as opposed to the *sunan* sub-genre (for example), which focuses specifically on law. In the Book of Battles (*Maghāzī*) in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Bukhārī aggregated 548 reports and narrations, which is a considerable amount on the topic.

From early on, Muslim scholars wrote on the Prophetic *sīrah* as a dedicated standalone topic. This includes:

- Sulaymān ibn Ṭarkhān al-Taymī's (d. 143 AH) *al-Sīrah al-Ṣaḥīḥah*.
- Ibn Ishāq's (d. 151 AH) *al-Sīrah*.
- The first volume of Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230 AH) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*.

Scholars also dedicated material to the Prophetic *shamā'il* (sublime characteristics):

- Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH) wrote *al-Shamā'il*.

- Abū al-Shaykh (d. 369 AH) wrote *Akhlāq al-Nabī ﷺ wa-Ādābuh*.
- Mustaghfirī (d. 432 AH) authored *Shamā'il al-Nabī ﷺ*.

A number of scholars wrote on certain attributes of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, or certain themes of the *sīrah*:

- Abū al-Bakhtarī Wahb ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī (d. 200 AH) wrote *Ṣifāh al-Nabī ﷺ* (*Description of the Prophet ﷺ*).
- Barqī (d. 249 AH) wrote *Akhlāq al-Nabī ﷺ* (*Morals of the Prophet ﷺ*).
- Zubayr ibn Bakkār (d. 256 AH) authored *Mizāḥ al-Nabī ﷺ* (*Humour of the Prophet ﷺ*).
- Ibn al-Madīnī wrote *Ṣulḥ al-Nabī ﷺ* (*Reconciliations of the Prophet ﷺ*).
- Abū Dawūd (d. 275 AH) wrote *Ma'īshah al-Nabī ﷺ* (*Day-to-Day Life of the Prophet ﷺ*).

Books dedicated to particular stages of the Messenger's ﷺ career have also been written:

- *Al-Mawlid* by Muhammad ibn ʿAyyidh al-Qurashī (d. 233 AH).
- *Mawlid al-Nabī ﷺ* by Abū Bakr al-Shaybānī (d. 287 AH).
- *Al-Mawlid wa al-Wafā'* by Ḥusayn ibn Mufarrij (d. 308 AH).

A number of books regarding the speeches of the Messenger ﷺ have also been compiled, like:

- *Khuṭab al-Nabī ﷺ* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madā'inī (d. 225 AH).
- Abū Nuʿaym al-Aṣbahānī (d. 430 AH) and Mustaghfirī (d. 432 AH) each wrote on the same topic under the same title.

Many authors have written on the battles of the Messenger ﷺ, including:

- Abān (b. 20 AH), the son of the Caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān and Governor of Madinah.

- ʿUrwah (d. 94 AH), son of the Companion Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām (d. 94 AH).⁸⁷
- Mūsā ibn ʿUqbah (d. 141 AH).
- Maʿmar ibn Rāshid (d. 154 AH).
- Muhammad ibn Ishāq (d. 151 AH).
- Najīh ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 170 AH).
- ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī (d. 176 AH).
- Ibn Wahb (d. 198 AH).
- *et alia.*

Standalone works on the personal affairs of the Messenger ﷺ have also been written:

- *Aslāf al-Nabī* ﷺ by Muhammad ibn Ishāq al-Musayyabī (d. 234 AH).
- *Tarīkah al-Nabī* ﷺ *wa al-Subul al-Latī Wajjahāhā fihā* by Ḥammād ibn Ishāq ibn Ismāʿīl (d. 267 AH).
- *Amwāl al-Nabī wa-Kuttābuh* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madāʾinī (d. 225 AH).

Muslim scholars also wrote a number of books on the indicators of Prophethood (*dalāʾil al-nubuwwah*)—with chains—from the earliest period:

- *Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah* by Abū Zurʿah al-Rāzī (d. 264 AH).
- *Aʿlām al-Nubuwwah* by Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275 AH).
- *Muʿjizāt al-Nabī* ﷺ by Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276 AH).
- *Aʿlām al-Nubuwwah* by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 277 AH).
- *Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah* by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281 AH).

87 The remaining preserved portion of this book was edited and published by Aʿzamī: (Aʿzamī, *Maghāzī Rasūl Allāh bi-Riwāyah Abī al-Aswad Yatīm ʿUrwah*, 1981).

- *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* by Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq al-Ḥarbī (d. 285 AH).⁸⁸

Furthermore, scholars writing on general Islamic history have either commenced with the Muhammadan Prophetic mission and pre-Prophethood events, or focused on the important Muslim regions where the Prophet ﷺ lived. Examples of the first category are:

- *Tārīkh Khalīfah ibn Khayyāt* (d. 240 AH).
- *Al-Ma'rif wa al-Tārīkh* by Ya'qūb al-Faswī (d. 277 AH).

Examples of the second are:

- *Akhbār Makkah* by Azraqī (d. 244 AH).
- *Akhbār Makkah* by Fākihī (d. 272 AH).
- *Tārīkh al-Madīnah* by 'Umar ibn Shabbah (d. 262 AH).

We thus have a vast amount of content. It is primarily distinguished by its comprehensive collection of reports, and further supported by the fact that it is reported by chains of transmission, even if reported on occasions with breaks in the chains. With these two features, this content can be subjected to scrutiny according to the principles laid out by the masters of hadith.⁸⁹

88 For more information on the *sīrah* sources, see: (Ḥamādah, 2004), (Salāmah, *Maṣādir al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah wa-Muqaddimah fī Tadwīn al-Sīrah*, 1431 AH), and (Salāmah, *Muqaddimah fī Tadwīn al-Sīrah*, 1431 AH)

89 We agree with those who draw a distinction between critiquing the hadiths of law and the narrations on the *sīrah*. The methodology of assessing historical reports does not negate their authenticity *in toto* if there is some problem with its chain, as most historical reports have not been transmitted through chains that are free from defects. We would however add that, in relation to arriving at decisive conclusions in matters pertaining to Prophethood, a healthy dose of scepticism is required. This is because of the great value of the subject and the delicate nature of its themes. For this reason, no researcher can dispense with the methodology of the scholars of hadith, as the methodology of journalists and most historians is not sufficient for the purposes of achieving certainty when passing judgement on the Prophethood of a man who lived in a bygone era.

The wisdom of the Islamic approach in judging the veracity of narrations

One might object: ‘Everything that has preceded may be indicative of the compilation of narrations with chains, but that is not the crux of the matter, as compilation is a pointless endeavour; what is required is that these narrations are demonstrated to be authentic. There is no logical impediment to the notion that many Prophetic traditions are fabrications of later Muslim generations in order to defend their beliefs, like the desire to place the Prophet of Islam on a pedestal or defend his Prophethood. Indeed, Muslim scholars have employed narrations that reached them with an extremely lackadaisical approach and an obviously favourable view of narrators. This is why the conclusion of these narrations—the Prophethood of Muhammad—cannot be believed.’

This objection can be answered in a number of ways:

1. The compilation of narrations with their chains was a momentous achievement. It is unique to the Muslims. Jews and Christians do not possess unbroken chains to Jesus or Moses ﷺ. There is no way to know the authenticity of narrations pre-compilation, as verification *follows* aggregation. The astonishing number of narrations that Muslim scholars compiled, including concocted and fabricated narrations, is extremely impressive and worthy of being celebrated.

Gathering weak and fabricated narrations alongside authentic ones is a great advantage that can only be appreciated by someone who has experience in the study of history: Reports with baseless content expose at least one of their narrators and remove the veil of anonymity from him. It also assists in passing judgement on narrations when they conflict with one another—the denounced report is abandoned, and its opposite is accepted when it fulfils the conditions of authenticity.

2. Investigations by Muslim scholars into the reports of the Prophetic *sīrah* in the chain-backed works was not a form of naivety or gullibility on their part, which is what Orientalists like to believe. Centuries before Orientalism and its schools emerged, Muslim scholars knew that the narrations of the *sīrah* comprise of the authentic and the weak. This is why ‘Irāqī (d. 806 AH) said in his *Alfiyyah*⁹⁰ regarding the *sīrah*:

A student should know that biographies gather what is authentic and what is denounced

The point being is to mention what the biographical scholars have brought forth, even if the chains are not taken into consideration.

For the acceptance of a narration so that it may be admissible as evidence in any debate on Prophethood, there are five conditions:

- i. **Uprightness of the narrator.** He should not be ascribed to transgression. He should carry out the commandments, cease himself from the proscribed matters, and refrain from dishonourable behaviour in the form of small sins that are indicative of contemptible behaviour, and even in the form of those lawful acts whose perpetrators are generally loathed by people.
- ii. **Accuracy of the narrator.** The narrator must have secured his narrations by committing them to memory or having documented them in writing.
- iii. **Connected chain.** The hadith must be reported by every narrator from the narrator he took it from—up to the Messenger ﷺ.
- iv. **The text should not be anomalous.** The narrator should not have conflicted with someone more reliable than him.
- v. **The chain or text should not be infiltrated by a hidden defect.** The chain or the text should not carry a hidden defect that is injurious to the authenticity of the narration.

⁹⁰ Translator's note: *Alfiyyah* means a thousand (or more) verses of poetry on a particular subject.

3. The last people to have a partial view in favour of the hadith narrators are the hadith scholars. When passing a judgement on narrators, the hadith is by default dispositioned towards caution, i.e., to not trust its narrators or automatically accept their uprightness. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥdī, a hadith scholar from the 2nd century AH, said, ‘There are two issues in which believing in the most favourable option is improper: judicature and hadith.’⁹¹ This principle manifests itself in a number of issues:
 - ♦ The narration of an unknown narrator is weak until he is identified (unlike the methodology of the historians of Christianity, and in fact the methodology of most historians).⁹²
 - ♦ All the hadiths of a narrator afflicted by confabulation⁹³, which eliminates his memory precision, would be rejected if it is unknown when exactly confabulation occurred. If the time of his confabulation is known, his narrations pre- and post-confabulation would be easily discernible.⁹⁴
 - ♦ A hadith is rejected when a narrator is declared to be both discredited and upright, and the majority of scholars incline towards his discreditation⁹⁵—unless when the declaration of his upright-

91 (Rāzī I. A., 1952/1271 AH), 2/35.

92 Scholars made a distinction between *majhūl al-‘ayn* (whose person is unknown) and *majhūl al-ḥāl* (whose state is unknown). The former is someone from whom only one narrator has taken. The latter is someone from whom more than one narrator have taken, but his judiciousness is unknown and his status could not be ascertained from his narrations. The hadiths of both are rejected when indicators of their judiciousness are absent: ‘There is no authority vested in someone whose judiciousness is unknown and his status as such is not dispelled’ (Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-ʾItidāl*, 1963/1382 AH), 2/234.

93 Definition of *ikhtilāf*: ‘The spoiling of the mind and the disorganisation of statements and actions, whether from dotage, harm, illness, or ailment’ (Sakhāwī, 1426 AH), 4/458-459.

94 ‘The one from whom hadith was taken from when he had muddled up (*ikhtilāf*), or when his affair had become uncertain (so it is unknown whether it was taken from him pre- or post-muddlement), is not accepted’ (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ), p. 195.

95 ‘Most scholars are of the view that siding with disapproval (*jarḥ*) and implementing it takes precedence’ (Baghdādī, *Al-Kifāyah fī Ma‘rifah Uṣūl al-Riwāyah*, 2003/1423 AH), 1/336.

‘If approval (*ta‘dīl*) and disapproval conflict, the latter would be given precedence as per the preferred view of the erudite scholars and the overwhelming majority’ (Nawawī, *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Muslim*, 1996/1416 AH), 1/107.

ness is detailed but the declaration of his discreditation is generic, or the one discrediting him is known to be overly harsh.

- ♦ A narration with a broken chain is weak until the missing link is identified.
- ♦ When a narrator hears a hadith book, and then develops a doubt in one of its narrations but he forgot which exact hadith it was, he would be prevented from narrating the entire book.⁹⁶

The scholars of hadith were aware that a noble person might perpetrate grave errors in narration. A pious person can narrate reports without precision or accuracy, or from an untrustworthy person. That is why Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān⁹⁷ said, ‘We have not observed anyone more economical with the truth in hadith than the pious.’⁹⁸

It was therefore not the task of the scholarly masters of hadith investigation to authenticate the narrations of the godly and pious. Rather, their work was directed at searching for the hidden defects of narrations—and narrators—without fear or favour. There was no consideration given to the piety of the narrator. All of this was with the aim of preventing the inclusion of weak narrations—let alone those reports that are even lesser in status—into the ranks of acceptable hadiths.

4. In passing judgement on narrators, the accuracy of Muslim scholars reached astonishing nuance. Sometimes, they distinguished between the reports of some narrators by neither accepting nor rejecting them *in toto*. Rather, they would make selections from their reports based on clear, scholarly rules after assessing their narrations and

96 ‘If one has any doubt in whether he heard a particular hadith from the book he took or wrote from his teacher, he must discard it, but it would be permissible for him to relate other narrations from the book. If he does not remember the specific hadith he has doubts about, he cannot relate anything from the book... Ḥusayn ibn Ḥurayth al-Marwazī said, “I asked ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaqīqī, ‘Have you heard the Book of Prayer from Abū Ḥamzah?’ He said, ‘The whole book, except one day a donkey brayed so a hadith or part of a hadith was lost on me. Thereafter, I forgot which hadith from the book that was. I thus abandoned the entire book’” (Baghdādī, *Al-Kifāyah fī ‘Ilm al-Riwāyah*, 1357 AH), pp. 233-234.

97 Translator’s note: Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, or Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān, was an early hadith master who died in 198 AH. The author wrote ‘Ibn al-Qaṭṭān’ here, which is commonly used to refer to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī (d. 1230/628 AH), another hadith scholar.

98 Narrated by Muslim in the *Introduction* to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

comparing them to the narrations of the trustworthy. Examples of these nuances are:

- ◆ Accepting a person's narrations when he took from certain narrators only.
- ◆ Accepting a person's narrations when he took from a particular city only.
- ◆ Accepting a person's narrations from a particular stage of his career only.
- ◆ Accepting a person's narrations only if they are corroborated, not when he alone was the narrator of a certain report.
- ◆ Not accepting his narrations in a particular subject matter⁹⁹, though accepting them in others.
- ◆ Accepting a person's narrations when he relates from a book in which he recorded hadiths he took from someone else, but not when he relates from his memory.

The scholars of criticism and verification (*ahl al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*) distinguished between the rankings, or classes (*tabaqāt*), of narrators. They did not merely suffice with the macro-level taxonomy of 'trustworthy versus weak' narrators. Rather, they differentiated the trustworthy into various rankings as follows:

- The best narrators are those who are described with a phrase denoting amplification, such as, 'the most trustworthy of people' (*awthaq al-nās*).
- That is followed by those narrators for whom a verificatory phrase is repeated, like 'trustworthy, trustworthy' (*thiqatun thiqah*).
- That is followed by those regarding for whom words such as 'trustworthy', 'solid', and 'authority' (*thiqah, thabt, ḥujjah*) are used.
- Then it is those narrators who are a notch lower than that. They are described as, 'There is no issue with him', 'truthful', and, 'His place is one of truthfulness' (*lā baʿsa bihī, ṣadūq, maḥilluhū al-ṣidq*).

⁹⁹ An example of such is when the narration supports the innovation he is calling to. There is some detail to this issue, but this is not the place for that discussion.

- Those who are lower than that are described as narrators whose hadiths can be ‘written and considered’.
- Finally, it is those narrators whose hadiths are written for comparative purposes.¹⁰⁰

Likewise, they sequenced weak narrators into rankings in order to employ them during a) preponderance in cases of conflicting narrations, and b) leveraging them as supportive narrations when they accumulate and strengthen each other. Criticised narrators are ranked as follows:

- Those who are the best positioned among the criticised narrators are those described as ‘soft in hadith’ or ‘There is discussion on him’ (*layyin al-ḥadīth, fihi maqāl*).
- Then it is ‘those whose hadiths are denounced’ and ‘those who are not used in evidence’ (*munkar al-ḥadīth, lā yuḥtajju bihī*).
- Below them are ‘those whose hadiths are rejected’ or are ‘extremely flimsy’ (*mardūd al-ḥadīth, wāhin bi-marrah*).
- Lower than above are those who are accused of lying or fabrication (*muttāham bi al-kadhib, muttāham bi al-waḍʿ*).
- Then it is those who are liars and fabricators (*kadhdhāb, waḍḍāʿ*).
- The lowest of the low are those regarding whom terms like ‘The biggest liar of all people’ or ‘The pinnacle of lying ends at him’ (*akdhab al-nās, ilayhi al-muntahā fī al-kadhib*) are used.

5. The narrations of a narrator who lies to defend Islam or glorify the Prophet ﷺ are rejected by consensus. In fact, the reports of any person regarding whom it is established that he lied in a single hadith are all void. Scholars did not differentiate between that which was reported for the purposes of defending the religion and that which was reported to damage it—the existence of the injurious element of lying, whether that is in the chain or in the text, is proof in and of itself for its rejection. In other words, there is no consideration given to the content or intention of a fabrication when determining whether it is to be rejected or not.

100 (Abū Shuhbah, 1983), pp. 408-412.

6. Scholars were not duped by the apparent piety of narrators into claiming that their narrations are to be accepted without question. They clearly set out that the righteousness of a narrator in that he is generally truthful and possesses a good memory that preserves narrations are not enough for its authenticity. For acceptability, the chain of narrators must be unbroken, and the narration of a trustworthy person must not conflict with the narration of someone else who is more trustworthy than him.
7. That all the apparent conditions of authenticity in the chain (*sanad*) of a hadith were found did not prevent scholars from further stipulating that its content (*matn*) must also be free of any injurious elements. The reports of trustworthy people are not considered authentic when a chain—of which they are a part—is not free of such elements. They have a famous rule in this regard: ‘The chain’s authenticity does not necessitate the content’s authenticity.’ One of the reasons why a chain-backed report would be rejected in the *sīrah* of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ—even when reported by trustworthy narrators, or those whose apparent state is considered as such—is the presence of defects, which Ibn al-Qayyim and others mentioned. The most important defects can be summarised as follows:
 - The narration conflicts with the sensorily perceptible. The sensorily perceptible, whether today and in the past, includes the scenario when a hadith conflicts with an indisputable fact from science.
 - The narration conflicts with verified history.
 - The narration conflicts with something within the *sīrah* that is mass transmitted.
 - The hadith is a report of a momentous matter, and it had all the hallmarks for it to be passed down by a large group of people, but then only one person relates it.
 - The narration conflicts with clear logic, such as being void in and of itself because it sets out what is logically impossible.
 - The narration conflicts with a clear-cut provision of the Qur’an.

- The hadith is literarily inelegant.¹⁰¹
8. Those who are sceptical about the preservation of the *sīrah* assume that those who passed judgement to accept and reject hadiths did not reject those narrations that conflict with logic or science. This assumption is invalid and is discredited by the rules of passing judgement on hadiths, which have been previously mentioned. One explicit statement of scholars in this regard is when they say, 'Among the indicators of fabrication is that its authenticity is rejected by human minds...and aligned to this are those which are rejected by the senses and by observation.'¹⁰² Ibn al-Jawzī says, 'Any hadith that you see going against logic...is fabricated, so do not bother taking it into consideration.'¹⁰³
 9. Scholars did not accept hadiths that glorify the Messenger ﷺ or establish miracles for him, which could have been indicative of the truth of the Prophetic message. Rather, they subjected those narrations to scrutiny as well, and they were not given any special treatment over other narrations. In his book on concocted narrations, *al-Mawḍūʿāt*, Ibn al-Jawzī has a section titled, 'Chapters on the virtues of our Prophet ﷺ'.¹⁰⁴ In similar fashion, when mentioning narrations on the sublime characteristics or the miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, the scholars of hadith had a habit of pointing out that some were reported through authentic routes and others were not; they were not pushed by the multitude of routes into blindly authenticating all of them.
 10. From the era of Prophethood, Muslims have passed down the Prophetic tradition: 'Whosoever wilfully lies on me, he should prepare his seat in the Fire.' It was reported by seventy odd Companions^{105, 106} Quantitatively, there is no hadith reported from the Prophet ﷺ that even remotely comes close to this one. The Companions circulated

101 (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Al-Manār al-Munīf fī al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa al-Ḍaʿīf*, 1328 AH); (Kinānī), pp. 5-8 .

102 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Nukat ʿalā Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, 1984/1404 AH), p. 845.

103 (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Mawḍūʿāt*, 1966/1386 AH), 1/106.

104 (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Mawḍūʿāt*, 1966/1386 AH), 1/279-308.

105 If you ask yourself whether there is any report you have come across, and whether it was sourced from seventy different people, you would most probably not be aware of any such report. This is indicative of how far and wide this particular Prophetic tradition spread.

106 (Athyūbī), p. 223.

this in both education and as an admonishment. The scope of its spread among the Tabi‘ūn and their followers is even greater. In a nation that places great importance in honesty, it is a hadith that became extremely widespread, even during its phases of ignorance. A group of scholars¹⁰⁷ have understood from this hadith that a person who wilfully lies on the Prophet ﷺ would have committed disbelief. Another narration—‘May Allah brighten a man who hears a saying of mine, so he understands it, and then conveys it to one who did not hear it’—is also mass-transmitted from the Companions¹⁰⁸ and is in relation to encouraging honest narration that disseminates Revelation.

What can any intellectual possibly add to the aforementioned rigorous conditions for the acceptance of a sound text and a robust chain? I am unaware of any additions that have been made up until today—except for subjectivity that submits to the whim of the times that people are currently living in, and this happens to be the most dishonest form of discourse.

Looking at the hadiths that Muslim scholars authenticated, one would discover that these are not a set of printed works that are monotone in nature, in which the signs of concoction and the desire to present a single picture are apparent right from the outset. That is why Reinhart Dozy¹⁰⁹, a notable 19th century Orientalist, was of the position that the problems, or contradictions even, that appear in the authenticated hadiths of Muslims are evidence that Muslims did not contrive them, as it is not the usual behaviour of liars to open the door for debate in something they are striving to promote or embellish.¹¹⁰

To assess the authenticity of historical reports in the most stringent manner possible, the Islamic and hadithic methodology of scrutiny comprises of conditions:

- a. **Assessing the narration.** Narration deals with the transmitters (*rijāl*) of the chain and how the report was circulated among them. Islamic scrutiny to accept a narration focused on a number of issues, including:

107 One of these was the Shaykh of the Shāfi‘ī scholars, Abū Muhammad al-Juwaynī (d. 1047/438 AH), father of Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī (1084/478 AH).

108 It was narrated by 24 Companions. See (‘Abbād, 1401 AH).

109 Reinhart Dozy (1820-1883). Dutch Orientalist of French origin. He taught Arabic and history. His works include *Histoire des Musulmans d’Espagne, jusqu’à la conquête de l’Andalousie par les Almoravides, 711-1110*.

110 (Dozy, *Essai Sur L’histoire De L’islamisme*, 1879).

- Honesty of the narrator.
 - Preservation by the narrator, either by way of memory or in writing.
 - Precision of the narrator.
 - Any potential conflict of interest for the narrator, either personally or in sectarian terms, arising from the narration of the report.
 - The receipt of the report by the narrator from the one above him in the chain in unbroken fashion.
 - That the one from whom the narrator is reporting grants him permission to narrate his narrations.
- b. **Assessing the narrated content.** It is not sufficient that the report is narrated from those who have not been attacked for their intellect, what is in their hearts, or their morals. In reality, the narrated report must be free of a number of adversities, the most important of which are:
- It should not conflict with authenticated history.
 - It should not conflict with clear-cut logic.
 - It should not conflict with the sensorily perceptible.
 - From a literary perspective, it should not conflict with the style of speech that is known of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

These are the rules that regulate every aspect of the hadith reports and shut down every possible gateway to lies or errors slipping into the ranks of acceptable hadiths.

One may object that there are certain hadiths—authenticated by Muslim scholars—that conflict with logic or history. I would say in response that this is the final card of the opposition. They denounce the content of merely a dozen or so hadiths. However, they cannot muster the courage of discrediting the hadith methodology that judges thousands upon thousands of narrations. Such an objection against a handful of hadiths cannot mean that the entirety of the hadith heritage—the life of the Prophet ﷺ and the content of his message as mentioned in the Prophetic *sīrah*, which has fully or mostly been refined from a hadithic angle—is to be wholly rejected.

That is why it is necessary to mention here that, when we shall be investigating the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, we will play devil's advocate and present the sceptics' claims as fully as possible. We shall for argument's sake accept the validity of their objections on the narrations they are objecting to. We shall accompany them to the nth degree in these objections...

But then what? The greatest reality will still remain. It is the greater picture that the adversary does not have a single reason to deny: The vast corpus of the Prophetic *sīrah* would still be present, unshaken by doubt or mistrust. The vast presence of the *sīrah* corpus shall inevitably push any fair-minded adversary to the following logical conclusion: the acknowledgement of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. This is because we are not making the truth of Islam contingent on some hadiths we believe are accurate but our adversaries believe are weak. Rather, we are basing the truth of Islam on the mass accumulation of reports, which should compel even the greatest of sceptics to acknowledge that the final overall picture of the Prophetic *sīrah* cannot be scathed by doubt—let alone discreditation—in some of its reports.

Given that we agree for argument's sake with the sceptics vis-à-vis some of the narrations of the Prophetic *sīrah*, we must say that we cannot find even the least of objections that carry any consequential value against the methodological framework of passing judgement on hadiths. In fact, we witness that Orientalists who reject the *sīrah* heritage in their works cannot bring themselves to even remotely administer a competent critique of the scholarly methodology of passing judgement on hadiths. Rather, the lofty standards they claim to set for themselves go into freefall as they start to rely on the weakest of tools when critiquing: instinct. Instinct—so long as it is not grounded in robust and objective rules—is something that the wind can sway in whichever direction it likes.

The *sīrah*'s indication of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is contingent on the robustness of the theoretical framework that judges the veracity of narrations, not that these rules are properly applied when looking at individual narrations. If a degree of error is assumed to have been made during the application process of verification, that does not mean there is fault in a) the framework itself, and b) the overall application of that framework.

The Orientalists' alternative approach

Orientalists¹¹¹ instinctively understood that accepting the *sīrah*, either *in toto* or overall, would lead to affirming the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. This is why the starting point of Orientalism vis-à-vis the *sīrah* is to search for alternatives to the hadith heritage, expediting discussions either with gross generalisations about the *sīrah*, or by improper sampling through the wilful usage of rare cases within the body of *sīrah* scholarship. The bulk of this activity was assumed by the Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher¹¹²; this Orientalist *modus operandi* then spread its tentacles and branched out.

Ultimately, Orientalists have two positions on the *sīrah*. The Revisionist camp, headed up by John Wansbrough¹¹³ and his students, states that the source materials of the *sīrah* are void and inadmissible, as they are the result of concoction by generations of Muslims who were overzealous about their faith. The other camp is the Traditional camp, headed up by W. Montgomery Watt¹¹⁴, that believes there are at least some reports within the *sīrah* that are acceptable¹¹⁵, and that any critique of it would be with this precursor in mind.¹¹⁶

111 The generalisation here does not preclude the existence of Muslim Orientalists, who are not intended in our discussion here.

112 Ignác Goldziher (1850-1921). Hungarian Orientalist. He was one of the biggest sceptics of the authenticity of the Prophetic tradition and Islamic law. He was the secretary of the Jewish community in Budapest. His works include *Muhammed-anische Studien*.

113 John Wansbrough (1928-2002). American historian. His focus was the early history of Islam and a radical revisionist approach to Islamic fundamentals. His works include *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*.

114 Montgomery Watt (1909-2006). British Orientalist and Anglican priest. His focus was on *sīrah* and Islamic history. His works include *Muhammad at Mecca*.

115 This camp was not trustworthy in its claim. It too was extreme in its scepticism, selectively delineating the general outline of what is acceptable for *sīrah* literature.

116 See (Schoeler, 2011), pp. 8-12.

‘Three camps of scholars may be identified: one attempting to reconfirm [Schacht’s]

An assiduous reader cannot but be utterly bewildered at the Orientalists' proposed alternatives. They have the audacity to reject the chain-backed narrations, which have been sieved away from the muddy waters of doubt. According to them, these sources are either silent and consequently cannot express anything, or are doubtful and accordingly cannot be trusted to faithfully convey history. Their main sources are:

1. **Early writings of non-Muslims.** *Hagarism*¹¹⁷, a book by Orientalists Patricia Crone¹¹⁸ and Michael Cook¹¹⁹, establishes a modern Orientalist invention in how to negotiate the most reliable sources of the *sīrah*. The authors claim that Muslims—who were referred to as 'Hagarenes' (an ascription to Hagar)—concocted their entire early religious heritage. They claim that they were influenced in their religious outlook by the Eastern Judeo-Christian tradition. They further assumed that the Makkah referred to in Islamic sources is not in the place where it is known to be today, but rather it is in the Levant. There are other extremely fringe claims made therein, which do away with established historical facts that all previous historians considered unassailable.

The authors relied on non-Islamic writings that spoke of Islam in its early period. Despite the lure of coming across an external historical source that might be impartial in its reading of Islamic history, this position is incorrect for a number of reasons:

- Early non-Islamic sources do not really provide any historical data on Islam. They provide either very little information, or information that is extremely generic in nature without any granularity. One cannot build a robust historical narrative based on that. Perhaps looking at

conclusions [that legal ḥadīth are fictitious unless proven otherwise], and at times going beyond them; another endeavouring to refute them; and a third seeking to create a middle, perhaps synthesized, position between the first two. Among others, John Wansbrough, and Michael Cook [author add.: and Ignác Goldziher] belong to the first camp, while Nabia Abott, F. Sezgin, M. Azami, Gregor Schoeler and Johann Fück belong to the second. Harald Motzki, D. Santillana, G.H. Juynboll, Fazlur Rahman and James Robson take the middle position' (Hallaq, 1999), p. 76.
117 (Crone & Cook, 1976).

118 Patricia Crone (1945-2015). Danish Orientalist and historian. She was a lecturer at Princeton. Her works include *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*.

119 Michael Cook (b. 1940). British Orientalist and historian. He taught at SOAS, London. His works include *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective*.

Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam, which is the largest such writing today and collates all the early non-Islamic eyewitness testimonies, clearly proves what we are saying. So, even though it gathers disparate testimonies from Syrian, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, Armenian, Latin, Coptic, and Ethiopian sources from the 1st century AH, these testimonies are still extremely thin on detail and offer nothing other than the emergence of a new religion in Arabian lands, and that the affiliates of this faith waged war against rival nations. Furthermore, the author compiling these testimonies concluded that the testimonies within the Islamic tradition considerably overlap with the testimonies mentioned in it. He summarised the value of the testimonies in his book by stating, 'I would certainly agree that non-Muslim sources cannot provide a complete and coherent account of the history of Early Islam, even less can they support an alternative version of its development.'¹²⁰

Backers of the authority of these writings have taken advantage of the yawning chasm of information therein to fill in the gaps with their implausible views, the best of which can only be described as 'logically possible', not 'probable', let alone 'likely'.

- The historical details mentioned in these sources are based on remote hearsay and rumours. There has been next-to-zero historical investigation or proper academic research conducted on them. Moreover, these were written by men who lived outside the Islamic state without ever having directly interacted with Muslims or understanding the Arabic language. Merely being contemporaries does not elevate them to having a solid variety of information that would have allowed them to offer more depth on Islam and the Muslims.
- The information mentioned in these sources is not impartial. The authors who wrote segments in relation to describing Islam and Muslims were, for the large part, opponents of Islam. They include priests and ministers, as well as those with political and ethnic interests that rejected the Islamic conquests. Furthermore, a number of these writings carry an eschatological slant in their reading of the Islamic conquests: writers would paint and present them in apocalyptic terms. In other words, they are spun as the Lord's punishment of the Christian people for not observing the Bible's divine Revelation or its laws. In this context, when presenting the image of Islam and

120 (Hoyland, 1997), p. 598.

Muslims, such historians would not have paused to achieve the requisite historical accuracy. Likewise, Wansbrough himself criticised Crone and Cook for their naïve reliance on sources by authors who were not only alien to Muslim civilisation, but were in fact its sworn enemies.¹²¹

2. **Scarce archeological remnants.** The predominantly desert nature of the Arabian Peninsula did not allow for the preservation of anything important in the history of the region. Life existed there in rudimentary dwellings such as tents, which are not conducive for inscriptions or engravings—which can spell out the history of a civilisation and its beliefs (with the exception of a few instances in Yemen)—for posterity. Up to now, Orientalist efforts have still not produced anything worthwhile in terms of the general state of the Peninsula prior to Prophethood. So, how can they successfully map out the historical career of someone who lived in relative obscurity and with a target on his head before the Islamic state came into existence, and who lived as an ascetic and was distant from buildings and administrative documentation after the state was established?
3. **Fantasy and conspiratorial mistrust.** A number of Orientalists rejected the entirety of the historic Islamic heritage, treating it to be fabricated stories and worthless myths. According to them, they are just illusionary and concocted historical accounts, which were then portrayed as being backed up by historical principles distinguished by authenticity and holiness. The Orientalist Joseph Schacht¹²² took the position of even discrediting the entirety of Islamic law, describing it as the fabrication of the advocates of the legal schools since the beginning of the 2nd century, who sought out chain-backed narrations from the sources of Revelation to shore up their legal deductions.¹²³

In her book *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (1986), Patricia Crone strove to eliminate the entirety of the Islamic tradition in order to build up an entirely different image of Islam. One of its strangest features is the

121 (Wansbrough, 1978).

122 Joseph Schacht (1902-1969). German Orientalist. He taught Arabic and Islamic studies at a number of European universities. His works include *An Introduction to Islamic Law*.

123 For a refutation on Schacht, see (A^cẓamī, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 1985).

repositioning of Makkah—from the place we know it to be—to hundreds of miles away. Her research relied on the notion that there were no trade relationships for rare or valuable goods between the southern Arabian Peninsula and neighbouring lands towards the north. She adds that, if there was any commerce happening, it was just in relatively cheaper goods. She took a giant leap of faith from there to strike down the authority of the Islamic tradition. Her research was laden with distortion (which was clear in the incompetent translation of ancient documents), truncated citations, and the overlooking of historical testimony that conflicts with her theory.¹²⁴ She sought to embed her surmises into normative discourse by pointing out that the Islamic sources conflict with each other. Kennedy¹²⁵ said, ‘In the final analysis, the assessment of historical sources is a question, not of proof, but of value judgement. To enumerate the contradictions in the sources is useful; to argue from there that we should believe none of the different versions leads to a sort of historical nihilism which is essentially unproductive.’¹²⁶

The scholars of hadith grasped that and refused to accept that there was any disorder in the reports. They challenged historical nihilism by way of testing and selecting, based on precise academic principles. Crone’s research, as described by the Orientalist Robert Serjeant¹²⁷, was a polemical study through which she wanted to take Orientalists by surprise with her strange theories on the history of Makkah prior to Islam; that her research is written in a condescending tone; that it is a set of ideas that are confused, irrational, and sorely lacking critical judgement, while also twisting the clear-cut historical texts; and that she lacked understanding of the Arabian social fabric. Serjeant concluded his note by stating, ‘The impression of the author left by reading Dr. Crone’s work is that of a clever undergraduate at a student debate, intent to win on the points at issue, but neither over-careful in interpreting the historical sources, nor with any scruples at twisting what has already been said, to make it fit her argument. Her book may gain her

124 (Rūbī, 2007), p. 4.

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125 Translator’s note: Hugh Nigel Kennedy (b. 1947). British Orientalist, medieval historian, and academic. He specialises in the history of the Crusades, the early Islamic Middle East, and Muslim Iberia. He first lectured in St Andrews, and now is a Professor of Arabic at SOAS, London.

126 (Kennedy, 1988), p. 55.

127 Robert Bertram Serjeant (1915-1993). Scottish Orientalist. He taught Islamic history at Cambridge.

the publicity it is clearly designed to do, but it will in no way advance our understanding of early Islamic origins.¹²⁸

Conspiratorial positions such as Crone's have not won the support of many Orientalists. Yet, the majority of them are selective and undisciplined in their reading of the Islamic tradition. They take from the *sīrah* what agrees with their preconceived conceptualisations about Islam, chiefly the rejection of the Muhammadan Prophethood¹²⁹, denial of the inimitability of the Qur'an, and the assumption that the Prophet of Islam took from the Jewish and Christian religious traditions either by way of self-study or being taught.

The Orientalist critique of the position of Muslim Sunnis vis-à-vis the hadith heritage conflates the compilation and memorisation of narrations on the one hand, and their critique and scrutiny on the other. Muslims do not believe that mere compilation is proof for their authenticity. Rather, they treat it as a necessary prelude for a fruitful discussion on their veracity. The Orientalist critique has repeatedly given the false impression that Muslims believe the hadith compilation necessitates the acceptance of narrations. These Orientalists conveniently ignored the scholarly rules that judge their veracity, which is how Muslim scholars deal with narrations.

128 (Serjeant, 1990), p. 486.

129 The most infamous example of this is their obsession with the *Gharānīq* story, even though its chain is weak and its content is spurious.

Comparing the two approaches

Islamic history as a subject is a deep and rich methodology that promotes investigation, so much so that Franz Rosenthal¹³⁰—an Orientalist who specialises in the methodology of Islamic history—said, ‘The size of Muslim historical literature was conspicuous. Byzantine chronicles were closely related to their Muslim counterparts, but, with regard to them, Muslim historiography had the advantage of its great variety and its vast volume. Indeed, it may be doubted whether anywhere in earlier history, there existed so large a historical literature as we find it in Islam. The Greek and Latin historical production may have been equally large, but there certainly was nothing to be compared with it in sheer bulk in medieval Byzantine, European, or Far Eastern literature. Its prominent place in Muslim literary activity cannot have remained concealed to medieval western scholars who had contact with the Arabs.’¹³¹

The greatest routes to understanding Islamic history consist of the body of rules the hadith scholars set out. They discussed this at length while also ensuring their phraseology was precise. They delineated the methods of dealing with narrations and came up with clearly demarcated signposts for the subject of hadith verification and criticism, which had been meticulously mapped out by them.

The differences between the Islamic method of verifying the *sīrah* (as per the course of action adopted by the hadith scholars) and the method used by most Orientalists are vast. These include the following:

- The Islamic method works on the content of the *sīrah* to pass judgement on it. On the other hand, the Orientalist method is rooted in presumptions that reject any indication in favour of the Propheth-

130 Franz Rosenthal (1914–2003). German Jewish Orientalist. He was Professor of Semitic and Arabic Languages at Yale. He wrote on multiple themes of Islamic civilisation. He undertook the first complete translation of the *Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldūn. He also translated two volumes from *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*.

131 (Rosenthal, 1952), p. 173.

ood of Muhammad ﷺ from the outset. One of the most significant self-internalised claims of this method is the position that the Qur'an is an edited version of the Jewish (some would even say: ecclesiastical) books.

- According to Muslim scholars, the rules of critiquing chains and texts are founded on principles that are objective and consistently applicable; according to Orientalists, critique of texts is a mere product of subjective instinct.
- The Islamic method of critique is based on precaution: the worst is assumed in a narrator unless there is proof to the contrary. Orientalist methods, on the other hand, are rooted in the notion of believing the worst in the entirety of the hadith tradition except when a hadith agrees with the individual interests of the researcher.
- The Islamic method is focused on scrutinising both the manner in which the report from the *ṣīrah* was transmitted (the chain) and the content of the report (the text). As for Orientalists, they focus solely on critiquing texts, not chains.
- The scope of critiquing texts for the Muslim is far broader than that found in the case of the Orientalist.
- The Islamic method builds the bigger picture for the *ṣīrah* from individual hadiths. Orientalist methods generalise about the *ṣīrah* from individual hadiths, which a researcher would have internalised in the pre-research phase.
- Muslim scholars knew about sectarian competition that would leverage narrations that were in vogue. They thus established an objective framework to pass judgement on chains and texts to differentiate those that are sound from those that are not. When reports conflict, the option a balanced critical approach leads to would be selected, without hastening to reject all reports. Had the rejection of every report in the case of any conflict been the norm, the entire subject of history would become futile. Most lines of historical investigation would have been rendered pointless, as there is almost always some conflict in reports; this would have led to a gross deficiency in knowledge of history overall. As for Orientalists, they adopted scepticism in the *ṣīrah* due to the mere existence of doubt in some

of its aspects. Due to these doubts, they therefore rejected most of the *sīrah*.

For the opposite side to deny the preservation of the Prophetic *sīrah* would also necessitate them to trust anything reported from history. Otherwise, the reality is clear: There is nothing in the world of historical reporting that is equal to, or can come even close to, the Islamic tradition in terms of compilation of reports and having them subjected to scrutiny.

What about Christianity?

A number of Western scholars focusing on early Christian history established different methodologies to investigate the historicity of events reported from Jesus ☩. The most salient critical movement in the first wave was known as the ‘Quest for the Historical Jesus’; this was followed by the second and third waves, which continue until today. These are a number of extremely varying schools of thought, united only by their faith in the historical existence of Jesus. Everything apart from this is subject to contention and dispute.

Among those who study the life of Jesus in the West, there is a widespread notion of differentiating between the Jesus of Faith—who is Jesus as per the Christian faith’s conceptualisation of the person—and the Jesus of History, i.e., Jesus who lived on Earth. James Dunn¹³² said, ‘But that we can somehow hope to strip out the theological impact which he actually made on his disciples, to uncover a different Jesus (the real Jesus!), is at best fanciful.’¹³³ As such, the Jesus whose features can be sketched from the available historical sources does not really qualify to be in sync with the Jesus that breathed air and walked on Earth.

The problems found in the New Testament’s historical value as a source on Jesus that lived on the Earth (Jesus of History) are manifold:

1. **The New Testament and the lack of chains of transmission.** The New Testament comprises of 27 ‘Books’. All these Books without exception lack an unbroken chain of transmission. Upon analysis, they are found to have no chains at all.

132 James Dunn (1939-2020). Priest, theologian, and scholar in New Testament studies. He was a Fellow of the British Academy. He was the 2002 annual President of the New Testament scholars’ research association, *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*.

133 (Dunn J., 2003), p. 126.

2. **The New Testament and textual verification.** Principally, Christians rely on unearthed manuscripts of the New Testament to verify the Holy Text. This is notwithstanding the fact that these manuscripts were written by unknown scribes, and the circumstances surrounding the most important manuscripts are not known at all. What is more significant is that there is a lack of any oral tradition corresponding to these manuscripts.
3. **The most important manuscripts and their late arrival on the scene.** The most important manuscript of the Torah that Christians rely upon to verify the Torah is the Aleppo Codex from the 10th century, which is more than 21 centuries after Moses . This manuscript is missing the Books attributed to Moses , except for some sections in the Book of Deuteronomy. In terms of importance, this manuscript is followed by the Leningrad Codex from 1008; it is perhaps even more important than the Aleppo Codex.¹³⁴ As for the Gospels, their most ancient manuscripts go back to the beginning of the 3rd century¹³⁵, with the exception of a small piece that contains a few dozen Greek letters, called P52.¹³⁶
4. **The authors of the Gospels not being eyewitnesses.** Only the Gospels comprise the story of the life of Jesus. Most critics are of the view that the identity of the compilers of the Four Gospels is unknown.¹³⁷ As an example, the Gospel of Matthew is the longest and most important of the Four Gospels. Christians say that the strongest of chains for the Gospel of Matthew is the testimony of Eusebius¹³⁸ in the 4th century that Papias in the 2nd century said that Matthew wrote the Gospel.¹³⁹ The problems with this are as follows:

134 The Dead Sea Scrolls have not altered the significance of the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.

135 This is in accordance with the history of codices as per the most recent revision of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA28).

136 Translator's note: Rylands Library Papyrus P52, at the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, UK.

137 (Reddish, 1997), p. 42.

138 Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339). Bishop of the ancient city of Caesarea Maritima and historian of Christianity, hermeneut, and polemicist. He is the most famous historian of the Church. He published a number of works on various religious topics (with additions from translator).

139 (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Church History), 1890), 3.39.16.

- ◆ In reality, this is not a chain of transmission, as it does not quote the text of the Gospel, but rather a report about Matthew compiling a gospel.
- ◆ This line of transmission has a multi-chain break between Eusebius (d. 339) and Papias (d. 163), as well as a break between Papias and Matthew, regarding whom the Church believes he was a student of Jesus in the beginning of the 1st century.
- ◆ Eusebius himself critiqued Papias. He said about him, ‘For he appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses.’¹⁴⁰ He accused him of reporting ‘strange parables’ and many myths about Jesus¹⁴¹, which is the position of the critics today in relation to Papias. When discussing the void testimony Papias gave on the Gospel of Mark, Bart Ehrman¹⁴² said, ‘There’s an even bigger problem with taking Papias at his word when he indicates that Mark’s Gospel is based on an eyewitness report of Peter: virtually everything else that Papias says is widely, and rightly, discounted by scholars as pious imagination rather than historical fact.’¹⁴³
- ◆ Papias did not say that Matthew compiled a gospel. What he actually said was, ‘Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν Εβραϊδὶ διαλεκτῷ τὰ λόγια συνεταξάτο συνεταξάτο τὰ λόγια ‘Matthew therefore ordered together the sayings in the Hebrew language.’
 - The word τὰ λόγια (ta logia) means ‘sayings’, which is not a synonym for εὐαγγέλιον (*Evangelion*) ‘Gospel’. Therefore, it does not constitute evidence for the writing of a ‘Gospel’.
 - The word συνεταξάτο (synetaxato) means ‘collection’, but the Gospel of Matthew is a singular narrative, not a collection of sayings like the Gospel of Thomas.

140 (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*Church History*), 1890), 3.39.13.

141 Translator’s note: (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*Church History*) 1890), 3.39.7.

142 Bart Ehrman (b. 1955). American scholar focusing on textual criticism of the New Testament and the historical Jesus. He has a number of academic works that have become reference points in his field.

143 (Ehrman B., 2008), p. 9.

- The following text states, Ἡρμηνεύσεν δ' αὐτὰ ὡς ἦν δυνατὸς ἑκάστος (Hermēneusen d'auta ōs ēn dynatos hekastos) 'And each one interpreted them as he was able.'¹⁴⁴ This is not an accurate description of what the Christians did with the Gospel of Matthew.
- ♦ Papias and all the Church Fathers¹⁴⁵ agreed that the Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew. There is a consensus¹⁴⁶ among scholars today that the Gospel of Matthew was written in Greek, as it was his native language. There is also a lack of any indication that the translation is of Semitic origin. His textual selection from the Torah is not done in Hebrew. This is in addition to the fact that he took passages from the Gospel of Mark verbatim; the ancients and those after them are united that the Gospel of Mark was in Greek.¹⁴⁷
- ♦ Papias mentioned that Judas Iscariot died after much suffering as a result of his deviance. He says that his body had become so bloated that he could not pass through what was wide enough even for a chariot; his genitalia had grown up out of proportion; and worms infested his entire body as he lived.¹⁴⁸ In spite of Papias's keenness in this segment to mention the multiple traditions he received regarding the state of Judas Iscariot just before his death¹⁴⁹, he did not point out what had come in the Gospel of Matthew¹⁵⁰ that Judas Iscariot committed suicide by hanging. This suggests that he had not read the Gospel of Matthew as we know it today, as suicide would be something that should have been mentioned here.

5. **Total ignorance about the circumstances surrounding the recording of the Gospels.** Scholars are in the dark about the period in which the Four Gospels were compiled, as well as the initial circumstances

144 That is, each one of them interpreted these sayings.

145 Irenaeus, Origen, Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), and John Chrysostom.

146 An extreme minority today says otherwise, but scholars have not given any credence to that view.

147 (Carson and Moo 2009), pp. 143-144.

148 Papias, frag. 4:2-3.

149 Some of the works of Papias that have reached us state that Judas Iscariot died after a carriage ran over his body. However, the authenticity of this remains a point of dispute among scholars. See (Robertson 2011), pp. 189-199.

150 See Matthew 5:27.

of their committal to manuscripts and their subsequent circulation. Everything that is said is merely guesswork that is not backed up by any direct historical source.

6. **Lack of an objective standard in the selection of the Four Gospels.** Historical investigation does not offer us the reason for why the Four Gospels were selected, to the exclusion of the other Gospels that were in circulation during the 1st and 2nd centuries. The most we know is that these Gospels were considered holy according to some Christians. These are the same Christians¹⁵¹ who later prevailed at the debate over divinity at the Council of Nicaea, during the beginning of the 4th century. We are completely unaware of the factors informing the Church's selection of these Gospels.
7. **Paul and the historicity of his Epistles.** The larger part of the New Testament carries the 14 Epistles of Paul, which are documents without any chain going back to Paul. Scholars agree that the attribution to Hebrews (i.e., Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews) is not authentic.¹⁵² Except for only seven, they differed over the attribution of the other Epistles^{153, 154} Of note is the fact that Paul did not see Jesus, and he was not focused on presenting a detailed historical image of his life. In addition, his understanding of Jesus's message clearly conflicts with what is in the Gospels.¹⁵⁵
8. **Unknown Christian faiths in the first centuries.** Christians did not have a single church or a unified theological outlook for the first three centuries. Rather, there was a mosaic of various outlooks on theology that dominated the polemical scene. Every church believed that it represented the original image of Jesus's message. This is why the historical distinction between the 'orthodox' and the 'heretical' sides in the pre-Nicene setting is incorrect as fragmentation was the norm, and every church considered itself to be the Church.¹⁵⁶

151 They are the advocates of a theology that Bart Ehrman refers to as 'proto-orthodox', i.e., a set of beliefs held by those who lived pre-4th century that became dominant in the 4th century onwards. (Ehrman B. D., *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*, 2003)

152 (Ellingworth, 1993), p. 3.

153 The Epistles that scholars tend not to doubt their authenticity are: Romans, Corinthians 1 and 2, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians 1, and Philemon.

154 (Porter, Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for Canon, 1995), pp. 105-123.

155 (Del Tonto, 2006).

156 The best analysis of this historical phenomenon, which collects the beliefs

9. **Reliance on weak rules of methodological critique.** Scholars determined a set of objective standards that should have assisted in distinguishing between the authentic reports on Jesus and later fabrications. Yet, they are all subject to debate and dispute. The ‘criterion of embarrassment’ sets out that the stories and events that are a source of embarrassment for the Church and the first Christians cannot really be treated as a fabrication just because they serve the interests of the Church’s adversaries. This criterion of embarrassment is considered the most accepted standard among critics. It is in reality not as robust as it appears, because what a scholar might consider embarrassing today might not have been the case in an earlier era. Likewise, the Apocryphal Gospels that the Church does not acknowledge as canon, or those ancient texts related to the life of Jesus that critics do not afford any historical weight, comprise of many embarrassing stories. Add to this the fact that those who concoct religious stories might make up embarrassing stories for the purposes of provocation, or because they carry certain historical or theological purposes.¹⁵⁷

In addition to the questionable historical value of the Gospels, it might be of surprise to the reader that the Gospels do not offer us any lengthy accounts of Jesus. This is especially pronounced in the case of the Gospel of Mark, which is chronologically the first of the four Gospels to be compiled.

In the introduction to his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Dennis Nineham¹⁵⁸ wrote, ‘It is a striking fact that they (the Gospel authors) tell us nothing whatsoever about Our Lord’s appearance, physique, and health, or, for that matter, about his personality—whether, for example, he was a happy, carefree, placid man or the reverse. They do not even think to tell us definitely whether or not he was married! Likewise they give us no definite information about the length of his ministry or his age when he died, and there is no hint of the influence of his early environment upon him or of any development in his outlook or beliefs. From the point of view of the biographer the sheer amount of information the Evangelists give us is quite inadequate. It has been calculated that three or four weeks would suffice for everything related in Mark, except 1:13: as B. H. Streeter¹⁵⁹

of Early Christianity across various geographical regions, is (Bauer, 1971).

157 (Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, 2004).

158 Dennis Eric Nineham (1921-2016). Priest. He was the Head of the Department of Religion and Theology at Bristol. His works include *The Use and Abuse of the Bible*.

159 Translator’s note: Burnett Hillman Streeter (1874-1937). English Anglican theologian, scholar of the Bible, and textual critic.

remarked: the total number of incidents recorded is so small that the gaps in the story must be the more considerable part of it.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ (Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, 1992), p. 35.

Summary

- Acknowledging the preservation of the Prophetic *sīrah* results in the affirmation of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ.
- The Prophet of Islam is the sole religious personality whose biographical narrations can stomach scrutiny, leading to definitive historical assessments of his life.
- Accepting that the *sīrah* is indicative of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is not contingent on accepting solitary hadiths. Rather, it is based on the acknowledgement of the notion that the analytical methodology—the science of hadith scrutiny—is robust.
- Islamic writings on the *sīrah* are not merely citations about the life of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ that appeared later on. There are many books written in this field—some of them early; others came later on. These works are multi-genre in their focus and are based on chains of transmission.
- Orientalist objections about fabrications infiltrating *sīrah* narrations do not prove anything in and of themselves. The science of hadith already acknowledged that weak narrations exist, and that its rules are there to discern the acceptable narrations from the rejected.
- The Orientalist method of reading the *sīrah* is fundamentally rooted in looking at it from a conspiratorial lens and passing judgement on it from a sheer subjective instinct, as opposed to the method of hadith scrutiny that is based on objective and consistently applicable rules. The hadith method is a middle path between the extremes of lackadaisical acceptance and pathological scepticism.

- The attempt to acquire knowledge on the career of Jesus and the fundamentals of his call through the New Testament or historical works from the 1st century is virtually impossible.

Further reading

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SECTION 2

The Second Condition for Prophethood: Moral Perfection

﴿There certainly has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. He is concerned by your suffering, anxious for your well-being, and gracious and merciful to the believers.﴾

(Qur'an, 9:128)

As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?

(The great French poet, Alphonse de Lamartine)



A moralist's perfection? Or an opportunist's deception?

A man who is bestowed the heavenly divine message, and is entrusted with conveying it and guiding people, is someone who—in the conscience of humans, notwithstanding all their cultural differences and varying dispositions—would be considered as a caller to good. He would be seen as someone who encompasses all virtues, delivers on every obligation, and refrains from evil and its impurities. One would not be content of his trustworthiness and congeniality until he knows the details of his biography and innermost thoughts, for the station he espouses is a momentous one. Ambiguous references are not sufficient to assess his details, or to inspect that which might remain elusive from the gazes of passers-by without an in-depth screening process.

So, how were the morals of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ as suggested by the established reports from his life?

A Muslim would say, 'The history of the Prophetic *sīrah* is a testament—at both macro- and micro-levels—that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is one of a kind in terms of moral ideals. Anyone who reads his *sīrah* with any degree of objectivity would no doubt be taken by the magnificence of his nobility and eminence. One could suffice with the truth and good in the *sīrah* to attest to the Prophethood of the person associated with it.'

An adversarial non-Muslim would say, 'The burden of proof is on the claimant. I may not disagree with you that the Prophet of Islam is the most important and influential figure in history, as is the position of Michael Hart in his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, which Muslims celebrate and use to claim that their Prophet is on a pedestal (though Hart denies that the Prophet of Islam was greater than Jesus, but that is another issue). However, I do not consider there to be a causal link between impact and moral greatness.'

The conclusions on both sides are correct in that they seek historical attestation for the moral superiority of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. That is

why a Muslim must provide proof for the uniquely positive distinction of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. Such proof should fulfil a number of conditions:

1. It should rely on authentic hadiths.
2. The testimony should be from someone who interacted with the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. The mere opinion of someone who did not sit with him, did not visually assess his activities, and was not aware of his innermost self and conduct in private and away from his Companions, would not be accepted.
3. The testimony should be interpretable by visually accessible events from the life of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. An opinion that cannot be attested to by events or experience would not be accepted.

The confluence of these conditions should assure anyone researching the moral side of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ in his *sīrah*. Such a process should reveal its true nature without embellishment or cosmetics that may keep its reality hidden away from the prying eyes of history.

1. MORAL UPRIGHTNESS AS PROOF FOR PROPHETHOOD

Wisdom dictates it is unacceptable that the carriage of the divine message, designed to guide people to good in life and salvation in the Afterlife, should be conferred on someone from whose scourges people are unsafe, or cannot expect to gain decent company or truthfulness in him. Among his people, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ interacted as though he had no skeletons in his closet to be fearful of. This is why those who knew him stuck to him like someone they knew who would offer them good teachings and drive them on the path of righteousness. They dedicated themselves to him, like those who traverse in darkness towards the path of salvation adhere to its signposts.

If you ask how his actions are indicative of his Prophethood, you should note that framing such a question in this way is ambiguous and requires some detail. The features of good are manifold and clear in the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

To explain this, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ lived in a harsh desert environment. This is what makes hardship the primary sign in identifying the Arab personality. Customs of this environment placed honour in fighting and glory in battle on par with brute strength, thus raising the reputations of those engaged in thuggish behaviour who attacked their rivals by the sword and subterfuge. The dignity of man—as per the settled understanding of it in the then Arab mentality—was found when he was at his most intense state, even if he was on the right side of the argument. With all this crudeness, subtlety was simply not customary for them. This is why the combined morals of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ were fashioned in a mould that was unlike anything the Arabs were used to. His morals had the strength of the truthful, the meekness of the humble, and the magnanimity of the virtuous. They are the traits that brought his Companions around him out of the awe for his greatness, and they yielded to his pull. He had in him what Arabs would consider virtuous in their elders, and even more than that.

Perhaps the best non-Muslim summary of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is by the Orientalist Bosworth Smith¹⁶¹: ‘Head of the State as well as of the

161 Reginald Bosworth Smith (1839-1908). Schoolmaster and author. He studied at Oxford and became a lecturer there. During his vacations, Smith was a travel enthusiast. In 1874, he delivered four lectures on *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* at the Royal Institution in London. While retaining his Christian faith, Bosworth Smith ably defended the character and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar. Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue, if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right Divine, it was Mohammed; for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports.¹⁶²

Let us put aside the attestations of later people and ask those who were close to every affair of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. They possess information rooted in certainty and based on visual testimony, and described his state and actions from direct experience. This is why nobody should put the testimony of anybody else ahead of theirs. Taken collectively, their statements sketch an image of the morals of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ to their finest detail. Considering their testimonies are a direct account, and that the detail of the events they provided match the events that would have normally occurred, it is beyond the reproach of the sceptics. Such sceptics have nothing of benefit to offer when accounting for the morals of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and sculpting the feature of the Muhammadan personality, so that onlookers may get a sense of the details of his life and person.

If you want to ask about the speech of the Prophet of Islam, Anas ؓ—his attendant—described it: “The Prophet ﷺ would not swear, be foul-mouthed, or curse. When admonishing, he would say to one of us, “What is it with him? May his forehead be dusty.”¹⁶³

If you want to ask about his silence, Simāk ibn Ḥarb—a Ṭābiʿī—said, ‘I asked Jābir ibn Samurah (a Companion), “Would you sit with the Prophet ﷺ?” He said, “Yes. He was lengthily silent and short on laughter. His Companions would sometimes sing poetry and mention their other affairs in front of him and would laugh—he would simply smile.”¹⁶⁴

If you want to ask about his courage, read what his attendant Anas ؓ said about him: ‘He was the most courageous of people. The people of Madinah went into panic one night over some commotion. Some people started walking towards it. The Messenger of Allah met them as he was returning—he had beaten them to the noise and had figured out what the

The book sparked controversy, but its objectivity was acknowledged by neutrals. It was later translated into Arabic. His other works include *Carthage and the Carthaginians* (with additions from translator).

162 (Smith R. B., 1874), p. 92.

163 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter: The Prophet ﷺ was neither obscene nor one who uttered obscenities (hadith no. 5683).

164 Narrated by Aḥmad (hadith no. 20829); declared authentic by Albānī.

occurrence was. He was bareback on a horse of Abū Ṭalḥah, with a sword hanging from his neck, and said, “No need to be afraid.”¹⁶⁵

His Companion al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib said, ‘When the battle turned fierce, we used to take protection in him (i.e., the Messenger of Allah ﷺ). Indeed, the brave among us is the one who confronted the onslaught, i.e., the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.’¹⁶⁶

If you want to ask about his clemency, listen to what Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh said, ‘We went in a battle on the way towards Najd with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ found us in a thorny valley. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ descended under a tree and hung his sword on one of its branches... People dispersed across the valley, seeking out the shade of the trees... The Messenger of Allah said, “A man came to me when I was asleep. He took the sword. I woke up and he was standing over my head. The first thing I noticed was that the sword was unsheathed in his hand. He said, ‘Who will save you from me?’ I said, ‘Allah.’ He said the second time, ‘Who will save you from me?’ I said, ‘Allah.’ He placed the sword back in its sheath. And look—he is sitting here.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not take any action with him.’¹⁶⁷

When ‘Ikrimah—his enemy and son of Abū Jahl, the chieftain of disbelief—came to him seeking protection, the Messenger of God ﷺ said, ‘You are safe.’ ‘Ikrimah said, ‘I testify that there is no god but Allah alone, without partner, and that you are Allah’s slave and His Messenger. You are the most noble, most truthful, and most fulfilling of promises of all men.’ ‘Ikrimah then said, ‘I was saying that with my head bowed down, in shyness of him. Then I said, “O Messenger of Allah, pray for my forgiveness for every instance of enmity I have had against you, and for every situation in which I have strove to uphold polytheism.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “O Allah, forgive ‘Ikrimah for every case of enmity he has had against me, and every situation in which he sought to prevent from Your Way.”’¹⁶⁸

If you want to ask about his generosity, his student Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ said of him, ‘The Messenger of Allah was the most generous in good. He was at

165 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on good manners, generosity, and undesirable miserliness (hadith no. 2033); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the bravery of the Prophet ﷺ and that he stepped forward for battle (hadith no. 2307) .

166 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on the Battle of Ḥunayn (hadith no. 1776).

167 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Battles (*Maghāzī*), Chapter on the Battle of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq from the Khuzā‘ah—the Battle of Muraysī‘ (hadith no. 4139); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on his reliance on God Most High, and that God had protected him from people (hadith no. 4353).

168 Narrated by Ḥākim (hadith no. 5011).

the peak of his generosity during the month of Ramadan... The Messenger of Allah was more generous with good than the flowing wind.¹⁶⁹

Anas رضي الله عنه said about him, ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was never asked for something except that he gave it. A man came to ask from him—he gave him all the sheep herds found between two mountains. He went back to his people and said, “My people, accept Islam—Muhammad gives like one who does not fear destitution.”’¹⁷⁰

If you want to ask how he treated his attendants, listen to what his personal attendant Anas رضي الله عنه said of him: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the best of the people in morals. He sent me one day for fulfilling some need. I said, “By Allah, I will not go,” though it was in my heart that I would go, given that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ had commanded me to do so... I went out with some boys to play in the marketplace. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ appeared, taking hold of my back from behind me. I looked at him—he was laughing. He said, “O Unays, go where I told you to.” I said, “Yes, I will go, O Messenger of Allah.”’ Then he said: ‘By Allah, I served him for seven or nine years—I do not know that he said for something I did not do: “Why did you not do such and such?”’¹⁷¹

If you want to ask of his bashfulness, his Companion Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī said of him, ‘The Messenger of Allah was shyer than a virgin in her chamber. When he disliked something, we would detect it in his face.’¹⁷²

If you want to ask about his meekness and selflessness, his wife ‘Āishah رضي الله عنها said, ‘The Messenger of Allah was never given a choice between two things except he chose the easier of the two, so long as it was not a sin. If it was a sin, he would be the farthest of people from it. The Messenger of Allah never took revenge for himself, except when the sanctity of Allah was violated.’¹⁷³

If you want to ask about his method of nurturing, Khawwāt ibn Jubayr informs us of a great story in which he says, ‘We stopped at Marr al-Zahrān with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I went out of my tent and ended up with

169 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Fasting, Chapter: The Prophet ﷺ was the most generous in Ramadan (hadith no. 1803).

170 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on ‘Never was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked for something and he said no’, and his extreme generosity (hadith no. 2312).

171 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter: The Prophet ﷺ was the best of all people in manners (hadith no. 2310).

172 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues (hadith no. 3369); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on his deep modesty (hadith no. 2320).

173 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the description of the Prophet ﷺ (hadith no. 3367); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the Prophet staying afar from sins, selecting the easiest lawful option, and exacting retribution for the sake of God when His limits were violated (hadith no. 2327).

some women for a chat. I took a liking to them. I returned and took out my sealed container, from which I took and wore [a fresh pair of] clothes. I came and sat with them. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out of his tent and said, “O Abū ‘Abdullāh, what makes you sit with them?” When I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, I feared him and got completely mixed up. I said, “O Messenger of Allah, a camel of mine tends to run off, so I am looking for something to tie it with.” He walked and I followed him. He threw his robe towards me and went into the arak trees. I can still see the whiteness of his back against the arak green. He relieved himself and performed ablution. With water dripping from his beard onto his chest, he turned towards me and said, “O Abū ‘Abdullāh, what happened with your camel that likes to run off?” We then departed. He would never meet me during the journey without saying, “Peace be upon you, O Abū ‘Abdullāh. What happened with that camel which runs off?” When I saw this, I hastened to Madinah. I avoided the mosque and I avoided sitting with the Prophet ﷺ. When that went on for a while, I sought out a time when the mosque would be empty. I came to the mosque and stood to pray. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ suddenly came out from one of his rooms and offered two light units of prayer. I extended my prayer in the hope that he would go and leave me. He said, “O Abū ‘Abdullāh, lengthen however much you want—I shall not stand up until you conclude.” I thought to myself, “By Allah, I need to apologise to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and I will get myself off his back.” So, when he said, “Peace be upon you, O Abū ‘Abdullāh. What happened with that camel which runs off?”, I said, “By the One Who sent you with the truth, ever since I entered Islam, that camel has never ran off.” He thrice said, “May Allah have mercy on you”, after which he did not revisit this episode.¹⁷⁴

If you want to ask about his night prayers, his wife ‘Ā’ishah attested that ‘he used to pray eleven units (i.e., at night), in which he would prostrate the length of one of you reading fifty verses, before raising his head. He would perform two units before the Fajr prayer, and then he would lie down on his right side until the muezzin would come to him for prayer.’¹⁷⁵

174 Narrated by Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr* (hadith no. 4164).

‘Ṭabarānī reported it from two routes. The narrators of one of the two are from the narrators of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* except for Jarrah ibn Makhlad, who is trustworthy’ (Haythamī, 1992/1413 AH).

175 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Night Vigil (*Tahajjud*), Chapter on prolonging prostration in the night prayer (hadith no. 1070); and Muslim, Book of the Travellers’ Prayer and Shortening It, Chapter on the night prayer, the Prophet’s ﷺ number of prayer units at night, that the odd prayer (*Witr*) is one unit, and that a single unit is a complete prayer (hadith no. 1216).

His Companion Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ said, ‘One night, I prayed with the Prophet ﷺ. He remained standing in prayer for so long that I was about to do something bad.’ He was asked, ‘What were you about to do?’ He said, ‘I was about to sit down and leave him.’¹⁷⁶

It is reported from his Companion Ḥudhayfah ؓ: ‘One night, I prayed with the Prophet ﷺ. He started from al-Baqarah. I said (i.e., in my heart) that he would bow at a hundred verses. He read on. Then I said that he would complete the unit with al-Baqarah. He read on... Then he started with al-Nisā’ and read it. Then he started with Āl ‘Imrān and read it. (These chapters are equal to one-sixth of the Qur’an.) He read calmly. When he came to a verse of glorification, he glorified Allah. When he would pass a verse of seeking refuge, he sought refuge in Allah. Then he bowed and said, “Glory be to My Lord, the Magnificent.” His bow was as long as his standing. Then he said, “Allah hears those who praise Him, our Lord, to You belongs praise.” He stood almost as long as when he bowed. Then he prostrated and said, “Glory be to my Lord, Most High”—his prostration was almost as long as his standing.’¹⁷⁷

His wife ‘Āishah ؓ said, ‘When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would miss prayer (i.e., by night) due to pain or something else, he would perform twelve units during the day.’¹⁷⁸

If you want to ask about his fasting, then know what his attendant Anas ؓ said: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would not fast in a month until we would think he would not fast any part of it; then, he would keep on fasting until we would think he would not break the fast in any part of it. He wanted you to see him perform prayer by night, and he wanted you to see him sleep.’¹⁷⁹

176 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Night Vigil (*Tahajjud*), Chapter on prolonging prostration in the night prayer (hadith no. 1135); and Muslim, Book of the Travellers’ Prayer and Shortening It, Chapter on the desirability of lengthening recitation during the night prayer (hadith no. 773).

177 Narrated by Muslim, Book of the Travellers’ Prayer and Shortening It, Chapter on the desirability of lengthening recitation in the night prayer (hadith no. 772).

178 Narrated by Muslim, Book of the Travellers’ Prayer, Chapter gathering narrations on the night prayer (hadith no. 140).

179 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Night Vigil (*Tahajjud*), Chapter on the Prophet ﷺ getting up from sleep at night, and that which has been abrogated from the night prayer (hadith no. 1141).

Translator’s note: The lattermost sentence means the Prophet ﷺ wanted people to see him observe both his prayer in the night and his rest. He did not want people to see him only performing prayers at night. The actual Arabic of the sentence is not something that can be legibly rendered into English, and thus a more interpretive translation has been offered.

If you want to ask about the impact that the Qur'an had on him, listen to what his Companion Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ said: 'The Prophet ﷺ said to me, "Read the Qur'an to me." I said, "How can I read to you when it was you upon whom it was revealed?" He said, "I want to hear it from someone other than myself." So, I read Sūrah al-Nisā' until I reached the verse, "So how will it be when We bring a witness from every faith community, and bring you—O Prophet—as a witness against yours?" (Qur'an, 4:41) He said, "Enough." I looked up—his eyes were overflowing with tears.'¹⁸⁰

If you want to ask about how much he remembered God, listen to what 'Ā'ishah said: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to remember Allah all the time.'¹⁸¹

If you want to ask about his penitence, pay attention to what Ibn 'Umar ؓ said: 'In a single sitting, we used to count the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reading, "My Lord, forgive me and accept my penitence—verily You are the Acceptor of repentance, the Giver of mercy" one hundred times.'¹⁸²

If you want to ask about how much appreciation he had for God's favour on him, there is a narration of his Companion Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah on this. When the feet of the Prophet ﷺ were swollen from standing in worship, it was said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, Allah has forgiven you all your past sins.' He replied, 'So should I not be a thankful servant?'¹⁸³

If you want to ask about his daily bread, know what his close Companion Abū Hurayrah ؓ said: 'The Messenger of Allah never found fault in any food. If he liked it, he ate it; otherwise, he left it.'¹⁸⁴

If you want to ask about his humility, see what his attendant Anas ؓ said on how the Companions were around him: 'There was no person more

180 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, Chapter on the recitation teacher saying 'Enough' to the reciter (hadith no. 4781); and Muslim, Book of the Travellers' Prayer, Chapter on the virtue of listening to the Qur'an (hadith no. 1332).

181 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Menses, Chapter on remembering God Most High in the state of major ritual impurity etc. (hadith no. 373).

182 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Supplications, Chapter on what one says when departing from a sitting (hadith no. 3434); declared authentic by Albānī.

183 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Interpreting the Qur'an—Sūrah al-Fath, Chapter: '...so that Allah may forgive you for your past and future shortcomings, perfect His favour upon you, guide you along the Straight Path...' (hadith no. 4557); and Muslim, Book of the Description of the Resurrection, Paradise, and Hell, Chapter on committing to many good deeds and striving in worship (hadith no. 2819); the wording is from Aḥmad (hadith no. 18114).

184 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Food Items, Chapter: The Prophet ﷺ never found fault in any food item (hadith no. 5093); and Muslim, Book of Beverages, Chapter: One should not find fault in food (hadith no. 2064).

beloved to them than the Messenger of Allah. When they saw him, they would not stand, as they knew he disliked it¹⁸⁵; ‘A slave girl of Madinah would take the hand of the Messenger of Allah and take him around to see to what she wished. Only when she finished would he return¹⁸⁶; ‘I did not see any man whisper into the ear of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he turn his head away except it was the man who would turn his head away first. I did not see any man take his hand and he let go of his hand except it was the man who would let go first.’¹⁸⁷

If you want to ask about his patience in hunger, his wife ‘Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها said: ‘The Messenger of Allah did not consume wheat bread to his full for three days running until he passed away.’¹⁸⁸

If you want to ask about the patience he had within his hard life, then note that when Abū Hurayrah requested that he place a sheet over the mat that left a mark on his blessed lateral, he replied, ‘And what connection do I have with the world? In relation to this world, I am just like a traveller who took shade under a tree, and then he got up and left.’¹⁸⁹

If you want to ask about his frugality, listen to what ‘Uqbah ibn al-Hārith رضي الله عنه said: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ led us in ‘Aṣr. He then quickly left, walking through the people, until he entered his home. People were surprised at his haste. Shortly after, he came out. He said, “I remembered a golden nugget we had—I feared it would keep me from more important things, so I distributed it.”’¹⁹⁰

If you want to ask about how he inquired about those who were not as well known among the general population, listen to the testimony of Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه: ‘A black man (or woman) used to sweep the mosque. He died. The Prophet ﷺ did not know he had died. He mentioned him one

185 Narrated by Tirmidhī in the *Shamā'il* (hadith no. 335); declared authentic by Albānī.

186 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on arrogance (hadith no. 6072).

187 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on good conduct (hadith no. 4794); declared sound by Albānī.

188 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Heart Softeners, Chapter: How the daily life of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions was like, and their disinvestment in the world (hadith no. 6089); and Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Heart Softeners (hadith no. 2970).

189 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Asceticism reported of the Messenger of God ﷺ, Chapter on taking wealth by right (hadith no. 2377); he declared it to be *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*.

190 Narrated by Bukhārī, Chapters of the Description of Prayer, Chapter: One who leads the people in prayer, then remembered something and stepped over their necks [of people to get to it] (hadith no. 813).

day saying, "What happened to that man?" They said, "He died, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Why did you not inform me?" They mentioned his story that he was such and such...as if they were detracting from his significance. He said, "Show me his grave." He thus came to his grave and performed the funeral prayer over him.¹⁹¹

If you want to ask about his kindness with those who sought from him in an ill-mannered fashion, listen to what Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه said: 'A Bedouin came to the Prophet ﷺ seeking repayment of a debt owed by him. He behaved rudely and said, "I am insisting you pay up." His Companions scolded him and said, "Woe to you. Do you know whom you are addressing?" He said, "I am claiming my right." The Prophet ﷺ said to them, "Why would you not side with he who is owed his right?" He then sent a message to Khawlah bint Qays, telling her, "If you have some dates, lend it to us until our dates arrive and we can repay you." She said, "Yes—you are dearer to me than my father, O Messenger of Allah." So she lent some to him. He repaid the Bedouin and presented food to him. He remarked, "You have fulfilled your obligation. May Allah repay you well." He said, "Those are the best of the people. A community in which the weak cannot get their dues without trouble cannot be regarded as pure."¹⁹²

If you want to ask about how he helped his family, his wife ʿĀʾishah رضي الله عنها said, 'He used to be in the service of his family. When prayer would come, he would go for prayer.'¹⁹³

If you want to ask about his loyalty to his spouse, listen to what ʿĀʾishah رضي الله عنها said about his first wife, Khadijah رضي الله عنها: 'The Prophet ﷺ used to mention her a lot. He would sometimes slaughter a goat, cut it into pieces, and then send them to Khadijah's friends. I would on occasions utter "As if there is no woman in the world except Khadijah." He would say, "She was like this and like that, and I had children with her."¹⁹⁴

If you want to ask about how mindful he was of women, listen to what his attendant Anas رضي الله عنه said: 'The Prophet ﷺ was on a journey. A slave by the name of Anjashah was driving them. The Prophet ﷺ said, "O Anjashah, drive easy with the glass vessels."¹⁹⁵ Before he departed towards the Supreme

191 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Funeral, Chapter on prayer over a grave after burial (hadith no. 1272).

192 Narrated by Ibn Ḥibbān, Book of Charity (hadith no. 2426); declared authentic by Albānī.

193 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter: How a man should be with his family (hadith no. 1272).

194 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the Prophet ﷺ marrying (hadith no. 3558).

195 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on the type of poetry, prosody, and throat singing that is lawful and that which is undesirable (hadith no.

Comrade, his speech at the Final Sermon—which carried great advice—had the following words: ‘Lo, take my advice on being good to women.’¹⁹⁶

If you want to ask about his mercy and honour for the elderly, then know that when Makkah was conquered, Abū Bakr ؓ carried his own father so that he would give his pledge to the Messenger of God ﷺ. He said, ‘Why could you not leave the old man at his house, so that we would be the ones to visit him?’¹⁹⁷

If you want to ask about his mercy with children and mothers, then observe what he says: ‘I enter into prayer and I want to lengthen it, but I hear the cry of a child, so I shorten my prayer as I understand the angst of his mother from his cries.’¹⁹⁸

If you want to ask about his playful interactions with children, then know the statement of Anas ؓ: ‘The Prophet ﷺ used to meet up with us—he said to a smaller brother of mine, “O Abū ‘Umayr, what happened with the *nughayr* (small bird?)”’¹⁹⁹ He used to refer to the small child as Abū ‘Umayr, and he used to gamesomely ask of his small bird.

If you want to ask about his mercy to animals, his Companion ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd said, ‘We were with the Messenger of Allah on a journey. We saw a desert lark with two chicks. We took the chicks. The lark came and flapped her wings furiously. When the Messenger ﷺ came, he said, “Who has grieved this bird over its chicks? Return the chicks to her.”’²⁰⁰

And finally, if you want to ask about his entire affair, his wife ‘Ā’ishah ؓ said, ‘The morals of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ were the Qur’an.’²⁰¹

5707); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the Prophet ﷺ being merciful to women and commanding their cameleers to be gentle with them (hadith no. 2323).
196 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Suckling, Chapter on reports of a woman’s right over her husband (hadith no. 1163); and Ibn Mājah, Book of Marriage, Chapter on the woman’s right over the husband (hadith no. 1851); Tirmidhī said, ‘This is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* hadith.’

197 Narrated by Aḥmad (hadith no. 27001), Ibn Ḥibbān (hadith no. 7208), and Ḥākim (hadith no. 4363), who said, ‘An authentic hadith as per the condition of Muslim; [Bukhārī and Muslim] did not record it.’ Shu‘ayb al-Arnā’ūṭ said, ‘Its chain is sound.’

198 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Call to Prayer (*Adhān*), Chapter on one shortening prayer when a child cries (hadith no. 709); and Muslim, Book of Prayer, Chapter on ordering Imams to shorten prayer while maintaining perfection (hadith no. 192).

199 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter: How a man should be with his family (hadith no. 1272).

200 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on killing ants (hadith no. 5268).

201 Narrated by Muslim, Book of the Travellers’ Prayer, Chapter combining

So, after all we have mentioned, what other traits and wonderful characteristics are left—apart from honesty?

Honesty is a pivotal matter. Only with honesty would a Messenger be entrusted with the divine message, and a proselytiser would be trusted for what he is disseminating. The exposition of this is about to come, with testimonies from those both nearby and afar.

narrations on night prayer and one who slept in or became ill [from being able to offer prayer] (hadith no. 746).

2. HONESTY AS PROOF FOR PROPHETHOOD

The heart and soul of Prophethood entails that a servant chosen by God conveys a divine message to people in order to guide them with the alleyways of beliefs, laws, and ethics. Since conveying is the most fundamental activity of a Prophet, honesty would be the greatest requirement within Prophets.

A person analysing the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ would have one of two choices: believe in the honesty of Muhammad ﷺ, that he is the safest of all people on Earth to convey what was delivered to him, and that his claim of being the intermediary between people and their Creator is the pure truth; or accuse him of the most blatant lie and slander, that he made up every single one of his statements and his apparent actions, and that he was plotting all sorts of machinations against those who listened to him and concealed a deep-seated deceit in his heart.²⁰² The claimant of Prophethood would thus be either the most truthful or the most egregious liar.

If a person wants to establish anything that goes against the apparent state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, his seeking to do so would compel him to rise to an extremely difficult level, and he would have burdened himself with a very tough task to summon all the proofs stating so, and to nullify all objections against it. Denying the honesty of Muhammad ﷺ would necessitate that the man was the biggest liar and fraud ever to walk on Earth: he would concoct segments of the Qur'an whenever some event occurred; he would come up with daunting acts and behaviours, appearing to respond to the Revelation that would come; he would put on a show of sincerity when committing worship and veneration to the Lord alone; he was deceptive with those Companions who stuck by him; he would put on a show of integrity in his dealings; and he would deceive even his wives at home with putting on a show of honesty and integrity.

The required proof from the one denying the nature of honesty in the personality of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ can be summarised with the following. He should be able to explain how a man—who is apparently extremely motivated by the obedience of the Lord alone, by cleansing hearts from polytheism, by his indifference to worldly pleasures, by his striving for the

202 There is a third option here—which we shall deal with later—that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was epileptic. Advocates of this position nowadays are few and far between.

betterment of people's lives and the Afterlife²⁰³—can conceal in his heart the exact opposite, that he loves to lie, that he gives a lot of thought to this, and that the only path of achieving what he wants is by doing this.

So that the inaccessibility of the path sought and traversed by the one denying the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ becomes clear for you, you should read—with some considerable detail—history's testimony in favour of the Prophet of Islam's ﷺ honesty.

203 This is attested to by those who were with him day and night, home and away, in anger and pleasure, in peace and war, and in good times and bad.

a. Reality's attestation

Paul Casanova²⁰⁴, a French Orientalist, wrote a book called *Mohammed and the End of the World*. In this work, he objected to the Qur'an's divinity and the Companions' preservation of it by stating, 'Before going into the source of the question, I would like to say first that I reject *a priori* any theory leaning against Muhammad's sincerity...and it is contrary to all scientific spirit to assert, without evidence, that here had been imposture and calculation. The whole history of the Arab Prophet proves that his character is positive, serious and loyal.'²⁰⁵

Among a people that had a deep attachment to honesty, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was known to excel at it. There was no possible thought of deception or plotting on his part. He was in an environment that considered manliness a virtue, betrayal contemptible, and its perpetrator dishonourable. Among his people, the Prophet ﷺ was known for honesty, such that his sobriquet was *al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn* (the Truthful, the Trustworthy). There are numerous events and situations to his name that would support this epithet. Even those who rejected his Messengerhood could not appeal to their innermost selves to consider him a liar. Rather, their rejection of his Messengerhood was driven by their opposition to his call of monotheism and abandoning the faith of their forefathers, not out of any aspersions on his integrity. The Qur'an says, 'We certainly know that what they say grieves you, O Prophet. It is not your honesty they question, but it is Allah's signs that the wrongdoers deny.' (Qur'an, 6:33) As such, they were not stating that he is a liar, but rather they rejected his Prophethood out of sheer stubbornness.

One event that reveals how his people viewed his trustworthiness is when he was commanded to call his family to Islam. He climbed on Mount Ṣafā and called on the various branches of the Quraysh: 'O Banū Fihir, O Banū 'Adī...', after which he said, 'What do you think if I were to tell you that horsemen are in the valley, seeking to attack you—would you believe me?' They said, 'Yes—we have experienced only honesty in you.' He said, 'I am therefore warning you of an upcoming severe punishment.' Abū Lahab

204 Paul Casanova (1861-1926). French archaeologist and Orientalist. He was born in Algeria. He worked as Professor in Arabic Language and Literature in France. His works include *La doctrine secrète des Fatimides d'Égypte*.

205 (Casanova, 1911), p. 5.

said, 'May you perish, O Muhammad. Is it for this you have gathered us?' As a result, the verses 'May the hands of Abū Lahab perish, and he himself perish...' (Qur'an, 111:1) were revealed.²⁰⁶

He would not part with honesty even in his light-hearted interactions. Abū Hurayrah ؓ said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, I am surprised you make light conversation with us.' He replied, 'I only speak the truth.'²⁰⁷ Anas ibn Mālik mentions: 'A man came to the Prophet ﷺ seeking a ride. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "We shall give you the child of a she-camel to ride on." He said, "O Messenger of Allah, what will I do with the child of a she-camel?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "And what else, other than she-camels, do camels give birth to?"'²⁰⁸

Whether it was in serious or light-hearted dialogue, with friend or foe, in peace or war, with family or outsiders, during weakness and strength, or when making covenants and entering into treaties, there was no situation that would remove him from his proclivity for honesty.

The Messenger ﷺ faced the hardships of the world with a tranquil soul. He rejected temptations with a steadfast heart. He chose the difficult path that was taken by desolation and tears of hardship. His challenge was to convey the truth, turn people away from the idolatrous and evil legacy of their forefathers, and unite them on the values of virtuousness and piety. How can this image be reconciled with the opposite image that the non-Muslim is ascribing to him—that he was a liar whose heart was infested by the love of deception, and was void of any meaning of good? How can the two opposites sit at harmony with each other?

Montgomery Watt, the Christian Orientalist, revealed that it was this partiality to the statements of the rejecters that is the source of all confusion in this discussion, and that these statements do not represent a satisfactory response. In relation to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, he said, 'His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of

206 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Interpreting the Qur'an, Chapter on His statement: 'Your fellow man is not insane. He is only a warner to you before the coming of a severe punishment' (hadith no. 4523).

207 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Obedience and Joining Ties as Reported of the Messenger of God ﷺ, Chapter on reports of humour (hadith no. 4523); Tirmidhī said, 'This is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* hadith.'

208 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on reports of humour (hadith no. 4998); and Tirmidhī, Book of Obedience and Joining Ties as Reported of the Messenger of God ﷺ, Chapter on reports of humour (hadith no. 1991); Tirmidhī said, 'A *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb* hadith.'

his ultimate achievement—all argue his fundamental integrity. **To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves.**²⁰⁹

209 (Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 1960), p. 52.

b. His followers' attestation

From the very first era of Prophethood, testimonies of the Prophet's followers are in unison in favour of his honesty—in its purest and most evident manifestation. This was acknowledged for him by those who believed in his honesty, well before he had gained any state apparatus or political power. This, according to William Muir²¹⁰—an Orientalist and Missionary who was adversarial to Islam—is evidence for exonerating the Prophet of Islam ﷺ from any notion that he intended to deceive: 'It is strongly corroborative of Mahomet's sincerity that the earliest converts to Islam were not only of upright character, but his own bosom friends and people of his household; who, intimately acquainted with his private life, could not fail otherwise to have detected those discrepancies which ever more or less exist between the professions of the hypocritical deceiver abroad and his actions at home.'²¹¹

210 William Muir (1819-1905). Scottish Orientalist and Missionary. He was a colonial administrator and Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Provinces of British India. He founded the University of Allahabad in India. He served as principal at Edinburgh. His works include *A Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira*, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, *The Koran: Its Composition and Teaching*, *The Beacon of Truth*, and *The Mohammedan Controversy* (with additions from translator).

211 (Muir, 1877), p. 60.

c. His adversaries' attestation

Heraclius²¹² was a clever and intelligent man, moulded by the times and reports on the state of men. That is why he asked Abū Sufyān, still a disbeliever at the time—when enmity between him and Muhammad ﷺ was at its worst—whether he accused him of being a liar. When Abū Sufyān answered in the negative, Heraclius said, ‘I asked you whether you used to accuse him of lying before he started saying what he now says. You stated not. I have identified that he is not the type to abandon lying to people yet would lie about God ﷻ.’²¹³

212 Translator's note: Heraclius (575-641). Byzantine Emperor from 610 to 641.

213 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Interpreting the Qur'an—Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, Chapter: 'Say, O Prophet, "O People of the Book, let us come to common terms: that we will worship none but Allah..."' (hadith no. 4278); and Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on the Prophet's letter to Heraclius inviting him to Islam (hadith no. 1773).

Did the Prophet of Islam possess a worldly interest?

Other than worldly fame, power over the fate of men, and enjoying their wealth, there is not much that false claimants to Prophethood would aspire to. The question is: Is there anything of this nature found in the life of Muhammad ﷺ?

There is no need to dive far into voluminous books. Nor is there any need to listen to enraged Orientalist sceptics, who cast aspersions on everything to the extent that some of them denied the historical existence of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ outright. Rather, simply turn your gaze, quite literally, to Madinah—to the Prophet's Mosque. Ask about the Prophetic chamber in which the Prophet ﷺ resided with his wife ʿĀishah رضي الله عنها, at the time when the Sasanian Monarchs and the Roman Emperors lived in sprawling buildings and walked over luxurious rugs and the fur of wild cats. You will see that the material world of the Prophet ﷺ was extremely small in dimension, and not remotely large for those whose hearts are filled with the love of the world and its carnal pleasures. This is the extant historical and physical testament before our eyes, so that we become from those who can start to believe in him.

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ lived a life of moderation with each and every bounty, including food and drink. His close Companion, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه said, 'I saw the body of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ curled up—he could not even find a low-quality date for his stomach.'²¹⁴

If your mind has a misconception that this story was when the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was in Makkah when he was weak, in tough times, and under embargo, then disabuse yourself with the fact that his aversion to the world when he had the bounties of the world at his feet was exactly the same as his aversion when he did not have them. His steadfastness was not because he was forced to go hungry; rather, it was his desire to remain authentic to himself and to whom he was. ʿĀishah testified that 'the family of Muhammad ﷺ, since they arrived in Madinah, did not eat to their hearts'

214 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Heart Softeners (hadith no. 2977).

content for three consecutive nights until he was taken.²¹⁵ Likewise, she tells us that, during his death sickness where pain had drained the energy out of his body and rendered him unable to stand, the Prophet ﷺ mustered all his strength and ordered his wife—who was up at night tending to him—to give up some gold in his possession in charity. He asked again a short while after about the gold—she said she was busy tending to his illness and was unable to give it away quickly enough. In a strong tone characterised with a clear determination to get rid of any remnant that binds him to the beauty of the world, he ordered her to bring the gold and said, ‘What can Muhammad expect were he to meet Allah with this in his possession? What would this take away from Muhammad were he to meet Allah with this in his possession?’²¹⁶ So, would a claimant to Prophethood on the verge of death be preoccupied with getting rid of any sort of attachment to the world, even if it were a tiny amount of wealth that his wife would have needed anyway after he left? Yet, he left the world when—as ‘Ā’ishah says—‘there was nothing a living being could eat, except for some barley on a shelf belonging to me.’²¹⁷

Even his followers were left perplexed at his state—minds were astounded at him, and souls were left wonderstruck. ‘Umar ؓ speaks about what he saw: ‘I came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He was on a mat... I sat down and noticed he had his lower garment on and nothing else. The mat had left a mark on the side of his body. I noticed a handful of barely to the tune of a *ṣā’*^c unit measurement, some mimosa leaves in the corner, and a leather bag hanging. My eyes welled up. The Prophet ﷺ said, “What makes you weep, O son of Khaṭṭāb?” (‘Umar) said, “O Prophet of Allah, why should I not cry? This mat has left marks on your side. This cupboard of yours—I see therein only what I see. The Sasanian King and the Roman Emperor live among fruits and springs, yet you are the Messenger of Allah and His Chosen, while this is your cupboard.” He said, “O son of Khaṭṭāb, are you not pleased that they are for us in the Afterlife, and for them in the world?”’²¹⁸

Yet, in spite of his delicate situation—which was borne not out of being able to do otherwise but because he simply did not seek the world—the

215 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Heart Softeners (hadith no. 6089); and Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Heart Softeners (hadith no. 2970).

216 ‘It was all narrated by Aḥmad with multiple chains, one of which carries the narrators of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*’ (Haythamī, 1992/1413 AH).

217 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Heart Softeners, Chapter on the virtue of poverty (hadith no. 6086); and Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Heart Softeners (hadith no. 5281).

218 This wording is narrated by Ibn Mājah, Book of Asceticism, Chapter on the resting mats of the family of Muhammad ﷺ. Ḥākim said, ‘Authentic as per the condition of Muslim.’

Prophet of Islam ﷺ was generous by nature and would not hold back gifts, whether in easy or rough times. His Companion Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh ؓ said, ‘Never was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked for something and he said no.’²¹⁹

The slaves of the world—those who strive for self-fortune—chug on the pleasures of the world; then they do their utmost so that their children will inherit abundant wealth, a large mansion, and all means of bounties and comfort from them. Nothing of the sort is found in the life of Muhammad ﷺ. He died with his armour placed in lien by a man of a religious minority (a Jew) that resided in his own state.²²⁰ Before his death, he gave this advice: ‘We—the assembly of Prophets—do not pass down wealth. Whatever we leave behind is charity.’²²¹ As such, neither his daughter nor his wives inherited anything from him. Do you think a charlatan who uses faith as a means for his own aims and predilections lives out life with the bare minimum, dies with the bare minimum, and leaves his family with the bare minimum?

Would a charlatan, who is engrossed in fulfilling his desire and loves prestige on Earth, be pleased with wearing what the commonfolk wear, eat what the commonfolk eat, ride on what the commonfolk ride, and rebuke those who raise him above the station of a human?

The Qur’an sealed the door shut on any potential dispute—arising from any human ambition otherwise—that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ ought to be raised to a station above his rightful place. It says, “I am only a man like you, who is revealed to...” (Qur’an, 18:110) Among his people, this man was but a human—he was never completely detached from the needs of the rest of humankind; in fact, his adversaries used this to detract from him and said, “What kind of Messenger is this who eats food and goes about in the marketplaces? If only an angel had been sent down with him to be his co-warner...” (Qur’an, 25:7)

219 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on good manners, generosity, and undesirable miserliness (hadith no. 6043); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on ‘Never was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked for something and he said no’ (hadith no. 2311).

220 ‘Ā’ishah, the Mother of the Believers, said: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed away with his armour given in lien to a Jew for 30 ṣā’ units of barley.’ Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on what has been said of the armour of the Prophet ﷺ and attire for war (hadith no. 2759).

221 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Inheritance Apportionments, Chapter on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Our wealth is not inherited—what we leave behind is charity’ (hadith no. 6346); and Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Our wealth is not inherited—what we leave behind is charity’ (hadith no. 1758).

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ turned to self-denial with a willing heart, in spite of the world—with all its pleasures, in all their adornment—having come at his feet in subservience.

‘A case has been made that mere economic gain was the inspiration for Mohammed’s religious revolution. That case does not suit the facts as they are known.’ New Catholic Encyclopedia²²²

222 (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003), 9.52. art. Muhammad.

The Prophet of Islam's supplications and what they tell us about his inner state

After all that has preceded vis-à-vis the morals of Muhammad ﷺ, his affairs, his good collaboration, his honesty, and his illuminating presence, a reader might be surprised when I say that the greatest sign of his Prophethood from his career is his supplication to God. His supplications were not those of a fabricating charlatan, nor those of a boastful liar. They come across as divinely inspired, a reflection of truth, and a proof of Prophethood. Such supplications cannot be from the speech of impersonators, nor are they the path chosen by fabricators, nor are they merely the effects of personal intelligence or an eloquent tongue.

I invite you—in vigorous objectivity—to monitor this man of the 7th century, who grew up among idolatrous, self-engrossed, and glory-hunting people who had aligned themselves to delusion and superstition. See how he managed to remove himself from the *Jāhiliyyah* (state of pre-Islamic ignorance) of his environment, and how he set himself free from the tell-tale signs of humanness that blocks the soul from ascending to embrace the One, the Divine. He remembered his Lord with the sweetest of words. His remembrance was a private converse, a deep thought, and a ritual worship.

When waking up, the Prophet ﷺ said, 'My Lord, I ask You of the good of this day and the good thereafter, and I seek refuge in You from the evil of this day and the evil thereafter. My Lord, I seek refuge in You from laziness and bad elderly age. My Lord, I seek refuge in You from punishment in the Fire and punishment in the grave.'²²³

When the Prophet ﷺ would finish eating his meal, he would say, 'Praise be to Allah Who has sufficed all our needs and quenched our thirst. His favour cannot be compensated or denied...Praise is for Allah, our Lord,

223 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance, and Seeking Forgiveness, Chapter on seeking refuge from the evil of deeds one has perpetrated and the evil of deeds one has not committed (hadith no. 2733).

Who cannot be compensated, nor can be left, nor can be dispensed with, O our Lord.’²²⁴

When he prostrated, he would say, ‘O Allah, to You I prostrate; in You I have faith; and to You I submit. My face prostrates for the One Who created it, shaped it, and carved out from it its hearing and seeing. Most blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.’ Then the last thing he would say, between the *tashahhud* and the *taslim*, was, ‘O Allah, forgive me by wiping away my previous sins and my future sins. My secret sins and my overt sins, my excesses, and that which You know more of than I do. You are the One Who puts forward, and You are the One Who holds back. There is no god but You.’²²⁵

When he would pray by night, he would say, ‘O Allah, praise is for You. You are the Holder of the heavens, the Earth, and whatever is in them. Praise is for You. You are the Possessor of the heavens, the Earth, and whatever is in them. Praise is for You. You are the Light of the heavens and the Earth. Praise is for You. You are the King of the heavens and the Earth. Praise is for You. You are the Truth. Your Promise is the truth. Meeting You is true. Your Word is true. Paradise is true. The Fire is true. The Prophets are true. Muhammad ﷺ is true. The Hour is true. O Allah, to You I surrender; in You I have faith; on You I depend; to You I return in penance; in Your Name I argue; and to You I raise my disputes. Forgive me for my previous and future sins, and my hidden and open sins. You are the One Who puts forward, and You are the One Who holds back. There is no god but You.’²²⁶

When he would prostrate, he would say, ‘O Allah, I seek refuge in Your Pleasure from Your Wrath, and in Your Forgiveness from Your Punishment. I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot encompass praise for You—You are as You have praised Yourself.’²²⁷

When he stood up from a sitting with his Companions, he said, ‘O Allah, apportion for us an amount of Your fear that comes between us and Your disobedience, and of Your obedience that causes us to obtain Your Paradise, and of certainty that makes the afflictions of the world easy for us. O Allah,

224 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Food Items, Chapter on what one says when finishing from his food (hadith no. 5143).

225 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Supplications, Chapter on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘O Allah, forgive me for my previous acts and my deferred acts’ (hadith no. 6035); and Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Penitence, and Seeking Forgiveness, Chapter on seeking refuge from the evil of deeds one has perpetrated and the evil of deeds one has not committed (hadith no. 4896).

226 Ibid.

227 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Prayer, Chapter on what is to be said when bowing and prostrating (hadith no. 486).

grant us the bounties of our hearing, our seeing, and our strength, so long as You keep us alive. Make it our heir.'²²⁸

When he chose to be concise in his request, he said, 'O Allah, rectify for me my faith, which is the safeguard of my affairs. Rectify for me my world, where I live. Rectify for me my Afterlife, to which I shall return. Make life for me a source of abundance in every good. Make death for me a source of comfort against every evil.'²²⁹

This is a state of perpetual supplication, real-time remembrance of God, freedom from greed for power and material wealth, and conferring magnificence and glory unto the Lord alone. All of this was done by night and day, in public and when alone, in fear and safety, in pain and pleasure. All of this flies in the face of the notion that he was a man who wanted to make religiosity a source of material profit and glory. How can these two opposites subsist in one man?

228 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Penitence, and Seeking Forgiveness, Chapter on seeking refuge from the evil of deeds one has perpetrated and the evil of deeds one has not committed (hadith no. 2720).

229 Ibid.

What of the traits of the Prophet of Islam that have been criticised?

A person might object: ‘Let us say we agree that the aforementioned morals of the Prophet of Islam are wonderful and great—nobody should have any doubt about them, nor should any opponent criticise them. So yes, these are all without doubt superb. However, what about the objections that Christian adversaries and Missionaries keep on repeating? Do they not break the image crafted by the previous narrations?’

The answer to that is twofold:

1. Once human moral perfection—especially the trait of honesty—is established in someone, this would automatically dismantle the adversary’s claim. Complete trustworthiness and scheming deceit cannot simultaneously subsist in a person. Nor can the desire to guide people and the desire to lead them astray come together. Nor can a focus on cleansing people from corrupt beliefs and being prepared to turn them away coexist. This is why the establishment of the first set of options is evidence in and of itself that the opposite set of options is invalid.
2. A detailed analysis of the doubts of Missionaries reveals that their objections are extremely limited in scope. Not only that, but they also carry the following fallacies:
 - a. **Drawing upon inauthentic narrations as proof.** Many a time, those making objections on the Prophetic *sīrah* employ weak or fabricated narrations for proof, such as the intention of the Messenger ﷺ to commit suicide²³⁰, the story of the cranes

230 Bukhārī reports on the authority of Zuhri: ‘In reports that have reached us, Revelation would not come to the Prophet ﷺ until he would become so sad that he thought about—on numerous occasions—to throw himself off from the high mountain tops. Every time he went up the top of a mountain to throw himself

(*Gharānīq*)²³¹, the Messenger ﷺ sitting in the lap of his wife Khadijah to test the angel of Revelation²³². Muslim scholars have repeatedly explained that these narrations are weak—something that Islam’s adversaries have not disputed. Rather, what they did was take advantage of the ignorance of the laity vis-à-vis the sciences of hadith narration to give the impression that the mere mention of a report in one book (or more) pertaining to the *sīrah* or hadith is evidence for its authenticity.

- b. **Distorting the language.** The linguistic weakness found in most Missionaries is the root cause of some of their doubts, which are surprisingly strange in how they have been constructed and the angles they focus on. An example would be their critique of the Messenger ﷺ lying in the grave of a woman who died, which he did in front of his Companions.²³³ Here, the Missionaries got mixed up between *idṭaja*^{ʿa} i.e., lying down, and *dāja*^{ʿa} i.e., sexual intimacy; they thought that the Messenger ﷺ publicly perpetrated necrophilia inside the dead woman’s grave. Likewise, Missionaries accused the Prophet of Islam ﷺ of consuming wine as per the tradition that he drank *nabīdh*; it is known that *nabīdh* beverages are fruits that are placed in a liquid, which first become sweet without becoming intoxicants,

down, Gabriel would appear before him and say, “O Muhammad, you are indeed Allah’s Messenger.” He would then return at ease, his heart would calm, and he would return. Whenever Revelation would remain absent for a prolonged period from him, he would do as before; when he would reach a mountain top, Gabriel would appear before him and say to him what he said before.’

This has a broken chain, as Zuhri is a Tābiʿī and did not mention who related this report to him. This is why the scholars of hadith have rejected the authenticity of Zuhri’s narration.

Translator’s note: That this is mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī does not indicate that he intended to authenticate it. The fact that the preceding narration in his book vis-à-vis Revelation is mentioned three times, and only on the third occasion did he bring this addition, is a solid indicator that, rather than authenticating this segment, Bukhārī actually intended to point out its contrarian nature to the established authentic narrations on the topic. Bukhārī’s *modus operandi* is well known to hadith critics.

231 Ibn al-ʿArabī, the famous Mālikī scholar of Andalusia, said, ‘Baseless, without any foundation to it.’

232 Narrated by Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*; declared weak by Albānī because of Yaḥyā ibn Sulaymān al-Madīnī in its chain—he has been scrutinised for his memory.

233 The hadith is weak. ‘It was narrated by Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*. Saʿdan ibn al-Walīd is in it—I do not know him’ (Haythamī, 1992/1413 AH), 9/257.

thereby making them more like regular juice. This is where the narration of Ibn ʿAbbās in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* comes: ‘*Nabīdh* was prepared for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at the beginning of the night—he would drink it in the morning of the following day, the following evening, the next day, the next evening, and the day after up to ʿAṣr. If some remained, he would either offer it to his attendant or would order for it to be disposed.’ This is found under the chapter ‘Permitting *nabīdh* that is not foaming and has not become intoxicative.’²³⁴

- c. **Deceit when presenting historical reports.** The objections of Christian proselytisers give the impression that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was obsessed with killing and shedding as much blood as possible. The reality is that his tendency for forgiving his enemies was his default. Even when he was eventually able to lethally crack down on them, he did not do so, for he forgave the Makkans during the Conquest in spite of the severe harm they inflicted on him and his call to Islam.

- d. **Condemning what the contemporaries of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not view as worthy of condemnation.** A number of objections regarding the Prophet of Islam ﷺ that have gained traction are of this type. One such objection is his marriage with ʿĀʾishah رضي الله عنها when she was a minor. This was an issue that was not against the custom of the time. Also consider that ʿĀʾishah was proposed to by Muṭʿim ibn ʿAdī, before she married the Messenger ﷺ. There is not a single adversary or Companion of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ who found his marriage to ʿĀʾishah رضي الله عنها obnoxious. Throughout their ancient history, Christians have—without condemnation—believed that Mary married Joseph the Carpenter when she was 14 years of age and he was 90 years old.²³⁵ Pastor Jim West²³⁶ writes of the Jews, ‘The wife was to be taken from within the larger family circle (usually at the outset of puberty or around the age of 13) in order to maintain

234 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Beverages, Chapter on the lawfulness of *nabīdh* that has not foamed or transformed into an intoxicant (hadith no. 2004).

235 (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1914).

236 Translator’s note: James E. West, better known as Jim West (b. 1960). An on-line blogger on the Bible. He is Professor at the Ming Hua School of Theology, Hong Kong. His focus areas are the Protestant Reformation and biblical archaeology.

the purity of the family line.’²³⁷ This is why Montgomery Watt wrote, ‘From the standpoint of Muhammad’s time, then, the allegations of treachery and sensuality cannot be maintained. His contemporaries did not find him morally defective in any way. On the contrary, some of the acts criticised by the modern Westerner show that Muhammad’s standards were higher than those of his time.’²³⁸

- e. **Condemning that which should not be condemned.** The prevalence of modernity and anti-Islamic religious sentiment is one way of censuring the Prophetic *sīrah*. One such objection is the assumption made by Missionaries that the hadith ‘Of your world, women and perfume have been made beloved to me; and the coolness of my eyes is in prayer’²³⁹ is indicative of an extreme amorousness on the part of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, i.e., he was inclined to satisfying his carnal desires without moderation, leading to an imbalance in his character and personality. Yet, there is nothing in the hadith that suggests this. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ was the leader of a nation, a statesman, a judge, a teacher, and a role model. Nobody from his contemporaries accused him of allowing his love for women to interfere with the divine message he was tasked to convey, or his steadfastness on the path of good and chastity. His wife states, ‘And who among you can control his desire like the Prophet ﷺ could control his?’²⁴⁰ The Prophet ﷺ had complete control over his desire, not vice versa. Furthermore, the hadith itself indicates that worship—prayer specifically—was far greater a virtue in the eyes of the Messenger of God ﷺ than attaining any pleasure of the world, including women and perfume. This completely belies the notion that he was amorous.

Dr Naẓmī Lūqā²⁴¹, a Christian philosopher from Egypt, refutes the objection that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was amorous: ‘There was no carnal desire in

237 (West, 2001).

238 (Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesmen*, 1961), p. 234.

239 Narrated by Nasā’ī, Book on Conduct with Wives, Chapter on love for wives (hadith no. 3940); declared authentic by Ibn Ḥajar.

240 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Menses, Chapter on physical relations with a woman in menses (hadith no. 296).

241 Naẓmī Lūqā (1920-1987). Egyptian author. He served as Professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts at Ain Shams University, Cairo. He has a number

any of his wives whom he married and brought together, which is what they (some non-Muslims) like to believe. In every marriage, it was either a gateway to mercy, forgiveness, and honourable conciliation, or to win over the tribal factions and bring hearts together through intermarriage. (Most of these wives) would still have been new to the fledgling faith. As such, this was a sort of repayment of duty or a repayment for status and leadership. It would not have been easy for a Messenger—and army commander and state governor—to increase his responsibilities, resulting in differences over petit issues that would naturally occur in a household of many women. However, this was what was needed—either as a responsibility to the call of Islam or as a duty to gallantry.²⁴²

Even more explicit is the assessment offered by the Orientalist Laura Veccia Vaglieri²⁴³: ‘Enemies of Islam have insisted in depicting Muhammad as a sensual individual and a dissolute man, trying to find in his marriages evidence of a weak character not consistent with his mission. They refuse to take into consideration the fact that during those years of his life when by nature the sexual urge is strongest, although he lived in a society like that of the Arabs where the institution of marriage was almost non-existent, where polygamy was the rule, and where divorce was very easy indeed, he was married to one woman alone, Khadijah, who was much older than himself, and that for twenty-five years he was her faithful, loving husband. Only when she died and when he was already fifty years old did he marry again and more than once. Each of these marriages had a social or a political reason, for he wanted through the women he married to honour pious women, or to establish marriage relations with other clans and tribes for the purpose of opening the way for the propagation of Islam. With the sole exception of ‘Āishah, he married women who were neither virgins, nor young, nor beautiful. Was this sensuality?’

He was man and not God, and the desire of a son may also have brought him to other marriages, for unfortunately the ones born to Khadijah had died. Without too many resources, he took upon his shoulders the heavy burden of maintaining a large family, but always, in spite of the number of his wives, he observed a perfect equality towards all of them, nor did he ever use in respect of any one of them the right of separation. He acted

of published works on fiction and poetry. In 1959, he was excommunicated by the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church for writing a book that spoke favourably of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. (with additions from translator).

242 (Lūqā, 1977), pp. 110–111.

243 Laura Veccia Vaglieri (1893–1989). Italian Orientalist and a pioneer of Arabic and Islamic studies in Italy. She taught at the Naples Eastern University. She has a number of books and articles on Islam and the Arabic language.

under the sanction of revered ancient patriarchs like Moses and others, to whose plural marriages nobody seems to take exception.’²⁴⁴

What is important to understand here is the background behind the missionary objection against the Messenger ﷺ. Throughout its history, the Church considered the physical relationship between man and woman to be abased, even when a man is married to a single wife. According to the Church, the body’s carnal instincts are incompatible with the requirements of the soul. St Clement of Alexandria²⁴⁵ ‘warned that married coitus remained sinless only if delight was restrained and confined.’²⁴⁶

Evidence of the Prophet of Islam’s steadfastness to the truth has not been matched by the types of accusations levelled at him by his opponents. The two issues are on opposite sides, though not in the same issue. Compared to the accusations, the evidence supporting his steadfastness is numerically superior and far more robust in detail.

244 (Veccia Vaglieri, *An Interpretation of Islam*, 2004), pp. 72-73.

245 Clement of Alexandria (150-215). Church Father and major early theologian. He was notably influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. His works include his famous trilogy of books: *Protrepticus* (Exhortation); *Paedagogus* (Tutor); and *Stromata* (Miscellanies) (with additions from translator).

246 (Skolnick & Skolnick, 2009), p. 163.

The Egyptian Reverend Father Mark Aziz says, ‘Christianity encourages spousal chastity. Though marriage permits physical intimacy between a man and his wife, Christianity encourages virtue even inside marriage. Voluntary chastity is achievable through fasts and mutual consent (1 Corinthians 7:5). Likewise, voluntary chastity assists involuntary chastity, like when one’s spouse is travelling, ill, old, preoccupied with work, or dead’ (Abū Ghadaḥ, 2003), p. 11 .

In other words, death is helpful for spouses to attain chastity! For the Church’s position on sex and the superiority of the Islamic faith in this regard, see (Armstrong, *The Gospel According to Woman*, 1996).

Rejecting Muhammad's Prophethood without rejecting the Prophethood of the Christian Prophets is invalid

In Cordoba, Spain, at the Second Islamic Christian Conference for Dialogue held in 1977, Dr Miguel Hernández²⁴⁷ presented a paper titled *Socio-Political Roots of the Fabricated Image Christians Created for the Prophet Muhammad*. It contains the following passage: 'There is no person in history who was subjected to the type of unjust vilification and degradation like Muhammad. Ideas about Islam, the Muslims, and their Prophet Muhammad remained governed by myths, right up to the 12th century. Direct interaction between the two sets of groups did not stop these myths from spreading.

I have previously highlighted that, historically and psychologically, it is impossible to suggest Muhammad was a fraud without rejecting the same notion for Abraham, Moses, and the other Hebrew bearers of Prophethood who are considered Prophets.

It had never transpired that any Prophet clearly and decisively suggested that the world of Prophethood was now shut. With regards to the Jewish nation, Prophethood was still open so long as they awaited Christ the Saviour.

As for Christians, there is no definitive suggestion that Prophethood had ended. Any person reading the Epistles of Paul, Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation would know that well.²⁴⁸

Personally speaking, I am so certain that Muhammad is a Prophet that I attempted to explain this in a study I conducted in 1968 that, even from a Christian religious perspective, he should be considered a true Prophet.²⁴⁹

247 Translator's note: Miguel Cruz Hernández (1920-2020). Spanish politician, philosopher, and Orientalist. He was Mayor of Salamanca and Governor of Albacete during Franco's rule. He lectured at the University of Salamanca.

248 There are passages in the New Testament speaking of Prophets who lived after Jesus was raised to heaven. See Acts 11:26-28, 13:1, and 15:32.

249 ('Abd al-Wahhāb, *Ikhtilāfāt fī Tarājīm al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas wa-Taṭawwurat Hāmmah fī al-Masīhiyyah*, 1987/1407 AH), pp. 63-64.

What about the Christian and Biblical conception of Jesus?

No fair-minded researcher would deny that the Gospels offer a number of praiseworthy traits for Jesus ~~✠~~ from his biography, such as his kindness, treating sinners with goodness, and his humility. However, the fine attributes mentioned in the Church Gospels, which Missionaries reduced the image of Jesus to, are extremely selective. A person holistically analysing the image of Jesus as offered by the Gospels would be shocked by some awful traits their authors mentioned, which in turn prevent the attribute of righteousness—let alone inerrancy—to be associated with any supposedly godly person. In his book—considered the Holy Book for American Deists in 19th Century America—Elihu Palmer²⁵⁰ said, ‘...yet it is believed that the New Testament presents us with immoral deviations from principle in the personal conduct of him whom the Christian world has declared to be the only begotten son of God. The followers of Jesus, however, have made up for his personal deficiency, and the Christian world has not been deficient in the number of fanatic phlebotomists disposed to destroy the moral and political plethora of the human race. Christians and Deists have sometimes coincided in their opinion that Jesus was a good character. This opinion, so far as it was acceded to by some of the first unbelievers, was either the result of ignorance, or an effect of fear. The Christian exalted this same Jesus into the character of a God, and, by their doctrines, made him equal to the Creator; such a circumstance struck terror into the human mind, and the idea of associating crimes with the divinity prevented independent inquiry. The New Testament, so far as proof of this kind goes, furnishes us with facts and circumstances which make a case strongly against the moral character of Jesus. Beside the general duplicity which characterises his answers to the multitude, he is guilty also of sending his disciples secretly

250 Elihu Palmer (1764-1806). American thinker and political activist. He was a pioneer of Deism in America. He started off with religious education to become a priest, but he switched to Deism after graduation. His works include *The Temple of Reason*.

to take and carry away a colt which did not belong either to him or his disciples. The doing of such an act in modern times would be denominated theft, even by pious Christians themselves. He is guilty of sowing the seeds of domestic and national warfare, and declaring that no man could be his disciple without hating his father and his mother; and also that he came not to send peace but a sword...'²⁵¹

The list of moral objections against the Jesus of the Church of is lengthy:

1. A fragmented personality

The most salient feature of Jesus in the Gospels is that it is impossible to craft a unified, unfragmented image of him. The statements and actions that are reported of Jesus do not grant us a coherent picture of a singularly dimensioned personality, the actions of which are borne out of a single purpose. Examples of this fragmentation are many:

- Extreme confusion pervades the personality of Jesus vis-à-vis his stance on the Law of Moses. In a number of instances, he emphasises that he calls to respect the Law of Moses *in toto*: 'Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."'²⁵² However, he also said, 'The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John'²⁵³, i.e., there would be no law after John ~~the Baptist~~. Additionally, Jesus refused to enact punishment on the female fornicator, even though the Law of Moses commanded it.²⁵⁴
- Jesus said, 'Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid.'²⁵⁵ But he also said, 'If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.'²⁵⁶
- Jesus said, 'Honour your father and mother, and love your neighbour as yourself.'²⁵⁷ But he also said, 'For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.'²⁵⁸

251 (Palmer E., 1806), pp. 203-204.

252 Matthew 23:1-3.

253 Luke 16:16.

254 See John 8:3-11.

255 John 8:14.

256 John 6:31.

257 Matthew 19:19.

258 Matthew 10:35.

This fragmentation is due to the Gospels conflicting in their narrations with one another, as well as a single story's sources conflicting with each other in each and every Gospel.

ii. Falling short of conveying the divine message

Jesus wilfully mystified the religious discourse he had brought, so that nobody except for his students could understand it: 'Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the Sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear." The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."²⁵⁹ This is very surprising, for wisdom dictates that the conveying of the divine message should be accompanied by a good explanation, and its knowledge should be capable of being disseminated—not accompanied by mystery and confusion.

iii. Invalidity of the content in the moral message

The most salient moral feature in Jesus's message—in addition to the self-contradictions that this message contains—is the call that man should adopt a defeatist attitude in front of his adversaries and subjugate himself in front of tyrants. If not, then the final thing he should do is run away from confronting these situations. Charles Bradlaugh²⁶⁰ says, 'What did Jesus teach? Manly self-reliant resistance of wrong, and practise of right? No; the key-stone of his whole teaching may be found in the text, "Blessed are the

This manifested in Jesus preventing one of his students from burying his deceased father. See Luke 9:59-60.

259 Matthew 13:2-12.

260 Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891). English politician and Member of Parliament for Northampton. He was a leading figure for secularism in his era. He partook in debating, as well as writing a number of books, in critique of Christianity.

poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”²⁶¹ Is poverty of spirit the chief amongst virtues, that Jesus gives it the prime place in his teaching? Is poverty of spirit a virtue at all? Surely not. Manliness of spirit, honesty of spirit, fullness of rightful purpose, these are virtues; but poverty of spirit is a crime. When men are poor in spirit then the proud and haughty in spirit oppress and trample upon them, but when men are true in spirit and determined (as true men should be) to resist and prevent evil, wrong, and injustice whenever they can, then is there greater opportunity for happiness here, and no lesser fitness for the enjoyment of further happiness, in some may-be heaven, hereafter.²⁶²

iv. Disobedience to his mother

Jesus never addressed his mother with phrases such as ‘My mother’ or ‘My dear mother’. Rather, what is reported is that when his mother had once informed him that the wine had finished for the participants in a wedding, he angrily rebuked her, “‘Woman, why do you involve me?’”²⁶³

Though he did his best to free Jesus of blame, D.H. Stern uncovered the Hebraic background of the harsh words attributed to Jesus. He said, ‘Literally,’²⁶⁴ “What to me and to you, woman?” This translates into Greek a Hebrew idiom found a number of times in the *Tanakh*, and we are thereby reminded of the Hebraic roots necessary to proper understanding of the New Testament. The meaning of this idiom is flexible; renderings include: “What do we have in common?” “Why do you involve me?” “You must not tell me what to do,” “Why turn to me?” “Your concern is not mine.”²⁶⁵

v. Racism

The Bible asserts that Jesus likened the Gentiles (non-Israelites) to dogs: ‘Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take

261 Matthew 5:3.

262 (Bradlaugh, 1895), p. 1

263 John 2:4.

264 The literal English translation of the Greek words attributed to Jesus in John 2:4.

265 (Stern. 1992), p. 163.

the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."²⁶⁶ This is a clear vilification of Gentiles. In fact, the Jesus of the Church chose the word 'small dog,' not just 'dog' (χυων, χυναριον) "chyōn, chynarion", to underscore the vilification of those who do not share his lineage to Jacob (Israel) ~~✠~~.²⁶⁷

St John Chrysostom (John the Golden Mouthed)²⁶⁸ made a comment on this degrading and racist passage that Jesus directed at the woman, having initially wilfully ignored her out of contempt for her: 'And when he vouchsafed her a word, then He smote her more sharply than by His silence.'²⁶⁹

As for St Origen²⁷⁰, a Church scholar and one of its greatest theologians, his note on the passage from Matthew reads: 'The Canaanite woman, therefore, because of her race was not worthy even to receive an answer from Jesus, who acknowledged that He had not been sent by the Father for any other thing than to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, a lost race of souls possessed of clear vision; but, because of her resolution and of having worshipped Jesus as Son of God, she obtains an answer, which reproaches her with baseness of birth and exhibits the measure of her worthiness, namely, that she was worthy of crumbs as the little dogs, but not of the loaves. But when she with intensified resolution, accepting the saying of Jesus, puts forth the claim to obtain crumbs even as a little dog, and acknowledges that the masters are of a nobler race, then she gets a second answer, which

266 Matthew 15:21-26.

267 A reader might find it surprising that a book considered holy by Christians carries this description of Gentiles. It is more surprising is that, apart from an extreme minority, Christianity in its entire history was never accepted as a religion by the Israelites. In truth, the New Testament—as described by Frederick Grant in his book *The Gospels: Their Origin and Their Growth* (p. 17)—is a hodgepodge assemblage of disparate texts from a variety of sources. This is why it comprises of self-contradictions and passages that clearly go against Church claims and Christian beliefs. Knowing this to be the case, the footnotes of *The New American Bible* adopted the position that Matthew 15:26—in its original context—is a contemptuous reference to Christian Jews who rejected the idea that Jesus's religious call should be shared with Gentiles.

268 John Chrysostom (347-407). Early Church Father and Archbishop of Constantinople. Chrysostom means 'Golden Mouthed' in Greek, alluding to his eloquence. He was known for public speaking, anti-Semitism, and asceticism. He is considered an important saint in many Christian denominations, including the Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran Churches (with additions from translator).

269 (Chrysostom, 1844)

270 Origen (184-253). One of the early Church Fathers. He wrote on theology, philosophy, and textual criticism of the Bible. He has a number of hermeneutical and polemical works to his name.

bears testimony to her faith as great, and a promise that it shall be done unto her as she wills.²⁷¹

vi. Describing Gentiles as pigs

Jesus accused Gentiles (which obviously includes Christian women and men) of being swine: ‘Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.’²⁷² Hagner²⁷³ stated that ‘...these words are among the most derogatory in the Jewish vocabulary...’²⁷⁴ In his seminal work *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament*, Samuel Lachs²⁷⁵ said in response to his own question, ‘Who are the dogs and the swine in this passage? It is well known that they are both used as derogatory terms for the Gentiles. Within the context of the passage we can be more specific.’²⁷⁶

vii. Lying

On one occasion, Jesus said to his disciples, “You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee. However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.²⁷⁷ In several later manuscripts, Christian scribes were compelled to add the word οὐπω, oupō, ‘not yet’, so the passage reads, ‘I am not going up to this festival *yet*’. However, the word is omitted in the best critical Greek version of the New Testament text today, namely NA28 and UBS5. It is likewise omitted from the most important modern translations, such as *The New International Version* and *The New American Bible*.

271 (Origen, 1890), 9/445-446.

272 Matthew 7:6.

273 Donald A. Hagner (b. 1936). Professor of the New Testament at the Fuller Theological Seminary for 30 years.

274 (Hagner, 2000), 1/171; quoted by (Bird, 2006), p. 49.

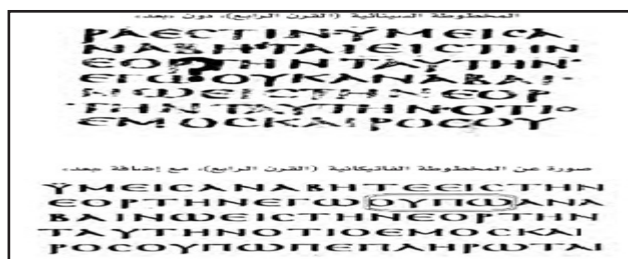
275 Samuel Lachs (1926-2000). Jewish rabbi. He was Professor of History of Religions at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania. He taught at other institutions and was a visiting lecturer in other places across America.

276 (Lachs, 1987), p. 139.

277 John 7:8-10.



Codex Sinaiticus (4th century) without the term ‘yet’



Codex Vaticanus (4th century) with the addition of the term ‘yet’

Another of Jesus’s lies—as per the narrative of the Church—is that he informed his students that John is the awaited Elijah.²⁷⁸ However, he denied this elsewhere.²⁷⁹

viii. Weakness

The Gospels believe that Jesus was sent to die on the Cross, and that he told his students, ‘I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more’²⁸⁰—except that he ran off when the time of crucifixion actually came, and that he prayed to God to relieve him of this tribulation. He used to offer prayer in extreme fear, so much so that an angel from heaven descended to keep him firm.²⁸¹ Many scribes felt forced to omit the passage ‘An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him’²⁸² from the Gospel of Luke, as it is a description that is

278 ‘Ilyās’ in the Qur’an. See Matthew 17:12-13.

279 See John 1:21.

280 Luke 12:4.

281 ‘An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him’ (Luke 22:43).

282 Luke 22:43.

detrimental to the entire story of self-sacrifice and bravery on the part of Jesus. This uninspiring image of Jesus compelled the famous French thinker Voltaire²⁸³ to compare Jesus of the Church with the Prophet of Islam ﷺ: ‘At least Muhammad wrote and went to battle. Jesus was able to neither write nor defend himself. Muhammad had the courage of Alexander the Great with the spirit of Numa; whereas your Jesus sweated blood and water once he had been condemned by his judges.’²⁸⁴

ix. Being foulmouthed and from the dwellers of the Fire

Jesus said, ‘But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister “Raca” is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, “You fool!” will be in danger of the fire of hell.’²⁸⁵ However, Jesus himself described his disciples and adversaries as ‘foolish’²⁸⁶, and that they are ‘blind fools’²⁸⁷, ‘brood of vipers’²⁸⁸, and ‘pigs’²⁸⁹. He described Herod as a ‘fox’.²⁹⁰ A Jewish man who was employed in legal matters lashed out against him when he saw Jesus being excessively vulgar with Pharisee Jews—he said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.’²⁹¹ In return, Jesus swore at him and his disciples: ‘Woe to you experts in the law.’²⁹² He described his contemporaries as ‘adulterous’²⁹³ because they did not believe in him. Some translators acknowledged the crudeness of the phrase and thus altered it to ‘evil and sinful people’. This is despite the fact that the Greek text uses the term μοιχαλῖς, *moichalis*, ‘adulterous’—also used in Matthew 12:39—the counterpart of which in English translations is ‘adulterous’.

283 Translator’s note: François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778). French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher. Known as Voltaire, he was renowned for his critique of religion, including Christianity and Islam. He was an advocate of freedom of speech, civil liberties, and the separation of church and state.

284 (Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 1827), 2/1207.

285 Matthew 5:22.

286 Luke 11:40.

287 Matthew 23:17.

288 Matthew 3:7.

289 Matthew 7:6.

290 Luke 13:32.

291 Luke 11:45.

292 Luke 11:52.

293 Matthew 16:4.

x. Hypocrisy

Jesus said, ‘But I tell you, if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be judged.’²⁹⁴ However, he himself became angry at others: ‘Jesus was angry as he looked at the people, and he felt very sad because they were stubborn. Then he said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” The man held out his hand and it was healed.’²⁹⁵

One might interject here by suggesting that Matthew 5:22 refers to anger in favour of falsehood, not anger overall, and therefore there is no contradiction. The answer to this contention is that the word falsehood (εἰκῆ or εἰκη, eikēi, ‘in vain, erroneous, at random’) is not part of the original text. Rather, it was added by later scribes. It is not present in the oldest manuscripts such as P⁶⁴ and P⁶⁷, the original Codex Sinaiticus, and Codex Vaticanus. This is why NA²⁸ and UBS⁵ had it removed. The most important modern translations, such as *The New International Version* and *The New American Bible*, omit this as well.



A later scribe added the word ‘falsehood’ on the marginalia of the 4th century Codex Sinaiticus

One of the hypocrisies of the Church Messiah is that he requested his students to relinquish all their property²⁹⁶ at a time when he had a spacious residence of his own: ‘Later, as Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” were eating there with Jesus and his followers. Many people like this followed Jesus.’²⁹⁷

294 Matthew 5:22.

295 Mark 3:5.

296 Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 33:11, 11:41, 12:33, 14:33, and 18:22.

297 Mark 2:15.

xi. Being temperamental; exacting revenge even on nature

Jesus was once walking down on a path. When he saw a fig tree, he approached it and did something strange: ‘The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.’²⁹⁸ It was not the fruit season, so why would Jesus supplicate against the tree for it to never bear fruit again?

xii. Betrayal of his disciples

Jesus encouraged his students to acquire swords: “If you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.”²⁹⁹ Yet, when the enemies surrounded him, he asserted that the usage of swords is a condemnable act, for he criticised a student of his by saying, “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”³⁰⁰

xiii. Ignorance of holy texts

Christians believe that Jesus was perfect in knowledge. The Gospel authors attempted to portray Jesus as someone who knew the scriptural texts of the Old Testament and its true meanings. Yet, analysing the many places Jesus borrowed from, or referred to, the Old Testament—as the Gospels assert—would reveal how ignorant the Christians’ Messiah was vis-à-vis the holy texts. Raymond Brown³⁰¹, a Catholic priest and famed critic, dedicates a section in his book *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* to scope how much of the Holy Scriptures Jesus had knowledge of. He mentioned a number of unique features of these borrowings:

- **The first unique feature:** Brown says, “There are instances where the citation of Scripture attributed to Jesus involves a mistake. We

298 Mark 11:12-14.

299 Luke 22:36.

300 Matthew 26:52.

301 Raymond E. Brown (1928-1998). Biblical scholar and specialist in Johannine literature in the New Testament. He was considered one of the leading Catholic scholars in America in the 20th century. His most important works include *The Birth of the Messiah* and *The Death of the Messiah*.

shall not bother with incidents where he cites Scripture and no such citation can be found in the OT, e.g., John 7:38³⁰² 303

Even though Jesus referred to the book (ἡ γραφή *ēgraphē*), the writing/book has no presence in the scriptures pre-Jesus. Brown attempted to bypass this problem: ‘...there is always the possibility that he is citing a book that has not been preserved for us, or that he is citing a targum (Aramaic translation) or some other popular form of the biblical text.’³⁰⁴ However, the very suggestion that this is a case of borrowing from sources we do not know of is injurious to the Holy Scriptures, as it implies distortion by way of removal. On the other hand, if the idea is that a translation is being cited, then this implies distortion by way of alteration.

The primary example that demonstrates this feature is the lamentation of the Pharisee Jews by Jesus: “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”³⁰⁵ What is odd here is that while he was rebuking the Jews for their ignorance, Jesus made an error when he borrowed. Brown said, ‘In Mark 2:26 Jesus says that David entered the house of God *when Abiathar was high priest* and ate the loaves of the presence. The scene is found in Sam 21:2-7³⁰⁶; there, however, the high priest is not Abiathar but Ahimel-ech. Matt and Luke seem to have noticed the difficulty, for their accounts of this saying of Jesus omit any mention of the high priest (Matt 12:4³⁰⁷;

302 ‘Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’

303 (Brown R. E., *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994), p. 37.

304 Ibid.

305 Mark 2:25-26.

306 Translator’s note: ‘David answered Ahimelek the priest, “The king sent me on a mission and said to me, ‘No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.’ As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. Now then, what have you to hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find.” But the priest answered David, “I don’t have any ordinary bread to hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here—provided the men have kept themselves from women.” David replied, “Indeed women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men’s bodies are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!” So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the Lord and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away. Now one of Saul’s servants was there that day, detained before the Lord; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul’s chief shepherd.’

307 Translator’s note: ‘He entered the house of God, and he and his companions

Luke 6:4³⁰⁸). Abiathar was better known than Ahimelech and more closely associated with David in later life, so that popular tradition may have easily confused the two. But if the reading is genuine, Jesus shows no awareness that he is following an inaccurate version of the story.³⁰⁹

Some writers were compelled to remove the word *του* (tou) ‘the’ before ‘high priest’³¹⁰, so that the meaning does not imply that the story occurred in the period when Abiathar was the high priest.³¹¹ In fact, to discard the problem altogether, some important manuscripts have this segment entirely removed.³¹²

- **The second feature:** Brown says, ‘There are instances where the citation of Scripture attributed to Jesus shows no critical sense but reflects the imprecise ideas of his time.’³¹³

The example that he gives in this regard is what the author of the Gospel of Mark ascribes to Jesus: ‘David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’”’³¹⁴ This passage is a reference to Psalms 1:110³¹⁵. Almost all scholars—including Catholics—deny its ascription to David ~~✠~~.³¹⁶

- **The third feature:** Brown says, ‘In still other instances the citations of Scripture attributed to Jesus employ a hermeneutic that would be judged marginal today, at least by the majority of scholars for whom

ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.’

308 Translator’s note: ‘He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.’

309 (Brown R. E., *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994), pp. 37-38

310 Examples include the scribes of Codex Alexandrinus (designated A; 5th century), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (designated C; 5th century), and Codex Koridethi (designated Θ; 9th century).

311 (Cranfield, 1959), p. 116.

312 Examples include the Codex Bezae (designated D; 5th century), Codex Washingtonianus (designated W; 5th century), and Codex Sinaiticus Syriacus (designated syr^s; 4th century).

313 (Brown R. E., *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994), p. 38.

314 Mark 12:36.

315 Translator’s note: ‘The Lord says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

316 (Brown R. E., *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994), pp. 38-39.

the basic norm is the literal sense, i.e., the sense that the original authors intended to convey by what they wrote.’³¹⁷

The example he gives is that Jesus defended himself after the Jews accused him of claiming to be god³¹⁸ by using Psalms 82:6³¹⁹ as evidence. The interpretation ascribed to Jesus is incorrect, because the text of Psalms claims that it is the judges who have been called the ‘sons of God’. This carries no defence for Jesus from his claim to deity, as sonship here means choosing, not that he has an equal partner.

I would add the following from the showcases of ignorance on the part of Jesus:

- ‘No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.’³²⁰
 - ◆ This is incorrect, as the Torah explicitly states that Elijah ascended to the heavens before Jesus.³²¹
- ‘And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form...’
 - ◆ This is in spite of the Jews having heard from and seen the Lord on many occasions.

‘Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice.’³²²

In addition, Moses ~~✙~~ and the dozens of people with him ‘saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky’.³²³

317 (Brown R. E., *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994), p. 39.

318 See John 10:33-36: “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, I have said you are ‘gods’”? If he called them “gods”, to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”

319 Translator’s note: “I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.”

320 John 3:13.

321 2 Kings 2:11: ‘As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.’

322 Deuteronomy 4:12.

323 Exodus 24:10.

Summary

- The testimonies of those who were with the Prophet of Islam ﷺ paint a first-hand account of the features of a human personality that possessed every virtuous trait.
- The greatest characteristic of Prophethood is honesty. Honesty was something attested to for the Prophet of Islam ﷺ by his contemporaries—both his closest Companions and his remote enemies.
- The state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ with his Lord—in worship in general, and in his supplication and his humility in front of his God in particular—was far removed from someone whose state would be indicative of charlatanry and fraud.
- Rejecting the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ after learning about his career necessitates the rejection of Prophethood for every other man who ascribed himself to, or was associated with, Prophethood.
- The attributes of Jesus, as portrayed by the Gospels of the Christians, negate the attribute of righteousness from him, much less his ascription to Prophethood or divinity.

Further reading

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SECTION 3

Tangible Miracles of the Messenger ﷺ

﴿...they acknowledged the Messenger to be true, and
received clear proofs...﴾

(Qur'an, 3:86)

Prepare your proof before you argue.

(Jewish proverb)



Attestable miracles? Or mere rumours?

We need to raise the bar to a higher standard, beyond what only the most extreme of sceptics set out. This is not an attempt to win over die-hard sceptics, but rather out of consideration for a fair-minded researcher who is satisfied with only the brightest and clearest of proof. The supplementary facts and indicators fuse with one another to prevent even the slightest doubt that may detract from the Muhammadan Prophethood's claim to truthfulness. In order to achieve this, we—in addition to the stipulation of rigorous honesty—shall furnish the existence of inimitability. This will be achieved by presenting proofs of the supernatural in the life of Muhammad ﷺ in a manner that will quench the thirst of a wayfarer by night in his path to seek the reality of the Lord.

Mass transmission is the highest proof for the occurrence of the miracle

An objector might say, ‘I am not looking for any supposedly definitive proof that Muhammad is honest. I want signs in the form of the supernatural that break the natural order, which would truly be indicative of his Prophethood.’

To this, I say the following.

The reality of Prophethood (*nubuwwah*) has already been explained. As its linguistic structure and the essence of its meaning carry the connotation of informing (*inbāʾ*) about the Lord, every proof for the truthfulness of this informing process would be sufficient evidence to establish the honesty of what the Prophet is informing about.

As we are—for the purposes of this book—agreeing for argument’s sake with the adversary in the ultimate pursuit of certainty, we shall tackle the issue of the Messenger’s ﷺ material supernatural occurrences. We anticipate from the adversary the following typical objection: ‘I do not want a story that so and so narrates from so and so—maybe they erred or lied. What I want is historical testimony that cannot be touched by suspicion or doubt, nor has any connection with the honesty of narrators.’

The answer to this objection can be offered in a number of ways:

1. That a man now does not see the dispensation of a miracle with his own eyes does not prove that miracles are impossible to occur. Merely claiming that historical testimonies for the miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ are insufficient is not any evidence, though what such a claim would be evidence for is that the opponent has reached a high degree of scepticism. Historians do not acknowledge *argumentum ad ignorantiam*. A person seeking the truth would go with the proof wherever it inclines to and settles. As it is incorrect to reject historical testimony for the occurrence of some miracle in favour of an alternative that claims a particular miracle did not occur, the necessary course of action then would be to accept what the evidence is suggesting.

2. Islam is the only religion that is able to showcase a miracle that all people can see with their own eyes: the Qur'an. We shall discuss this at length later in this book.
3. It can be inferred from the statement of the objector that those hadith narrations that have not reached a large level of narrators cannot offer inferential knowledge, i.e., knowledge that is arrived at via some analysis and intellectual engagement.³²⁴ This is an issue that has some detail to it.

Hadiths are of two types vis-à-vis the numbers in their chains of transmission:

1. Mass-transmitted hadiths (*ahādīth mutawātirah*), which are defined as 'what a group of narrators—who cannot possibly have conspired to lie—report from a group likewise, and the source of their report is perceptible to the senses.' One of the most important conditions of a mass-transmitted narration is that each class (*tabaqah*) possesses such a large number of narrators that it would be usually impossible for them to agree to concocting some lie.
2. Solitary narrations (*ahādīth al-āḥād*)—narrations that are numerically less in terms of transmission than mass-transmitted narrations (*ahādīth mutawātirah*).

If the intention is that solitary narrations cannot offer certainty in and of themselves, that is correct. However, such an assertion comes with three caveats (which shall follow shortly). The caveats are of such a self-evident nature that the adversary should at least be trustworthy with himself to accept them. We observe many religious polemicists who, when the proofs of Islam's truthfulness are presented to them, set the bar of admissibility unusually high, which they would not do so in other issues. My perennial call for these people is to remind them that they must remain self-coherent.

So, we say to this person raising the objection—and any person researching Islam: 'Remain coherent with yourself and your methodology in all situations when passing judgement on the reports that you hear of. Stick by this method when passing judgement on any claim. Do not create a special pair of scales for Islam, carried by a spasming hand.'

The three caveats are:

³²⁴ There is some detail to whether and how a mass-transmitted hadith offers instinctive or deductive knowledge. For more, see (Ibn Hajar, *Nuzḥah al-Nazar fī Tawḍīḥ Nukhbah al-Fikar fī Muṣṭalah Ahl al-Athar*, 2001/1422 AH), pp. 41-41.

- a. Solitary narrations that come from trustworthy narrators and are free from defects offer high probability of truth, not low-degree probability. With this, such reports would be worthier of acceptance than those that conflict with them. The existence of an authentic narration is an invitation to incline towards believing the authenticity of this Prophethood. There is no scope here to maintain the semblance of impartiality by not adopting a position.
- b. It is correct that solitary reports on their own do not offer certainty.³²⁵ However, when passing judgement on reports, we all adhere to—in practice—the position that, when solitary reports are surrounded by corroborative indicators, they can offer certainty. If a report is narrated in a particular fashion, or the accompanying external signs affirming the report support it, we would usually say that such a report offers certainty. This is why Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘The majority are of the position that knowledge varies as per the variance in the state of those reporting it. Sometimes, the report of a small number would provide the type of knowledge that would necessitate their truthfulness; on other occasions, the report of a group of people who are many times their number does not provide that knowledge. This is why the correct position is that a solitary report can provide certainty when it is surrounded by corroborative indicators that offer certainty.’³²⁶ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī—the leader of hadith disciplines in his time—said, ‘As per the chosen position, solitary reports can provide theoretical knowledge if they are supported by corroborative indicators.’³²⁷

Passing judgement on the narrations of miracles is of this same type. The scrutiny of such reports would be referred back to the specialists of the subject matter. Even though they have been reported by a few narrators, many miracle reports offer such a degree of contentment to the heart that treating their narrators to be liars could be an obstinance perpetrated by those who themselves are untrustworthy.³²⁸

325 ‘No person with intellect would say that a mere solitary report, or the report of any individual, offers certainty’ (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Sharḥ al-Aṣbahāniyyah*, 2010/1430 AH), p. 545.

326 (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 1995), 18/40.

327 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukhbah al-Fikar fī Muṣṭalah Ahl al-Athar*, 2006/1427 AH), p. 81.

328 For examples of books that aggregate narrations on miracles, see (Bayhaqī, 1405 AH) as an example from an early scholar; from the contemporaries, see

- c. No researcher can reject mass transmission. If he does so, it would be impossible for him to believe in any news. There would be no scope for gaining knowledge left for him, apart from what he sees with his own eyes—this is beyond the capabilities of anybody.³²⁹ In fact, he should not even believe in his own senses, because the knowledge one acquires through what his senses feed back to him falls under the definition of solitary or mass-transmitted testimony. It is his logic that judges the authenticity—or lack thereof—of reports, not his senses. Senses are but witnesses in the court of logic. We would tell our opponent, ‘It is a fact that there are mass-transmitted miracles in the reports of the *sīrah*. Denying the truthfulness of these reports must be preceded by the denial of the authority of mass-transmitted reports, which is insanity as it empties man from every acquired piece of knowledge.’

Mass-transmission (*tawātur*) is the narration of a group from a group—and likewise until the end of its chain—in such numbers that it would be logically impossible for all the narrators to have conspired to lie about it, and that the narration relies on a perceptible event. It is of two types: literal mass-transmission, which is when the wording is as such, like the phrase of the American civil rights activists Martin Luther King: ‘I have a dream’; and technical mass-transmission, which is the mass-transmission of a meaning shared across multiple different reports, even though we cannot say for certain that the specific individual events of those individual reports are authentic, such as the wisdom of Socrates and the courage of Alexander the Great.

With this definition, mass-transmission is evidence that we all would acknowledge in our lives, such as the existence of China and Mozambique for those of us who have not visited them, as the sheer vast numbers of those who attest to their existence cannot be plausibly rejected as a lie.

Research into the narrations on the miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ establish that they—in *toto*—reach the level of technical mass-transmission. In other words, norms would dictate that such a huge number of narrators could not have conspired to lie when reporting the supernatural events of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

(Bāshanfar, 1997/1418 AH).

329 More than 95% of our knowledge is sourced from reports.

Technical mass transmission for the miracles of the Prophet of Islam

Reports on the miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ are like any other event that spreads far and wide, for which we would have no doubt in its occurrence. The multitude of narrations reporting on the generosity of a generous man, the courage of a brave person, and the brilliance of an intelligent being—all from multiple routes and for disparate events—offers certainty in the truthfulness of those reports. From a practical standpoint, this is a matter that nobody would dispute in our lives: We pass judgement on many people all the time and are convinced that they are of a certain disposition, even though we do not possess the complete knowledge of the events that shaped any one particular person as such; rather, it is the combination of information that is reported of that person which cannot all be considered lies.

One of the best ways of examining your objection against Islam—to assess whether it is reasonable or pathological—is to compare the bar you set for the evidence in favour of Islam with the bar you set when researching other issues.

The material miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, which vary from one another, are in the hundreds. Speaking on the idea that there is no path to accept the miracles of Moses and Jesus without acknowledging the miracles of Muhammad ﷺ, Ibn al-Qayyim says, ‘If this is the situation with the miracles of these two Messengers—that they are believed in spite of the passage of a very long time, that the constituent parts of their respective nations have long spun off into individual sects, and that the material signs of their miracles have long gone—what then of the Prophethood of a person whose miracles and signs exceed a thousand, are relatively recent, their narrators are from the most truthful and upright of the creation, and their transmission is established in mass numbers on a multi-generational scale?’³³⁰

330 (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighāthah al-Lahfān min Maṣāyid al-Shayṭān*), 2/347.

Included within the genus of Prophetic miracles is the mass transmission of certain types, such as the Prophet's prayers being answered. Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ said, 'That the supplication of the Prophet ﷺ was accepted in relation to a number of people—both for and against—is mass-transmitted overall and known by necessity.'³³¹

The burden of evidence would now be on those who deny this mass transmission. They should disprove his honesty with clear proofs that put a stop in the combination of these narrations being indicative of the truthful nature of the Prophetic miracle. No matter how much a sceptic challenges the individual reports as forgeries, he cannot feasibly reject the entire genus of miracles emanating from the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

In an invaluable footnote on the multitude of Prophetic miracles, Ibn Hajar said, 'Their totality offers certainty for the many supernatural events having occurred at his hands—just as Ḥātim's³³² generosity and 'Alī's courage are considered to be certain. This is despite the fact that individual miracles might be relatively less certain, as they are reported through solitary routes. Yet, even those miracles can become famous and spread far and wide if they—individually—are reported by large numbers of people. According to scholars of the traditions and those dedicated to the study of biographies and reports, many of these reports offer certainty, even though they may not reach this level in the eyes of others, as they are not specialists in this. In fact, were someone to posit that most of these events offer certainty at a deductive level, it would not be a far-fetched assumption. This is because there is no doubt that the narrators of these reports in every class (*ṭabaqah*) related these reports overall; it is not known of any of the Companions or those after them that they conflicted with the narrators in what they narrated in this topic, nor is it known that they censured them for the same. As such, those who are silent (i.e., did not critique those reports) would be like those who spoke in support (i.e., of the authenticity of the miracle reports overall), for the confluence of all these people is immune from peddling falsehood. Assuming that some did condemn or censure some reports that have been narrated in this regard, then that would be only because the honesty of a narrator was being deliberated, or because he was accused of being a liar, or because his precision, his association with a poor memory, or that he may have committed a mistake was being

331 (Yahṣubī, *Al-Shifā' bi-Ta'rif Huqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, 2002/1423 AH), p 321.

332 Translator's note: Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī (d. 578). Arab poet hailing from the Ṭayy tribe. Stories about his extreme generosity immortalised him in Arabic literature. His son, 'Adī ibn Ḥātim, was a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ.

investigated. In other words, one would not find anybody censuring the actual content of those narrations on miracles.³³³

The summary of Ibn Ḥajar's statement is as follows:

- Reports on the miracles of the Messenger ﷺ are widespread in a way that most certainly prevent the notion that they are all fabricated.
- According to specialists in the discipline of compiling and assessing chains of transmission, many of these miracles are established with certainty.
- After analysing and assessing the state of the narration, one can come to the determination that most reports on miracles through authentic solitary chains also provide epistemic certainty. This is because it has never been proven that the Companions condemned each other for narrating miracles. This is especially poignant when considering the fact that they did conflict with one another in other narrations pertaining to laws and other issues. Subsequently, in spite of the default ruling that solitary narrations can only offer less-than-certain information—and that too when they are free of injurious defects—they most surely can offer certainty when they are surrounded by affirmative indicators.

The penalty for denying the authority of technical mass transmission (*tawātur maʿnawī*) vis-à-vis the miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is to doubt the sum of all of our acquired knowledge. That is because the highest of all knowledge is based on mass transmission.

333 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*), 7/392-393.

The mass transmission of specific miracles

Reports on the miracles of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ are not confined to the mass transmission of supernatural events occurring at his hands. Rather, a number of specific miracles have been proven to be mass-transmitted—i.e., reported by a large number of Companions, and from them a large number of Followers (*Tābi‘ūn*), until the authors of the compilations collecting the Prophetic tradition—from the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. The numbers qualifying such reports for mass transmission are established in each generational class of their narrators.

A. ‘AMMĀR’S MURDER AND THE TRANSGRESSIVE CROWD

The statement ‘You shall be killed by the transgressive crowd,’ said by the Messenger ﷺ to the Companion ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه, is mass transmitted. It is known with certainty that ‘Ammār was killed by the camp of Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه in 37 AH, well after the passing of the Messenger ﷺ. His group had transgressed against ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, the Caliph to whom the oath of allegiance was sworn.

Suyūṭī said, ‘This hadith is mass transmitted (*mutawātir*), narrated by over ten Companions’³³⁴: Khuzaymah ibn Thābit, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, his son ‘Abdullāh, Umm Salamah, Abū Hurayrah, Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Amr ibn Ḥazm, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Ayyūb, Abū Rāfi‘, Abū al-Yusr, and Ibn Mas‘ūd.³³⁵

It is important to remember here that this hadith is reported by the Sunnis with a large group of narrators in every class, in spite of their substantial difference with the Shiites. It is known that Shiites use this narration to detract from the group of Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه. It was reported in mass-transmitted fashion during the era of the Umayyad Caliphate, in which this same report was used to condemn its tyrannical rulers. Why would this report be allowed to survive without condemnation from those rulers?

Also consider the fact that, when Mu‘āwiyah was reminded of this hadith speaking on the killing of ‘Ammār at his hands, he did not deny its authenticity. It is narrated from Ḥanzalah ibn Khuwaylid al-‘Anazī: ‘While I was with Mu‘āwiyah, a couple of men were fighting over the head of ‘Ammār. Each one was claiming, “I killed him.” ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr remarked, “May one of you be content with giving it up to the other, for I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying, ‘He will be killed by the transgressive crowd.’” Mu‘āwiyah said, “So why are you with us?” He replied, “My father complained about me to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, so he said, ‘Obey your father as long as you live and do not disobey him.’ That is why I am with you. I am not fighting though.”’³³⁶

In fact, it is established that ‘Amr ibn Ḥazm came to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and said, ‘Ammār has been killed, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “He

334 (Suyūṭī, *Al-Khaṣā’is al-Kubrā*, 1985/1405 AH), 2/212.

335 From the marginalia of *Musnad Aḥmad* (Arnā’ūt edition), 11/44.

336 Narrated by Aḥmad in his *Musnad* (hadith no. 6538); declared authentic by Aḥmad Shākir.

will be killed by the transgressive crowd.” So ‘Amr came to Mu‘āwiyah and said, “‘Ammār has been killed.” Mu‘āwiyah said, “‘Ammār has been killed—so what?” He said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying, ‘He will be killed by the transgressive crowd.’” Mu‘āwiyah said, “May you slip up on your own urine—we killed him? No, he was killed by ‘Alī and his disciples.”³³⁷ As such, the argument between the group of ‘Ammār and their enemies was not about the truthfulness of the narration, but rather about how the hadith’s meaning is to be understood.

337 Reported by Aḥmad (hadiths no. 17931 and 24259).

B. A TREE TRUNK'S WEeping SAUDADE

Jābir ؓ narrates: 'The Mosque roof was built over trunks of date palms (i.e., they were the pillars). When the pulpit was made for him and he first was on it, we heard an emerging weeping from that trunk, like a heavily pregnant she-camel. The Prophet ﷺ came and placed his hand on it, and it became silent.'³³⁸

Anas ؓ added, 'When the Prophet of Allah ﷺ sat on the pulpit, the trunk started bellowing like an ox. The Mosque was shaken by its bellowing, which was out of sadness for missing the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ descended from the pulpit and made his way to it. He embraced it as it was bellowing. As the Messenger of Allah ﷺ embraced it, it fell silent.'³³⁹

This event was reported by a large group of Companions. The author of *Nazm al-Mutanāthir min al-Ḥadīth al-Mutawātir* said, 'He (i.e., Suyūṭī) brought it in *al-Azhār* from the narrations of Sahl ibn Sa'd, Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, Ibn 'Umar, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Buraydah, Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Anas, Umm Salamah, and Muṭṭalib ibn Abī Wadā'ah al-Sahmī—ten people... In *al-Shifā*, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ said, "This matter is famous and widespread. The report on it is mass transmitted and has been narrated by the authors of the authentic works. Of the Companions, over ten narrated it..." Then he mentioned the aforementioned ten. In his *al-Amālī*, Ibn Ḥajar said, "Its routes are many." Bayhaqī said, "Its matter is clear—it was reported by the later generations from the earlier generations. Listing the hadiths in its regard is almost affectatious (due to their widespread fame)."

In *Fath al-Bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar said, "The tree trunk's weeping saudade and the splitting of the Moon have both been reported extensively, providing certainty to those who are familiar with the routes of the hadith—though perhaps not to others who may not possess expertise in this regard. And God knows best." In the commentary on 'Irāqī's *Alfiyyah al-Siyar*, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī said, "The tree trunk's weeping saudade has been transmitted from many authentic routes, which overall offer technical mass

338 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the signs of Prophethood in Islam (hadith no. 3392).

339 Narrated by Ibn Khuzaymah, Book of Friday Prayer, Chapter on the mention of the reason for which the trunk bellowed (hadith no. 1777); authentic as per the condition of Muslim.

transmission...” Then he mentioned that it has been related by a group of around twenty Companions.³⁴⁰

340 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*), 6/592.

Objection: Did the Qur'an not negate miracles from the Prophet of Islam?

Missionaries assume that the Qur'an negated every material miracle from the Prophet of Islam ﷺ because—they claim—it attested that the sole miracle of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is the Qur'an. They cited the following Qur'anic verse as proof: 'They said to the Prophet, "We will never believe in you until you cause a spring to gush forth from the Earth for us. Or until you have a garden of palm trees and vineyards, and cause rivers to flow abundantly in it. Or cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you have claimed. Or bring Allah and the angels before us, face to face. Or until you have a house of gold. Or you ascend into heaven; even then, we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book that we can read." Say, "Glory be to my Lord. What am I anything other than a human Messenger?" And nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance comes to them except their statement: "Has Allah sent a human as a Messenger?"' (Qur'an, 17:90-94)

The answer to this objection can be offered in multiple ways:

1. The Qur'anic answer did not categorically rule out all miracles. Rather, it is connected to one of three issues:
 - ♦ Rejecting demands for specific miracles, not that the genus of miracles is negated. The context is indicative of this: 'They said to the Prophet, "We will never believe in you until you cause a spring to gush forth from the Earth for us. Or until you have a garden of palm trees and vineyards, and cause rivers to flow abundantly in it. Or cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you have claimed. Or bring Allah and the angels before us, face to face. Or until you have a house of gold. Or you ascend into heaven..."' (Qur'an, 17:90-93)

- ♦ Their demands for the supernatural were out of belligerence, not a genuine search for truth. This is reflected in the statement of Allah ﷻ vis-à-vis this group: ‘And We have truly set forth every kind of lesson for humanity in this Qur’an, yet most people persist in disbelief. They said to the Prophet, “We will never believe in you until you cause a spring to gush forth from the Earth for us. Or until you have a garden of palm trees and vineyards, and cause rivers to flow abundantly in it. Or cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you have claimed. Or bring Allah and the angels before us, face to face. Or until you have a house of gold. Or you ascend into heaven; even then, we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book that we can read.” Say, “Glory be to my Lord. What am I anything other than a human Messenger?”’ (Qur’an, 17:90-93) Their obstinance is established in the statement of God ﷻ in their relation to them: ‘And whenever they see a sign, they make fun of it saying, “This is nothing but pure magic.”’ (Qur’an, 37:14-15) This verse proves miracles (‘sign’ in the verse means miracle) and reveals their stubbornness of mocking opponents. This is why the Qur’an explicated that signs (miracles) are warded off from those who are not honestly seeking guidance. God ﷻ says, ‘I will turn away from My signs those who act unjustly with arrogance in the land. And even if they were to see every sign, they still would not believe in them. If they see the Right Path, they will not take it. But if they see a crooked path, they will follow it. This is because they denied Our signs and were heedless of them.’ (Qur’an, 7:146)

In his exegesis of the Qur’an, Rāzī said, ‘The Qur’an reported that the Jews asked the Messenger ﷺ that a book be sent down on them from Heaven. He ﷺ mentioned thereafter that they are not seeking that for guidance, but out of obstinance and belligerence... The explanation of this is that the establishment of any content is reliant on the establishment of proof; when proof is then present and complete, demanding another proof would be a demand for excess, and a showcase of stubbornness and belligerence. God ﷻ does as He wishes and judges as He deems fit. There is therefore no possible objection anyone can lay unto Him as to why He gave one Messenger a particular miracle but gave another Messenger another miracle.’³⁴¹

- Some supernatural acts that the disbelievers demanded were, in reality, punishments brought forward for the deniers. He ﷻ said,

341 (Rāzī F. a.-D., *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 1981/1401 AH), 11/110.

‘And remember when they prayed, “O Allah, if this is indeed the truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from the sky or overcome us with a painful punishment.”’ (Qur’an, 8:32) He ﷺ also said, ‘Say, O Prophet, “Indeed, I stand on a clear proof from my Lord, yet you have denied it. That torment you seek to hasten is not within my power. It is only Allah Who decides. He declares the truth and He is the Best of Judges.” Say also, “If what you seek to hasten were within my power, the matter between us would have already been settled. But Allah knows the wrongdoers best.”’ (Qur’an, 6:57-58) As such, the polytheists’ demand was actually a type of belittling of Prophethood, a stubbornness that was void of any seeking of truth, and a call for punishment—hastened for them—that can bring ruin to the people of a Prophet should it befall them. An example of this is the blast (*ṣayḥah*) of the people of Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام—when his people demanded for a sign, though they were messing around and being obstinate: “They replied, “You are simply bewitched. You are only a human being like us, so bring forth a sign if what you say is true”’ (Qur’an, 26:153-154); when the sign did manifest itself in front of them, they made a mockery of it and so were visited by a terminating punishment: ‘Ṣāliḥ said, “Here is a she-camel. She will have her turn to drink as you have yours, each on an appointed day. And do not ever touch her with harm, or you will be overtaken by the torment of a tremendous day.” But they killed her, then they became regretful. So the punishment overtook them. Surely in this is a sign. Yet most of them would not believe.’ (Qur’an, 26:155-158)

It is authentically related that Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘The Quraysh said to the Prophet ﷺ, “Call upon Allah, your Lord, that He makes Ṣafā into gold for us. We will then believe in you.” He said, “And you will really believe?” They said, “Yes.” So he supplicated to Allah. Gabriel came to him and said, “Your Lord confers peace on you and says, ‘If you wish, Ṣafā will become gold for them; but whoever from them then disbelieves, I will send him such a punishment that I shall not punish anybody in the worlds like it. But if you wish, I will open the doors of repentance and mercy for them.”’ He said, “O my Lord, the door of repentance and mercy.”’³⁴²

Regarding the statement of God ﷻ: ‘Nothing keeps Us from sending the demanded signs except that they had already been denied by earlier peoples. And We gave Thamūd the she-camel as a clear sign...’ (Qur’an, 17:59), Shawkānī said, “The meaning is, “Nothing keeps Us from sending

342 Narrated by Aḥmad (hadith no. 2166); and Ḥākim (hadith no. 3278)—he said, ‘Authentic per the condition of Muslim; [Bukhārī and Muslim] did not bring it.’

the signs they asked for except that the ancients had already denied them. So, if We send them and these people disbelieve in them, they would be hastened to punishment and would not be given a chance, as per the custom of God with His servants...” The summary is this: “What prevents Us from sending the signs that they proposed was that any such proposal that is accompanied by denial causes complete destruction. We have ensured that We would delay the affair of those to whom Muhammad ﷺ was sent until the Day of Resurrection.”³⁴³

2. The Qur'an itself establishes material miracles for the Messenger ﷺ. He ﷺ said, ‘Whenever a sign comes to them, they say, “We will never believe until we receive what Allah’s Messengers received.” Allah knows best where to place His message. The wicked will soon be overwhelmed by humiliation from Allah and a severe punishment for their evil plots.’ (Qur’an, 6:124) As such, the sign indicative of Prophethood had come to them, but they demanded specific miracles of the exact same type of previous Prophets, or those that are even more wondrous. He ﷺ said, ‘The Hour has drawn near and the Moon was split. Yet, whenever they see a sign, they turn away, saying, “Same old magic.”’ (Qur’an, 54:1-2) He also said, ‘How will Allah guide a people who chose to disbelieve after they had believed, acknowledged the Messenger to be true, and received clear proofs? For Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.’ (Qur’an, 3:86) Clear proofs are the proofs of Prophethood, which are attested to by their reports in relation to the stories of the Prophets: ‘That was because their Messengers used to come to them with clear proofs, but they persisted in disbelief. So, Allah seized them. Surely, He is All-Powerful, severe in punishment’ (Qur’an, 40:22); ‘Indeed, We sent Our Messengers with clear proofs’ (Qur’an, 57:25); ‘And We gave ‘Īsā, son of Maryam, clear proofs and supported him with the holy spirit’ (Qur’an, 2:87); and, ‘Then they took the calf for worship after receiving clear signs.’ (Qur’an, 4:153) Likewise, the Qur'an explicitly mentioned some signs for Muhammad’s Prophethood ﷺ—God said, ‘Who does more wrong than those who fabricate lies against Allah or deny His signs? Indeed, the wrongdoers will never succeed.’ (Qur’an, 6:21)
3. That the Qur'an did not respond to the specific miracle demands cannot be employed by Christians as evidence against Muslims for the notion that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ has no miracle to his name.

343 (Shawkānī), 3/243.

Christians believe that Jesus has miracles, despite the fact that Jesus had rejected undertaking miracles that were asked of him:

- ♦ ‘So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”³⁴⁴ The answer offered by Jesus was ambiguous—he did not respond to their request. When he repeated the ambiguous answer, as a result ‘...many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.’³⁴⁵
- ♦ In the story of Jesus being arrested, it states, ‘When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.’³⁴⁶
- ♦ In the same story, it read: ‘The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, “Prophesy! Who hit you?” And they said many other insulting things to him.’³⁴⁷ Jesus was thus asked about answering from the unseen, but he did not do so.³⁴⁸

344 John 6:30-31.

345 John 6:66.

346 Luke 23:8-11.

347 Luke 22:63-65.

348 Miracles are not a stipulation for Prophethood according to Christians. On John the Baptist (the Prophet Yaḥyā ﷺ), Jesus said that he is ‘more than a Prophet’ (Luke 7:26), yet he did not have a miracle to his name—his followers said to Jesus, ‘John never performed a sign’ (John 10:41).

What about the miracles of the Biblical Jesus?

The problems of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels do not stop at the fact that they lack chains of transmission, which demote them to the narrations of unknown figures, notwithstanding the clear contradictions between the reports of those miracles. Rather, they extend far beyond that.

Did Jesus have miracles?

Mark reads: ‘The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.”’³⁴⁹ He therefore negated any miracle occurring. The author of the Gospel of Matthew, who relied on the Gospel of Mark (as is the view of most scholars), distorted the text to: “A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.”³⁵⁰ This shows a promise was made that Jesus will produce one miracle, which is his Resurrection. All of this conflicts with the multiple miracles that are mentioned, which occurred prior to Jesus’s alleged Resurrection.

There is also a contradiction because of what Paul said. It is inferred from his statement: ‘Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles’³⁵¹ that Jesus did not have any miracles to his name, which goes against the Gospels.

Jesus’s inability to carry out miracles

The author of the Gospel of Mark informs us that when Jesus was in his city, ‘He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick

349 Mark 8:11-12.

350 Matthew 16:4.

351 1 Corinthians 1:22-23.

people and heal them.³⁵² This passage is strange from the viewpoint that Jesus—being a God—is unable to perform miracles.

Were Jesus's miracles in public or private?

We comprehend from the stories of the Gospels that Jesus's miracles were performed in front of people. However, we read in John the following: 'After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him.'³⁵³ This is proof for his miracles being performed in such privacy that not even his brothers believed in him.

Jesus's confusion over the reality of his miracles

In Luke, it states that Jesus heard that the daughter of the synagogue leader died. It reads: "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."³⁵⁴ So how can a young woman be returned to life when she is not dead to begin with? Note that it is understood from Mark 5:41-42 and Matthew 9:25 that the young woman was literally sleeping—there is no mention of her soul returning to her. This demonstrates that the author of the Gospel of Luke attempted to convert the story of Mark into a miracle, even if it led to a contradiction.

The obnoxious nature of Jesus's miracles

The Gospels mention miracles by Jesus that are of an obscene nature. One of these is that the first miracle by Jesus was at a wedding. The miracle was that when the wine had finished, he changed their water to wine to intoxicate the attendees even more.³⁵⁵ This is in spite of the prohibition of intoxication in the Old Testament³⁵⁶ and Paul saying that those who intoxicate themselves 'will not inherit the kingdom of God'.³⁵⁷

Another obscene miracle is that there was a woman who suffered from bleeding: 'When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the

352 Mark 6:5.

353 John 7:1-5.

354 Luke 8:55.

355 See John 2:1-11.

356 See Proverbs 20:1; Leviticus 10:9.

357 Galatians 5:21.

crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.³⁵⁸ The author of the Gospel of Matthew figured that the Mark version of this story was incredulous as it portrays Jesus as a person replete with miraculous power that can be drained from him without his knowledge. As such, the author of the Gospel of Matthew copied what Mark said, but altered the story to suggest that Jesus was aware of the miracle before it had occurred, and that the woman was cured after Jesus spoke, not when she first touched him: ‘Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.’³⁵⁹

Jesus ascribing the miracles bestowed upon him to the favour of God

Christians cite Jesus’s miracles to prove his divinity. They argue that only a god can carry out supernatural acts. Notwithstanding the fact that this is a fallacious argument given that many Prophets have demonstrated miracles yet are not considered divine, the Gospels are clear in that Jesus did not carry out these miracles through any innate power; rather, it was only through the bounty of God that He had bestowed on him. John reads: ‘So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”’³⁶⁰

In fact, Peter himself clarified that Jesus’s miracles are the workings of God, not the workings of Jesus: ‘Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.’³⁶¹

This is what was understood by those who were present when Jesus’s miracles occurred: ‘After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they

358 Mark 5:27-33.

359 Matthew 9:20-22.

360 John 11:41-42.

361 Acts 2:22.

began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”³⁶²
In other words, in the eyes of his people, these miracles proved his Prophet-
hood, not his divinity, as is now claimed.

362 John 6:14.

Summary

- Reports of the Prophet of Islam's ﷺ miracles are established via the means of solitary hadiths, which are surrounded by corroborative indicators that offer certainty for their occurrence.
- It is established that a number of specific miracles have been mass-transmitted from the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.
- *In toto*, the Prophet of Islam's ﷺ miracles that have reached us are of mass-transmission status.
- Denial of something that is mass-transmitted automatically necessitates that the human mind cannot acquire any knowledge through the medium of reports.
- The Qur'an rejected replying to demands for specific miracles. It offered other miracles through the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.
- Jesus's miracles lack historical basis, some of which are of obnoxious content and are most certainly not indicative of his divinity, as is claimed by Christians.

Further reading

Nursî, S. (2007). *Prophet Muhammad and His Miracles*. Lanham, Maryland: Tughra Books.

Ibn Kathîr. (2001). *Book of Evidence: The Miracles of the Prophet*. (A. M. Mziwa, & I. Ramadhan, Trans.) Mansoura, Egypt: Dâr al-Ghad.



SECTION 4

What Has the World Gained from the Mission of Muhammad ﷺ?

﴿We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy, and good news for those who fully submit.﴾

(Qur'an, 16:89)

Arab science and philosophy helped rescue the Christian world from ignorance and made possible the very idea of the West.

(Jonathan Lyons)



Evidence-based enlightenment? Or misguided darkness?

A Muslim would say, ‘The mission of Prophethood is to convey the message of guidance and light. If the doors to empower it on Earth are opened up, its sweet fruits will manifest, revealing their pure roots. The Islamic call to faith was empowered for centuries on Earth, albeit with varying degrees of adherence to the revealed scripture by those claiming it. The Islamic message etched its words and letters into the walls of history. Considering the fruits it bore, this opens up a new gateway to assess the truthfulness of this message as per the statement attributed to Jesus: “By their fruit you will recognise them”³⁶³; or as the Qur’an itself says, ‘The fertile land produces abundantly by the Will of its Lord, whereas the infertile land hardly produces anything. This is how We vary Our lessons to those who are thankful.’ (Qur’an, 7:58)

The end-goal of such an assessment is to verify the reality of the Muhammadan Prophethood. What the British author John Davenport³⁶⁴ said was absolutely right, in the introduction to his book *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran*: “If we consider what the Arabs before Mohammed’s appearance and what they became after it—if we reflect, moreover, upon the enthusiasm kindled and kept alive by his doctrine in the breasts of more than one hundred and sixty millions of the human race—we cannot but feel that to withhold our admiration from so extraordinary and so great a man would be the most flagrant injustice, and that to attribute his advent to mere blind chance would be to doubt the over-ruling power of Divine Providence.”³⁶⁵

This is affirmed by the Orientalist priest, Montgomery Watt, in a book he wrote on the Prophetic biography from the Qur’an: ‘Personally I am convinced that Muhammad was sincere in believing that what came to

363 Matthew 7:16.

364 Translator’s note: John Davenport (1789-1877). British Orientalist and author. He is best known for his book *An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran*.

365 (Davenport, 1881), p. IV.

him as Revelation (*wahy*) was not the product of conscious thought on his part. I consider that Muhammad was truly a Prophet, and think that we Christians should admit this on the basis of the Christian principle that “by their fruits you will know them”, since through the centuries Islam has produced many upright and saintly people. If he is a Prophet, too, then in accordance with the Christian doctrine that the Holy Spirit spoke by the Prophets, the Qur’an may be accepted as of divine origin.’³⁶⁶

On the other hand, a non-Muslim would say, ‘Islam is a desert religion, founded on the love for egoism and the control of faraway lands. It was spread by Bedouins who waged war on neighbouring civilisations—they plundered them and gutted their knowledge and values. There is nothing that needs to be said after that—Islam is nothing. It in fact screams of a type of Bedouinism infesting the human intellect.’

History is the best arbiter for the two positions. It testifies not with the tongue of subjectivity or emotion, but with the voice of actual stories, events, and precedent. It carries the answer to the question: Did the world regress—after it had progressed—because of Islam? Or did Islam elevate the mind and soul, and revived the lifeless entities around us?

366 (Watt, *Muhammad’s Mecca: History in the Quran*, 1988); quoted by (Aydin, 2002), p. 178.

History speaks

Discussing Islam and its influence in history attracts two objections. The first is an *oriental* one: the weakness of Muslims today who sit on the periphery; the second is *occidental*: the supposed feats of Muslim civilisations are isolated and a distortion of history.

The first objection comes in the context of the weakness of Muslims at a specific moment in time. It disregards that there was—without any doubt—an Islamic civilisation. According to all historians, it was the greatest of civilisations until the 14th century. I am unaware of any serious historian who would dispute this.

History testifies that the Prophetic mission served as a barrier from the overcoming of the Dark Ages in Muslim lands, also known as the Middle Ages. In his famous book about Islam and its distorted image in the West, Norman Daniel³⁶⁷ says, '[For the Arabs], they see no Middle Age, only an age of glory followed by a slow deterioration...into the wholly foreign and degrading colonialism of the Western powers, whose civilization was alien, and unwelcome on any count.'³⁶⁸

The second objection overlooks the fundamental stereotype of Islam in the West's mind. The reality is stated in the *Encyclopedia of Enlightenment*: 'After all, since the Middle Ages Islam had been the chief enemy of the Church, perceived only through the fog of prejudice and distortion.'³⁶⁹

This subject is vast and nebulous. A solitary chapter in this book would not do it justice. We shall therefore restrict ourselves to the most salient questions that preoccupy men today: the praiseworthy influences one can hope for from a heavenly-inspired message. For this, we shall answer the following questions:

367 Translator's note: Norman Daniel (d. 1992). Historian on the Middle Ages and intercultural relations. His other works include *Heroes and Saracens* and *Islam: Past Influence and Future Challenges*.

368 (Daniel, 1975), p. 2.

369 (Delon, 2001), p. 714.

- Did the world generally change for the better with the spread of Islam?
- Did Islam have a positive impact in cleansing the beliefs of deviant people from paganism and polytheism?
- Did Islam contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge associated with the then beliefs of Jews and Christians?
- Did Islam elevate the value of knowledge in both Muslim and neighbouring lands?
- Did Islam contribute to establishing and spreading verity, not superstition, vis-à-vis the natural world?
- Did Islam elevate the value of the woman, or did it cause it to regress?

Guidance and light

A prominent Orientalist historian described Johann Reiske³⁷⁰ as being ‘brilliant’ and ‘the first well-known Arabist that Germany has produced.’³⁷¹ In the 18th century, Reiske arrived at the view that a materialistic historical interpretation for the success of the Muhammadan mission must be rejected. He argued that it completely defied any interpretation by the laws of the material world, and it rejected being contextualised by the norms of history. Such an assessment by Reiske provoked the Catholic Church, which eventually persecuted him and sought to prevent him from teaching in spite of his intellectual distinction.³⁷²

One of the most epic features of the Prophetic call’s divinity is that, in a backdrop of darkness without light and an Earth that was barren and infertile, it opened up the door to guidance. In relation to His Prophet, He ﷺ said, ‘We have sent you, O Prophet, only as a mercy for the whole world.’ (Qur’an, 21:107) On his message, He said, ‘O humanity, indeed there has come to you a warning from your Lord, a cure for what is in the hearts, a guide, and a mercy for the believers.’ (Qur’an, 10:57) As such, Islam was a message to bring people out from the engulfing darkness to the brightness of good, divine light, and a rich cultivation that yields its harvest all the time. It was a call that was not paved for by material means; rather, it leapfrogged the process of gradual emergence and did not look back. It thus opened up its fresh horizons for a new order in the world.

Anthropologists say that the Western world entered the Dark Ages, commonly known as the Middle Ages, in the 5th century, shortly after Christianity switched from being a persecuted minority to becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire. Historians agree that the Muhammadan Prophethood sparked a fire of light in the Orient—its people never

370 Johann Reiske (1712-1774). German Orientalist and language scholar. He edited a number of important works.

371 (Fück, 1955), p. 108.

372 (Fück, 1955), pp. 108-123.

knew the darkness that had engulfed the West. Rather, what they created was an age of science, knowledge, discovery, and industry.

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ was sent at a time when the Jews did not have any meaningful political power on Earth; the flagbearers of civilisation in the world back then were the Christians. With that said, what was the state of Christians then? Isaac Taylor³⁷³ answers: ‘What Mahomet and his caliphs found in all directions, whither their cimeters cut a path for them, was a superstition so abject, an idolatry so gross and shameless, church doctrines so arrogant, so dissolute and so puerile, that the strong-minded Arabians felt themselves inspired anew as God’s Messengers to reprove the errors of the world, and authorized as God’s avengers to punish apostate Christendom. The son of the bond-woman was let loose from his deserts, to “mock” and to chastise the son of the free-woman.’³⁷⁴

The huge accomplishment of Islam—the religious call started off by one man—in changing the trajectory of the world compelled Montgomery Watt to say, ‘The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of his achievement’³⁷⁵

It was a historical phenomenon that could never have been doubted, for its effects were soon etched into the annals of history. It was one man—not known for any academic study or authorship—who changed a nation of herders, flock tenders, and primitive merchants to bearers of knowledge and guidance.

Islam converted the Arab’s state of primitiveness into a fresh outlook for the universal that became the pinnacle of accomplishment. It was founded on two rock-solid fundamentals: firstly, the belief that the Lord alone possesses the highest dominion in creation and providence; and secondly, travelling the Earth for discovery, construction, and sharing prosperity.

Islam represented a revolution for knowledge and action, even for non-Muslims. It moved them away from things distracted from the greater questions of existence—such as the narrowness of tribalism and extreme indulgences in ritualism—to the vastness of the universe and the potential of human existence. This demanded rational principles of thought, the forging of diplomatic relationships between nations, and hearts that aspired to become God’s successors on Earth. It was Islam that opened up the arenas of analytical thought and hope for Jews and Christians, in

373 Isaac Taylor (1787-1865). English philosopher and historian.

374 (Taylor I., 1840), 1/364-365.

The *slave woman’s son* i.e., Hagar’s progeny (the Ishmaelites, who are Arabs, i.e. Muslims), as opposed to the *free woman’s son* i.e., Sarah’s progeny (the Israelites, or Christians for the purposes of this passage).

375 (Watt, *Muhammad at Madina*, 1981), p. 335.

ways far more pronounced than what they had inherited from their own ancients. The influence of Islam had touched the Christians of Andalusia in the 3rd century AH in a profound way. In his book *Indiculus Luminosus* (*The Little Letter of Lofty Eloquence*) in 854/240 AH, Paul Albar (Mozarab³⁷⁶ Alvaro) of Cordoba said, ‘My fellow Christians delight in the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the works of Muslim theologians and philosophers, not in order to refute them, but to acquire a correct and elegant Arabic style. Where today can a layman be found who reads the Latin commentaries on Holy Scriptures? Who is there that studies the Gospels, the Prophets, the Apostles? Alas! The young Christians who are most conspicuous for their talents have no knowledge of any literature or language save the Arabic; they read and study with avidity Arabic books; they amass whole libraries of them at a vast cost, and they everywhere sing the praises of Arabian lore. On the other hand, at the mention of Christian books they disdainfully protest that such works are unworthy of their notice. The pity of it! Christians have forgotten their own tongue, and scarce one in a thousand can be found able to compose in fair Latin a letter to a friend! But when it comes to writing Arabic, how many there are who can express themselves in that language with the greatest elegance, and even compose verses which surpass in formal correctness those of the Arabs themselves!’³⁷⁷

The Islamic outlook was controlled by a balance between the obligation of conveying its message to others, and the prohibition of forcing others to accept it when attempting to convince them. This is what made Islam a message that was subjectable to analysis by non-Muslims: They could benefit from its good so long as they wished, without being forced to accept the entire faith.³⁷⁸

This is why those who wanted to stay on their Christian faith did so, though all of them were shaped—to varying degrees—by the civilisation of the Qur’an. These civilisations that flourished under the Islamic world—after having stagnated or strayed away from uprightness³⁷⁹—was largely because of the influence of Muslim civilisation. It was Islam that pushed

376 Translator’s note: A Mozarab—taken from the Arabic term *musta‘rab* (meaning arabianised or arabicised)—refers to an Iberian Christian who lived under Muslim rule, especially in the early part of Umayyad rule following the Muslim conquests there.

377 (Makdisi, 1990), p. 330.

378 Islam is a call to the whole religion as per the final message. However, it is unlawful to force people to adopt Islam. Also, whoever adopts only part of Islam would not be a Muslim.

379 Translator’s note: The uprightness referred to here means social, political, economic, etc., but not religious, as that would be—in the author’s view, or any Muslim for that matter—the domain of Islam alone.

them to abandon deviance, reduce the urge for believing in the fantastical, and adopt new methods in analysis, critique, and innovation. Even though they did not settle on the path of monotheism or agree to the rituals of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, they imbibed at least part of the Islamic spirit.

In addition, the allure of the unique intellectual Islamic environment of openness and free-thinking had a profound influence on the Jews, resulting in their golden era under the umbrella of the Islamic state. In this regard, as he spoke on the Jews of Baghdad in the 18th century, the Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela³⁸⁰ wrote, 'In Baghdad there are about 40,000 Jews, and they dwell in security, prosperity and honour under the great Caliph, and amongst them are great sages...' ³⁸¹ He praised the Abbasid Caliph in glowing terms: 'There the great king, Al Abbasi the Caliph (Hafiz), holds his court, and he is kind unto Israel, and many belonging to the people of Israel are his attendants; he knows all languages, and is well versed in the law of Israel. He reads and writes the holy language (Hebrew).'³⁸²

Raymond P. Scheindlin³⁸³, Professor of Medieval Hebrew Literature, articulated the historical state of Jews under Islamic rule by stating, 'The Jews did not blunder into the Muslim world as immigrants or exiles. They were part of the population of Western Asia, North Africa, and Iberia, now called al-Andalus, where medieval Arabo-Islamic culture developed as an amalgamation of Arabic language, Islamic religion, and local culture. Jews were an intrinsic part of this culture. They resembled their neighbours in their names, dress, and language as well as in most other features of their culture, except, of course, in their religion, their sense of their own distinctness, their view of history, and the institutional affiliations that flowed from these differences.'³⁸⁴

380 Benjamin of Tudela (1130-1173). Jewish explorer. He travelled to many places in Africa, Europe, and Asia. He was polylingual.

381 (Adler, 1907), p. 39.

382 (Adler, 1907), p. 35.

383 Raymond P. Scheindlin (b. 1940). Professor of Medieval Hebrew Literature at The Jewish Theological Seminary, and director of the Shalom Spiegel Institute of Medieval Hebrew Poetry. His works include *A Short History of the Jewish People*.

384 (Scheindlin, 2002), p. 317.

Monotheism and the glorification of God

In its pursuit to reaffirm the belief of monotheism, the Muhammadan message did not believe it was a theologically unprecedented call. Rather, it emphasised that monotheism is the message of all past Prophets. At their core, the call of the Prophets is a call to divine monotheism. This theme is repeated in the call's fundamentals and implications. He ﷺ says, 'We never sent a Messenger before you without revealing to him: "There is no god worthy of worship except Me, so worship Me alone."' (Qur'an, 21:25) The Qur'an underscored that it is a set of clear verses on the same theme: to renew true monotheism that had become extinct due to man taking partners unto God, whether in providence or in legislation.

The Qur'an lamented the Makkan polytheists for assuming partners unto God: 'Yet they associate the demons with Allah in worship, even though He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters out of ignorance. Glorified and Exalted is He above what they claim.' (Qur'an, 6:100) He ﷺ also criticises the Jews and Christians for the same wrong: 'They have taken their rabbis and monks as well as the Messiah, son of Mary, as lords besides Allah, even though they were commanded to worship none but One God. There is no god worthy of worship except Him. Glorified is He above what they associate with Him.' (Qur'an, 9:31) So, did the call of the Qur'an resonate with the pagans, Jews, and Christians?

History makes it clear that, for the first pages of the 7th century and onwards, Islam spread monotheism in the Arabian Peninsula, and used a proofs-based approach to confront the paganistic rituals across Asia and Africa. Its inhabitants were delivered from the myths of idols to embrace the belief of faith in One God, Who is above materialism and its shortcomings, and above earthliness and its darkness. Their souls were connected to the heavens without any intermediary in the form of man or stone.

Historians also attest to the great influence of monotheism on the Jews of the Middle Ages, who were in direct contact with Islamic civilisation. Karaite Jews are the most conspicuous manifestation of the Islamic influence on the Jewish conceptualisation of monotheism.

Karaite Jews appeared in the 2nd century AH, founded by an Iraqi Jewish scholar by the name of Anan ben David (ʿAnān ibn Dāwūd). This sect rejects the Talmud and the rest of the Jewish oral tradition. Its leaders were influenced by Muslim religious debate and its dedication to divine transcendentalism, so much so that they stood firm against Jewish literature ascribing anthropomorphism to the divine, which was represented in their time by the book *Dimensions of the Body* (*Shiʿur Qomah* or *המזק רועיש*).³⁸⁵ Islamic law also influenced the laws of the Karaites.³⁸⁶ In summary, ‘Karaism was a product of Jewish experience under medieval Islam.’³⁸⁷

In similar fashion, Islamic monotheism influenced Rabbinic Judaism, which emerged victorious in its battle with the Karaites. Rabbinic Judaism today represents Orthodox Judaism. In the first centuries of Islam, many Jews travelled to Muslim lands thanks to the revival of religious and philosophical—and even linguistic—disciplines within the Jewish nation. This occurred during what is known as the Geonic Period.³⁸⁸ The writings of Maimonides³⁸⁹ were a reason for a large number of religious Jews abandoning a corporeal understanding of the God mentioned in the Torah, which was in direct contrast to the corporealism contained within the Torah itself. Despite his severe disputes with Islam, Maimonides acknowledges in one of his treatises³⁹⁰ that Islamic monotheism is pure and monumental without a speck of paganism. He says, ‘*But in the matter of the unity of God, they have no error at all.*’³⁹¹ He did, however, have a vigorous attitude with Christians, whom he branded as paganists. Maimonides was influenced by Islamic monotheism in his book *The Guide for the Perplexed*, so much so that the philosopher Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Razzāq said, ‘I am of those who consider Maimonides and his brothers as being from the philosophers of Islam.’³⁹² One contemporary who testified like Maimonides did is the Jew-

385 (Baskin & Seeskin, 2010), p. 404.

386 (Astren, 2004), p. 60.

387 (Ankori, 1959), p. 3.

388 Geonic period (589-1038). Named after *Geonim*, the heads of the rabbinic academies in Babylonia, Mesopotamia (with additions from translator).

389 Moses ben Maimon (Mūsā ibn Maymūn) (1138-1204). Philosopher, physician, and scholar of the Torah. Commonly known as Maimonides, he is considered the greatest intellectual Jewish personality of the Middle Ages, so much so that the phrase ‘From Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses’ is popular among Jews. He was born in Cordoba and died in Egypt. His works include the voluminous *Mishnah Torah*. He is also known by his Hebrew acronym, ‘Rambam’ (Hebrew: רמב"ם) (with additions from translator).

390 *Rambam’s Letter to Ovadiah the Convert*.

391 (Walzer & et al, 2006), p. 500.

392 (ʿAbd al-Razzāq, 1936/1355 AH), p. wāw (و).

ish Rabbi, Joseph Messas³⁹³—considered one of the most famous rabbis of the Islamic Maghreb—who said, ‘*There is no unity [of God] like the unity found in Islam*.’³⁹⁴

Likewise, there was another Jewish sect by the name of the ‘Īsawīs (or Isawites). Its affiliates were followers of a Jewish scholar by the name of Abū ‘Īsā al-Aṣḥānī, who lived in Persia during the reign of Ma‘mūn. One of the positions of this sect was acknowledging the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, though they also believed that his Prophethood was specific to the Arabs.³⁹⁵

Another Jewish rabbi and one of their great scholars who acknowledged the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ was Natan’el al-Fayyūmī³⁹⁶, author of the prominent book *Bustān al-‘Uqūl*³⁹⁷, in which he said, ‘Even before the Revelation of the Law (of Moses) He sent Prophets to the nations... And again after its Revelation nothing prevented Him from sending to them whom He wished that the world might not remain without religion... (The Qur’an) further said, “God desireth to declare these things unto you and direct you according to the ordinances of those who have gone before you.” (Qur’an, 4:26) That indicates that Mohammed was a Prophet to them (i.e. the Arabs)...’³⁹⁸

Jews believe that those Gentile children of Noah who act on the Seven Noahide Laws will gain salvation. These are laws that have appeared in the Talmud: ‘Do not kill; do not steal; do not worship false gods; do not fornicate; do not consume parts taken from a live animal; do not curse God; and establish courts of justice for evildoers.’³⁹⁹ By this angle, Jews—by their own standards—should acknowledge that Muslims are candidates for salvation—something that is already acknowledged by some Jews today.⁴⁰⁰

393 Joseph Messas (1892-1974). Rabbi in Algeria and Morocco, after which he was chief rabbi in Haifa.

394 (Messas), 2/66.

395 (Shahrastānī, 1992/1413 AH), 2/239-240.

396 Natan’el al-Fayyūmī or Nathanel ben Fayyumi (1090-1165). Jewish scholar and the eldest son of Rabbi Fayyumi. He was appointed the *Nagid* (leader) of Yemenite Jews halfway through the 12th century.

Translator’s note: *Nagid* was usually used for Sephardic Jews living under Muslim rule. The *Nagid* would be the representative for Jewish affairs.

397 This is a book on faith in God, the Last Day, Messiah the Saviour, penitence, obedience, and reliance.

398 (Ibn al-Fayyūmī, 1966), pp. 104-105.

399 Sanhedrin 58b.

400 An example of this is the Jewish rabbi Tovia Singer (b. 1960), known for his debates with Christians in the West.

The influence of Islamic monotheism also appeared in Christian history during the Byzantine Iconoclasm⁴⁰¹, after the Prophetic mission. In 726, the Byzantine Emperor Leo III⁴⁰² began destroying icons that were in his kingdom. In his notes on this revolution, Thomas Hodgkin⁴⁰³ wrote ‘that it was the contact with Mohammedanism which opened the eyes of Leo and the men who stood round his throne, ecclesiastics as well as laymen, to the degrading and idolatrous superstitions that had crept into the Church and were overlaying the life of a religion which, at its proclamation the purest and most spiritual, was fast becoming one of the most superstitious and materialistic that the world had ever seen.’⁴⁰⁴ As Roland Bainton⁴⁰⁵ said, ‘The Mohammedan invasion affected Christianity in other ways than by reducing territory. The Mohammedan example of allowing no images of the divine in human shape may have been the reason why some Christians began to object to the many religious images with which the churches had come to be filled.’⁴⁰⁶

During the European Renaissance, Islamic monotheism had triggered a wave of renunciation of the Christian Trinity in major thinkers. Such was Islam’s sway that *anybody* found to have rejected the Trinity was accused of being influenced by Islamic monotheism, even if they did not agree with Islam on the nature of Jesus. This was the case with Michael Servetus⁴⁰⁷, who is considered the most famous of the early thinkers who wrote in rebuttal of the Trinity. He dedicated his piece *De Trinitatis Erroribus* (*On the Errors of the Trinity*) to the subject. In *Christianismi Restitutio* (*The Restoration of Christianity*), he said, ‘The concept of the trinity is clearly refuted in the Qur’an. Namely, in Sūrahs Hūd, Yūsuf, and al-Qaṣaṣ, where Muhammad ﷺ taught the people that [the idea of] three deities or three entities sharing in divinity was not known amongst previous generations (i.e., Prophets Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya‘qūb).’⁴⁰⁸ Servetus was burned at the

401 An icon in Christianity is an artistic depiction of holy people.

402 Translator’s note: Leo III the Isaurian (685-741). Byzantine Emperor from 717 until 741, and founder of the Isaurian Dynasty. As a general, he defended Constantinople against the Umayyads.

403 Translator’s note: Thomas Hodgkin (1831-1913). British historian and biographer. He wrote on the history of the wars of the late Roman Empire.

404 (Hodgkin, 1895), 6/430.

405 Translator’s note: Roland Herbert Bainton (1894-1984). British-born American Protestant church historian.

406 Translator’s note: (Bainton, 1941), pp. 62-63.

407 Michael Servetus (1511-1553). Spanish theologian and polymath. He excelled in the field of medicine. His works include *Dialogorum de Trinitate* (*Dialogues on the Trinity*).

408 Quoted by (Friedman J., 1978), p. 19.

stake for heresy. Today, he is seen as one of the foremost symbols of the intellectual revolution in the West.

It is possible that Newton⁴⁰⁹—the most renowned scientist in recent European history and known for rejecting the Trinity—was also influenced by the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. Newton used to attend the lessons of the Orientalist Edward Pococke⁴¹⁰, a lecturer in Arabic language history and a biblical scholar. During his lifetime, it was made famous of him that he believed God sent Muhammad ﷺ to reveal the One True God to the Arabs.⁴¹¹

The English thinker Henry Stubbe⁴¹² was also impressed by Islamic monotheism. During the Enlightenment, Stubbe was one of the most consequential figures on movements that rejected both the Trinity and Deism. His thought had clearly influenced the conceptualisation of religion, as is mentioned in the works of his friend, John Locke⁴¹³, who was accused by his enemies of being a Muslim—or being influenced by the ‘Muhammadan Holy Book’ at least—for his rejection of the Trinity.⁴¹⁴ Locke had also befriended Isaac Newton in Cambridge. In defence of Islam, Stubbe wrote *An Account Of The Rise And Progress Of Mahometanism: With The Life Of Mahomet, And A Vindication Of Him And His Religion From The Calumnies Of The Christians* (1671). He was unable to publish it, as the Church did not wish to depict Islam in a positive manner; it was, however, secretly circulated. In it, he explicitly mentioned that the Prophet of Islam was sent by God to revive ancient Christianity.

One final major name that, in no uncertain terms, pointed to the important role of reformation that the Qur’anic theology played is Hans Küng⁴¹⁵, a Catholic scholar. His view has been summarised as such: ‘If Muhammad, as the Qur’an insists, recapitulated an original understanding of Jesus’

409 Translator’s note: Isaac Newton (1642-1727). English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, theologian, and author. He is widely recognised as a leading scholar in many scientific fields. He was also a key figure in the Enlightenment.

410 Edward Pococke (1604-1691). English priest, Orientalist, and scholar of Torah and Bible studies. His works include *Lexicon Heptaglotton*.

411 (Edleston, 1850), p. IXXX; quoted by (Snobelen, 1999), p. 388.

412 Henry Stubbe (1632-1676). Historian and mathematician. He was a leading figure in his era by arguing for religious tolerance. His works include *A Light Shining Out of Darkness*.

413 John Locke (1632-1704). Leading figure in empiricism and political philosophy for reform during the Enlightenment. His works include *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

414 (Edwards, 1696).

415 Hans Küng (1928-2021). Swiss Catholic priest and major theologian. He taught ecumenical theology at Tübingen. His works include *Islam: Past, Present and Future*.

message, the church needs to embrace Muhammad's insights in order to retrieve that which was obscured in its own Hellenistic development.⁴¹⁶ Therefore, according to him, it is possible that the Qur'an is an invitation to Jesus's original message.

Ultimately, it is important for us to appreciate that the idea of Islamic monotheism appearing in the sweltering desert of 7th century Arabia, far removed from theological debates that were in vogue at the time, is above any kind of historical explanation. The Orientalist Henry de Castries⁴¹⁷ said, 'The explosion of this faith, we repeat, is the primary event of the Prophet's life—it is the best guarantor of his sincerity.'⁴¹⁸

416 Translator's note: (Haddad & Haddad, 1995), p. 438.

417 Henry de La Croix de Castries (1850-1927). Explorer and cartographer. He founded the Historical Moroccan Foundation. His works include *Les Moralistes populaires de l'Islam*.

418 (De Castries, 1907), p. 37.

Biblical criticism

During the era of Prophethood, religious criticism of beliefs and the Holy Scriptures was alien to global intellectual custom. Beliefs would settle their scores on the battlefield with spears; dialogue would only have a fleeting role. The arena for debate gave way to the executioner. Likewise, religions would protect their faith by cursing opponents, preventing them from occupying key roles, and accusing independent scholars of heresy. This is why the Qur'anic discourse on the distortions in the Torah and the Bible, its repudiation of divinity and being a part of the Trinity from Jesus, and its divergence from certain historical details vis-à-vis stories of the Prophets were a gateway for fresh and invigorated religious dialogue. Granted, this was (somewhat) preceded by some writings by Roman pagans scattered across the 2nd century. This was obviously before the Roman State coming under the wing of the Church, which shut down any investigation on the inerrancy of the scriptural text, disappeared opponents' works by burning them, and tortured those who secretly amassed them.⁴¹⁹

Islamic religious arguments in critiquing Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and paganism started in the 1st century AH; they assumed a more legible format in subsequent centuries, all the while setting out the issues for analysis and debate. The Zoroastrian challenge in the form of conquering Persia was the greatest of all religious challenges, as the Muslims found themselves in front of a vast religious tradition that had been refined by its scholars and philosophers for centuries. This is why the Muslim scholarly output in critiquing Zoroastrianism and its dualistic cosmology of good and evil is both expansive and decisive in dismantling the fundamentals of that religious ideology.

The beliefs and scriptures of Jews and Christians were the subject of special focus in Islamic theological debates. The Islamic discourse in this matter is based on three principles: a) using the Qur'anic theological and

419 The most famous is the pagan author Celsus from the 2nd century. His objections were preserved in his polemic, *On the True Word*, which was refuted by the Christian scholar, Origen of Alexandria, in his book *Contra Celsum*.

historical references as the starting point for critiquing those people's beliefs; b) quoting verbatim the holy texts of Jews and Christians; and c) seeking out historical precedents to support critiques and setting out the foundations of the discourse.

One indication for the greatness of the Qur'anic text and its influence on the theological and historical critique of religions is its impact on Christians during their discussions with Jews. Yitzhak Baer⁴²⁰, a Jewish German historian and specialist in the history of Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages, said, 'These Christian theologians and polemicists relied, it appears, to a large extent upon the anti-Jewish writings of the eleventh-century Mohammedan scholar Ibn Hazm, who had in his day crossed literary swords with Samuel ha-Nagid^{421, 422} Furthermore, the Islamic critique of the Torah influenced the writings of Baruch Spinoza in the 17th century, via the Jewish scholar Ibn Ezra⁴²³, who was acutely familiar with Islamic theological debates. Spinoza's book *A Theologico-Political Treatise* represented the true roots of Western critiques of the Torah, releasing people from the myth of its inerrancy.⁴²⁴ The Orientalist Juan Vernet⁴²⁵ described Ibn Hazm's book *al-Fisal* as '...the first noteworthy book in the history of religions with such a title...and that nothing similar appeared in the Christian world until the nineteenth century'.⁴²⁶

Similarly, many Jews leveraged Islam's critique of Christianity, which is set out by the famous Jewish Orientalist Hava Lazarus-Yafeh^{427, 428} This

420 Yitzhak Baer (1888-1980). German-Israeli Jewish historian. He lectured on medieval history at the Hebrew University. His works includes *History of Jews in Christian Spain*.

421 Translator's note: Samuel ibn Naghrillah or Samuel HaNagid (993-1056). Spanish Jew, Talmudic scholar, philologist, politician, and poet. He lived in Iberia at the time of the Moors. He was probably the most politically influential Jew in Muslim Spain.

422 (Baer, 1967), 1/281.

423 Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089-1167). Jewish rabbi. He was born in Andalusia. He moved around North Africa, Egypt, and other places. He is one of the most famous commentators on the Torah from the Middle Ages.

424 See (Sharqāwī, 1990/1410 AH), pp. 66-110.

425 Joan Vernet Ginés (1923-2011). Spanish Orientalist who specialised in the history of Islam and the sciences in the Middle Ages. He translated the Qur'an to Spanish, which was published in 2001.

426 (Ginés, 1997), p. 261.

427 Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (1930-1998). Prominent Jewish Orientalist. She was Professor of Islamic Civilisation at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She had a focus on Muslim-Jewish relations in the Middle Ages. Her works include *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*.

428 (Lazarus-Yafeh, *Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics Against*

appears, for example, in the works of Abraham ben David⁴²⁹ of the 12th century, who wrote in critique of the Gospels. In relation to him, Fontaine⁴³⁰, a specialist in Jewish studies, said, ‘Naturally Ibn Hazm, an opponent of some stature, must be mentioned here as one of the factors affecting Ibn Daud’s decision to elect for a hitherto untried form.’⁴³¹

Whether in theology, scripture, or early history, the Islamic critique of Christianity and Judaism had a profound impact on the Jews and Christians of the Middle Ages. Such was this impact that, in religious debates, Islamic avenues of critique were treated like evidence by Jews against the Christians and vice versa.

Christianity, 1996), pp. 65-70.

429 Abraham ben David (1110-1180). Jewish rabbi, historian, astronomer, and philosopher. He lived in Andalusia.

430 Translator’s note: Resianne Fontaine, or T. A. M. Smidt van Gelder-Fontaine. Lecturer at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

431 (Fontaine, 2018), p. 166.

The importance of worldly knowledge

Many non-Muslim researchers assert that the greatest miracle of Islam is the creation of a nation of knowledge, prior to which the pre-Islamic desert Arabs were virtually nothing with rampant unletteredness. Had it not been for the Prophetic mission that arose in the Arabian Peninsula, history would not have remembered the Arabs of the 7th century at all, other than the notion that they were a bunch of tribes far removed from the vibrance of civilisation and the prevalence of new ideas.

The miracle of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was a book that guides to the ways of righteousness. Its meanings are its building blocks, connecting the mind to the world is its mortar, and linking the world to action is its stated aim. It is a comprehensive outlook on existence, a path to walk on, and a goal to aspire for. That is why this book is the fuel of a renaissance whose fire lit up the hearts that had never previously known anything other than amassing means to stay alive in the lethal Arabian desert. Bedouin life meant that they had no aspirations of ever rivalling, or coming close to, the glorious neighbouring civilisations of the Romans or the Persians.

Ever since the Prophetic mission, the veneration of seeking knowledge has been firmly implanted in the Muslim mind, and likewise the contempt for not doing so. Scholars in Islam are considered the stars of society, and the reference point of where those with political power look towards in appreciation of their authority. This is all part and parcel of a nation that treats faith as knowledge and disbelief as ignorance. It is a direct result of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition demanding that scholars be treated with the same respect as they are. He ﷺ said:

- 'Are they better, or those who worship their Lord devoutly in the hours of the night, prostrating and standing, fearing the Hereafter, and hoping for the mercy of their Lord? Say, O Prophet, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" None will be mindful except people of reason.' (Qur'an, 39:9)

- ‘...He will elevate those gifted with knowledge in rank. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.’ (Qur’an, 58:11)
- ‘Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky with which We bring forth fruits of different colours? And in the mountains are streaks of varying shades of white, red, and raven black; just as people, living beings, and cattle are of various colours as well. Of all of Allah’s servants, only the knowledgeable are in awe of Him. Allah is indeed Almighty, All-Forgiving.’ (Qur’an, 35:27-28)

Furthermore, the people of knowledge are described as fearing God. This follows verses speaking of some of nature’s phenomena, which is indicative that this praise is fundamentally for those who work in the worldly sciences, and not primarily the disciplines of the Shariah.

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ said, ‘Whoever seeks a path seeking knowledge therein, Allah shall make the path to Paradise easy for him.’⁴³² In spite of being a nation that does not read or write, he also took a great interest in the Companions learning how to read and write, to the extent that he decreed that the ransom of some Badr prisoners of war was for them to teach writing to the children of the Anṣār.⁴³³

In the pursuit of knowledge and conveying it, Muslims celebrated the Qur’an. The sittings of major scholars witnessed thousands in attendance. Criers would stand between rows, shouting out the lines of lecturers so that the gathering, eager to gain knowledge, could hear them.

The manufacturing of paper also flourished. Professional copyists appeared in the major Islamic cities. Caliphs took interest in building privately owned libraries, through which they competed with other libraries over the wealth of books therein.

Public libraries spread in a way never seen before, so much so that public libraries were integrated into schools and hospitals. In Baghdad, the number of books at the Nizāmiyyah College totalled 80,000 volumes. In Cairo, the number of books in medicinal science and other fields at the Mansur Hospital (or the *Māristān*) totalled 100,000.⁴³⁴

Public libraries were founded through the collaborative efforts of caliphs, businessmen, scholars, and the wealthy. They comprised of multiple

432 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Remembrance and Supplication, Chapter on the virtue of gathering to recite the Qur’an and for remembrance (hadith no. 2699).

433 On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: ‘Some Badr prisoners of war did not have ransom to free themselves, so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ decreed that their ransom would be teaching the children of the Anṣār how to write.’ *Musnad Ahmad* (hadith no. 2216); declared sound by Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūt.

434 (Maḥāsnaḥ, 2000-2001), p. 164.

rooms and iwans linked by wide corridors, with bookshelves lining up the walls. There were spaces for copywriting; others for reading and personal reference; others for studies and discussion. Some libraries even had rooms for resting and relaxation, with mats spread out on the floors and curtains draped over the windows, all to cater for every need and means of satisfaction for students of knowledge.

These libraries contained a wide number of references—topically arranged—that would assist readers in attaining what they wanted out of books. Libraries also had a number of employees supervising them, organising and cataloguing books therein, and other services. Library employees included:

1. Library manager (*khāzin*), who would be selected from the most competent scholars.
2. Librarian (*munāwil*, pl. *munāwilūn*), who would fetch books for readers and visitors to study.
3. Copyist (*nāsikh*, pl. *nussākh*), responsible for copywriting books for the library—especially its rare books—and writing in beautiful script.
4. Translator (*mutarjim*, pl. *mutarjimūn*), who would translate books from other languages into Arabic.
5. Bookbinder (*mujallid*, pl. *mujallidūn*), who would bind books to protect and preserve them from ruin.
6. Cataloguer (*mufahris*, pl. *mufahrisūn*), who organise books on shelves and catalogue them for easy referencing.
7. General worker, who was responsible for cleaning the library and all other required services.

Libraries allowed those who wanted to read off-premises to borrow books, in exchange for a nominal security fee that would be taken from the borrower—with the exception of students and scholars, as they were not required to do so.⁴³⁵

In spite of the then febrile political situation, many Christian scholars travelled to Muslim lands to study the sciences. One of these was Leonardo Bonacci⁴³⁶—more commonly known as Fibonacci—the most renowned

435 (Maḥāsnaḥ, 2000-2001), pp. 155-156.

436 Leonardo Bonacci, or Fibonacci (1175-1250). Italian. He was one of the greatest mathematicians in the Middle Ages. His works include *Practica Geometriae*.

mathematician of the Middle Ages. Another was the philosopher Adelard of Bath⁴³⁷, who translated Islamic and Arabic works in mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. In fact, Pope Sylvester II⁴³⁸ had learned Arabic and was a student of the scholars of Seville and Cordoba. He was an encyclopaedic scholar and encouraged Christians to learn Arabic to become aware of the then dominant Islamic culture. Love for the Arabic language and Islamic culture as well as gathering its works was the crime of Frederick II⁴³⁹, the Holy Roman Emperor, who was excommunicated twice by papal bull. Excommunication is the severest form of punishment the Church can enact against someone who commits grave crimes. This emperor was unique in his love and taste for knowledge: he used to read up on philosophy, logic, and medicine. This is why some have described him as the ‘wonder of the world’ (*stupor mundi*). He was such an opponent of the Church that it earned him the title of Antichrist. He was also accused of secretly being a Muslim who prayed with his teachers at every Muslim call to prayer.⁴⁴⁰

437 Adelard of Bath (1080-1152). English philosopher and mathematician. His works include *Quaestiones naturales seu physicae*.

438 Translator’s note: Pope Sylvester II (946-1003), originally known as Gerbert of Aurillac. French-born scholar and teacher who served as the Pope from 999 until his death.

439 Frederick II (1194-1250). King of Sicily. He sparked a cultural revolution in his kingdom. He founded the University of Naples.

440 (Lyons, 2009), pp. 165 ff.

Empiricism

The Hellenistic method of contemplative thought dominated the Christianity of the pre-Muhammadan Prophethood era. The Church compounded this by placing a wedge between its ideologues and the world on the basis that it is a 'valley of darkness'; the Church took this idea from Gnosticism, that divided the Orthodox Church. This is what caused a chasm to appear between science and life experience in the West. Only contemplation, stripped of everything else, remained unblemished as the fundamental source for human knowledge, including knowledge of the natural world.

Knowledge remained as such until the emergence of empiricism at the hands of Roger Bacon⁴⁴¹, who exposed the deficiencies found in Aristotelian logic. However, Muslim scholars had already preceded him in this, as they had founded their intellectual *modus operandi* based on direct interaction with the material world.

Many historians acknowledge that Roger Bacon's adoption of empiricism is credited to the Islamic civilisation that firmly ingrained empiricism in exploring the material universe. It was the spark of the European Enlightenment and the tremendous advancements in science that we are witnessing today.

In his book *The Making of Humanity*, Robert Briffault⁴⁴² says, '...it was under their (Muslims of Spain) successors at that Oxford school that Roger Bacon learned Arabic and Arabic science. Neither Roger Bacon nor his later namesake⁴⁴³ has any title to be credited with having introduced the experimental method. Roger Bacon was no more than one of the apostles of Muslim science and method to Christian Europe.'⁴⁴⁴ He added, 'For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the

441 Roger Bacon (1214-1294). English philosopher and a pioneer of empiricism in Europe. His works include *Opus Majus*.

442 Robert Briffault (1874-1948). French social anthropologist and surgeon. His works include *Breakdown: The Collapse of Traditional Civilization*.

443 Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is meant here.

444 (Briffault, 1919), p. 200.

decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory—natural science and the scientific spirit.⁴⁴⁵

As for George Sarton⁴⁴⁶, the science historian, he admits that the most important accomplishment in the Middle Ages was the spirit of empiricism, which he principally credited to the efforts of Muslims in the 12th century.⁴⁴⁷

Hartwig Hirschfeld⁴⁴⁸—a scholar of biblical studies, philosophy, and Semitic languages, and an adversary of Islam—said, ‘We must not be surprised to find the Qorân regarded as the fountain-head of all the sciences. Every subject connected with heaven or Earth, human life, commerce and various trades are occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the Holy Book. In this way the Qorân was responsible for great discussions, and to it was also indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Moslim world. This again not only affected the Arabs but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious questions after Arab methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilised by Arabian theosophy need not be further discussed.’⁴⁴⁹

One of the latest admissions is the statement by Victor J. Stenger, one of the leaders of New Atheism in the 21st century: ‘The Christian apologists who write about science and religion try to tell us that science flourished because of Christianity...we saw that after a good start in ancient Greece and Rome, science in fact did not flourish in Europe for more than a millennium, at least in part because of Christianity. Islam preserved much of Greek and Roman science and developed it further...’⁴⁵⁰

The Islamic focus on empiricism stems from clear verses of the Qur’an, which call to observing the universe. They invite people to consider the universe as the direction to which human endeavour should direct itself in the pursuit of learning the uniquely innovative creation of God, empowerment on Earth, and material prosperity. God says:

445 (Briffault, 1919), p. 190.

446 George Sarton (1884-1956). Belgian-American chemist and historian. He is considered the founder of the history of science as an independent discipline. His works include *Das Studium der Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften* (*The Study of the History of Science*).

447 (Sarton, 1988), p. 99.

448 Hartwig Hirschfeld (1854-1934). Prussian-born British researcher of the Jewish faith and a fanatic. His focus was on attempting to establish Jewish influence on the development of Islam. He published a number of ancient Jewish texts.

449 (Hirschfeld, 1902), p. 9.

450 (Stenger, 2012), chapter 12.

- ‘Say, O Prophet, “Travel throughout the land and see how He originated the creation, then Allah will bring it into being one more time. Surely Allah is Most Capable of everything.”’ (Qur’an, 29:20)
- ‘Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the Earth; the alternation of the day and the night; the ships that sail the sea for the benefit of humanity; the rain sent down by Allah from the skies, reviving the Earth after its death; the scattering of all kinds of creatures throughout; the shifting of the winds; and the clouds drifting between the heavens and the Earth—in all of this are surely signs for people of understanding.’ (Qur’an, 2:164)

As such, observing the universe, its uniquely innovative creation, and the subtlety of its beautiful features are a means to grasping its reality. They are a call to gain knowledge of the universe’s origin and are a proof that instructs people that there is a purpose to existence. In fact, it was only through the Islamic civilisation that the West acquired the belief that knowledge grants men power over nature.⁴⁵¹

In the Qur’anic verses pertaining to the universe is an exposition of the holistic rationality of nature. In other words, the material world is not a combination of random and disconnected pieces of wonder, but rather it is a deliberately arranged building that is made of interconnected individual components and organised parts. This is the first proposition in every intellectual research, as the nature sciences require—for it to flourish—the understanding of ‘system’ and ‘wisdom’ as the first proposition, before observation, uncovering, and innovation.

In Judeo-Christian theology, there was some understanding of nature as a coherent construct, but only in fleeting terms. In the Bible, the most salient usage of nature is that it is the manifestation of the acts of an angry, vengeful god against the enemies of the Children of Israel: the mountains, oceans, rain, and wind are more about being tools for exacting revenge rather than manifestations of the greatness of creation.

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ expresses the new meaning of nature’s manifestation in a momentous story that is reported by his wife, ‘Āishah رضي الله عنها. The Prophet ﷺ once stood in prayer at night as people were asleep. He continued to weep until his lap area became wet, and then he cried some more until the Earth became wet. Bilāl came to inform him of the time of prayer (i.e., Fajr). When he saw him weep, he said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, why do you weep when Allah has forgiven your past and future sins?’ He replied, ‘So should I therefore not be a thankful servant? During this

451 (Lyons, 2009), p. 5.

night, some verses were revealed to me—woe to the one who reads them and does not ponder over them: “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the Earth and the alternation of the day and night there are signs for people of reason...”⁴⁵² (Qur’an, 3:190)

It is from this unprecedented Qur’anic outlook from the 7th century that the spirit of investigating the universe, uncovering its beauty, vastness, and unique laws, and harnessing all of that for the service of man grew and spread on Earth. This outlook came into contact with the West only six centuries later.

When Sigrid Hunke⁴⁵³ authored her famous book *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland* (*Allah’s Sun Over the Occident*), she said in its introduction, ‘So it seems the time has come to speak of a people who have profoundly laid down their mark on the trajectory of world events. They are a people to whom the West owes a debt of gratitude. Yet, out of a hundred historical treatises that you may read through, you will hardly find a couple that mention the name.

Even today for any Western schoolboy, the study of world history—that of literature, art and science—begins with a superficial examination of what Ancient Egypt and Babylon were, then they study the Greeks and the Romans to no end, followed by a quick glance at Byzantium, after which they proceed to the Christian Middle Ages, and from there finally to modern times. Pre-medieval Europe received little attention, nor did the events simultaneously occurring outside of Europe during the Middle Ages. At that time, at the very gates of Europe, it was the Arabs who carried—for three-quarters of a millennium—the torch of civilization, the splendour of which they enjoyed for twice as long as the Greeks.

The truth is that they influenced the West more directly and more differently than the latter. But who cares about this? They are given a certain importance, but only in terms of their role vis-à-vis the Greeks: It is the Arabs who “transmitted” to the West the treasures of the Ancient Greeks. This superfluous phrase, which claims to pay homage to the service that the Arabs have rendered to the West, only diminishes them by reducing their role to that of mere intermediaries while ignoring the essence of their work.

As this is not only a question of widening our historical horizon, but at a time when we are looking in the enemy of yesterday as the friend of tomorrow, we also are crossing the old religious barriers to show greater

452 Narrated by Ibn Ḥibbān, Book of Heart Softeners, Chapter on repentance (hadith no. 626); declared authentic by Albānī.

453 Sigrid Hunke (1913-1999). German Orientalist. Her works include *Allah ist ganz anders*.

tolerance and, beyond issues of theology, we are turning our attention to others as human beings.

Would it still be too early to do justice to a people to whom—through our religious fanaticism—we have refused their right to an objective and fair judgment? Can we start being fair with those whose remarkable achievements we have systematically denigrated, and whose necessary contribution to our civilization we have concealed? The nature of the relationship between the West and the Arab world—ever since the inception of Islam to the present day—exemplifies the extent to which feelings and passions can dictate the way history has been written. This was understandable at a time when all heterodox influence was considered undesirable and dangerous. But this point of view, no doubt valid in the Middle Ages, is no longer applicable today. Now, it is obvious that a sort of uneasiness of religious origin, most often unconscious but deeply rooted inside us, restricts our horizons and renders us uncomfortable with regard to individuals, whom propaganda has made out to be arsonists, idolators, and wizards...⁴⁵⁴

In her book, she mentioned interesting details of the Islamic civilisation's influence on European culture and lifestyle, from bathing practices to the fields of medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, in which she set out 'it was the Arabs, not the Greeks, who were the teachers of Europe during the scientific-mathematic Renaissance'.⁴⁵⁵ She concluded by saying, 'Indeed, they are—in every sense—the pioneers of applied sciences and experimental methods. The Arabs are the true pioneers of empirical research.'⁴⁵⁶

454 (Hunke, *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland*, 1965), pp. 12-14.

455 (Hunke, *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland*, 1965), p. 88.

456 (Hunke, *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland*, 1965), p. 211.

What did Muslims offer the world?

Hunke answers: ‘They laid the foundations for experimental chemistry, physics, algebra, modern mathematics, spherical trigonometry, geology, and sociology, in addition to countless valuable discoveries and inventions across the sciences and the field of knowledge. ... Arabs brought this most precious gift to posterity. Their methods of scientific research ultimately paved the way for the tremendous development of western knowledge and mastery over the natural sciences.’⁴⁵⁷

Muslims had a deep interest in, for example, medicine. They helped it evolve in leaps and bounds in the subfields of pathology, aetiology, disease prevention, treatments, and medical instruments—all thanks to the Revelation in the form of the Prophet of Islam’s proclamation. For when he was asked ‘Shall we not take medicine?’, he said, ‘Yes, O servants of Allah, take medicine. Allah did not place any sickness without placing a cure for it.’⁴⁵⁸ He also said, ‘Allah did not send any sickness without sending a cure for it—those who know it, know it; those who do not, do not.’⁴⁵⁹

The summon to discover cures would seem today as something that does not evoke surprise. However, this was not the case in Christian lands in the Middle Ages and the period preceding it. For example, Tatian⁴⁶⁰—one of the early fathers of the Church—said, ‘But medicine and everything included in it is an invention of the same kind. If anyone is healed by matter, through trusting to it, much more will he be healed by having recourse to the power of God. As noxious preparations are material compounds, so are curatives of the same nature. If, however, we reject the baser matter, some persons often endeavour to heal by a union of one of these bad things

457 (Hunke, *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland*, 1965), p. 88.

458 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Medicine, Chapter on what has been reported about medicament and encouraging it (hadith no. 2038).

459 Narrated by Aḥmad (hadith no. 3922); declared authentic by Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūṭ.

460 Tatian (120–180). Assyrian Father of the Church. His most famous work is *Diatessaron*, the most prominent early work on gospel harmony.

with some other, and will make use of the bad to attain the good. But, just as he who dines with a robber, though he may not be a robber himself, partakes of the punishment on account of his intimacy with him, so he who is not bad but associates with the bad, having dealings with them for some supposed good, will be punished by God the Judge for partnership in the same object. Why is he who trusts in the system of matter not willing to trust in God? For what reason do you not approach the more powerful Lord, but rather seek to cure yourself, like the dog with grass, or the stag with a viper, or the hog with river-crabs, or the lion with apes? Why do you deify the objects of nature? And why, when you cure your neighbour, are you called a benefactor? Yield to the power of the Logos!⁴⁶¹

The Islamic scientific influence on medicinal knowledge in the West had started as early as the 10th century. This was when a Jew by the name of Donnolo⁴⁶²—who was a prisoner to the Muslims—transferred what he learned from Muslims and dhimmis who used to write in Arabic. In the following century, the greatest intellectual push was from Constantine the African⁴⁶³, who translated many of the Arabs' works to Latin.⁴⁶⁴ A statistical study has demonstrated a number of pointers, through reliable ancient European writings, to sources that the Arab influence was clearly far greater than the Hellenistic influence, in spite of the latter's rich tradition.⁴⁶⁵

When we observe the rise of astronomy in Muslim lands within the context of global civilisation, we can put that down to the scriptural texts of the Qur'an and its belief in monotheism. God ﷻ says:

- 'Blessed is the One Who has placed constellations in the sky...' (Qur'an, 25:61)
- 'And He is the One Who causes the day and the night to alternate...' (Qur'an, 25:62)
- 'He is the One Who made the Sun a radiant source and the Moon a reflected light, with precisely ordained phases, so that you may know the number of years and calculation of time.' (Qur'an, 10:5)

461 (Tatian, 1867), 3/23-24.

462 Translator's note: Shabbethai Donnolo (913-982 circa). Graeco-Italian Jewish physician, and author on medicine and astrology.

463 Translator's note: Constantine the African (d. pre-1098/1099). Physician who lived in North Africa and Italy. He became a monk at the end of his life. In Italy, he translated a lot of Arabic works of medicine to Latin.

464 (Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, 1972), pp. 60 and 66.

465 (Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, 1972), pp. 67-68.

- ‘The Sun and the Moon travel with precision.’ (Qur’an, 55:5)

Abu ‘Abdullāh al-Battānī⁴⁶⁶—a 3rd century (AH) Muslim astronomer and author of some of the greatest discoveries, who was honoured by the America space agency NASA by naming a Moon crater after him—said, ‘Indeed, the most honourable of all knowledge in status, and highest in station, the most pleasing in appearance, the most embraced by hearts, the most enlightening of souls, the most sharpening of thought and observation, the most refining of understanding, and the most edifying, is that which—out of all the laws and customs of the religion—a person cannot be ignorant of: the science of the construct of the stars (astronomy). It has huge favours and great benefits in identifying the period of years, months, timings, seasons, the increase and decrease in night and day, the stations of the Sun and Moon, eclipses, the set movement of the stars, the change in their complexions, the sequencings of their bodies, and all their other matters. One who observes deeply and thinks at length can acquire monotheism and the true reality of the Creator’s greatness, His all-encompassing wisdom, His magnificent power, and His delicate construction. He—Most Glorified—said, “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the Earth and the alternation of the day and night there are signs for people of reason.”’⁴⁶⁷ (Qur’an, 3:190)

Hugh Ross, a Christian apologist and astrophysicist, acknowledged the difference between Islamic astronomy and the state of the same subject outside Muslim lands: ‘The anti-science mood triggered by Plato and encouraged by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches was so stifling that no significant astronomical investigations were made in Europe until after the middle ages. Outside Europe, Muslims were the most advanced in astronomy but contented themselves with those studies that would give them the direction to Mecca, the times for prayer, and a predictable calendar. By the thirteenth century, however, Muslim scholars had exported to Europe the new mathematics from India, including trigonometry, algebra, and the counting of numerals from zero.’⁴⁶⁸

466 Muhammad ibn Jābir ibn Sinān al-Battānī (858-929), latinised as Albategnius. Mathematician and one of the greatest astronomers. He founded an observatory at Antakya. He is referred to as the Ptolemy of the Arabs. His works include *al-Zij*.

467 (Battānī, 1899), p. 6.

468 (Ross, 1991), p. 19.

When Muslims submitted themselves to the Qur'an, where was the West vis-à-vis the East?

The American historian Mark Graham⁴⁶⁹ concisely yet comprehensively answers this in his book *How Islam Created the Modern World*: ‘Truth, unlike myth, is frequently what we do not want to hear. And perhaps the most heretical thing to say is that Europe ever had anything to learn from Islam. But learn it did, sitting at the foot of its Muslim teachers for half a millennium. Far from being incubators or preservers, Muslims were all the things those textbooks deny them being: artists, poets, philosophers, mathematicians, chemists, astronomers, physicists. In short, they were civilized at a time when Europe was wallowing in barbarism. Muslim civilization was the greatest in size and technology that the world had ever seen. And far from existing in a vacuum, it directly impinged on the creation of Europe as a cultural entity and as a scientific and political power. As much as some are loathe to admit it, the Islamic world is the giant on whose shoulders the European Renaissance stood.’⁴⁷⁰

With the grace of the Qur'an, the Miraculous Book, the Muslims were everything.

469 Mark W. Graham. Professor in History. He has taught at Grove City College, Stanford, and Michigan State University.

470 (Graham, 2006), p. 39.

RIGHTS OF WOMEN

As per the Christian conceptualisation, the woman was not cared for at all in the New Testament. This is why the Holy Scripture did not offer any new mechanism that would uphold her rights and ward off from her the very bad hand she was dealt under the Jewish rabbinical and scriptural regime, or indeed under the customs of the Roman Empire: ‘...in the Gospels there is no special doctrine propounded in regard to women, and if there is any approach to this, it exhibits great mildness...’⁴⁷¹

Before Islam, the Bible (both the Old and New Testaments)—alongside the writings of the Church Fathers—was a gateway to the oppression of women. One notable Western thinker said, ‘If there are any books in existence, the authors of which held women more in contempt than the authors of the biblical scriptures and the writings of the fathers of the Church, I do not know of them.’⁴⁷²

From the very beginning until the end of Church law in the West, the status of the woman in Christianity fared no better than that in the Roman State prior to its adoption of Christianity as the state religion. When *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* spoke on the rights of the Roman woman and how her status was elevated under Roman rule, it said, ‘The influence of the early Church was in general to restrict the legal rights of women, while at the same time exalting her social and religious position.’⁴⁷³

As for the period in which Church law dominated the state during the Middle Ages, after it had removed much of Roman law, the British jurist and historian James Bryce⁴⁷⁴ paints a picture of that situation by stating, ‘When direct legislation by the State came to an end in Western Europe with the disappearance of the effective power of the Emperors in the fifth and sixth centuries, the control of marriage began to fall into the hands of the Church and remained there for many generations. To pass from the civil law of Rome to the ecclesiastical law of the Dark and Middle Ages is like quitting an open country, intersected by good roads, for a tract of

471 (Donaldson, 1907), p. 149.

472 (Rappaport, 1906), p. 48.

473 (Mathews & Smith, 1923), p. 475.

474 James Bryce, 1st Viscount Bryce (1838–1922). Irish-British Professor of Civil Law at Oxford. He was President of the British Academy from 1913 to 1917.

mountain and forest where rough and tortuous paths furnish the only means of transit.⁴⁷⁵

As such, Christianity was the cause for regression in women's rights. There was no reform at all in this regard—not even during that ancient period.

When Islam arrived on the scene, the situation changed for the better. The *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion* makes it clear: 'Women are considered more extensively in the Qur'an than in any other religious scripture.'⁴⁷⁶ Furthermore, it lists the new Qur'anic laws that were fair to women, such as prohibiting female infanticide via viviseptulture, stopping men from inheriting their mothers-in-law at the death of their fathers-in-law, assigning an honourable meaning to the bridal gift, and granting her rights of ownership and inheritance.⁴⁷⁷

The Orientalist Hamilton Gibb⁴⁷⁸ said, 'That his reforms enhanced the status of women in general by contrast with the anarchy of pre-Islamic Arabia is universally admitted.'⁴⁷⁹

Karen Armstrong⁴⁸⁰, another prominent female author in the West who attested to Islam's critical role in emancipating the woman from the fetters of ignorance, said, 'Women had been among Muhammad's earliest converts and their emancipation was a project that was dear to his heart. The Koran strictly forbade the killing of female children and rebuked the Arabs for their dismay when a girl was born. It also gave women legal rights of inheritance and divorce: most Western women had nothing comparable until the nineteenth century. Muhammad encouraged women to play an active role in the affairs of the *ummah* and they expressed their views forthrightly, confident that they would be heard.'⁴⁸¹

The Italian Orientalist Laura Veccia Vaglieri said, 'But if, from the social point of view in Europe, woman has reached a high condition, her position, legally at least, until a very few years ago, has been and in some countries continues to be, less independent than that of the Muslim woman in the

475 (Bryce, 1901), p. 811.

476 (*Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, 1999), 1/488.

477 (*Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion*, 1999), 1/489.

478 Translator's note: Hamilton Gibb (1895-1971). Scottish historian on Orientalism. Born in Egypt, he studied in Edinburgh and then at SOAS. He has a number of works to his name, including a translation of Ibn Battuta's travels and *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey*.

479 (Gibb H. A., 1962), p. 22.

480 Karen Armstrong (b. 1944). Famous British author. Her books are well known in the anglophone world. Her focus is on the history of religion and major religious figures. Her works include *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*.

481 (Armstrong, *A History of God*, 2011), pp. 157-158.

Islamic world. The Muslim woman, besides having the right to inherit together with her brothers, even if in a smaller proportion, of not being given in marriage without her free consent, and of not being mistreated by her husband, also possesses the right of receiving a dowry from the husband, of being supported by him, even if she is wealthy by birth, and of enjoying the most complete freedom, if she is legally capable, in the administration of her personal estate.⁴⁸²

But before all of the aforementioned attestations is the direct testimony of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Caliph of Islam. Comparing life pre- and post-Islam, he said, ‘In the Jāhiliyyah period, we did not think anything of women. When Islam came, because of what God mentioned about them, we started to see that they had a right over us.’⁴⁸³

482 (Veccia Vaglieri, *An Interpretation of Islam*, 1980), pp. 76-77.

483 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Clothing, Chapter on the clothes and mats the Prophet ﷺ was content with (hadith no. 5842).

What about Christianity?

Christianity became an influential player only in the 4th century, whereby it ascended as the official religion of the state. With this, Christianity managed to overcome paganistic faiths that were prevalent by the mace of temporal power, thus firmly positioning faith front and centre in man's universal outlook and elevating the value of Revelation in guiding his life. However, in spite of this, it did not manage to take man out of the darkness of either the inner self or the world. In fact, after the Hellenism that set alight the fervent desire of discovery and cognitive refreshment, the Christian mind was a cause for cultural regression. Some of the most important angles of corruption in history associated with the emergence of Christianity are as follows:

Revival of pagan beliefs

Jesus was sent to bring people back to the worship of the One and the Incomparable, and to abandon obnoxiously affectatious and extreme forms of practices. However, from the earliest centuries, the Church chose a different path and, to a large degree, imbibed the beliefs of pagans and their rituals.

The influence of paganism on Christianity was well known, both among the Church Fathers and the Church's opponents. This assertion was not made up in the 19th century, as is the claim of certain Church apologists today. The Church Fathers' beliefs in relation to Jesus as per the Gospels are similar to the beliefs of the Ancient Greeks in relation to the Greek God Bacchus (and other ancient gods). Justin⁴⁸⁴, who was born in the beginning of the 2nd century, mentioned many angles of similarity between Jesus and the Greek gods in an attempt to convince the Emperor⁴⁸⁵ that Christians did not produce anything novel that the Romans were unaware of.

484 Justin Martyr (circa 100-165). Church saint and one of its earliest apologists. He is considered by the Church as one of its earliest martyrs. His works include *Dialogue with Trypho*.

485 Translator's note: Antoninus Pius, addressed by Justin as 'Titus Ælius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Cæsar' (86-161). Roman Emperor from 138 until

In his admission, Justin was extremely clear. In fact, he was adamant to explain the peculiar similarity between Christianity and paganism in the 1st century. In the context of refuting objections that prove the obscenity of Christian beliefs, he said, ‘And when we say also that the Word, who is the first-birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter.’⁴⁸⁶

Likewise, Christianity’s early adversaries attested to paganism waging a war on the new faith. The 3rd century philosopher Ammonius Saccas⁴⁸⁷ said, ‘Christianity and Paganism, when rightly understood, differed in no essential points, but had a common origin, and really were one and the same religion, nothing but the schismatical trickery of fanatical adventurers, who sought to bring over the trade and profits of spiritualising into their own hands, having introduced a distinction where in reality there was no difference.’⁴⁸⁸

This was echoed by Faustus⁴⁸⁹. In a letter to Augustine, he said, ‘You have substituted your agapæ⁴⁹⁰ for the sacrifices of the Pagans; for their idols your martyrs, whom you serve with the very same honours. You appease the shades of the dead with wine and feasts; you celebrate the solemn festivities of the Gentiles, their calends, and their solstices; and, as to their manners, those you have retained without any alteration. *Nothing distinguishes you from the Pagans, except that you hold your assemblies apart from them.*’⁴⁹¹

his death.

486 (Justin, 1899), 1/170.

487 Ammonius Saccas (175-242). Considered to be the precursor to, or the founder of, Neoplatonism. He was a self-taught Greek philosopher from Alexandria. He is known as the teacher of Plotinus. Some Christian writers stated that Ammonius was a Christian, but it is now believed that there was another Ammonius in Alexandria who wrote biblical texts (with additions from translator).

488 Translator’s note: (Taylor R., 1845), p. 312.

489 Faustus of Mileve (b. circa 350; d. pre-400). Manichaean bishop in Milevis, Numidia (modern Algeria). When Augustine was himself a Manichaean, he met him to ask him about some issues he believed were complex. However, after Augustine left Manichaeism, he wrote a book in refutation of Faustus called *Contra Faustum*.

490 In the first centuries of Christianity, Christians used the term ἀγάπη (agos), meaning ‘love’, to denote the love of God the Father for His creation, so much so that He sent His only son to die to compensate for their sins.

491 (Doane, 1884), p. 411.

Establishment of a divine clergy

‘And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in heaven.’⁴⁹²

*‘If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’*⁴⁹³

These statements attributed to Jesus—with the first directed to his apostle Peter and the second to his students—were a cause for the emergence of intermediaries being appointed between the Lord and mankind in their beliefs and laws. This belief has dominated ecclesiastical history. It is how the relationship of man with the Lord changed from what was a direct (of sorts) relationship as per the Jewish conceptualisation of worship to—firstly—Jesus himself becoming the intermediary in Orthodox Christianity, and—secondly—Popes and their subordinates within the Church structure becoming intermediaries.

The following verse was revealed in this regard: ‘They have taken their rabbis and monks as well as the Messiah, son of Mary, as lords besides Allah, even though they were commanded to worship none but One God. There is no god worthy of worship except Him. Glorified is He above what they associate with Him.’ (Qur’an, 9:31)

Christians over-glorified Mary to the extent that they supplicated to her, naming her the ‘Mother of God’. They took saints as intermediaries, seeking closeness to God through them. This is how the shining Sun of monotheism disappeared behind the veil of intermediaries.

Superstitious mindset that led to a despisal of science

The Church Gospels contributed to a supernatural outlook on the natural laws of the universe. This is especially so in the case of medicine: its repeated assertion that illnesses and epidemics during the era of Jesus were satanic interventions led to a disdain of disease being scientifically analysed. In doing so, it was partial to explaining away most illnesses as direct satanic acts.

Hunke footnoted on this: ‘Other than the spiritual medicines the Church prescribed, any other remedies—or even operating as a doctor and performing surgeries—was considered below the clergy.’⁴⁹⁴ That was true for many

492 Matthew 16:18-19.

493 John 20:23.

494 Translator’s note: Here, Hunke adds the Latin phrase: *Inhonestum magistrum*

generations of prospective doctors: They were shamed and dishonoured for working in the physical administration of medicine. Surgeons were especially denigrated, even for bloodletting as the Church had forbidden the clergy to practice surgery at all. In short, the Church forbade the clergy to administer surgery directly; they left this to those who were considered as part of the lower social class that was looked down upon.⁴⁹⁵

This negative conceptualisation on the scientific aspects of illness resulted in the ardent opposition to vaccination against smallpox in Europe and America. One manifestation of this was a book by a priest titled *A Sermon against the Dangerous and Sinful Practice of Inoculation*.⁴⁹⁶ In this book, the author says that the Prophet Job  was most likely afflicted with smallpox, and that Satan was the cause for this illness. The Church used to tell people that smallpox was a divine punishment, such that it would be inappropriate for it to be countered through vaccinations. Even the Holy Scripture was drawn on to justify this: 'Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.'⁴⁹⁷

One of the most bizarre aspects of Christendom during the Middle Ages was that when an experienced physician administered medicine to treat patients and did not rely on the supposed supernatural notions of the Church, he would be accused of having doubt in his faith and the Word of the Lord. Such accusations would be phrased as, for example, 'Mohammedan' or 'Averroesean'.^{498 499}

in medicina manu operari ('It is against the professional code for a doctor to use his hands'). What follows is an explanation and some background:

'It is in this light that the uncompromising attitude of Paracelsus regarding the relationship between medicine and surgery must be viewed. The traditional medieval interpretation had led to the separation of medicine and surgery, which had been united in ancient medicine. The medieval doctor had assumed the rank and dignity of a *scholar*—as against the ancient doctor who had been *craftsman*; in this manner the former had found access to the ecclesiastic and scholastic hierarchy. The slogan, "It is against the professional code for a doctor to use his hands"—*Inhonestum magistrum in medicina manu operari*—epitomises the academic and social position of medieval surgery and its relegation to ignorant barbers and quacks.' (Pagel & Rattansi), p. 320.

495 (Hunke, *Allahs Sonne über dem Abendland*, 1965), pp. 102–103.

496 (Massey, 1722).

497 Hosea 6:1.

For the Church's opposition to vaccination and anaesthesia, see (White A. D., 1901), 2/55–63.

498 Translator's note: Ibn Rushd or Averroes (1126–1198). Renowned Andalusian philosopher and Muslim jurist.

499 See (White A. D., 1901), 2/38.

In their formulative period, Christians did not possess an objective approach in dealing with the traditions of other nations. This is why they perpetrated one of the greatest early crimes on scholarship towards the end of the 4th century: burning the Great Library of Alexandria, the most important book repository of the ancient era.⁵⁰⁰

The Church's hatred of all opposition and anything new continued until the Catholic Church released its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, listing books that were ecclesiastically rejected. These included books on philosophy, history, political reform, and the sciences. It was only in 1966 that this list was abolished by Pope Paul VI⁵⁰¹.

Annihilating other civilisations

When the researcher Helen Ellerbe wrote her famous book *The Dark Side of Christian History*⁵⁰², its very first line contained an admission from Pope Paul II⁵⁰³ vis-à-vis the dark history of Christianity: a history of bloodshed, destruction, and forceful conversion under the threat of execution by guillotine. Even though the Gospels did not encourage—in any clear directive—the annihilation of other nations, the Church remained silent from issuing any condemnation for the bloody wars commissioned by the Torah. This left the door open for the Church to amply justify finishing off what it considered to be the heretics and disbelievers, all with the blessing of the Lord's Word as contained in the Torah.

Before gaining power, the Church in the first three centuries was a place of severe infighting, leaving it to repeatedly sign ongoing cessation of hostilities with the domineering Roman State. When the Roman Empire adopted Christianity, the door to spilling blood was flung wide open for Christianity. As a result, minorities—especially the Jewish minority⁵⁰⁴ and opposing Christian sects, of which the main one was Arian Christianity—bore the brunt of crimes perpetrated under the auspices of papal rule that controlled the seat of the Emperor (or the equivalent thereof).

500 The idea that Muslims were responsible for this became widespread in Arab Christian literature. However, a number of Western historians—such as Gustave Le Bon, Victor Chauvin, and Alfred Butler—have rejected this.

501 Translator's note: Paul VI (1897-1978). Pope of the Catholic Church between 1963 and his death.

502 (Ellerbe, 1998).

503 Translator's note: Paul II (1417-1471). Pope of the Catholic Church between 1464 and his death.

504 (Smallwood, 1979).

St Augustine raised the *cogite intrare*⁵⁰⁵ banner—which he repurposed from the Latin translation of Luke⁵⁰⁶—to force non-Christian nations into Christianity.⁵⁰⁷ This is the principle by which the Church operated for centuries—with heretical sects, Muslims, and others. This is why history has not seen any Muslim or Jewish minority that was safe under the rule of the Church. Such an assessment was echoed by the Jewish Orientalist Claude Cahen⁵⁰⁸: ‘The Islamic world was like Paradise for Jews, on the cultural and economic fronts, between the 9th and 11th centuries.’⁵⁰⁹

Islam outlawed bullying Jews and Christians for their beliefs and forcing them to abandon their faith. The Orientalist Thomas Arnold⁵¹⁰ said, ‘Forcible conversion was forbidden, in accordance with the precepts of the Qur’an: “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (ii. 257). “Wilt thou compel men to become believers? No soul can believe but by the permission of God” (x. 99, 100). The very existence of so many Christian sects and communities in countries that have been for centuries under Muhammadan rule is an abiding testimony to the toleration they have enjoyed...’⁵¹¹

Furthermore, with regard to the atrocities that Christians faced in Islamic history, he states, ‘...the persecutions they have from time to time been called upon to endure at the hands of bigots and fanatics, have been excited by some special and local circumstances rather than inspired by a settled principle of intolerance.’⁵¹²

505 ‘Compel them to come in.’

506 ‘Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23).

507 (Augustine, Letter 185, 1887).

508 Claude Cahen (1909-1991). French Orientalist and historian. He was the foremost Francophone specialist in the Muslim history of the Middle Ages and the Crusades. He taught at Sorbonne and other institutions. His works include *Orient et Occident au temps des croisades* (*East and West at the Time of the Crusades*).

509 (Cahen, 1995), p. 36.

510 Thomas Arnold (1874-1930). British Orientalist and specialist in Muslim history. He was Dean of the Oriental Faculty at Punjab University. He also taught Arabic and Islamic Studies at SOAS, London. He was the editor of the first edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

511 (Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, 1896), p. 341.

512 Ibid.

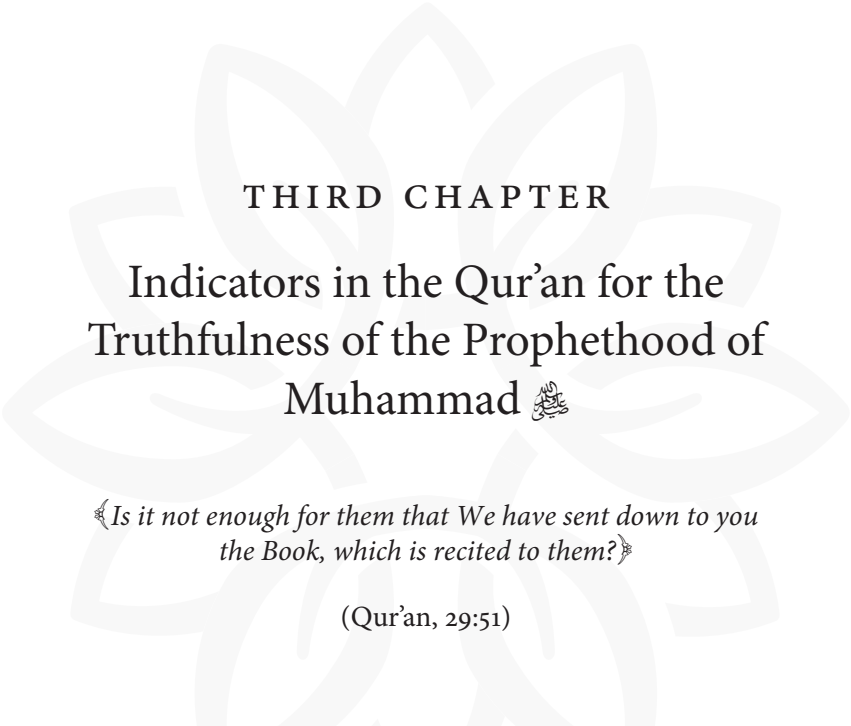
Summary

- After the conquests, those parts of the world that Islam ruled changed for the better. Those parts that were not governed by Islam improved only because of their interaction with the Islamic world. These are realities that most historians specialising in the Middle Ages would not dispute.
- Islam's most unique feature and source of pride is the transcendentalism of God from any partner, parallel, or competitor. This is a virtue that even the most extreme of Islam's opponents could not but issue an admission to its distinction. Qur'anic monotheism contributed to arousing the minds of many prominent Christians to reconsider the logic of the Trinity.
- Christianity obliterated the message of Jesus—which is to worship the One Lord alone—after it was widely influenced by the predominant pagan beliefs, as well as Hellenistic philosophy, during the period in which its theology of divinity and its liturgical practices were still being negotiated.
- The Qur'anic critique of Christianity and Judaism contributed to strengthening the evidence used by Jews and Christians against each other. A lot of what the Qur'an set out centuries ago is the conclusion at which Western biblical criticism today has arrived.
- The Qur'an goes against the customs of the Arabs and the laws of Jews and Christians vis-à-vis women's rights and their status. It afforded them many rights, from which many unfortunately remained aloof until the most recent two centuries of repeated ideological revolutions that brought Islam's conduct in this regard to light.

- A fair-minded person cannot explain away the impact of the Muhammadan Prophetic mission on the world to materialistic propositions in the 7th century. This mission requires a supernatural interpretation, which is represented in the inimitability in the message of the divine Revelation.

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THIRD CHAPTER

Indicators in the Qur'an for the Truthfulness of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ

﴿Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you
the Book, which is recited to them?﴾

(Qur'an, 29:51)

*The mind is confused over the fact of how these signs are
produced by an unlettered man. It is well recognised in the
East that the human mind could not produce the like of
these signs in word and meaning.*

(Henri De Castries)

Preface

Muslims firmly champion the belief that the Qur'an is the greatest miracle of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. The Qur'an itself sets out: 'Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book, which is recited to them? Surely in this Qur'an is a mercy and reminder for people who believe.' (Qur'an, 29:51)

In the Muslim paradigm, the Qur'an evidences the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ for two key reasons:

1. It is supernatural, indicating that it is heavenly.
2. It gathers numerous miracles—the supernatural manifestations therein are manifold and cannot be summarised in a single point.

In the context of any debate, the Qur'an's proclamation of it not being manufactured by man cannot be taken at face value without showcasing the proofs that convince the mind and fill the heart with conviction. The way to assess that is by answering the following two questions:

1. What are the angles of Qur'anic inimitability?
2. What are the indicators of this inimitability?

The following discussion assesses the angles and indicators of the inimitability of the Qur'an.



SECTION 1

Rhetorical Inimitability

﴿...and you will never be able to do so...﴾

(Qur'an, 2:24)

The Qur'an rises to the top and cannot be surpassed.

(Walid ibn al-Mughirah)



A poet's ingenuity? Or an extraordinary miracle?

The veracity of all Prophets' miracles is dependent on seeing them in person, or that their report reaches future generations via robust chains of transmission. This means that any fault in the transmissional aspect of these miracles prevents the Prophethood of these honourable Prophets from being believed. Insofar as the one for whom knowledge of the supernatural is the sole motivator, or the crucial factor, in accepting a Prophet's Prophethood, it would be impossible to know that they occurred if there is fault in transmission.

The greatest miracle of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is the Qur'an. He said, 'There is no Prophet among the Prophets except that he was given such signs that man believed because of them. What I have been given is a Revelation that Allah revealed to me, so I hope that I shall have the most followers on the Day of Resurrection.'⁵¹³

Using the inimitability of the Qur'an as evidence, the Muslim offers the following proof for the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ:

1. This miracle is one of the greatest proofs of Prophethood.⁵¹⁴ This aspect subsists in the description of the Holy Qur'an. A miracle is that which occurs at the hands of a Prophet and can be described as a matter that breaks the norms of the universe, and that it is safe

513 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, Chapter: How Revelation came and the first Revelation (hadith no. 4696); and Muslim, Book of Faith, Chapter on the obligation of believing in our Prophet (hadith no. 152).

514 The Qur'anic challenge is limited to the eloquence aspect. Islam's adversaries were not required to produce anything other than a speech of a same or similar level to that of the Qur'an. As for aspects of inimitability related to the unseen, history, or science, they do form some of the Qur'an's supernatural elements but are not part of the Qur'anic challenge. In this book, our usage of terms such as 'inimitability related to the unseen' or 'scientific inimitability' is metaphorical. See (Khālidi, *I'jāz al-Qur'an al-Bayānī wa-Dalā'il Maṣḍarih al-Rabbānī*, 2000/1421 AH), p. 105-118.

from being successfully rivalled or challenged⁵¹⁵ so that no human or demon can produce something like it.

2. The Qur'an challenged all of humankind and jinn to produce something like it.
3. It is established that all men are incapable of producing anything like it.
4. The Qur'an is therefore a miracle.
5. The Qur'an is therefore evidence for the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ.

Opponents have objected to the above by stating:

1. The Qur'an is an eloquent book by an articulate Arab who lived in the 7th century.
2. There is nothing in the Qur'an that breaks the norms of the universe. Rhetoricians are able to produce something like it.
3. The Qur'an is therefore not a miracle.

⁵¹⁵ It is not necessary that the Prophet challenges people to produce something like it. It is, however, incumbent that people cannot produce anything like it.

Assessing the inimitability of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the first miracle of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. It was a challenge to the world. However, nobody has been able to produce anything like it from when it was revealed up until today. The angle of inimitability therein is its unmatched rhetoric. It debilitated eloquent Arabs, who were the rhetoricians and the candidates to step up to the challenge, from rising up to it. With their inability, evidence is thus established over the rest of the world.

An opponent might say, 'That is a sweeping claim, so where is the proof? The inimitability of the Qur'an is contradicted by a number of criticisms that negate the uniqueness and divinity of the Qur'an, which is what Muslims believe:

1. The Qur'an is a book by an eloquent poet who happened to be proficient in what his contemporaries were good at: rhythmic measured speech.
2. It is true that the Qur'an reached a high level of literary beauty. As the Orientalist A. J. Arberry⁵¹⁶ put it: "In making the present attempt to improve on the performance of my predecessors, and to produce something which might be accepted as echoing however faintly the sublime rhetoric of the Arabic Koran, I have been at pains to study the intricate and richly varied rhythms which—apart from the message itself—constitute the Koran's undeniable claim to rank amongst the greatest literary masterpieces of mankind."⁵¹⁷ Yet, one looking at this from the outside would believe that the Qur'an's rhetorical brilliance is like that of the Arab poet Mutanabbī, or the

⁵¹⁶ A. J. Arberry (1905-1969). Famous British Orientalist. He taught at Cambridge and also served as Head of the Department of Classics at Cairo University in Egypt. He became famous among academic circles for his English translation of the Qur'an.

⁵¹⁷ (Arberry A. J., 1982), p. X.

British poet and playwright Shakespeare⁵¹⁸, who were proficient in the literature of their respective languages. Any person can rise to the level of unrivalled distinction in any aspect of literature, be that poetry or prose, storytelling or lecturing. So why can the Qur'an not be simply considered a piece of rare and incomparable literature, like any other? Why is it not like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*⁵¹⁹ or Homer's⁵²⁰ *Iliad*⁵²¹?

3. The Qur'anic challenge for the language natives was not stress tested. The Qur'an should have laid out its challenge in more stronger terms, to establish the inability of its adversaries.
4. Why should the greatest miracle of the Prophet of Islam not be present in every era? This miracle came in an ancient era; we want a miracle that we ourselves can scrutinise. The linguistic miracle is far removed from our capabilities, as people have lost their intuitive eloquence for classical Arabic.
5. Apart from those who were raised on Islam and are enthusiastic about this supposed miracle, nobody else is of the position of the inimitability of the Qur'an.'

In response, I would say that these objections are the most the deniers of the Qur'an's inimitability can put forth. As we have offered an open stage for those with objections to present their case, we should now be offered the same stage to critique these objections.

518 Translator's note: William Shakespeare (1564-1616). English playwright, poet, and actor, widely considered the greatest writer in the English language. His works that have survived include 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and 3 long narrative poems. His plays have been translated into every major extant language and are theatricised more than any other playwright.

519 Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are a set of 154 poems written by William Shakespeare on a variety of themes, such as love, beauty, and ethics. A sonnet is a musical poem comprising of 14 lines in a particular rhyme scheme.

520 Translator's note: Homer (fl. 8th BC). Ancient Greek author and writer of epic poetry. He is the reputed author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the two epic poems that are now the foundational works of ancient Greek literature.

521 Translator's note: The *Iliad*, sometimes referred to as the *Song of Ilion* or *Song of Ilium*, is an ancient Greek epic poem in dactylic hexameter, attributed to Homer. *Iliad* is among the oldest extant works of Western literature, containing 15,693 lines spanning 24 books. It is set during the Trojan War, the decade-long siege of the city of Troy (Ilium) by a coalition of Mycenaean Greek states.

1. THE QUR'AN AND POETRY

The beautiful construction of language in a way that surpasses that of the people of the time, overpowering the giants and the most prominent people associated with that language, is not a spontaneous occurrence. Rather, it is the result of effort, striving, experience, and practice, through which a committed individual climbs the ranks and hones his capabilities. So, how can a man produce an eloquent speech, pushing the limits of Arabic linguistic eloquence as per the standards of the 7th century Arabs, without having mastered its most important aspect: poetry? Eloquence is from poetry. Though prose and giving speeches were also part of classical Arabic eloquence, speeches were a seasonal activity, limited in impact, and narrow in scope.

Poetry was the obvious gateway for those who wanted to showcase themselves as eloquent people who had complete mastery over speech, description, and the expression of beautiful meanings and noble values.

The adversaries of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ understood the necessity of creating a link between the Qur'an's literary inimitability and poetry. They knew it was necessary for them to demonstrate that the causes of poetry and its disciplines were all facilitated for the Prophet ﷺ. This is why their accusation of linking the Qur'an to poetry is repeatedly found, i.e., that the verses of the Qur'an are from the genus of poetry, albeit—they would admit—of an extremely high standard beyond what is normally achievable. Quoting their accusation, God ﷻ said:

- '...they argued, "Should we really abandon our gods for a mad poet?"' (Qur'an, 37:36)
- 'Yet they say, "This Qur'an is a set of confused dreams. In fact, he has fabricated it. In fact, he must be a poet. So let him bring us a tangible sign like those Prophets sent before."' (Qur'an, 21:5)

Detractors knew that this book is not pure poetry at all. Its words, structures, meanings, and majesty all carry an enchanting power that disables the self from wanting to oppose or challenge it. It causes the self to submit to it. As a result, the detractors added the accusation of fortune-telling to the accusation of poetry. He ﷻ said:

‘Indeed, this Qur’an is the recitation of a noble Messenger. It is not the prose of a poet as you claim, yet you hardly have any faith. Nor is it the mumbling of a fortune-teller, yet you are hardly mindful. It is a Revelation from the Lord of all worlds.’ (Qur’an, 69:40-43)

The Qur’an shuts the door on the smearing and conspiring to bring the Prophet of Islam ﷺ into disrepute by stating:

‘We have not taught him poetry, nor is it fitting for him. This Book is only a reminder and a clear Qur’an.’ (Qur’an, 36:69)

Regardless of whether the person listening believes that the Qur’an is a lordly endowment or a human fabrication, he must at the very least acknowledge the testimony of the Qur’an that Muhammad ﷺ never practised poetry before the Qur’an. The Qur’an attested to this in a gathering of the disbelieving Makkans, who would have been able to discern a career poet from someone who never lent a day to poetry. Proficiency in poetry was not the type of information that would have remained concealed from them; rather, people used to compete with each other over poetry all the time, seeking to win at every forum.

Regarding the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and exercising poetry, the well-known littérateur al-Rāfi‘ī said, ‘In spite of him being the most eloquent of Arabs by consensus, he could not utter a full line of poetry according to its metre; he would only say the first or second half of a full line. If he were to say a full line, he would not be able to say it properly at all—he would render it outside of poetry form as it would not suit his tongue. Once, in the famous poetry line of Labīd, he said its first half:

Alā kullu shay’in mā khalā Allāha bā’ilu

Lo, everything apart from God is wrong

He said that correctly, but he did not say the second half:

Wa kullu na‘īmin lā maḥālata zā’ilu

And every bounty is bound to come to an end

For the famous line of Ṭarafah, he said:

Sa tubdī laka al-ayyāmu mā kunta jāhilā

Wa ya’tika man lam tuzawwid bi al-akhbārī

The correct way is actually:

*Sa tubdī laka al-ayyāmu mā kunta jāhilā
Wa ya'tika bi al-akhbāri man lam tuzawwidi*

The times shall reveal to you that which you were unaware of,
and news shall be brought to you by the one whom you offered no provision

He uttered the line of ʿAbbās ibn Mirdās as:

*Atajʿalu nahbī wa nahba al-ʿabī...
...di bayna al-aqraʿi wa-ʿuyaynah*

The people said, ‘bayna ʿuyaynata wa al-aqraʿi’⁵²²—he simply could not get the wording right.

The proper rendition of poetry simply could not pass the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ—except for two catalectic renderings on the rajaz metre. The first is narrated by al-Barāʾ, who stated that he saw the Prophet ﷺ on a white mule on the Day of Uhud saying:

*Ana al-nabiyyu lā kadhib
Ana ibnu ʿabd al-muṭṭalib*

I am the Prophet, no lie
I am the son of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib

The second, as per the narration of Jundub, is when the Prophet’s finger bled, so he ﷺ said:

*Hal anti illā iṣbaʿun damīti
Wa fī sabīl Allāhi mā laqīti*

Are you but a finger that has bled
Yet you have not suffered in God’s path?

This was coincidental, as the rajaz metre is actually not poetry but rather a rhythm, like the patterns of rhythmic speech, which is possible even for children and those Arabs of weak language proficiency who casually employ such rhyming when working, playing, and in the marketplace.

⁵²² Translation is: ‘Are you suggesting my looting is like the looting of slaves in the showdown between ʿUyaynah and Aqraʿ...’

Such people would not be classed as poets. They may spontaneously utter a rajaz metre without much effort, but when they try to make that into poetry, they would be unable to. Rajaz was upgraded to poetry status only because of the continuity in its lines, the self being inclined to it, its usage to compete with others for pride, and that it was the stepping stone for Arabs to start learning about the poetry metres. As for just one line of poetry, nobody among the Arabs—not even their children, servants, and slave girls—would take notice, let alone consider it poetry or believe that there is something more to such speech. It would be treated like any other speech—nothing else.⁵²³

As Muhammad ﷺ was not part of the world of poetry linguistics nor was he known for it in the slightest, the question is: From where did the stream of Qur’anic eloquence gush forth? Consider the fact that, when a person does a write-up, it must fall under one of seven categories:

1. Compiling information from disparate sources.
2. Correcting a previous author.
3. Sequencing information that was not previously sequenced.
4. Summarising a lengthy piece of work.
5. Commenting on a relatively inaccessible piece of writing.
6. Completing an unfinished work.
7. Writing on something that has never been written on before.⁵²⁴

The greatest form of writing is the lattermost type—which is exactly what the style of the Qur’an is.

In response to the previous question, the Orientalist Laura Veccia Vaglieri disapprovingly interrogates the adversarial assumption, ‘How could this marvellous book be the work of Muhammad, an illiterate Arab who in all his life composed only two or three verses, none of which reveals the least poetic quality; e.g. “I am the Prophet and do not lie. I am the son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib”?’⁵²⁵

It is within the nature of miracles to appear suddenly without preparation or forewarning, evoking a sense of astonishment from people’s faces

523 (Rāfi‘ī, 1973/1393 AH), pp. 307-309 .

524 This passage is by Shams al-Dīn al-Bābulī (d. 1077 AH). See (Muḥibbī, 1869/1284 AH).

525 (Veccia Vaglieri, *An Interpretation of Islam*, 1980), p. 43.

and leaving them speechless. In a similar fashion, the Qur'an was borne from the womb of unexpectedness and the supernatural thus came to pass.

2. IS THE QUR'AN A MIRACULOUS PHENOMENON OR MERELY A RARE PIECE OF LITERATURE?

An objector would say, 'The Qur'an is merely a fantastic literary piece publicised by a man who claimed Prophethood. Subsequent Muslim generations claimed it is an irreplicable book. Let us assume that the Prophet of Islam did say that nobody is able to produce anything like it—that does not compel us to believe that the Arabs took this claim seriously. It is possible that the eloquent Arabs turned away from the Qur'anic challenge because they were not motivated enough to rise up to the challenge.'

Unlike the picture this objection paints, the challenge is not merely about a man in a far-flung place who stood up to say to some passers-by minding their own business, 'I have a rare book that nobody can rival.' Nor is the challenge to a people who were not listening to his speech with any serious interest, or that they were uninterested because it sounded more like the trash talking frequented by combat sportsmen.

The outstanding linguist Jāhīz sketched out the reality of the issue: 'God sent Muhammad ﷺ with capabilities that exceeded what the Arabs had in poets and prose speakers. He had a command over the language that was far more proficient and resourceful than theirs. Via evidence, he called the Arabs, far and near, to the monotheism of God and to accept his message. Once he left them no excuse and dispelled their doubts, and their denial to acknowledge his message turned from ignorance and confusion to predilection and pride, he took the sword to them...

During all of this, he took the Qur'an to them as evidence, calling on them by dawn and dusk to challenge it with just one chapter (*sūrah*) or a few verses if he was a liar. As his challenge to them increased and their inability to rise up to it was exposed, their concealed deficiency came into the open...

When they could find no other evidence or choice, they told him, "You know of the stories of nations which we do not, which is why what is possible for you is impossible for us." He said, "So bring forth your concoctions." However, not one prose speaker or poet could muster anything. Had they done so, they would have been affectatious at that. Had they produced anything out of affectation, it would have come to light; if that had come to light, there would have been those who would have considered it good enough and would have stubbornly defended it no matter what, deluding

themselves into thinking that it successfully faced down the challenge, met the challenge requirement, and dismantled the challenge claim.

For the intellectual person, the fact that they did not even do this is indicative of their inability. This is in spite of the abundance of their speech, their receptiveness to their own language, that the language was extremely easy for them, their many poets, and the abundance of people who satirically mocked him and competed with the poets and speakers among his Companions. A single chapter or a few verses would have broken his claim, ruined his affair, served to disprove him, and hastily dispersed his followers. All of this would have been far easier than sacrificing lives, leaving the homeland, and spending money to fight him. This was a great benchmark that was not lost on those less than the Quraysh.

In opinion and intellect, Arabs were of various classes. They possessed wondrous literary pieces and high quality compositions of both poetry and prose that were eloquent in length yet concise and compact. They also possessed rhymes, couplets, and scattered words of the highest quality. After all that, having demonstrated the inability of his closest adversaries, he challenged every last person to it. It is therefore utterly impossible—may God honour you—that all of these people united on an error and a clear mistake was made in such an obvious issue. This is notwithstanding the fact that they were repeatedly put down for their deficiency and failed due to their inability.

They were the proudest of people and the most competitive on matters impacting on their esteem. Speech was their leading activity, and they needed it the most when facing down this challenge. As need breeds solutions for even the most obscure matter, how about when it is for an open need that has a momentous amount of benefit riding on it? Likewise, just as it would have been impossible for them to survive 23 years in error on this, it would also be impossible for them—knowing who he was—to leave him alone and unharmed, yet they spent far more than that.⁵²⁶

526 (Biqā'ī, 1/173-176; quoting from Jāḥiẓ.

Translator's note: The author references Biqā'ī, stating that this passage is from Jāḥiẓ's book *al-Hujjah fī Tathbīt Khabar al-Wāḥid*. Upon investigation, it appears that this book is most probably lost, or that it remains in uncatalogued manuscript form somewhere in the world. Suyūṭī—Biqā'ī's contemporary—also offers this same passage in his *al-Itqān* (pp. 1877-1878) and attributes it to Jāḥiẓ, though he does not mention whether he took the passage directly from Jāḥiẓ or from a secondary source, like Biqā'ī (Suyūṭī was around 26 years old when Biqā'ī completed *Naẓm al-Durar*) or someone else. The editor of *al-Itqān* suggests that the contents of this passage—though definitely not word for word—are found in his *Rasā'il* (see (Jāḥiẓ, 1964/1384 AH)). Bibliographical works like Ḥājī Khalīfah's *Kashf al-Zunūn* do not make reference to a book called *al-Hujjah fī Tathbīt Khabar al-Wāḥid*,

Consequently, the Arabs were confronted by the biggest challenge that ate away at their literary honour and dignity. If this is not the challenge that proves the Qur'an's inimitability, then what other challenge should it be? Give us the answer to that.

An opponent might say, 'Granted, the Qur'an did indeed challenge its opponents and goaded them into issuing a response. However, that is not proof for its inimitability: Historical factors came together that made it a unique book—like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Every era has its own rare literary pieces, the distinction of which can be explained by favourable socio-cultural factors for their authors due to their potent gifts and the advanced nature of their innate powers to innovate in their minds. Everything can be materially explained, even the claim of the supposed inimitability of the Qur'an.'

Our response is that the Qur'an in its entirety is quite different from the uniqueness of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. It has challenged the Arabs—the people of eloquence and literary brilliance—to produce something like it. This is despite the fact that all the details and the historical context surrounding the Qur'an would have meant it should not have reached even an intermediary level of eloquence, let alone the highest level a human can ever produce. It is a book that rejects any material explanation, for a number of reasons:

1. The Qur'an was delivered to people through an unlettered man who had not learned how to read or write, nor did he receive any lessons to construct ideas, have them penned down on paper, or set out or give sequence to any theological lesson.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, did go to schools: He studied Greek and Latin; books were available to him, from which he would pick and choose; he met the most prominent teachers and took from them; he looked through many books and benefited from them.

2. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not learn or practice poetry, nor was he known for it. Knowledge of poetry and proficiency therein are a necessary step to enter the world of linguistics. This is why verses negating the knowledge of poetry from the Prophet ﷺ were revealed, dispelling any doubt or accusation in the audience containing both

nor do contemporary works or editors who have written on the life and works of Jāḥiẓ list this book. However, a book by the name *Khabar al-Wāḥid* is attributed to Jāḥiẓ in (Bāqillānī, 1963), p. 248. Indeed, the Arabic passage reflects the bold and emphatic style typically employed by Jāḥiẓ in most of his written works.

believers and adversaries who knew every last detail of his biography and the stages of his life. ‘We have not taught him poetry, nor is it fitting for him. This Book is only a reminder and a clear Qur’an.’ (Qur’an, 36:69)

As for Shakespeare, he was considered a fine theatrical author only when he reached 30 years of age; he did not reach professional author status until he had undertaken a wide regime of perfecting literary construction. It is known that, in that era, stories and theatrics combined both prose and poetry, especially musical poetry.

3. In the beginning, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not compete with his people—or anybody else for that matter—in the disciplines of Arabic eloquence. Arabs never knew of a brilliance in poetry that would suddenly emerge one day or overnight.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, was free to write theatrically until it became his day job. In a London environment, a professional job in writing would have meant there were other proficient authors in competition, all of whom were attempting to prove themselves in the revolving world of linguistics by locking horns with contemporaries.

4. The field of sonnet writing was known for centuries pre-Shakespeare and was adopted by many literarists. Shakespeare had an abundance of rich experience from his predecessors, upon which he could build his own fresh style.

As for the Qur’an, it is one of a kind: Arabs had known nothing of the sort before it in terms of its organisational structure, nor its rational process.

5. Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* are not all the same level of beauty. Proficiency therein varies: It is fantastic on occasions; in other instances, it is less than that.

The Qur’an, on the other hand, is a single breath-taking expressive piece. Regarding the Qur’an, Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī⁵²⁷ said, “The inimitability in the Qur’an is in the fact that its rhetorical brilliance and eloquence is continuous throughout it, across all its aspects, and without interruption. No man is able to do that. Even the highest speech of Arabs and those who

527 Translator’s note: Ḥāzīm al-Qarṭājannī (1211-1284). Arabic-speaking poet. He was born in Cartagena, Spain, and later settled in Tunis, where he died. He has a number of literary works to his name.

speak in their tongue is not continuously eloquent and rhetorically brilliant in every aspect; it would only be as such in small portions, after which natural human breaks intervene, putting a stop in fine and bright speech. Thus, this eloquence does not continue throughout, but is found in segments and different portions of it. Breaks in eloquence occur even for the eloquent person for a number of reasons: a) inadvertence that overcomes him in something, without him being ignorant of how to say something eloquently; b) ignorance of how to say something eloquently; c) weariness affecting his thought; and d) self-predilection overcoming him, keeping his thoughts from selecting the meanings, whether they are useful to the context or not. These are the human afflictions that even a virtuous man of perfect temperament cannot escape.’⁵²⁸

6. The rhetorical experts of Makkah said to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, ‘This book is your brainchild.’ So he placed an open challenge for them: ‘Produce something like it.’ He publicised this challenge at every place that was at an audible radius from his residence. God ﷻ said, ‘Or do they say, “He made this Qur’an up”? In fact, they have no faith. Let them then produce something like it, if what they say is true.’ (Qur’an, 52:33-34)

Shakespeare did not challenge anyone. To his contemporaries, his writings were not considered to be of a status that could not be attained by hard work and patience. Rather, they were merely treated like how any superior person is treated compared to an inferior person or like in any competition between contemporaries. A person who is serious could hope to participate in the competition and reach victory. Indeed, Shakespeare’s literary work has been compared to the writings of Francis Beaumont⁵²⁹, John Fletcher⁵³⁰, and other literarists.⁵³¹

7. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ really laid into his people with the challenge, almost infringing on their sense of honour and pride. He threatened them with Hellfire if they could not respond. He equated them to rocks if they turned away. He accused them of disbelief if they remained stubborn.

528 (Zarkashī, 1984/1404 AH), p. 101.

529 Francis Beaumont (1584-1616). Famous English theatrical writer. His most significant work is *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

530 John Fletcher (1579-1625). English theatrical writer. He wrote over 50 plays in various theatrical genres. With Shakespeare, he co-authored *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

531 (Holland, 2021).

‘But if you are unable to do so—and you will never be able to do so—then fear the Fire fuelled with people and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers.’ (Qur’an, 2:24)

They were a people of stubbornness and argumentation, as the Qur’an describes them:

- ‘...a people prone to dispute.’ (Qur’an, 43:58)
- ‘...a contentious people.’ (Qur’an, 19:97)

The Qur’an magnified its inimitability at every opportunity, enraging those who heard it:

- ‘We have certainly granted you the seven often-repeated verses and the great Qur’an.’ (Qur’an, 15:87)
- ‘Allah sent down the best message—a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons—which causes the skin and hearts of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the remembrance of Allah.’ (Qur’an, 39:23)
- ‘Say, O Prophet, “If all humans and demons were to come together to produce the equivalent of this Qur’an, they could not produce its equal, no matter how they supported each other.”’ (Qur’an, 17:88)

Even if there was no challenge, these three verses alone would have goaded the people into a showdown. Imagine how they then felt when they read these three verses alongside those other verses that publicly challenged them to produce something like the Qur’an.

Despite the intensity of the challenge and the heated provocation, none of the opponents could respond. Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ said, ‘The Prophet ﷺ continued to upbraid and scold them. He stultified their dreams, dishonoured their leaders, disrupted their system, and criticised both them and their gods. In spite of all this, they shrank away from rising to his challenge and fell short of standing toe to toe with him. They deceived themselves by noise, denials, inciting each other to fabricate falsehoods, with statements such as:

- “Our hearts are unreceptive...” (Qur’an, 2:88)
- “...are veiled against what you are calling us to...” (Qur’an, 41:5)
- “...there is deafness in our ears...” (Qur’an, 41:5)

- "...and there is a barrier between us and you..." (Qur'an, 41:5)
- "Do not listen to this Qur'an but drown it out so that you may prevail" (Qur'an, 41:26);

and making empty claims despite being proven to be powerless:

- "...if we wanted, we could have easily produced something similar..." (Qur'an, 8:31)

Indeed, God already told them,

- "...and you will never be able to do so..." (Qur'an, 2:24)
- They neither did it nor were they able to do so.⁵³²

Shakespeare never discredited the intellectual or literary capabilities of his contemporaries, nor did he ever claim that their writings are nonsense when compared to what he wrote. Nor did he claim that he possessed a total command over language, policymaking, and other facets simply based on his *Sonnets*.

8. Nobody has assigned supernaturalness to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. For those who admire his literary work, it is at best considered the product of an intelligent mind and fine intuition.

As for the Qur'an, it was described by the adversaries of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and his antagonists as magic. For them, magic was not something that could be acquired by the human mind, but was rather an inspiration from supernatural entities, namely demons (*jinn*).

When one of the leaders in disbelief wanted to say something that would reveal the Qur'an's true source and secret, he tried his best but only ended up negating its humanness, instead linking it to magic. God ﷻ said, 'He contemplated and determined a degrading label for the Qur'an. May he be condemned—how evil was what he determined. May he be condemned even more—how evil was what he determined. Then he contemplated. Then he frowned and scowled. Then he turned his back on the truth and acted arrogantly. He said, "This Qur'an is nothing but magic from the ancients. This is no more than the word of a man."' (Qur'an, 74:18-25)

Additionally, after a lengthy period of enmity and argumentation, the Makkans said, "This is only a man who wishes to hinder you from what

532 (Yahşubî, *Al-Shifâ'*, 1988/1409 AH), 1/261.

your forefathers used to worship.” They also say, “This Qur’an is no more than a fabricated lie.” And the disbelievers say of the truth when it has come to them, “This is nothing but pure magic.” (Qur’an, 34:43) They also expressed their fears of being impacted by the Qur’an’s magic: ‘The disbelievers advised one another, “Do not listen to this Qur’an but drown it out so that you may prevail.”’ (Qur’an, 41:26) Mujāhid⁵³³ said, “Drown it out” means whistling and attempting to get the Messenger of God ﷺ muddled up when he recited the Qur’an.⁵³⁴ All of this proves that they were confused in how to deal with this and were flummoxed by their incapability.

The supernatural nature of the Qur’an was the reason behind the poet Unays al-Ghifārī accepting Islam. When he first heard the Qur’an, he said, ‘I have heard the soothsayers—it is not their speech. I have had his speech compared to the ways and the types of lines produced by poets—it is unlike anything a poet would be capable of. By Allah, he is truthful and they are liars.’⁵³⁵

9. The material means for the originality in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* were present: a poet setting out to write on a chosen topic, expressing through imaginative thought, writing up odes so that each of them would be a standalone piece, and knowing from the outset what the beginning, middle, and end of the ode would look like. The Qur’an is not like this at all, for a number of reasons:
 - a. Most topics of the Qur’an are theological, philosophical (i.e., responding to the existential questions), legislative, and historical—the mind has no room to creatively manoeuvre in these areas, as they are relatively mundane topics. If an attempt is made to bring them to life through speaking or writing, the person must also be extremely well informed about these topics, precise, and honest. From ancient times, Arabs have said, ‘The sweetest of poetry is also the most dishonest’, because poetic language and an imaginative mind refuse being restricted to absolute seriousness or burdensome honesty. One of the historical precedents for this is the poetry of Labīd ibn Rabi‘ah and Ḥassān ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه, who dropped in their standards when

533 Translator’s note: Mujāhid ibn Jabr (d. 722). Famous early exegete of the Qur’an. As a close student of Ibn ‘Abbās, he was from the first generation of Muslims after the Companions.

534 (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 7/174.

535 Narrated by Muslim, Book of the Virtues of the Companions, Chapter on the virtues of Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه (hadith no. 2473).

they accepted Islam and lost much of the pull they had during the Jāhiliyyah. Their previous poetry was full of the melodious serenading of every form of beauty and picturesque backdrop. All of this was associated with the poetry of the pre-Islamic period, not to mention their ability to use their imagination to the fullest extent to conjure up stunning and bold imagery from their minds into poetry.

- b. Many Makkan verses are linked to the theological dispute with pagans, and to mandating monotheism when worshipping the Lord. Conversely, most Madinan verses are connected to refuting the Jews and the systemisation of laws. A literarist is not inclined to theological discourse and its complexities, nor would he be captivated by legislative matters and the parameters of commands and prohibitions therein. Usually, when serious matters are discussed, words come off as dry and imagery as icy—there is usually no warmth or pleasure in such expressions.
- c. Inimitability in the Qur'an is infused in all its chapters. As for the *Sonnets*, the areas of eloquence and ingenuity therein vary; this is natural for any literarist, as his words would fluctuate in terms of quality and his expressive ability. In other words, a literarist would be able to achieve his objective in only parts of his work. Look at the poetry of Imru' al-Qays: he was very good at cheerful lines, romancing women, and describing horses; Nābighah was superb at expressing fear; A'ṣhā was good at requests and describing wine; Zuhayr was great at expressing desire and hope; they were not of the same level in other areas.
- d. Most verses of the Qur'an are linked to a question that would have just appeared, or to an event of consequence, leaving the Qur'anic expression restricted to the remit of the issue at hand.
- e. Many topics of the Qur'an are repeated numerous times, such as monotheism, the Last Day, and the stories of the Prophets. Maintaining the highest levels of eloquence when dealing with the same topic over and over again is not customary in literature, as repetition suggests that a poet is unable to maintain the highest levels of eloquence he was previously able to achieve.

- f. The Qur'an is a religious book that would naturally have to address the young and the old, the elite and the laity, the intellectuals and moderately clever people, Arabs and non-Arabs, and the people of the time and posterity. This is completely unlike literary works that are written for a specific class of readers and listeners. These writings are such that whoever understands them is welcome to do so; whoever cannot, then tough luck to them. A person analysing the Qur'an would see that it is of an impressive ingot of literary brilliance in its ability to address minds of all capabilities, hearts of all dispositions, and every generation no matter how far in the future they are. Its influence is maintained. Its colour does not fade away, nor does its voice diminish.
- g. Many verses of the Qur'an were revealed much later than the earlier segments of the same chapters they are part of. Such verses are later add-ons to what was previously revealed, thus potentially causing a cacophony in the flow of topics, and even perhaps endangering the smooth progress in the rise of Islam. In spite of that, the Qur'an stands as a singular piece: the call to Islam starts off with 'O you wrapped in your clothes, stand all night in prayer except a little...' (Qur'an, 73:1-2) and 'O you covered up in your clothes, arise and warn all' (Qur'an, 74:1-2), and concludes with '...I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way.' (Qur'an, 5:3) In the interim, there is an assurance for the continuation of the call to Islam: 'O Messenger, convey everything revealed to you from your Lord. If you do not, then you have not delivered His message. Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the people who disbelieve.' (Qur'an, 5:67)
- h. The circumstances surrounding the descent of Revelation were not conducive to the mind to fashion innovative speech or unique ideas. During Revelation, the face of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ used to change colour, his state would be of extreme discomfort, he would profusely perspire even on the coldest of days, and his weight would dramatically increase. Such a situation would be one of endurance and hardship, not of literary innovation helped by a backdrop of peace and relaxation.

The context and situation in which the Qur'anic text appeared would have normally prevented it reaching even an average level of fine rhetoric. This further demonstrates its miraculous nature.

10. The Shakespearean literary originality lies in its holistic distinction, and is not found in each and every constituent part. As for the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, his challenge to his people was not only to produce a book like it, but he then dialled down the challenge in both quantity and quality:
 - a. He first challenged both them (they used to believe that poetry had a satanic demon by the name of 'Abqarah) and the demons to produce a book like the Qur'an: 'Say, O Prophet, "If all humans and demons were to come together to produce the equivalent of this Qur'an, they could not produce its equal, no matter how they supported each other."' (Qur'an, 17:88)
 - b. When they could not respond, he provoked them by saying they should fabricate only ten chapters, if indeed they felt that the Qur'an was his own fabrication: 'Or do they say, "He has fabricated this Qur'an"? Say, O Prophet, "Produce ten fabricated chapters like it, and seek help from whoever you can—other than Allah—if what you say is true."' (Qur'an, 11:13) Describing the ten chapters as 'fabricated' was with the intent of upbraiding and scolding the obstinate polytheists, as fabrication means a type of lie in which its perpetrator has no doubt of it being a lie. In other words, it is a wilful form of lying.⁵³⁶ 'Producing' means procuring, whether it is by appeal to someone else or by the procurer's own invention. This was yet another dilution of the challenge.⁵³⁷ By 'fabricated', what is intended is that its meanings are fabricated, which is exactly what they thought of the Qur'an, i.e., stories and tales from the people of Jāhiliyyah. This is a further loosening of the challenge for the sake of the argument, as the similitude in the phrase of the verse 'like it' is a request for similarity in only the rhetorical eloquence of speech, not in terms of the propriety of their meanings.⁵³⁸

536 (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984), 12/19.

537 Ibid.

538 Ibid.

- c. Then the Prophet ﷺ reminded them of their claim: that he fabricated the Qur'an from his own self. As such, he said they should produce just one chapter like it: 'Or do they claim, "He made it up"? Tell them, O Prophet, "Produce one chapter like it then, and seek help from whoever you can—other than Allah—if what you say is true."' (Qur'an, 10:38)
- d. The challenge reached its limit when the Prophet ﷺ stipulated the most minimal of requests: producing something that *looks like* a response to the challenge. In other words, they should bring one chapter that *somewhat resembles* the Qur'an: 'And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call your helpers other than Allah, if what you say is true.' (Qur'an, 2:23) He followed this up with a threat that was a slight on their self-esteem and in the process shredded any sense of honour and dignity that remained in their hearts. He goaded them so that they would at least come out to the literary battleground to showcase their rhetorical capabilities: 'But if you are unable to do so—and you will never be able to do so—then fear the Fire fuelled with people and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers.' (Qur'an, 2:24) The point of the challenge was not to prove who wins the title of 'the most eloquent Arab'. Rather, it was a contest with the aim of dismantling the beliefs of the Arabs, and to facilitate for them to accept the Prophethood of the man who brought the Qur'an, accept his every command and prohibition, and believe in every item of news he brought.
- e. The challenge thus reached the farthest it could possibly go—to produce a single chapter that *resembles something like* the Qur'an, even if it is of a few words and of little meaning—there was no challenge left beyond that. The requirement of the challenge was extremely small in size; there was not even any requirement for the produced work to be qualitatively the same.

It is a mistake to believe that the Qur'anic challenge is for the adversary to produce a book that is quantitatively the same size of the Qur'an, or one that is of the same level in terms of its rhetorical and expressive eloquence.

The Qur'anic challenge is to produce a speech—the size of the shortest chapter of the Qur'an or thereabouts—that is similar to the Qur'anic rhetorical and expressive proficiency, though not necessarily equalling the Qur'an.

If someone claims that the Qur'anic challenge did not fully frustrate its opponents, and that it could have still brought itself down a few notches, then say this to them: 'Bring what you think would be a level of challenge that could be classified as a reasonable challenge!'

Makkah was rife with petty argumentation, disunited hearts, the swords of battle drawn to wage war on life, wealth, and reputation, and the thrones of pride, wealth, and lineage on the verge of collapse. With this backdrop, the Qur'an addressed the Makkan elite by saying, 'Bring just one chapter, even if its size is small, and even if it is just a few lines, with its structure similar—not even necessarily equal—to that of the Qur'anic structure. Still, you stubborn disbelievers should know that you will never gain anything from these efforts of yours apart from further defeat, humiliation among the Arabs in this world, and punishment on the Day of Resurrection.'

This is how the Qur'an discussed the challenge and offered up its verses for scrutiny. In spite of the danger the initial provocation and the first challenge could have had on the future of the fledgling religion and the believers, the Qur'an instead—which had already enraged the feelings of its opponents—daringly lowered the bar of the challenge to the lowest possible level that an opponent in a literary competition can be requested to rise up to.

An opponent might claim, 'Perhaps history did not record successful responses to the Qur'anic challenge.'

Our response is simply this: The Qur'an quoted the polytheists' objections and repeatedly mentioned both the major and minor problems they had. Had there been any response worthy of maintaining the Makkans' pride, that would have most certainly been put up as proof that the challenge was met; it would have most certainly become widely known, and the Qur'an would have been compelled to reply to it. Instead, the Qur'an repeatedly issued challenges, then pointed out the inability of the eloquent polytheists to provide a response—there was no condemnation forthcoming from opponents against the Qur'an making such assertions. The Orientalist

E. H. Palmer⁵³⁹ said, 'That the best of Arab writers have never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'ân itself is not surprising.'⁵⁴⁰

One might ask what is the stipulation for an inimitable construct that would make it stand head and shoulders above all other wondrous constructs. For the astute intellectual, this would be when such a construct reaches a level whereby 'it stupefies and so overpowers everything else that any desire to confront it ceases, tongues fall silent from any fanciful notion of coming even close to it. No person would feel it could be caught, and everybody would cease wandering in the hope that producing something like it is possible. In spite of all the courage everyone could possibly muster, their sense of helplessness would be so potent that even the attempt to challenge a portion of it feels as impossible as challenging the whole thing.'⁵⁴¹ This is exactly the state of the Qur'an vis-à-vis its adversaries.

As for the activities of every eloquent person, then that is far removed from what the Qur'an is. Eloquent people compete with their contemporaries in the literary compositions they are good at, and there is an assumed mutual comparability between any two competitors which spark those comparisons. Imru' al-Qays competed with 'Alqamah al-Fahl—they asked each other, 'Who of us is the most prolific poet?' The same can be said of Jarir and Farazdaq. People have long weighed up Abū Tammām against Buḥturī. In none of these 'battle of contemporaries' have later generations arrived at any firm conclusion as to who was better in rhetorical eloquence.

In facing the Qur'anic challenge, the incapability of Arabic language literarists has been well established. The people of the Arabic language, who possessed the sharpest of expressions and most proficient of articulation, chose instead to respond by material overpowerment. They economically boycotted the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and his people, punished his Companions, acted with hostility towards his invulnerable aides, prevented the voice of the Qur'an from being read out in Makkah, stopped visitors to Makkah from listening to his verses, organised a defamatory media campaign against him claiming 'The companion of the Qur'an is either a soothsayer or a magician, wanting to divide between loved ones through his magic', attempted to imprison, expel and assassinate him, and ended up raising weapons against him and causing bloodshed. All of this could have been avoided if they triumphed in a literary competition, which would have been far less

539 Edward Henry Palmer (1840-1882). British Orientalist and explorer. He served in the British colonial occupation of Egypt. He taught Arabic at Cambridge. His translation of the Qur'an is considered his most famous work. His works include *Arabic Grammar*.

540 (Palmer E. H., 1880), 1/LV.

541 (Jurjānī, *Al-Risālah al-Shāfiyah fī al-I'jāz*), p. 129.

burdensome and a lot easier. Obviously, the impact of any such triumph on their part would have been a devastating blow on the newfound religion.

So look carefully: Can you see that those people left no stone unturned in scheming against the Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ? They went through the gauntlet of every burden, spent every last effort, did not hold back on any wealth or power to achieve their objective, and even relinquished the customary Arabian virtues of magnanimity and honesty (which would have been extremely tough for any Arab to do, never mind the Makkan elites) just so that the word of the Qur'an did not reach the ears and hearts of men. Had they been able to face down the Qur'an in the literary arena, they would have done so without lag or delay, and would have unleashed their tongues without stammer or diffidence.

3. DID THE QUR'AN REACH THE HIGHEST POINT OF INIMITABILITY?

An objector might say, 'Granted, the Qur'an did downgrade the challenge it put to its opponents to a lower level. However, it could have downgraded it further, which would have put the sceptic's mind at ease. Nobody then would have doubted that the rhetoricians were completely paralysed by this thought-provoking challenge.'

The answer to this, as has been alluded to before, is that the Qur'anic challenge flung the doors wide open for anyone wanting to respond to it. The challenge complexity level being downgraded enraged its Makkan opponents so much that they combusted in anger. In order to grasp the idea that the Qur'an exhausted all avenues to downgrade its challenge—to establish its inimitability and so that there would be no doubt left over its heavenliness—perhaps one needs to take a step back and view the portrayal of the Qur'anic challenge from a wider lens. The challenge's outline can be showcased in a much clearer fashion when we consider the situation of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, his book, and the environment they were in:

1. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ who, through the Qur'an, challenged his people—or should we say the world—was unlettered. He was the last person when it came to the acquisition of scientific or empirical information.
2. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ was the last person to have possessed the preliminary skills—namely poetry—required to produce such a book of his own volition. Neither before nor after the Qur'an did he ever practise poetry.
3. Theological debate, historical information, and legislative discourse in the Qur'an are the most unlikely candidates for being suitable themes for rhetorical innovation.
4. The Qur'an's literary composition was a breakthrough in the sense that it could not be aligned to either poetry or prose. It is known that the most challenging aspects of rhetorical brilliance is to write up an original piece in a manner that would not only feel familiar to the language natives, but also be immediately accepted as normative.

Angelika Neuwirth⁵⁴², the leading German Orientalist today, said, ‘I really think that the Qur’an has even brought Western researchers embarrassment, who weren’t able to clarify how suddenly in an environment where there were not any appreciable written text, appeared the Qur’an with its richness of ideas and its magnificent wordings.’⁵⁴³

5. The Qur’an was revealed in what was the golden era for the Arabic language. The environment was such that poetry elevated and lowered the status of men. Each and every letter of poetry carried honour; refraining from it carried a degree of dishonour.
6. The Arabs were distinguished by what is known as the ‘poetry of contrasts’. The Qur’an was revealed to a people who were obsessed with poetry responses to the most famous odes. Battling the odes with one’s own was a recognised tradition and a practised custom. Poetry being the battleground of literarists was the backdrop of the Qur’anic challenge. It is generally known—for every nation—that the vernacular adopts and seeks out fine and pleasant literary constructs. Therefore, how could have one possibly envisaged that the *Qur’anic literary method* was to be effective when the Arabs of the 7th century considered *poetry face-offs* to be the pinnacle of their literary tradition?
7. Accepting the lowest form of a response in the form of one chapter—similar in size to any one small chapter in the Qur’an—was the benchmark. We know that much of the Makkan Qur’an is numerically limited in its word count and is extremely concise in its meanings.
8. The Qur’an did not even stipulate absolute resemblance. All it requested was the lowest form of any human response—one chapter that bears *some similitude* to the Qur’an.

542 Angelika Neuwirth (b. 1943). Professor of Qur’anic Studies at Freie Universität (Free University), Berlin. She is the director of the research project *Corpus Coranicum*, which deals with collecting pre-modern copies of the Qur’an. Her works include *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang* (*The Koran as a Text of Late Antiquity: A European Approach*).

543 This is a direct oral (and recorded) testimony by this Orientalist given to the Graeco-British Muslim preacher, Hamza Andreas Tzortzis. See (Tzortzis, *God’s Testimony: The Divine Authorship of the Qur’an*, 2019).

The Seven Odes were pieces of poetry that were orally transmitted, and penned down later on. This is why they are not related to what this Orientalist intended.

9. The Qur'an demanded only the weakest form of a response by allowing it to focus solely on the rhetorical aspect, not even in its content. The Qur'an described the ten chapters it sought to be 'fabricated', i.e., lies. Thus, any such literary response to the Qur'an could have focused solely on the expressive side, regardless of whether the content was true or not.
10. The Qur'an's challenge allowed the highest number of rhetoricians to unite in order to muster a production similar to that of the Qur'an. It did not limit the challenge to individuals. He ﷺ said, 'Say, O Prophet, "If all humans and demons were to come together to produce the equivalent of this Qur'an, they could not produce its equal, no matter how they supported each other."' (Qur'an, 17:88)
11. The window of opportunity for responding to the Qur'anic challenge is indefinitely open. As such, it has offered the greatest possible amount of time to any response.

Given the above, the Qur'an was described by disbelievers as the most potent of unnatural speech: magic. This was a tacit acknowledgement on their part that it is a supernatural book that does not conform to the norms of natural speech.

One reason why some fail to comprehend that the Qur'anic challenge is indicative of its divinity is that they remain aloof of the fact that the inducements of facing it down have been exhausted. Simply put, the Qur'anic challenge cannot be downgraded any further.

4. IS RHETORICAL INIMITABILITY STILL APPLIABLE TODAY?

An objector might say, ‘We do not accept that the Qur’an is inimitable simply because it incapacitated the Arabs of the 7th century. Evidence against its opponents is not established unless it incapacitates every generation from meeting the challenge. This is why the door to the possibility of composing some chapters like those in the Qur’an—or bearing some resemblance to it—should not be considered closed.’

The answer to that is twofold:

1. *Argumentum a fortiori*

Assume a man gathers the leading astronomers of his era. He presents a major cosmic problem to them and challenges them to find a solution. When they announce in unison their inability and admit they failed, and he proudly proclaims that nobody is able to solve the problem he put to the experts of that field, someone turns around and tells him, ‘But what about the shepherds? If you cannot demonstrate that they too are unable to answer like you have demonstrated with the astronomers, we shall never admit to your so-called unrivalled unique knowledge.’

The fact is this: Establishing evidence against those who are experts in a subject matter necessitates that the evidence is established on those of a lower ranking. Likewise, we employ *argumentum a fortiori* here: The inability of the subject masters is proof that lesser people are incapable as well.

The Qur’an has established proof against the Arab natives to whom classical Arabic came naturally, and in whose era poetry reached its pinnacle. This was before the standard of Arabic expressiveness fell due to the introduction of mixed-race Arabs (*muwallads*). *Argumentum a fortiori* rules that the first generation’s inability to face down the Qur’an is evidence for the posterity’s inability as well. History is a testament to what we are claiming: The tongues of all eloquent people—no matter how many centuries pass—are seemingly loaded with barriers from rising up to the challenge, thus rendering them incapable of producing anything like the Qur’an.

In his rhetorical brilliance, Jāḥiẓ—who was indomitable and unmatched, as none of his 3rd century contemporaries could compete with him in the field—said, ‘We—may God lengthen your life—claimed that the Arabs possess superiority over all other nations in the various aspects of rhetorical eloquence: odes, *rajaz*, prose, rhymes, and poetry in both couplet and non-couplet formats. From the esteemed preambular, the wondrous

lustre, the verbal craftsmanship, and the rhetorical sculpting in front of us, this—for them—is a true testament that neither the best of poets nor the greatest of eloquent rhetoricians today can rival them—except in the most minute of quantities.⁵⁴⁴

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Zaydī (d. 421 AH) clarified the difference between the Arabic language of the natives during the Prophethood era and those before them on the one hand, and those who came afterwards on the other. He said, ‘Do you not see that Khalil ibn Aḥmad was without doubt better in language, and in poetry metres, faults, and points of linguistic beauty than Imru’ al-Qays? Although Imru’ al-Qays knew the language of his own people and of neighbouring people, Khalil studied the language until he encompassed it. Despite this, there can be no doubt that Khalil could not come up with the type of poetry that would even come close to that of Imru’ al-Qays, let alone rival it. If someone—who might be proficient in the language sub-disciplines and theory of poetry—is not proficient at poetry itself, he cannot produce it in the way someone who is cut out from poetry can. This is despite the fact that the language knowledge of the latter may not reach even a tenth of the former. In fact, the former might not even be able to compose a single line of poetry without exerting a tiresome amount of effort. Even when he does produce anything as such, it would most probably come off as extremely desolate and mediocre. The same can be said for writing up treatises, delivering lectures, and engaging in extensive discussions.’⁵⁴⁵

As the natives of the language forwent responding to the challenge, those after them must also forgo it and accept its inimitability. They should accept the fact that they are as incapable as the early natives were. Their inability and admission to the inimitability of the Qur’an—whether verbally or circumstantially—is like us seeing them in person in a state of being unable to produce anything like it. As such, both they and us are the same in this regard.

This is notwithstanding the fact that they had the incentive to attempt to rival the Qur’an. Yet the Qur’an upbraided them, scolded their rhetoricians, discredited their capabilities for not being able to meet the challenge, and condemned them for their idolatrous beliefs, problematic customs, and unjust laws.

2. The Qur’an’s adversaries emphasise on its inimitability
Ancient history does not record any attempt worth mentioning in which the Qur’an was challenged. Most of what is narrated in this regard is doubtful in either:

544 (Jurjānī, *Al-Risālah al-Shāfiyah fī al-I‘jāz*), p. 118.

545 (Hārūnī), p. 62.

- its historicity, such as the Chapter of the Frog⁵⁴⁶ and the Chapter of the Elephant⁵⁴⁷, both attributed to Musaylimah and comprising of ludicrous meanings and a flimsy composition that would most likely not have come from an Arab; or
- whether it was designed to challenge the Qur'an to begin with, like the assertion that Ma'arri's book, *al-Fuṣūl wa al-Ghāyāt*, is a response to the Qur'anic challenge; his book is not like that at all.⁵⁴⁸

Only a few rare instances of attempts at a response to the Qur'an are authentically reported. In Muslim lands, there were spiteful adversaries who spared no effort in making disparaging remarks about the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, though none of them announced any book that would have matched the Qur'an, which would have satisfied the opponents of Islam in that time and thereafter. One of these people was Ibn al-Rāwandī⁵⁴⁹, who wrote the book *al-Farīd* to disparage the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ and speak ill of his miracles. He also wrote *al-Tāj*, which is in relation to the pre-eternity of the world, and *al-Zumurrud* in relation to denying prophecies. These are books that he publicly disseminated, and they went into circulation among the public.⁵⁵⁰ Therefore, there was actually an op-

546 O frog, daughter of a frog, croak as much as you can. Your upper part is in water; your lower part is in mud. Neither can you prevent the drinker from drinking nor can you turn the water murky.

547 The elephant. What is the elephant? And what will make you realise what the elephant is? It has a long trunk. That is from the creation of our Great Lord. The elephant. And what will make you realise what the elephant is? It has a short tail and a long trunk.

Translator's note: Obviously, this bears no link to Sūrah al-Fil (the Elephant) that is in the Qur'an.

548 The book *al-Fuṣūl wa al-Ghāyāt* is replete with the glorification of Allah. There is nothing in its literary construct that would suggest it is attempting to rival the Qur'an. In fact, Ma'arri himself wrote a book named *Zajr al-Nābiḥ* (see bibliography) to refute those who accused him of heresy and attempting to rival the Qur'an. This allegation has been finally put to bed thanks to the publication of *al-Fuṣūl wa al-Ghāyāt*—it is only recently that its contents have been noted.

549 Ibn al-Rāwandī (872-911). Author who frequently switched across various theological schools—from Mutazilism to Shiism to agnosticism. It has been said that he was of Jewish origin, and that he used to mock various sects in his writings in exchange for money.

550 Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār lived in the second half of the 4th century AH and the beginning of the 5th. He depicted the spread of books by heretics attempting to take down Islam. He says, 'Look at...the books produced by atheists and the classes of heretics, such as Ḥaddād, Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq, Ibn al-Rāwandī, and al-Ḥaṣrī,

portunity for a rival book challenging the Qur'an to appear, and for it to have circulated if it were worthy of reverence and being put forth.

Furthermore, all attempts to rival the Qur'an simply borrowed its wordings and patterns in the hope that it would gain the same status as that of the Qur'anic rhythmic patterns and rhetoric. Such attempts would see the Qur'an being mimicked in having letters, words, and sentences positioned next to each other, to fashion a new chapter. This has been the preferred course of action by contemporaries who have attempted to rival the Qur'an. Their literary efforts are void of any originality—no author has manufactured anything innovative. You can assess every last item of these pieces attempting to rival the Qur'an and all you will see are compositions void of any new meaning or novel diction. Such authors have ended up even mimicking the stops in the Qur'an, and in doing so rendered the meanings they wished to express unintelligible.⁵⁵¹

In our times, people may vaguely remember *The True Furqan (al-Furqān al-Haqq)*, the attempt by some Missionaries to refute the inimitability of the Qur'an. It was circulated by the Palestinian-American Missionary, Pastor Anis Shorrosh⁵⁵². So what happened to this well-publicised response? Nothing—apart from utter humiliation. One professor of Arabic literary critique⁵⁵³ wrote a study, the title of which is translated in English as *Embarrassment of the Era: A Contrived American Qur'an*. The author tore down the veil of Shorrosh's self-adornment therein and exposed the flimsy nature of its construct and meanings.

and their intentions to criticise Lordship, exercise vulgarities against the Prophets—may Allah's benedictions be upon them—and cause disbelief in them. They made these books during the time of the Abbasids, right in the middle of Islam and Islamdom, when the Muslims were more in number and strength than ever and possessed power and might, and these people who made such books were the most downtrodden they ever were. One after the other, they surreptitiously and apprehensively made these books, keeping them from their own family and children. Only similar individuals of the same state, one after another, would be given access to these books. Shortly after, they would spread and come into the open, until they start getting sold in the marketplaces of the Muslims. Both the elite and the public know about them. They discuss them and make mention of them in sadness and distaste, wishing that these books had never come' (Hamadhānī, *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, 1966), p. 129.

551 (Rāfi'ī, 1973/1393 AH), p. 197.

552 Translator's note: Anis Shorrosh (1933-2018). Evangelical Christian from Palestine who settled in America. He published multiple books including the infamous *The True Furqan*, which he wrote in English and then translated to Arabic. He also debated Ahmad Deedat.

553 Dr Ibrāhīm 'Awad.

It is sufficient to read just some of the passages in this so-called Qur'an—for which the efforts of the enemies of Islam assembled—to understand the scope of incompetence therein.⁵⁵⁴ Instead of learning the details of the self-incoherence in this rivalling attempt, one can simply settle with the knowledge that the people who distributed this book and defended it ended up ashamed about it—yet the time to be ashamed was long gone. Just a few months after its publication, they stopped giving it any publicity. You would be hard pressed to find even one prominent Missionary who now uses it as evidence, even though it was only very recently published.⁵⁵⁵

A miracle⁵⁵⁶ is what renders people unable to rival it after challenging them. Reality is testament that both the ancients and anyone who came after are unable to produce anything like the Qur'an. This in itself is material evidence for the inimitability of the Qur'an, which is ever ready for scrutiny and can be seen first-hand.

554 As examples, see the following asinine and graceless concoctions:

يأيها الذين أشركوا من عبادنا ادعونا أو ادعوا الرحمان أو ادعوا الرحيم أيا ما تدعوننا فلنا التجليات الحسنى جميعا مثلثة موحدة فردا وترا فأنى تشركون... فنحن الأب الكلمة الروح ثالث فرد إله واحد لا شريك لنا في السماوات والأرضين

يأيها الذين كفروا من عبادنا الضالين، لقد جعلتم من جناتنا مواخر للزناة ومغاور للقتلى ومخادع رجس للزانيات ونزل دعارة للسكارى والمجرمين

يأيها المنافقون من عبادنا الضالين، أنى تشهدون بما لم تشهدوا وترددون ما لا تفقهون، لقد شهدتم إفكا وقتلتم بهتا ونكرا، وبلغتم الناس ما ليس لكم به علم وأنفذتم جاهليتكم على الراسخين في العلم والدين القويم فأثقلتم كواهلهم وزرا، وشبه لكم الحق فما فقهتم للتجسد معنى وما فهمتم للأبوة والبنوة مغزى وما أدركتم للفداء مرمى وما علمتم من أمور الروح أمرا

Translator's note: The above is intended for an Arabic-speaking audience. There is not much benefit translating these terribly constructed passages.

555 For a critique of *al-Furqān al-Haqq*, see (Khālidi, *Tahāfut Furqān Mutanabbī' al-Amrikān Amām Haqā'iq al-Qur'ān*, 2005).

556 'Miracle' (*mu'jizah*) here is in its linguistic and literal meaning of the Arabic. Because of this meaning, it is distinct from the general meaning of 'sign' (*āyah*).

5. IS THE POSITION OF QUR'ANIC INIMITABILITY MERELY A FAITH-BASED CLAIM?

An objector may say, 'The claim of the Qur'an's inimitability is presented only in writings proselytising the Islamic faith. It is not attested to by Christian or Jewish rhetoricians, or indeed those of other faiths. As such, the testimony in favour of the Qur'an's inimitability would be tantamount to a man testifying in favour of his own virtue. Such testimonies are not accepted in court or debate.'

This objection assumes that history has been fully examined and is unable to uncover any testimony from non-Muslims in favour of the inimitability of the Qur'an. The fault of this objection lies in the fact that, in reality, it goes against history's testimony. The rhetorical inimitability of the Qur'an was the principal reason for many polytheist, Jewish, and Christian rhetoricians to embrace Islam. Furthermore, it is part and parcel of the faith of Muslim rhetoricians. Had they not affirmed this inimitability, they would have been the first to condemn the Qur'an for testifying in favour of itself.

The Qur'an appeared in Makkah, where people were upon paganism. The Qur'an then spread to Madinah, where there were a number of Jewish tribes residing. Then news of the Qur'an was circulated across the Arabs of all religions and sects. A lot of these people reached the highest level of eloquence, especially the Jews who—as a whole—were enthralled by Islamic civilisation as it ushered in a new golden era for Jewish poetry and Hebrew grammar thanks to the influence of the Arabic-Islamic oral tradition and literature.

So that our discourse is not so casual as to allow the opponent to label it deceitful, we shall mention admissions from non-Muslims in favour of the Qur'an's inimitability. Some fully acknowledged it and accepted Islam; others were overcome by loyalty to the religion they had inherited and did not accept Islam, even though they acknowledged its inimitability.

i. Testimony of the Pagan Arabs

The Makkan polytheists' testimony for the Qur'an's inimitability is widely known, for they were the principal addressees of the Qur'anic challenge. They all admitted it, albeit tacitly, through their inability of rivalling the Qur'anic verses. Furthermore, a number of them accepted Islam because of it.

One person who accepted Islam on this basis was Labīd ibn Rabī'ah. He was one of the greatest poets of the Jāhiliyyah. When 'Umar رضي الله عنه asked him about his old poetry, he said, 'Allah has given me Sūrah al-Baqarah in lieu of poetry.'⁵⁵⁷ Labīd is the one regarding whom the Prophet of Islam ﷺ said, 'The truest word of poetry ever uttered by an Arab is the word of Labīd: "Lo, everything apart from God is vain."⁵⁵⁸

When Jubayr ibn Muṭ'īm رضي الله عنه heard the Prophet ﷺ read Sūrah al-Ṭūr in the Maghrib prayer and he reached the statement of God ﻻ إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ, 'Or were they created by nothing? Or are they their own creators? Or did they create the heavens and the Earth? In fact, they have no firm belief in Allah. Or do they possess the treasures of your Lord? Or are they in control of everything?' (Qur'an, 52:35-37), he said, 'My heart almost flew out.'⁵⁵⁹

The statement of Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah—a polytheist—is sufficient to prove that the Arabs of the Jāhiliyyah, having heard the Qur'an from the Messenger of God ﷺ, attested to its inimitability. After Abū Jahl encouraged him to say something bad about it, he replied, 'And what can I say? By Allah, there is nobody among you who knows more poetry than I do, nor is there anyone who knows about rajaz and odes—not even the poetry of demons—more than I do. By Allah, what he says bears no resemblance whatsoever to any of these. By Allah, what he says has a sweetness and a

557 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*), 7/188.

558 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Virtues of the Anṣār, Chapter on the days of Jāhiliyyah (hadith no. 3828), and Muslim, Book of Poetry, Chapter on the prohibition of playing backgammon (hadith no. 2256).

559 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Interpreting the Qur'an, Chapter on Sūrah al-Ṭūr (hadith no. 4573).

Translator's note: This means that not accepting Allah and the message of the Qur'an became extremely discomforting for him.

charm to it. Its higher parts bear fruit and its lower parts gush.⁵⁶⁰ It overpowers and cannot be overpowered. It crushes all that which is underneath it.⁵⁶¹

560 Translator's note: This is somewhat of a literal translation of an expression unique to the Arabic language. It simply denotes that it is extremely generous with the rich meanings and content it has to offer.

561 Narrated by Ḥākim. He said, 'This is a hadith with an authentic chain as per the conditions of Bukhārī; neither [Bukhārī nor Muslim] brought it.'

ii. Christian testimony

Due to their focus on Syriac, most Christians did not pay much attention to the Arabic language and its disciplines of rhetorical eloquence during its first few centuries after the Hijrah.⁵⁶² Their religious literary pieces remained detached from being influenced by the Qur'anic composition and its connection to the message of Islam. The Arabic language flourished in the Arab-Christian backdrop during later centuries, with famous and reputable names emerging in this field, with a number of them having something to say on the inimitability of the Qur'an.

One of their testimonies is recorded by Rashīd Riḍā: 'Whosoever is given a healthy portion of the stylistic expressions of this language and possesses a large chunk of its literary side to the extent that he acquired the taste for it, cannot repel from himself the belief that the Qur'an is inimitable in its rhetoric, eloquence, and the style in how it composes its phrases. This was explicitly mentioned by Professor Jabr Ḍūmiṭ⁵⁶³, a recent Christian literarist and lecturer in the disciplines of Arabic language rhetoric at the American University⁵⁶⁴, in his book *al-Khawātir al-Hisān*.⁵⁶⁵

Rāfi'ī⁵⁶⁶ commented on the above by saying, 'The famous Ibrāhīm al-Yāziji⁵⁶⁷, the Arabic literary expert of this faith (i.e., Christianity), has explicitly stated it (i.e., the inimitability of the Qur'an). He is the most eloquent author the Christians have ever produced. He alluded to his position in the introduction to his book *Naj'ah al-Rā'id*. Likewise, we asked the poet of Christian history, Professor Khalīl Muṭrān⁵⁶⁸—we are unaware of any poet from their people who could barge shoulders with him—and he admitted to us what Yāziji, his teacher, affirmed. After all of this, the

562 Akḥṭal (d. 92 AH) was an exception. He is the most famed Arab Christian poet from pre-Islamic times.

563 Translator's note: Jābir Ḍūmiṭ (1858-1930). Linguist, translator, and journalist.

564 Translator's note: American University of Beirut.

565 (Rāfi'ī, 1973/1393 AH), p. 18.

566 Translator's note: Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'ī (1880-1937). Egyptian poet. He leveraged his expertise in poetry to write a number of works on the rhetorical inimitability of the Qur'an.

567 Translator's note: Ibrāhīm al-Yāziji (1847-1906). Lebanese Catholic philosopher, philologist, poet, and journalist.

568 Translator's note: Khalīl Muṭrān (1872-1949). Lebanese-Egyptian poet and journalist. He was known as *Shā'ir al-Quṭrayn*, or 'the poet of the two countries'.

matter is left up to the fair mind. Fair minds have no religion except verity; verity is one and unchangeable.⁵⁶⁹

Another Christian is Amīn Nakhlāh⁵⁷⁰, who was introduced by the author of the book *Dhayl al-A‘lām*⁵⁷¹ in the section listing the biographies of the prominent Arab, Arabists, and Orientalists with the words: ‘A poet and a son of a poet. It is said that the leader of poets, Aḥmad Shawqī, atS tested to his leadership in poetry after him.’⁵⁷² In acknowledgement of his vast knowledge of the Arabic language, he was selected as a member of the Academy of the Arabic Language. He wrote an opinion piece titled *The Inimitable Book*, in his book *Fī al-Hawā’ al-Ṭalq: Tidhkārāt wa Najāwā* (*In Fresh Air: Mementos and Discussions*), in which he said, ‘I have never read the Qur’an, nor did I get the eloquence emanating from it from every angle, nor did I witness its inimitability that engulfs the mind, except that I screamed to myself, “Come on, turn yourself over to salvation, for I am still on the Christian faith.”’⁵⁷³

As for the contemporary literarist and poet, Niqūlā Ḥannā⁵⁷⁴, his belief in the inimitability of the Qur’an brought him to accept Islam and glorify this magnificent book. He says in his ode *Min Wahy al-Qur’an* (*From the Revelation of the Qur’an*), ‘I read the Qur’an and it left me bewildered. I delved into it and it enchanted me. Then I read it again and I brought faith. I brought faith in the Magnificent Divine Qur’an, and in the Messenger—the honourable Arabian Prophet—who carried it. As for God, I inherited my faith in Him from my Christianity. With the Criterion (i.e., Qur’an), my faith in Him only grew. And how can I not believe when the miracle of the Qur’an is in front of me? I see it and feel it in every moment. It is a miracle unlike any other. A divine, everlasting miracle that is indicative of its inimitability through its own self. It is not in need of a spokesperson or someone who offers its glad tidings. Previous religions were—and are—very much in need of scholars, bearers of good news, precedents, evidence, and proofs to encourage people to adopt them, as they do not carry anything

569 (Rāfi‘ī, 1973/1393 AH), p. 18.

570 Amīn Nakhlāh, or Amine Nakhlé (1901-1976). Lebanese Christian poet. His poetry focused on the ghazal genre. He worked as a journalist and a lawyer.

571 These are entries that are additional to *al-A‘lām* by Zirkilī.

572 (‘Alāwnah, 1998/1418 AH), p. 46.

573 (Nakhlāh, 1967/1387 AH), pp. 174-175.

574 Niqūlā Ḥannā, or Nicholas Hanna (1923-1999). Palestinian who migrated to Syria after the 1948 Nakba, where he passed away. He graduated with a degree in Arabic language from the Faculty of Arts in Damascus. After this, he dedicated most of his time to teaching the Qur’an. His works include a collection of poetry (*Dīwān*) called *al-Arḍ wa al-Waṭan* (*Earth and Homeland*) (with additions from translator).

observable or perceptible that would take root in the hearts. As for Islam, the Qur'an has allowed to dispense with all of that. It is the most knowledgeable teacher and the most rightly guided bearer of glad tidings. It is the most truthful witness, the most eloquent in evidence, and the most impressive in proof. It is the everlasting miracle, just as the eternal nature of the Pre-Eternal. It is observable and perceptible in every era. From this deep faith of mine, I have come up with the following ode:

They say, "What are its verses?"—may their efforts be in vain—
"Its verses are not that great."

Even one verse is enough to demonstrate the miracle of the
Criterion (i.e., the Qur'an) for people. It has ascended high in
the heavens, like a star that cannot be attained

Every eloquent person falls silent in front of it, as if masks are
placed on the mouths.⁵⁷⁵

Similarly, the Qur'an's inimitability was affirmed by the Orientalist Joseph Charles Mardrus⁵⁷⁶. In the beginning of his introduction of the 62 lengthier chapters of the Qur'an, which was commissioned by the French Foreign Ministry, he wrote, 'As for the style of the Koran, it is the personal style of God. As the style represents the essence of being, it can only be divine. In fact, even the most sceptical writers are utterly fascinated by it. ... This is because this language style, heard for the first time by Bedouin ears, was an essentially new prose, full of magnificence, rhythmic, alliterate, assonant, and the repercussion of which is still profound on any listener who understands Arabic. Also, it is a fruitless task to try to render the effects of this prose in a foreign language, and especially in the French language that is so restrained, uncompromising, and heavy on the tongue. Furthermore, the French language, like all modern languages, is not a religious language, nor has it ever served as a means of expressing divinity.'⁵⁷⁷

575 (Ḥannā), p. 1; quoted by (ʿItr, 1994/1415 AH), pp. 148-149.

The whole poem can be accessed at (Abū al-Suʿūd ʿ. ʿ., 2005), p. 44.

576 Joseph Charles Mardrus (1868-1949). French Orientalist and poet. He was born in Cairo. He is famous for his translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* from Arabic to French. (with additions from translator).

577 (Mardrus, 1926), pp. 19-20.

Fāris al-Shidyāq⁵⁷⁸ was the most prominent Christian Arab scholar in recent centuries. He was described by Edward Van Dyck⁵⁷⁹, son of the Orientalist Cornelius Van Dyck⁵⁸⁰ who wrote the most famous translation of the Bible in Arabic known as the *Van Dyck Translation*, as ‘the literarist, the poet, the linguist, the writer, the rhetorician...His language is one of the best written prose of the Arabic language written by later scholars, during the recent Nahda^{581, 582} The Muslim writer Anwar al-Jundī⁵⁸³ said about him, ‘The best of the era in the Arabic literature.’⁵⁸⁴ After Shidyāq accepted Islam, he found a Christian writer by the name of Rizq Allāh who set out to rival the Qur’an in an attempt to nullify its rhetorical inimitability. Shidyāq wrote an angry response: ‘This idiot has issued a grandiose public announcement that he is able to challenge the Qur’an. This is more confounding than his insanity and craziness... The time has come for us to reveal his ignorance of language, morphology, grammar, and other issues so that he knows that—in challenging the Qur’an, which he has set out to do—he is completely and utterly mad.’⁵⁸⁵ He then took *al-Nafathāt*—Rizq Allāh’s book in which he attempted to rival the Qur’an—and demonstrated the incoherence, weakness, and linguistic errors therein.⁵⁸⁶

578 Translator’s note: Fāris al-Shidyāq (as a Christian) or Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (after accepting Islam) (1805-1887). Scholar and journalist from what is now Lebanon. He worked in Europe before accepting Islam in Tunisia. He later worked for the Ottoman Government.

579 Translator’s note: Edward Abbott Van Dyck (1846-1938). American scholar of Arabic and consular clerk of the United States at Cairo. He was born in Lebanon, where his father worked. He died in Cairo.

580 Cornelius Van Dyck (1818-1895). Orientalist and medical Missionary. He lived in the Orient for most of his life. He studied Arabic with Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819-1883), a writer and scholar from Ottoman Syria (with additions from translator).

581 Translator’s note: The Nahda—or ‘Awakening’, ‘Arab Awakening’, or ‘Arab Enlightenment’—was the convergence of political reform and cultural awakening movements that flourished in Arabic-speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire, most notably in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

582 (Van Dyck, 1896), pp. 405-406.

583 Translator’s note: Anwar al-Jundī (1917-2002). Egyptian journalist and scholar of literature. He was known for his biographical and bibliographical reference works on Arab Muslim writers, as well as polemical works against Western cultural influence in the Arab World, and specifically the impact of secularism.

584 (Jundī, 1400 AH), 4/28.

585 (Shidyāq, 1870-1884), no. 339.

586 (Shidyāq, 1870-1884), no. 342.

Note that Fāris al-Shidyāq was appointed to prepare an Arabic translation of the Bible before he accepted Islam—he completed and published it, but Christians

One Christian testimony during the early era of Islam is the statement of ‘Ali ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 770), an encyclopaedic scholar, philosopher, physician, and astronomer with knowledge of Arabic, Greek, and Syriac. He said, ‘When I was a Christian, I used to say—as did an uncle of mine who was a learned and eloquent man—that eloquence is not one of the signs of Prophethood because it is common to all people. However, when I discarded customary imitation and gave up adhering to old habit and my indoctrination, and when I reflected upon the meanings of the Qur’an, I came to know that what the followers of the Qur’an claimed for it was true. The fact is that I have not found any book like this Qur’an—be it by an Arab, Persian, Indian, or Greek, right from the beginning of the world up to now—which simultaneously contains praise of God, belief in the Prophets and apostles, exhortation to everlasting good deeds, commanding good and prohibiting evil, as well as inspiration to the desire of Paradise and the avoidance of Hell. When a person brings to us a book of such qualities, which inspires reverence and sweetness in the hearts, and has achieved everlasting success—yet he is an unlettered person who never learnt the art of writing or rhetoric—then that book is without any doubt one of the signs of his Prophethood.’⁵⁸⁷

One humorous story that can be mentioned here is what the Egyptian literary specialist, Kāmil Kaylānī⁵⁸⁸, narrated in his memoirs. He said, ‘I was with Professor Finkel, an Orientalist. We had strong ties when it came to literary issues. He used to take my view in any problem he faced when dealing with Arabic—he thought I would be forthright whenever I offered my views. One day, he whispered in my ear: “With your customary directness, tell me: Are you one of those who believe in the inimitability of the Qur’an? Or perhaps you can challenge the global Muslim population, who have passed it down generation to generation.” He smiled in a way that it was so transparent as to what he meant, and he thought he had shot an arrow at me and there was no way for me to ward it off. I smiled just as he did and said, “So that you can judge the eloquence of a specific piece of rhetoric, you must either attempt to write something like it or follow it. Let us therefore try, so it becomes clear to us whether we can or cannot copy it... For example, we should try expressing the vastness of Hell—what should we say?” He took a pen and I took a pen. We wrote 20 sentences in different styles to express this meaning. Confident of winning, I smiled and said, “Now, the eloquence of the Qur’an will become clear for you,

blocked its further circulation after he accepted Islam.

587 (Abdul Aleem, 1933), pp. 222-223.

588 Translator’s note: Kāmil Kaylānī (or Kīlānī), or Kamil Keilany (1897-1959). Egyptian writer and author of children’s literature.

as we have attempted to relate this meaning.” He said, “Has the Qur’an rendered this meaning more eloquently from what we have offered?” I said, “We are like children in our offer.” Astonished, he asked, “What did the Qur’an say?” I said, “Beware of the Day We will ask Hell, ‘Are you full yet?’—it will respond, ‘Is there anymore?’” (Qur’an, 50:30) He fainted—or was almost about to—and his jaws were left wide open, leaving himself to look like a fool in front of this miraculous eloquence. He said, “You have indeed spoken the truth. It is the Word of God.”⁵⁸⁹

589 (Subay^c, 1987), pp 386-387.

iii. Jewish testimony

Between the fall of their last political entity centuries before Jesus and the 20th century, Jews have not known of any respite from the torture inflicted on them by domineering civilisations. They most certainly did not experience comfort and space to exercise independent thought like they could when living in the Islamic civilisation. Impressed by the faith of Islam and the belief in monotheism, a number of their elders accepted Islam. Probably the most important of those people is the prominent philosopher and the famous physician, Hibah Allāh ibn ʿAlī ibn Malkā al-Baghdādī⁵⁹⁰—titled the ‘Unique One of The Era’.

One of the most famed Jews who accepted Islam is Samawʿal ibn Yaḥyā al-Maghribī⁵⁹¹ (d. 570 AH).⁵⁹² Explaining the reason why he accepted Islam, Samawʿal wrote in his book *Silencing the Jews* (*Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ifhām al-Yahūd*)—a book that riled up Maimonides, the greatest Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages and one of his contemporaries: ‘At the same time, engrossed in the accounts of ministers and secretaries, I acquired from this wide reading of the stories and reports about them, and from their own words, a mastery of eloquence, and a knowledge of rhetoric to the extent that it evoked the praise of stylists and the admiration of rhetoricians, and that will be recognized by those who read any of the books I wrote on some scientific discipline. I saw the miracle of the Koran, which human eloquence cannot rival, and well did I recognize the truth of its miraculous character.’⁵⁹³

In his exegesis of the Qurʾan, Nūr Allāh al-Shūstarī wrote that when ʿAlī al-Qūshjī travelled to Roman lands, a Jewish rabbi came to him to debate Islam. He debated him for a month but the rabbi did not accept a single piece of evidence from him. He then came one morning while Qūshjī was preoccupied reciting the Qurʾan with an unpleasant tone, while on the roof

590 Translator’s note: Baruch ben Malka (pre-Islam) or Abū al-Barakāt Hibah Allāh ibn Malkā al-Baghdādī (1080-1164). Muslim philosopher and physician of Jewish descent from Baghdad.

591 Samawʿal ibn Yaḥyā al-Maghribī or Samuel the Moroccan (1130-1180). Scholar of the Torah, engineering, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and history. His father was a Moroccan Jewish rabbi and a great poet, considered by Judah ben Solomon Harizi (Yahudhā al-Ḥarīzī) as one of the greatest poets of Andalusia (with additions from translator).

592 (Prats, n.d.).

593 (Maghribī, 1964), p. 79.

of the house. When he entered the door and heard the Qur'an, it affected him greatly. He said to the Shaykh, 'I announce my Islam.' When asked for the reason, he said, 'Throughout my life, I have not heard any man with a voice that is more unpleasant than yours. But when I came to the door, I heard the Qur'an from you. I was immensely impacted by it, and I thus knew this is Revelation.'⁵⁹⁴

594 (Kayrānawī, 1410 AH), 3/823.

What about the rhetorical and expressive aspect of the Bible?

The authors of the Biblical scriptures did not believe what they wrote was rhetorically inimitable. Likewise, most Christians today do not believe in verbal dictation, even though it had some supporters in the era of the Church Fathers such as Augustine, John Chrysostom, and Hieronymus (Jerome)⁵⁹⁵.⁵⁹⁶ What they do believe is that the authors employed their personal styles to convey what was given to them. There are a number of observations on the literary construct of the Bible scriptures:

Linguistic weakness

Comparing the literary style of the Qur'an to that of the Bible, the Orientalist Von Grunebaum⁵⁹⁷ writes: 'In contrasting the stylistic perfection of the Qur'an with the stylistic imperfections of the older Scriptures the Muslim theologian found himself unknowingly and on purely postulative grounds in agreement with a long line of Christian thinkers whose outlook on the Biblical text is best summed up in Nietzsche's brash dictum that the Holy Ghost wrote bad Greek.'⁵⁹⁸ This is problematic, as the heavenly message cannot satisfactorily be complete without the exposition of religious realities being delivered in a relatable manner.

Unletteredness of the authors

595 Hieronymus (Jerome) (circa 347-420). Saint and Church Father. He presided over Vulgate, the most significant Latin translation of the Bible. He has writings on various themes, some of which are polemical, others hermeneutical, as well as other topics.

596 (Law, 2010), p. 58.

597 Gustave E. Von Grunebaum (1909-1972). Austrian Orientalist and historian. His Doctorate was on ancient Arabic poetry. His works include *Islam: Experience of the Holy and Concept of Man*.

598 (Lewis & Menage, 1971), 3/1020.

Scholars of higher criticism⁵⁹⁹ in relation to the New Testament set out that one of the most significant proofs for the Apostles not having written the Gospels is that the Gospel Greek language is superior⁶⁰⁰ to the Greek known by Jesus's Apostles, whose primary language was Aramaic, not Greek. Furthermore, they were unlettered and could not have written Greek properly.⁶⁰¹

Obscenity in the text of the Torah

In the Bible, there are words of an obscene and licentious nature that necessitate they could not have emanated from Revelation. I have discussed this in detail in another book.⁶⁰² Suffice it to say that, for example, whenever the 'Lord' in the Bible is angry with the Palestinians or Israel, He describes them as prostitutes. He even described the city of Jerusalem as ever exceeding in its promiscuity for opening up its legs to any passerby.⁶⁰³

Likewise, the Lord castigated the nation of Israel by saying, 'But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favours on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. You went to him, and he possessed your beauty. You also took the fine jewellery I gave you, the jewellery made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them.'⁶⁰⁴

Note that, because of its gross licentiousness, Jewish rabbis previously prevented their students from reading Ezekiel 32 until they reached the age of 30.⁶⁰⁵

Additionally, when the Lord was angry with the people of Nineveh, He threatened to remove its skirt over its face so that all other nations would see its privates: 'I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame.'⁶⁰⁶ There are other grossly licentious passages that I cannot possibly quote here.

599 Higher criticism is a term used to denote all forms of biblical criticism except for textual criticism.

600 That it is superior does not automatically mean it is also eloquent. The description is connected to the level of proficiency in the Greek for the one who does not understand the language.

601 (Ehrman B. D., *Forged: Writing in the Name of God: Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, 2011), p. 8.

602 See (Ameri, *Did the Qur'an Borrow From the Scriptures of Jews and Christians?* (Arabic)), pp. 342-403.

603 See Ezekiel 16:25.

604 Ezekiel 16:15-17.

605 (Miller L., 1974), p. 9.

606 Nahum 5:3.

Summary

- The Qur'an is clear that the primary proof for its inimitability is the inability of Arabs to produce a single chapter—consisting of a few words—that is similar to it. Despite their fervent desire to dismantle the divinity of the Qur'an, they were unable to do so.
- For those who spoke Arabic in prose and poetry, the Qur'anic challenge is as provocative as it can be. This is despite the fact that the nature of its topics and the circumstances in which it was revealed should actually have left it struggling to attain even the most basic form of eloquence.
- The foremost Arab rhetoricians, just like some Jewish and Christian rhetoricians, attested to the inimitability of the Qur'an.
- Compared to other miracles, the unique feature of rhetorical inimitability is that it can be visually witnessed in every era.
- Recently, Missionaries attempted to produce a rival to the Qur'an. Despite their best efforts and their mass-marketing of that book, the only thing they earned was embarrassment. They eventually stopped circulating it completely.
- The Bible comprises of passages that are weak in terms of expressive construct, thus causing a mismatch between its rendition and the wisdom behind Messengerhood to convey the message of the Lord. Furthermore, these scriptures carry expressions that are vulgar and obscene.

Further reading

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SECTION 2

The Qur'an is a Supernatural Phenomenon

﴿You never expected this Book to be revealed to you, but it came only as a mercy from your Lord.﴾

(Qur'an, 28:86)

Truth is ever to be found in the simplicity, and not in the multiplicity and confusion of things.

(Isaac Newton)



The Qur'an: From a human? Or from Heaven?

In the religious works of nations that believe there is a connection between Earth and Heaven, the Revelation phenomenon is linked to the non-conventional, which is none other than the reception of the divine message. Atheists, Christians, and Jews who deny the Muhammadan Prophethood believe that the Qur'an does not give the impression of a heavenly connection; instead, it comes across as a human concoction.

Analysing the Qur'an, we are compelled to say that the Qur'an must be one of the three following items:

- A concoction from the Prophet of Islam, and that he used to make up the chapters of the Qur'an wilfully and from his own efforts.
- An uncontrollable state within him due to some illness, without any wilful intention on his part.
- Revelation from above, over which he had no agency.

A Muslim would say, 'The notion that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ had any influence in the input of the Qur'an is immediately blocked by an analysis of a) the precise nature of the Qur'anic text and b) the Prophet's personality. In fact, what such analysis would lead to is that it was the Qur'an that impacted the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. This is the proof for the divinity of this book.'

On the other hand, a non-Muslim would say, 'The Qur'an is either a concoction from the Prophet of Islam, or it is a state of illness that is the cause of input therein.'

Judging between these two interlocutors would have to be referred to an analysis of the precise nature of the Qur'anic text, and the historical testimonies vis-à-vis the state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ in relation to this book.

1. IS THE QUR'AN A CONCOCTED BOOK?

By suggesting the Qur'an is a concocted book that was inked by the Prophet of Islam ﷺ when his people were heedless, the implication would be that his relationship to this book would be reflected in his personal whims and scheming, through which he managed to deceive his people. Looking at the Prophetic career, this implication does not appear to have any grounds. Rather, the linkages between the mind, soul, and tongue of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and the Qur'an would reveal that we have in front of us a book that is psychologically and mentally detached from what Islam's adversaries attribute it to.

a. Is the Qur'an the handiwork of a most egregious liar?

Denying the divinity of the Qur'an necessitates that it is the handiwork of a liar who is markedly deceptive. Such a person not only lies—he is a pathological liar. He schemes against his people in the most wicked manner as he wilfully concocts chapters at every instance, setting up the fundamentals of a new religion and its many minutiae over the period of 23 years. Throughout, he ascribes his statements to God without care or perturbation. None of this fits with what we know of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ—that he was honest in his every affair, that those who were close to him and those who were his adversaries both attested to his steadfast commitment to the truth, and that his state was completely different to the acts of liars.

We have a man who called his people for 23 years. He mingled with them and they knew his true nature in any situation he faced, whether at home and in travel, in anger and in pleasure, in good times and bad. Such a person could not have truly severed his true self from his public persona. He could not have consistently been able to give people the impression that he was responsible for a book in which he had no part.

As such, we are faced with two mutually exclusive choices. On the one hand, we have contemporary adversaries accusing the Prophet of Islam ﷺ of pathologically lying in every large and small issue. On the other, we have the testimony of his family members and Companions who were close to him—and even some of his contemporary adversaries—affirming that he was a paragon of honesty.

If one wonders about some of his people accusing him of lying, my answer is that his people were confused about his affair, which is why they were perplexed about him. In their attempt to turn Arabs away from him, they could not pinpoint the charge they were levelling at him. They would sometimes say he is a liar; at other times, they would say he is a poet; magician; bewitched; deranged; etc. They would switch from one form of condemnation to another, just like how a convoluted person is perplexed.

The Qur'an called out this rapid lurching from one accusation to another, which resembled more like restless panting. He ﷺ said, 'Yet they say, "This Qur'an is a set of confused dreams. In fact, he has fabricated it. In fact, he must be a poet. So let him bring us a tangible sign like those Prophets sent before."' (Qur'an, 21:5) The Qur'an then exposed the stubborn insolents: 'We certainly know that what they say grieves you, O Prophet. It

is not your honesty they question, but it is Allah's signs that the wrongdoers deny.' (Qur'an, 6:33) Denial here means to deny something in public while internalising that it is true.⁶⁰⁷

The constant jumping from one allegation to another against his morality reveals that the only thing that united them was the desire to make any condemnation stick, not the actual substance of the denunciations. It was the attempt to discredit him that was the root cause of their condemnations; the actual substance of the condemnation was merely an afterthought.

The fact that accusations of lying in the gatherings of the Makkan polytheists came and went with ease is clear proof that these were nothing other than trumped-up charges against the Prophet ﷺ. This was all an attempt to explain away a heavenly phenomenon that cannot accept material interpretation.

607 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH) and (Jawharī, 2009/1430 AH)—entry on the root *j-h-d*.

b. The book that bled the heart of the Prophet ﷺ, the one calling to God through it

The book of a pathological liar who is infatuated by deception is a fraudulent construct. Such an author would be laughing on the inside at his unsuspecting followers, for he would be seeing his speech and thoughts to be like bright candles, the appearance and glow of which simpletons would fall for. According to such an author, his speech and thoughts would actually be as barren as a dead wasteland.

Any person looking at the Prophet of Islam ﷺ—standing by night in the vigil prayer (*tahajjud*) until his feet cracked up, reading the Qur'an in obedience and utmost humility—would not even think for one solitary moment that the soul of this humble man carries even the slightest sense of deception and scheming. What he would rather see is a man whose soul melts away at the words of the Qur'an, the essence of monotheism, images of the Resurrection, and the dreaded spectacle of the Arising.

One story that expresses this state is reported by Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه): "The Prophet ﷺ said to me, 'Read the Qur'an to me.' I said, 'How can I read to you when it was you on whom it was revealed?' He said, 'I want to hear it from other than myself.' So, I read Sūrah al-Nisā' until I reached [the verse], 'So how will it be when We bring a witness from every faith-community, and bring you—O Prophet—as a witness against yours?' (Qur'an, 4:41) He said, 'That is enough.' I looked up—his eyes were overflowing with tears.'⁶⁰⁸

His wife 'Ā'ishah was asked, 'Tell us the most wonderful thing you saw in the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.' She fell silent for a bit, then she said, 'One night, he said, "O 'Ā'ishah, give me leave to worship my Lord tonight." I said, "By Allah, I love your closeness; I also love what makes you happy." He went and purified himself, then he stood in prayer... He cried so much his lap area became wet... He kept on weeping until his beard became wet... He kept on weeping until the Earth became wet. Bilāl came to inform him of the time of (Fajr) prayer. When he saw him weep, he said, "O Messenger of Allah, why do you weep when Allah has forgiven your past and future sins?" He replied, "So should I not be a thankful servant? In this night,

608 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, Chapter on the recitation teacher saying 'Enough' to the reciter (hadith no. 4763); and Muslim, Book of the Travellers' Prayer, Chapter on the virtue of listening to the Qur'an (hadith no. 800).

some verses were revealed to me—woe to the one who reads them and does not ponder over them: ‘Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the Earth and the alternation of the day and night there are signs for people of reason...’⁶⁰⁹ (Qur’an, 3:190)

This is no doubt that a soul melts in front of the furnace of verity, and falls humble at its momentous meanings, in both private and public. Pray tell me: Where is this supposedly malevolent soul? Where is the trickery of this supposedly sick person who is taking advantage of people’s obliviousness? How is he fooling their well-intentioned hearts away to the state of spiritual numbness? What we have here is something completely different. It is a different class of soul altogether. It is a soul of truthfulness in all its softness when it touches the sensitive sinews of light.

609 Narrated by Ibn Ḥibbān, Book of Heart Softeners, Chapter on mentioning the necessity of repentance as an obligation on man in all causes (hadith no. 620); declared authentic by Albānī.

c. The Qur'an as a singular coherent piece

The circumstances surrounding the descent of the Qur'an, and the connection of its verses to various events, are discussions that go well beyond the persona of the Prophet ﷺ. These discussions would require information on his people, his adversaries, the state of his predecessors, his contemporaries, and the Day of Reckoning. They would include the emergence of new and unexpected events, the vicissitudes of his religious call, the multiplicity of subject matters in the Qur'anic chapters, and the sequencing of verses that does not chronologically correspond to when they were revealed. All of this should compel a person to expect that the chapters of the Qur'an would be a scattering of random thoughts. Even before diving into all of this, ever since he was sent as a Messenger, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ would inform people of verses without ever knowing what would happen to his call to Islam tomorrow, or when the Revelation of the Qur'an would be complete. Despite all of that, a close analysis of the Qur'an would reveal that it is a singular, sequenced, and organised piece, regulated by a fascinating symmetry and a uniquely innovative concatenation of chapters and verses.

Systemisation of the work of calling to Islam and those calling to it

During the early stages of the call to Islam, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was besieged. The challenges on the ground were rapidly evolving. The number of adversaries were growing. The guided were few in number. The aspirations of thin-skinned tribal leaders were being hampered. This is why it was very difficult at that moment to accurately predict any future for Islam. However, a person reading the Qur'an would observe that it is quite well organised in the taxonomy it laid out for the call to Islam—from its inception right up to the passing of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ:

- The Qur'an commences with a simple command: 'Read, O Prophet, in the Name of your Lord Who created.' (Qur'an, 96:1)
- It then progresses to entrusting the Messenger with the responsibility of conveying the message: 'Arise and warn all.' (Qur'an, 74:2)
- Then it mandates calling his closest ones: 'And warn your closest relatives.' (Qur'an, 26:14)

- It then progresses to incorporating the Makkans: ‘Your Lord would never destroy a society until He had sent to its capital a Messenger, reciting Our Revelations to them.’ (Qur’an, 28:59)
- Then it adds those around Makkah: ‘This is a blessed Book which We have revealed, confirming what came before it, so you may warn people in the Mother of Cities and everyone around it.’ (Qur’an, 6:92)
- Finally, it invites him to call all people to Islam.

Likewise, this deliberate preparatory sequencing—from beginning to end—was to be initiated by calling to monotheism and building up the Islamic character in Makkah. This was to be followed by the command to engineer a political entity in Madinah, which was only after the Muslim mindset—submissive and obedient to the command of God alone—had matured. The Makkan chapters in the Qur’an deal with the core fundamentals; those are then explained and implemented through the Madinan chapters.

This long chain of events continued seamlessly, right from the beginning of the journey in the Cave of Ḥirā’ when Muhammad ﷺ was instructed that he would receive a wise divine Revelation, until its goals were finally met during the Farewell Pilgrimage when he knew his task was complete, his job of calling people to Islam concluded, and he announced that the drapes of hardship and tribulation were no longer extant: ‘Today I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way.’ (Qur’an, 5:3)

In this fashion, the Qur’an did not carry any semblance of an improvised, impromptu sequencing. Rather, it was properly sequenced. Its future was clearly mapped out right up to the death of the Prophet ﷺ, which was when he was given glad tidings in Sūrah al-Naṣr (Victory), also known as Sūrah

al-Tawdī^c (Chapter of Farewell)⁶¹⁰—it gave information on the passing of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ from this world.⁶¹¹

Symmetry in the topics and reports of the Qur'an

The multiplicity and variation of subjects tackled by the Qur'an did not prevent it from being a well-arranged book in its presentation of ideas and facts. It is a book whose source fully knew the trajectory of the call to Islam, steadily revealing its verses on the back of this knowledge.

Something that is worth noting here is that the Orientalist Angelika Neuwirth studied the literary structure, words, and sentences of the Makkan Qur'an and compiled all the words and sentences in lists as per classical linguistic standards. At the end of her project, she revealed that she now had a superbly well-arranged representation of words and sentences, which confounded her.⁶¹²

The organisation of thoughts in a single chapter

Most lengthier chapters of the Qur'an were revealed over a lengthy period of time. The divergence of topics and the circumstances of individual verses appearing would most certainly not have been inducive to the Prophet of

610 On the authority of Ibn 'Abbās: 'Umar used to make me sit with the seniors who participated in Badr. It was as if some of them disapproved and said, "Why do you bring this boy to us when we have sons like him?" 'Umar said, "He comes whence you all know." One evening, 'Umar called and made me sit with them. I think he called me on that day only to show them [his point]. He said, "What do you say about the statement of Allah ﷻ, 'When Allah's ultimate help comes, and the victory over Makkah is achieved?'" Some said, "We were ordered to praise Allah and ask for His forgiveness when He aided us and gave us victory." Others kept quiet and did not say anything. He asked me, "Do you say the same, O Ibn 'Abbās?" I said, "No." He said, "So what do you say then?" I replied, "This is about the death of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, which He informed him of. Allah said, 'When Allah's ultimate help comes and the victory over Makkah is achieved'—which is the sign of his impending death—then glorify the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness, for certainly He is ever Accepting of Repentance." 'Umar said, "I understand from this chapter exactly what you have just mentioned." Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the signs of Prophethood in Islam (hadith no. 3428).

Translator's note: 'He comes whence you all know' i.e., everybody knew he had already learned a lot directly from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

611 Muhammad 'Abdullāh Darāz pointed out this phenomenon in a number of his books.

612 (Jarrār, 1994/1414 AH), p. 39.

Islam ﷻ in terms of ensuring the maintenance of a flow of ideas within a single chapter. The purpose of verses and their connection to the problematic minutiae that the call to Islam faced would have utterly frustrated a person wanting to finalise a coherent construct to those chapters.

Looking at the make-up of Qur'anic chapters, some of which were revealed in segments over several years—or more even—would reveal the opposite to what one would have expected. Consider Sūrah al-Baqarah, which was revealed over a lengthy period post-migration. Muhammad ʿAbdullāh Darāz studied this chapter in depth. In spite of its length and the multitude of its topics that would give the impression that the discussions therein are randomised, he uncovered that its structure is uniquely sequenced and comprises of a prelude, four objectives, and a conclusion:

- Prelude: introduction to the Qur'an, and an explanation that it contains guidance that no person with a pure heart would have two minds about, and only those who are heartless or have a sickness in the heart would turn away from it.
- First objective: to invite all people to adopt Islam.
- Second objective: to specifically invite Jews and Christians to abandon their beliefs, and for them to embrace this faith.
- Third objective: to present the laws of the true faith in detail.
- Fourth objective: the religious motivation for adhering to those laws and commands, and to not violate them.
- Conclusion: describing those who accepted the comprehensive call to Islam and what is expected for them in both this life and the next.⁶¹³

From his thoughtful and robust study, the conclusions of Darāz are without any doubt interesting. He shed light on a thematic approach that is far removed from the chaotic events accompanying the Revelation of verses.⁶¹⁴

613 (Darāz, *Al-Naba' al-ʿAẓīm*, 2005/1426 AH), pp. 196-197.

614 At the tail end of his research on the self-coherence of the text of Sūrah al-Baqarah, Shaykh Darāz ﷻ said, 'This is Sūrah al-Baqarah. Can you see its self-coherence in spite of its lengthiness? Can you identify the direction of the lines on its tablet? Can you see how its bricks seamlessly fit into each other without any cement, and how its sky is raised without any supporting pillar? Can you see how all its constituent parts are harmonious with each other? I would not say it is a lovely piece of theory, but rather it is the most beautiful depiction that is brimming with life. It proclaims that it has taken its rightful place as the most comprehensive

The same can be said of all other chapters of the Qur'an, and this was the conclusion of other scholars such as Abū Bakr al-Naysābūrī, Rāzī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, Biqāʿī, and Shāṭibī.

write up by the Nurturer and Purifier of hearts, the Enlightener and Guide of minds, and the Lead and Encourager of souls. By Allah, had this chapter been sequenced only after it was fully revealed, the compilation of all its parts in this manner would have been a miracle in its own right. So how about given that every star contained therein—like all other stars in all other chapters—were placed in sequence immediately after they were revealed and would save the place for the next part until it arrived? How about every single part having already a place fixed for it before it was even revealed? More significantly, how about the fact that this chapter stands out given that the places of its parts were determined—not just only a year or two years before they were revealed—but *nine years* prior? I swear if there are miracles in the Qur'an's eloquent expressions, if there are miracles in its nurturing methods, if there are miracles in its truthful prophecies, if there are miracles in its everlasting laws, if there are miracles—and then some—in all the scientific knowledge pertaining to the inner human and the universe that it has offered, then—and I swear [again]—that the sequencing of verses in this manner is the miracle of miracles (Darāz, *Al-Naba' al-ʿAẓīm*, 2005/1426 AH), pp. 284.

d. A double-tongued man?

Suggesting that the Qur'an principally came from the tongue of Muhammad ﷺ would mean that it is his personal style of expression in both thought and emotion. Even if it is claimed that he took effort to draw a rhetorical and expressive distinction between his usual statements and the style of the Qur'an, that would not at all negate the fact that this book—the objectives of which are multiple, and which expresses the core Muhammadan call and its details—must also carry the Muhammadan linguistic style of expression.

The Orientalist A. J. Arberry was able to differentiate the two. He says, 'We know quite well how Mohammed spoke in his normal, everyday moods; for his *obiter dicta* have been preserved in great abundance. It is simply untrue therefore to say, as Margoliouth⁶¹⁵ said, that "it would be difficult to find another case in which there is such a complete identity between the literary work and the mind of the man who produced it". Accepting, as we have good reason to accept, the sayings of Mohammed recorded in the books of Traditions as substantially authentic, and supposing, as Margoliouth supposed, that the Koran was Mohammed's conscious production, it would be more reasonable to say that it would be difficult to find another case in which the literary expression of a man differed so fundamentally from his ordinary speech.'⁶¹⁶

Some scholars have studied the linguistic difference between the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. They concluded—with detailed quantitative and statistical indicators—that there is a clear difference between the two. One of these studies is a comparison between the words of the Qur'an and the words of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī. One of its interesting conclusions was that 62% of the hadith words have no presence in the Qur'anic lexicon, and 83% of Qur'anic words do not have a presence in the lexicon of hadith wordings.⁶¹⁷

Another specialist in literary critique⁶¹⁸ studied this same topic in a book titled *The Qur'an and Hadith: A Stylistic Comparison (Al-Qur'an wa*

615 Translator's note: George Margoliouth (1853-1924). Biblical and Oriental scholar, and writer for the British Museum where he was in charge of the Hebrew, Syriac, Samaritan, and Ethiopic manuscripts.

616 (Arberry A. J., 2007), pp. 31-32.

617 (Sayoud, 2012).

618 Translator's note: Dr Ibrāhīm 'Awad (b. 1948), from Egypt.

al-Hadīth: Muqāranah Uslūbiyyah). With many examples, he shed light on the fact that the Prophetic wording is clearly far removed from Qur'anic modes of expression. He compared the linguistic and stylistic lexicon of the Qur'an to that which has come in the main books of hadith, namely Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, and Mālik. His research uncovered that most words in the hadith corpus in relation to the period of the Messenger ﷺ, such as his daily life (food, drink, clothing, adornment), names of time and seasons (days of the week, months, seasons, festivals), measure metrics (*shibr*, *dhirā'*, *qirāt*, *ṣā'*), aspects of the natural desert environment (topography, insects, animals, birds), the social sphere (tribal structures, relations among Arabs), war-related issues (military tools, battlefield strategies), and the lexicon of technical terms pertaining to purification, prayer, and most acts of ritual worship—among others—have no or little presence in the Qur'an.

There are also dual-word combinations frequenting the hadith corpus that are not found in the Qur'an, such as *al-ajr wa al-wizr*, and *al-ājil wa al-ʿajil*; likewise, one may also note the usage of words in hadith texts for meanings or in contexts that have no Qur'anic equivalent, such as *imām* (in the sense of 'one who leads a congregation in prayer') and *ḥudūd* (in the sense of 'defined punishments in the Shariah as a right unto God'; pl. of *ḥadd*).

The Qur'an repeats many phrases that are not found in the hadith proof-texts, such as *āmanū wa ʿamilū al-ṣāliḥāti*, the *yujādilu fī āyāti*...format, and *aḥalā taʿqilūna*; and vice versa, like *mā bālu kadhā*, *bayna zahrānay...*, and *alā uʿallimuka*. Furthermore, there is oft-repeated imagery in hadith texts that is not found in the Qur'an, such as discussions on the Moon, the stars, and many sentences used in hadiths, such as *nīʿma al-ʿabdu* or *bīʿsa al-ʿabdu*, *ayyamā kadhā*, and *iyyāka wa kadhā* or *iyyakum wa kadhā*. Proper nouns are also scarce in the Qur'an, unlike the hadith which is replete with the mention of the name of people, tribes, and places.⁶¹⁹

The reality is that this issue is clear to anyone who understands the differences between the styles of eloquence and expression. This is why, when explaining the differences between the structure of the Qur'an and the structures of the speeches and messages by the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, Bāqillānī said, 'If you have any understanding of this art, possess any sense of comprehending this point, possess any amount of knowledge on the literary aspects of the language, or strike any level in Arabic—even if small—I would not think you would be confused over the difference between the brilliance of the Qur'an and what we have transcribed from the statements of the Messenger ﷺ in his speeches and letters. I estimate that—just as you

hear his speech and his words descend around you—you will see a gaping chasm, a lengthy gap, a far-reaching field, and a huge space open up between the two sets of words. If you say, “Perhaps he exerted effort to make up the Qur’an and spent himself in arranging its structures”, and in doing so you allowed Satan to confound you out of his wickedness, then go back to yourself, return to your intellect, gather your wits, and believe full well that oral speeches are properly assembled for momentous occasions, large gatherings, and big seasonal events. Such occasions are not glossed over and treated lightly. The letters to the monarchs would have been something for which a writer would assemble all his efforts, roll up his sleeves, and exert every endeavour—how would deficiency [relative to the Qur’an] still be present in them, and how would they still be subject to a shortage [in eloquence, relative to the Qur’an]? You would no doubt learn that the composition of the Qur’an is of a divine order, and that the speech of the Prophet ﷺ is of a Prophetic order.’⁶²⁰

620 (Bāqillānī, 1963), pp. 135-136.

e. A man with two hearts?

If the Qur'an is considered to be from the cognitive moulding of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, it would be without doubt shaped by both his conscious and subconscious thoughts, as well as his public aspirations. However, the Qur'an operates from a completely different framework.

Feeling uncertain and seeking verification

A book put together by someone lying about Prophethood would be immersed in the language of certainty and alarmism, so that its claimant can gain control over the minds of his followers and ensnare their souls. As for the Qur'an and the *sīrah*, they reveal an initial state of confusion on the part of the Prophet ﷺ, who feared that what he was going through was not a state of Prophethood. That is the hallmark of an honest soul.

The Qur'an was sent to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ in the loneliness of a cave. The Prophet ﷺ feared that he was afflicted by a demon's touch. Confused and fearful, he returned to his wife saying, 'Wrap me in clothes, wrap me in clothes.'⁶²¹ His heart could not bear the heavy burden of the situation or the unexpected nature of what had transpired, which had already turned away from the ways of pagans and idolators, finding solitude in the cave to worship the True God.

Likewise, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was extremely anxious to memorise what he heard. His heart and mind became fatigued as he swiftly repeated what he heard so that he could commit it to memory and not forget it. This is why the statement of God ﷻ was revealed: 'Do not rush your tongue trying to memorise the Qur'an. It is certainly upon Us to make you memorise and recite it. So, once We have recited a Revelation, follow its recitation. Then it is surely upon Us to make it clear to you.' (Qur'an, 75:16-19) So, his fear did not subside until he was given an assurance that what he heard would be preserved.

Regarding the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and his relationship to the Qur'an, one does not find a domineering nature of someone who fabricates what he says. The Prophet ﷺ was someone who started to accept the Qur'an after

621 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Dream Interpretation, Chapter: The first Revelation the Prophet ﷺ was started off with was true dreams (hadith no. 6571); and Muslim, Book of Faith, Chapter on the beginning of Revelation to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (hadith no. 160).

having doubted it; he tried to memorise it with great apprehension. This is proof that he was in receipt of the Qur'an just as how someone would receive news from an external source, without any control over it.

Severe reprimand in the case of arriving at a non-preponderant position

A man who invents what he says to give people the illusion that he is a Prophet would strive to show he is absolutely inerrant, for he would claim to be revealing the Lord's Will and Deed on Earth. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ was unlike any of this. The Qur'an mentions on more than one occasion the Prophet ﷺ being reprimanded by his Lord and even points out erroneous courses of action he undertook or how he missed the truth:

- 'May Allah pardon you, O Prophet. Why did you give them permission to stay behind before those who told the truth were distinguished from those who were lying?' (Qur'an, 9:43)
- 'And remember, O Prophet, when you said to the one for whom Allah has done a favour and you too have done a favour, "Keep your wife and fear Allah," while concealing within yourself what Allah was going to reveal. And so you were considering the people, whereas Allah was worthier of your consideration. So when Zayd totally lost interest in his wife, We gave her to you in marriage, so that there would be no blame on the believers for marrying the ex-wives of their adopted sons after their divorce. And Allah's command is totally binding.' (Qur'an, 33:37)
- 'It is not fit for a Prophet that he should take captives until he has thoroughly subdued the land. You believers settled with the fleeting gains of this world, while Allah's aim for you is the Hereafter. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. Had it not been for a prior decree from Allah, you would have certainly been disciplined with a tremendous punishment for whatever ransom you took.' (Qur'an, 8:67-68)
- 'It is not proper for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were close relatives, after it has become clear to the believers that they are bound for the Hellfire.' (Qur'an, 9:113)

All these issues in which the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is reprimanded are legal matters subject to independent reasoning, in which it was possible that many pious people would have also adopted the same course of action had they not had the benefit of guiding Revelation. Therefore, the notion

that may spring up in an adversary's mind—that these reprimands were a means to wriggle out of a blatant error, considered by the laity to be problematic—is negated.

And perhaps the most salient example of this is Sūrah ‘Abasa (He Frowned). The name of this chapter, as you can see, is not subtle at all. It might occur to someone hearing this sharp chapter title that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ committed an act that would never emanate from someone whose heart is sound and whose actions are honourable:

- ‘He frowned and turned away because the blind man came to him interrupting. You never know, O Prophet, perhaps he may be purified, or he may be mindful, benefitting from the reminder. As for the one who was indifferent, you gave him your attention, even though you are not to blame if he would not be purified. But as for the one who came to you, eager to learn, fearing from falling down, you were inattentive to him.’ (Qur’an, 80:1-10)

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ was in a heated discussion with one (or more) of the Quraysh elders. He was inviting them to the good of Islam and warning them from the evil of polytheism, but they were haughtily rejecting the truth. At that moment, a blind man, largely unheard of, came to him seeking to ask about the truth he had brought. The Messenger ﷺ turned away from him as he was preoccupied discussing with the leaders of the people. When the sitting concluded, these relatively harsh verses were revealed, reprimanding the Prophet ﷺ that he had given his full attention to uninterested polytheists at the expense of this weak man who came to seek guidance in earnest.

So ask yourselves: Why would the Prophet of Islam reprimand himself, in an environment dominated by the doubts of polytheists, in which the chieftains of disbelief would pick up on any opportunity to malign Muhammad, his ethics, and his book? Why would he issue a harsh reprimand to himself despite the fact that this situation—as per the custom of us faulty human beings—would not have really needed the Revelation of an entire chapter? Even if there was a need for a chapter reprimanding him, why the need for such a name—‘He Frowned’—that draws an uninspiring complexion of the face of the Prophet? Above all, why would he issue a reprimand to himself when he was preoccupied with delivering a message he set out for himself and was taking advantage of the opportunity of sitting with the leading polytheists? Would their acceptance of Islam not have alleviated the Muslims of the prejudice from which they were suffering? Would it not have opened up the doors to good for a religious call that was considered a pariah back then? Would any strategic advantage have been lost had this

largely unknown person not gotten a chance to hear the message of Islam at this specific time and in this specific gathering? Were there no other opportunities at other times for the Prophet to address the class of people that he represented? Why would the Prophet not try to make best of the time with the powers that be—the people of material power who had thus far united against it—after which he would have had little chance to get their attention? Why would the Prophet of Islam need to have abandoned preaching to these leaders when he did not have any clear scriptural directive to the contrary at hand? How would he have been expected to give his full attention to this weak man when he thought this was an issue in which he had some leeway and had already exercised his personal preference in prioritising people who were strategically more important?

I for one cannot find any explanation for this Qur'anic reprimand—other than the fact that it was divine justice that brought the Prophet of Islam back to what was right, so that he would be fair with this weak and unknown blind man. This was achieved in the form of a chapter, where the people would worship God by reciting it—right up to the Day of Reckoning. Leitner⁶²², an Orientalist, did the truth justice when he said, 'Once, God sent Revelation to the Prophet which was extremely critical, because he had turned his face away from a poor blind man so that he could converse with an influential rich person. That Revelation was made widespread. Had Muhammad been a liar—which is what some stupid Christians say of him—that piece of Revelation would have been non-existent.'⁶²³

Exercising independent reasoning and accepting error

A man who makes up words would fabricate meanings that align with his predilections to help him achieve his ambitions. In the Qur'an, there are plenty of verses revealed where the intended meanings would be initially unclear to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ—he would undertake independent reasoning to identify their intended meaning. In doing so, he would not have gained decisive knowledge of the meaning of these verses until the descending Revelation guided him to the correct position. One example of this is that, after the death of ʿAbdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the leader

622 Translator's note: Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (1840- 1899). British Orientalist and languages expert. He was born in Hungary to a Jewish family. He travelled the Muslim World under the name ʿAbd al-Rashīd Sayyāḥ. He taught at King's College London, and Government College University in Lahore. He commissioned the construction of the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, the first purpose-built mosque in the UK (first administered by Lahori Ahmadis with intermittent periods of disuse post-Leitner's death, then by Sunni Muslims since 1968).

623 (Leitner, 1433 AH), p. 132; quoted by (Muṭayrī, 2006/1427 AH), p. 193.

of the hypocrites in Madinah, his son ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and requested his garment to shroud his father in, so he gave it to him. Then he asked him to lead his funeral prayer, so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood to pray over him. ʿUmar stood up and took hold of the clothes of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah, are you praying over him when your Lord has prohibited you to pray over him?’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Allah has given me a choice—He said, “Pray for them to be forgiven or not. Even if you pray for their forgiveness seventy times...” (Qurʾan, 9:80)—and I will go over seventy.’ ʿUmar said, ‘But he is a hypocrite.’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed over him, so Allah revealed: ‘And do not ever offer funeral prayers for any of their dead, nor stand by their grave at burial...’⁶²⁴ (Qurʾan, 9:84)

What we have here is a man (the Prophet ﷺ) attempting to interpret a passage from the book that his adversaries attribute to him (and not to God), and his own disciple (ʿUmar رضي الله عنه) is disagreeing with him. After this, another verse in this book comes to correct his understanding of the first verse and declares his disciple’s course of action—who disagreed with him—as the correct one. This occurred in Madinah, where he had political power.⁶²⁵ Self-glorification, on the other hand, would dictate: ‘Is there anything else to puff me up more?’

624 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Interpreting the Qurʾan, Sūrah al-Barāʾah (al-Tawbah) (hadith no. 4393); and Muslim, Book of the Traits of Hypocrites (hadith no. 2774).

625 A person reading this can feel the merciful side that engulfed the heart of Muhammad ﷺ, which is why he felt compelled to accept the request of one of his Companions to pray over his hypocrite father. In doing so, he interpreted the verse prohibiting prayer over polytheists in a manner that conflicted with the obviously apparent purpose it was revealed for, just because he saw some room for an alternative interpretation.

f. Emphasis on the humanness of the Prophet

People are inclined to fall into extremes vis-à-vis their elders. The self is partial to becoming deluded by praise. When a man becomes proficient in what he himself knows is ultimately worthless twaddle, he would still be dazzled by people's praise and their veneration of him. Self-delusion in this situation would result in his heart not realising anymore that what he is good at is utterly meaningless; instead, he would start believing he is on the path of manufacturing glory for an entire nation.

So, what about a man who is claiming Prophethood and is focused on it, and people are accepting his religious call and are fawning over his mere mention? Do you really think that such a person would simply pass up on the opportunity for self-glorification and inflating one's skill set to the brink of deification, if not to claim deification outright?

Now look at the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and read the Qur'anic passages describing him. You will not find therein an assertion made about the Prophet ﷺ which is repeated more than the emphasis on his humanness and—being the creation of God that he is—his innate powerlessness:

- It goes to the extent to suggest that he does not know what his own final state of affairs will be: 'Say, "I am not the first Messenger ever sent, nor do I know what will happen to me or you. I only follow what is revealed to me. And I am only sent with a clear warning."' (Qur'an, 46:9)
- It asserts that he has no power over bringing about good or warding off evil, and that he does not know the unseen: 'Say, "I have no power to benefit or protect myself, except by the Will of Allah. If I had known the unknown, I would have benefited myself enormously, and no harm would have ever touched me. I am only a warner and deliverer of good news for those who believe."' (Qur'an, 7:188)
- It further asserts that, had it not been for God's bounty bestowed to him in the form of keeping him firm on the truth, he would have slightly inclined himself to the people of falsehood—inadvertently that is, in the attempt to guide them to Islam—and his final outcome would have been calamitous: 'Had We not made you steadfast, you probably would have inclined to them a little, and then We truly

would have made you taste double punishment both in this life and after death, and you would have found no helper against Us.’ (Qur’an, 17:74-75) This is why one of his reported supplications is: ‘O Allah, do not leave me to myself for even the blink of an eye.’⁶²⁶

- He did not have control over the devils; rather, he was commanded to seek refuge in God from them when they tempted his heart: ‘If you are tempted by Satan, then seek refuge with Allah. Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing’ (Qur’an, 7:200); ‘And say, “My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the temptations of the devils. And I seek refuge in You, my Lord, that they come near me.”’ (Qur’an, 23:97-98)
- He used to live in a state between fear and hope: ‘Say, “I truly fear, if I were to disobey my Lord, the torment of a tremendous day.”’ (Qur’an, 39:13)

These Qur’anic assertions are not merely pieces of information for the Prophet ﷺ to be humble, only for him to go against these assertions when he met up with his Companions and dealt with his adversaries. Rather, the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ was an enactment of those Qur’anic assertions, and the rearing of his own self and his Companions in accordance with them. Indeed, some admirers would sometimes fall into exaggeration by venerating him to the point of extremes. One example of this was when he heard some slave girls playing the duff, mourning over their fathers who had been killed at Badr. During this, one of them said, ‘And we have a Prophet who knows what will happen tomorrow.’ In a style that combined both a reprimand and a lesson, the Prophet ﷺ said to her, ‘Do not say it like this. Say it like how you used to say it.’⁶²⁷ When he heard his Companions exaggerating his description, he told them, ‘Do not exaggerate me like how the Christians exaggerated the Son of Mary. I am just a slave, so say, “The slave of Allah and His Messenger.”’⁶²⁸

626 Narrated by Nasā’i in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (hadith no. 147); declared sound by Albānī.

627 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Battles (*Maghāzī*), Chapter on the presence of angels at Badr (hadith no. 3779).

628 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book on the Narrations of the Prophets, Chapter on the statement of God, ‘And mention in the Book, O Prophet, the story of Mary when she withdrew from her family...’ (hadith no. 3261).

2. IS THE QUR'AN THE BOOK OF AN UNSTABLE MAN?

If the Qur'an is the speech of Muhammad ﷺ without any wilful concoction on his part, the only option remaining would be that the Qur'an, rather than being prepared by him, was the result of an emotional disturbance within him. In other words, it is the influence of someone who does not possess control over his mind—words come from his mouth that his mind did not intend to utter. Would it therefore be correct that the Qur'an is the result of a form of epilepsy? And are the abnormalities that used to overcome the Prophet of Islam ﷺ—when the Qur'an was being revealed to him—proof for an emotional disturbance within him, such that it would be possible that speech like that of the Qur'an would emanate from him?

Conversely, if we are unable to detect any correlation between his state of uncontrollable self-agitation and the descent of the Qur'an, we would then be compelled to attribute the Qur'an to a source that does not involve concoction or human instability—we would be attributing it to heavenly Revelation.

a. Was the Prophet of Islam epileptic?

Defending the claim of Jesus's divinity, C. S. Lewis says, 'A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.'⁶²⁹

We criticise Lewis for forgetting to mention the fourth (and most obvious) possibility: Jesus ﷺ was merely a Messenger and a Prophet. Notwithstanding this criticism, we do agree with him that there is no way to believe in the honesty of someone inviting to what he claims is a heavenly message—not until the possibility of him being a liar, deluded, mentally ill, or a subject of a psychological disorder is ruled out.

We have previously discussed the bankruptcy of the accusation that Muhammad ﷺ was somehow a liar. There is nothing in the history of his career that gives this slander any credence. As such, apart from suspicion and deficiency in intellect, there is nothing that serves to malign the Muhammadan Prophethood.

Orientalists are well aware of the importance of ascribing epilepsy to Muhammad ﷺ as a safety net from submitting to the reality that he was honest. In other words, what they are saying is this: Even though he was truthful and did not intend to trick people into taking their wealth or leveraging their intellect, this is all irrelevant and not indicative of the truthfulness of his Prophethood, as he was simply deluded into thinking he possessed Prophethood, just as many claimants of divine inspiration have been deluded into thinking the same.

This accusation has some historical precedence. Regarding Muhammad ﷺ, the Makkans said:

- “O you to whom the reminder is revealed, you must be insane.” (Qur'an, 15:6)
- “Should we really abandon our gods for a mad poet?” (Qur'an, 37:36)

It is an oft-repeated accusation, from which perhaps no Prophet ever escaped. The Qur'an says:

629 (Lewis C. S., *Mere Christianity*, 2001), p. 52.

- Regarding Noah ﷺ: ‘Before them, the people of Nūḥ denied the truth and rejected Our servant, calling him insane. He was intimidated.’ (Qur’an, 54:9)
- Regarding Moses ﷺ: ‘And in the story of Mūsā was another lesson, when We sent him to Pharaoh with compelling proof, but Pharaoh was carried away by his power, saying of Mūsā, “A magician or a madman.”’ (Qur’an, 51:38-39)
- With regard to a number of other Prophets: ‘Similarly, no Messenger came to those before them without them saying, “A magician or a madman.”’ (Qur’an, 51:52)

After the era of Messengerhood had passed, nobody among the adversaries of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ upheld the accusation of insanity—an accusation initiated by the Makkans. Rather, they reframed that accusation into another form by claiming that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was afflicted by epilepsy. Their proof for this is the abnormal state that would overcome him when the Qur’an was descending on him.

Apart from the unusual events that would accompany Muhammad’s ﷺ announcement of new Qur’anic verses, you will probably not find any back-up material for this accusation. Even then, these events do not correspond to the usual cases of epilepsy. Epilepsy is accompanied by symptoms such as extreme physical exhaustion and mental disturbance. Its symptoms most certainly do not include going out to the people and speaking to them in words that are highly wise and enchanting.

The Orientalist Montgomery Watt said, ‘Opponents of Islam have often asserted that Muhammad had epilepsy, and that therefore his religious experiences had no validity. As a matter of fact, the symptoms described are not identical with those of epilepsy, since that disease leads to physical and mental degeneration, whereas Muhammad was in the fullest possession of his faculties to the very end. But, even if the allegation were true, the argument would be completely unsound and based on mere ignorance and prejudice; such physical concomitants neither validate nor invalidate religious experience.’⁶³⁰

The differences between the state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ during receipt of Qur’anic Revelation and epilepsy can be summarised as follows:

630 (Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 1960), p. 57.

Symptoms of epilepsy	Reactions to the Revelation of the Qur'an
Physical deterioration	No physical deterioration
Body pain	No body pain
Adverse impact on memory	No adverse impact on memory
Psychological trauma	No psychological trauma
Followed by fear and angst	Followed by a spiritual clarity
Mental deterioration	Followed by intellectual enlightenment
Only one manifestation of the illness	Accompanied by either a) severity or b) no severity—in the case of the latter, the angel would assume the form of a man and the Prophet ﷺ would converse with him

The reactions to Revelation are thus not comparable to epilepsy, as those afflicted by this are actually ill—their senses and minds would exert no control over their actions. Even if we were to accept that the reaction to Revelation is similar to the symptoms of epilepsy, then mere similarity does not mean equivalence. So even though Revelation was burdensome on the Prophet ﷺ and rendered him spent (like epilepsy in that it assumes control over the body and violently shakes it), the two are quite different in other aspects.

These are obvious differences that unequivocally negate any equivalence or similarity that may allude to the root cause being the same. This objection was born in the Middle Ages; it was put to bed for a long time, as admitted by someone who wanted to revive this lie against the Prophet of Islam: ‘*Modern biographies of Muhammad reject the diagnosis of epilepsy...*’⁶³¹ The fact is that the Prophet’s pre-Prophethood career does not have any proof for this alleged epilepsy ﷺ. The legislative framework and the engineering of the new nation that he was responsible for run contrary to that assertion, as per the admission of the medical historian and German Orientalist Max Meyerhof^{632, 633}

631 (Freemon, 1976).

632 Max Meyerhof (1874-1945). German Jewish Orientalist, ophthalmologist, and Arab medical historian. He published 300 books, monographs, and treatises on ophthalmology and medical history.

633 (Meyerhof, 1940), pp. 10-11.

b. Physical trauma associated with Revelation and the ingenuity of the Qur'anic text

Whatever one's definition of the term 'rare' is, the Qur'an is indeed a rare literary piece. It is an in-depth presentation of metaphysics, a distinct legislative system, and special composition of ethics. Reducing these special Qur'anic features to the Prophet's bodily and psychological reaction to the descent of Revelation is abominable, as many of these reactions were extremely severe on his soul and would have left the mind in a disrupted state, and not exactly in a state where his thoughts were well collected. Among these reactions were:

- Hearing a noise like the buzzing of bees near the face of the Prophet ﷺ.⁶³⁴
- The Prophet ﷺ would sweat profusely, even on a day of severe cold.⁶³⁵
- He would sometimes be overcome by grief, and his face would change colour.⁶³⁶
- A snoring sound like that of a camel would emanate from him.⁶³⁷
- His weight would increase so dramatically that the femur of the person he was resting on would almost fracture, and the animal he would be riding on would sit down.⁶³⁸

634 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Interpreting the Qur'an, Chapter: From Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (hadith no. 3173).

635 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Beginning of Revelation (hadith no. 2); and Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the fragrant perspiration of the Prophet ﷺ in the cold and when Revelation would come to him (hadith no. 2333).

636 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Ordained Punishments, Chapter on the punishment of fornication (hadith no. 1690).

637 Bukhārī, Book of Pilgrimage, Chapter on washing saffron infusions from clothes thrice (hadith no. 1536); and Muslim, Book of Pilgrimage, Chapter on what is allowed and disallowed for a consecrator during Hajj and Umrah (hadith no. 1180).

638 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on the statement of God Most High 'Those who stay at home—except those with valid excuses—are not equal to those who strive in the cause of Allah...' (hadith no. 2677).

What do we learn from these events accompanying Revelation?

1. These were unnatural phenomena. Material laws cannot explain the sound resembling the buzzing of bees or the body increasing in weight in a sudden and dramatic fashion.
2. These were phenomena over which the Prophet ﷺ had no control. These were most certainly not planned-out forms of playacting.
3. These phenomena brought about a narrowness, severity, and disturbance. Going against the grain, however, they would be followed by a solid speech carrying enlightenment.
4. The manifestations of distress would be followed by a speech over which religious adversaries would be challenged to rival its eloquence and expressive brilliance.

Yet again, the Qur'an is assiduous in showcasing its inimitability. Its inimitable speech comes on the back of preceding events that would have normally prevented any inerrant speech to follow it, let alone a speech that is beautifully refined in both wording and meaning.

In the previous section, it became clear to us that the Qur'an requested from its opponent the submission of a speech of the lowest form possible that could rival it. That would require a short chapter that is close to resembling the Qur'an's rhetorical and expressive eloquence. This is despite the fact that the nature of the Qur'an's Revelation and its topics would typically disallow for any such speech to come out as eloquent as it did. The person who brought forth this book was not known to practise poetry, which—according to the Arabs—was the way to master eloquence and rhetorical brilliance in forging expertly balanced speech. In this chapter, the psychological separation between the Qur'an and Muhammad ﷺ was made lucid. Furthermore, the circumstances in which it was revealed would have normally prevented such speech to have come out as impressively as it did. However, not only did that happen, but it also reached the peak of eloquence.

What about Christianity?

The Qur'an is a book revealed to Muhammad ﷺ in the 7th century CE. He explicitly informed us that this speech is from God. The state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ with the Qur'an—as we explained earlier—is indicative that this book is divine. On the other hand, after evaluating the scriptures of the New Testament we can see a number of issues that would negate their divinity, even though there is some evidence of Revelation therein. Among these indicators suggesting that these works are not divine are the following:

- None of those who compiled the New Testament—especially those who wrote up Jesus's story—ever claimed they witnessed the life of Jesus first-hand. Likewise, those who did mention Jesus's story did not claim that they were writing based on divine inspiration. As for what is in the last section of John—"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true"⁶³⁹—most critics doubt whether it was ever part of the original text. The majority of critics are of the position that John 21 in its entirety is an interpolation and not from the compilation of the author of this Gospel.⁶⁴⁰ In addition, most critics are of the view that the compiler of the Fourth Gospel—John—is unknown and was not from the class of the Apostles.⁶⁴¹
- The personal nature of the writings

Most writings within the New Testament stand out for the very personalised nature of their expressions, which conflicts with the spirit of divine writings that address people in heavenly and instructive language. Of these expressions are:

639 John 21:24.

640 (Brown R. E., 1970), pp. 1077-1078.

641 (Freed, 2001), p. 337.

- ◆ ‘The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings.’⁶⁴²
- ◆ ‘I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.’⁶⁴³
- ◆ ‘When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. Alexander the metal-worker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. At my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill in Miletus. Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.’⁶⁴⁴

In fact, on more than one occasion, Paul explicitly mentioned that he said things that were not from Revelation at all:

- ◆ ‘In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool.’⁶⁴⁵
- ◆ ‘To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.’⁶⁴⁶
- ◆ ‘Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgement as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy.’⁶⁴⁷

642 2 John 1:13.

643 3 John 1:14.

644 2 Timothy 4:13-21.

645 2 Corinthians 11:17.

646 1 Corinthians 7:12.

647 1 Corinthians 7:25.

- ♦ 'I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me!'⁶⁴⁸

Away from the personal phraseology and their clear indication that much of the writings contained in the New Testament are of a personal nature, the author of Luke mentioned that he wrote his Gospel only to contribute to what he knows about Jesus—for the reason that others had done the same.⁶⁴⁹ With this admission, he reveals beyond any doubt the humanness of its transmission and the personal motivations behind it.

Synoptic problem

One of the most important items of evidence for the human nature of the Gospels is what is known as the Synoptic Problem. It is the problem of understanding the relationship between three of the canonical Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke.⁶⁵⁰ It appears that these Gospels have a high degree of overlap with one another, when compared to the Gospel of John. Via evidence that appears to be conclusive, most critics have established that both Matthew and Luke borrowed so much from Mark that they quote almost everything that is in it, albeit with some alterations of points that they were not highly pleased with, together with some additions.⁶⁵¹ This issue is extremely discomfoting to the Church, as it admits that Mark was neither an Apostle nor a first-person witness of Jesus. The obvious implication of this is that the first three Gospels were not written by first-person witnesses, as two Gospels relied on a third Gospel that was written by someone who did not even see Jesus.

Scriptural canon

Scriptural canon is the problem of determining the reason for why the Christians—specifically those whose views prevailed at the Council of Nicaea—selected 27 scriptures for the New Testament. Why, for example,

648 2 Corinthians 11:1.

649 'Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught' (Luke 1:1-4).

650 The authors of the Gospels are unknown. When we attribute a statement to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, we are in fact referring it to the Gospel ascribed to them, not the person after whom that Gospel was named.

651 (Mayboom, 1993).

were the Four Gospels selected, to the exclusion of others? We do not have an answer. In the 2nd century, Irenaeus⁶⁵² testified that the Church had the choice to select only four out of all the Gospels, as a) there are four cardinal points on Earth, and b) there are four winds!⁶⁵³

The problem of the scriptural canon and its connection to Revelation represents a historical quagmire for Christian researchers. It is rendered even more problematic by the following:

1. Our lack of knowledge due to the absence of any identifiable standards used for canonisation.
2. Our lack of knowledge vis-à-vis the earliest period of canonisation.
3. The huge difference between the leaders of Christianity in the first centuries in relation to the canonisation of the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁵⁴
4. The first person to mention the 27 Books of the New Testament as the final list was Athanasius⁶⁵⁵ in a treatise he wrote during the year 367, which is very late. His position was just an opinion that did not employ evidence from any mode of transmission.

As such, this is an unsolvable problem. For the purposes of setting out a divine theology, one cannot use as evidence that which has a strong and plausible material explanation as an alternative.

Paul and epilepsy

Many scholars and psychologists are of the view that Paul—whose words represent 28% of the New Testament—was periodically epileptic. This is well known, to the extent that in some countries, epilepsy is known as St Paul's disease.⁶⁵⁶

The ascription of epilepsy to Paul fundamentally goes back to his adoption of Christianity, in which a number of physicians have identified symptoms of epilepsy: 'As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light

652 Irenaeus (130-202). Early Church Father, saint, and defender of the Church. He was the Bishop of Lugdunum, now Lyon.

653 (Irenaeus, 1885), 3.11.8.

654 For more information, see (Metzger B., *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, 2009).

655 Athanasius of Alexandria (298-373). One of the most important Fathers and saints of the Church. He is the most significant personality in Christian history to support the posited religious 'orthodoxy' in the face of 'heresy'. His works include *De Decretis*.

656 (*The Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, 1845), 63/273.

from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.⁶⁵⁷

Other texts used by those who claim that Paul was epileptic include what Paul said about himself:

- “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, or because of these surpassingly great Revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.”⁶⁵⁸
- “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.”⁶⁵⁹

These texts contain the following symptoms of epilepsy:

- Suddenly falling to the ground, with the afflicted person able to stand up by himself straight after.
- Seeing a sudden bright light.
- Hearing a noise directed at him.

657 Acts 9:3-9.

658 2 Corinthians 12:2-8.

659 Galatians 4:13-14.

- Temporary vision loss for hours or days.
- A sudden return of vision.

The Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry published a scientific study on Paul's epilepsy. He was diagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy.⁶⁶⁰ One of the more prominent Christian theologians who believed Paul was afflicted with epilepsy, and that it was the cause for his Christianity, is the theologian and physician Albert Schweitzer⁶⁶¹ in his book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*.⁶⁶² This is the position of most German scholars who have written on Paul.⁶⁶³

660 (Landsborough D., 1987).

661 Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). German scholar. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life" (with additions from translator).

662 (Schweitzer, 1967), pp. 152-154.

663 (Landsborough D.), p. 663.

Summary

- The intellectual and emotional distinction between the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and the Qur'an is clear.
- The honesty of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ in all matters blocks any accusation that he fabricated the Qur'an.
- The stylistic composition of the Qur'an is far removed from that of fabricated books.
- The physical and psychological state of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ during receipt of Revelation is quite distinct from both epileptic people and those who undertake extensive preplanning to concoct eloquent speech.
- The Gospel authors are unknown. They carry the signs of works that can only be described as human.

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SECTION 3

Inimitability in the Qur'an Vis-à-vis the Imperceptible

*﴿This is one of the stories of the unseen, which We reveal to
you, O Prophet.﴾*

(Qur'an, 11:49)

*The acid test for identifying a Prophet of God is spelled out
by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:21-22 ⁶⁶⁴.*

(Hugh Ross, Christian apologist and astrophysicist)



⁶⁶⁴ 'You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what a Prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That Prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.'

The Qur'an: Speculation on the unseen? Or tearing down the veil of the unseen?

The Arabic word *nabī* (prophet) in its technical religious meaning is the same as its Hebrew (*nāvī*) and Aramaic counterparts. The word is shared across Semitic languages. Its root letters—*n-b-ʿ* or *n-b-y*—are present in Akkadian, Eblaite, Amorite, Punic, Amharic, and Old South Arabian.⁶⁶⁵

In Akkadian—the oldest of all known Semitic languages—the verb *n-b-w* is widely used to denote the meaning of the Arabic verb *nādā* (to call on). Some researchers are of the position that *nāvī* in Hebrew is borrowed from the Akkadian term *nabyūm*, meaning the caller or the one called on (i.e., gods).⁶⁶⁶ Language experts see a link between the Hebrew word *nāvī* and the word *tanabbu' bi al-mustaqbal* (prophesising the future).⁶⁶⁷ One of the most important links between *nubuwwah* (informing from the unseen) and *tanabbu' bi amr al-ghayb* is the passage, 'Formerly in Israel, if someone went to enquire of God, they would say, "Come, let us go to the seer," because the Prophet of today used to be called a seer.'⁶⁶⁸ The term *rā'ī* (*ro'e*) is from the verb *r-ʿ-y* (*ra'ā*) (i.e., to see; Arabic root word is *n-z-r*). The English term today for this meaning is *Prophet*, which is taken from the Ancient Greek term *προφήτης* (*prophētēs*), which translates to 'interpreter; proclaimer; herald; revealer; expounder'. This is a word that has been used in classical Greek literature since 500 BC, denoting 'someone who announces'.⁶⁶⁹

Etymologically, the word *nabī* in Qur'anic parlance is part of the same previous semantic group. Ibn Taymiyyah says, '*Nubuwwah* is derived from *inbā'*. *Nabī* is written according to the *fa'il* template; *fa'il* can sometimes denote an active noun, which in this case would be *munbi'*; and it can mean an object noun: *munba'*. Here, both are simultaneously implied: a *nabī* is someone who gives news of that which God informed him of, and a *nabī* is

665 See (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2001), 1/662.

666 (Fahlbusch & Bromiley, 2008), 4/387.

667 1 Kings 22.

668 1 Samuel 9:9.

669 (Soggin, 1980), p. 237.

also someone who is *informed* by God, making him *informed* of that which God *gave him* news of. That news which God grants him cannot be a lie, and that which the Prophet informs of on behalf of God cannot correspond to a lie, either inadvertently or wilfully. He must be honest in relation to the news that he is conveying from God. His news must correspond with the news source and must not wilfully or inadvertently conflict with it.⁶⁷⁰

As such, Prophethood (*nubuwwah*) is information of the Lord that is offered by the Prophet to mankind. The most salient type of information in the history of all Prophethood is giving information about news from the future, which is where the term *nubū'ah* (prophesising) comes from. Prophesising the future is a significant area to test the truthfulness of any Prophethood. This is emphasised by the Qur'an: 'He is the Knower of the unseen, disclosing none of it to anyone except Messengers of His choice. Then He appoints guardian angels before and behind them.' (Qur'an, 72:26-27) The same has come in the scriptures of the Jews and Christians: 'But the Prophet who prophecies peace will be recognised as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true'⁶⁷¹; and in even more explicit terms: 'You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what a Prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That Prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.'⁶⁷²

When establishing the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, it is sufficient for a Muslim to say:

Premise: The unseen is known only by God, or the one God informs him of such.

Premise: The Qur'an carries many prophecies—unexpected ones even on occasions—relating to the unseen.

Argument: The Qur'an therefore is from God.

As for the adversary, he must establish the following:

Premise: The Word of God is inerrant.

Premise: Some or all of the Qur'anic prophecies have been falsified by history.

Argument: The Qur'an is therefore not the Word of God.

670 (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Nubuwwāt*, 2000/1420AH), p. 873.

671 Jeremiah 28:9.

672 Deuteronomy 18:21-22.

The dispute would be judged by analysing the prophecies within Islamic Revelation, as this would be evidence for or against it.

Conditions for admissible prophecies

A Muslim would not say that every truthful prophecy is a sign of Prophethood. Any person can predict something, with the expected outcome subsequently occurring. Yet, this does not mean it is correct to ascribe Prophethood to him, even if he is not claiming Prophethood. What a Muslim does say, however, is that there must be a fulfilment of conditions that prevent blind guessing from being conflated with real information about the unseen, so that a person can be assured that truthful prophecies are indicative of actual Prophethood. These conditions are:

- i. Prophecies should emanate from someone claiming Prophethood.
- ii. The materialisation of those prophecies should be far-fetched; it is easy to predict things that would most probably occur.
- iii. Prophecies should be expressed in a clear language and be precise in their implication.
- iv. There should be a multiplicity of prophecies made so that truthful prophecies are not mixed up with predictions that would have simply coincided with the future event.
- v. There should not be a failed prophecy to the name of the same person. The existence of failed prophecies is proof that those other prophecies that did materialise were by chance.

When these conditions come together in the prophecies of the Qur'an (as well as the Prophetic tradition), it would follow that the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ should be accepted. Note that inimitability vis-à-vis the unseen also extends to information of a) unseen events from the past, which are usually stories about those who came before, as well as b) unseen matters for the present time (those things that could not have been observed by anybody present), and c) unseen matters for the future (which is what the world would eventually see after the prophecy has been made).

Qur'anic prophecies

In the Qur'an, all the aforementioned types of information in relation to the unseen are found. Here, we shall list the Qur'anic information vis-à-vis the unseen in *present* and *future* matters; information about the unseen in *past* issues has a dedicated discussion in the section on the historical inimitability of the Qur'an, which will be tackled later on.

1. 'The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land. Yet following their defeat, they will triumph in three to nine years. The whole matter rests with Allah before and after victory. And on that day the believers will rejoice at the victory willed by Allah. He gives victory to whoever He wills. For He is the Almighty, Most Merciful. This is the promise of Allah. Allah never fails in His promise. But most people do not know.' (Qur'an, 30:2-6)

The Roman army was defeated at the hands of the Sassanid army, which had taken control over wide regions of the Roman Empire. Because of this, an air of regional instability became predominant, especially considering that the Roman Empire had started showing signs of complete collapse. At that time, the Companions were weak in Makkah. That the pyrolators defeated the People of the Book did not sit well with them; they were also upset by the Makkan disbelievers rejoicing at the Persian victory. The verses in the beginning of Sūrah al-Rūm provide a number of glad tidings:

- The Romans will be victorious over the Persians.
- This victory will occur before a decade passes since the time the prophecy was first issued—the term *bidʿ* in the verse means a number between three and nine.
- Muslims would be there to witness this victory, which would also mean that they would not be annihilated in this period despite the fact that they were desperately weak and under a brutal siege.

- The Muslims will be delighted when the Romans gain victory. This happened around the time of the Battle of Badr or the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah.

All these glad tidings materialised and the verse came true. Edward Gibbon⁶⁷³, a famous non-Muslim historian and the author of the book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, commented on this astonishing Qur’anic prediction: ‘At the time when this prediction is said to have been delivered, *no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment*, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire.’⁶⁷⁴

673 Edward Gibbon (1737-1794). English historian. His six-volume book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* caused outrage in some quarters.

674 (Gibbon, 1854), 5/175.

Some Orientalists have cast doubt over the Qur’anic miracle vis-à-vis the unseen in these verses. Their claim is that there is a recitation of the second verse with a *fathah* on the letter *ghayn*, not a *ḍammah*, which according to them is the original recitation. In response, I say this:

Ṭabarī said, ‘Regarding this verse, it has been reported from Ibn ‘Umar and Abū Sa‘īd (al-Khudrī) via what was related to us by Ibn Wakī‘: My father related to me: From Ḥasan al-Jufri: From Salīṭ: “I heard Ibn ‘Umar read *Alif-lām-mīm ghalabat al-rūmu* (*Alif-lām-mīm*, Rome is victorious). He was asked, ‘O Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān, what did they gain victory over?’ He said, ‘Over the Levantine countryside.”’

According to us, the recitation that is correct in this—and nothing else is permissible—is *Alif-lām-mīm ghulibat al-rūmu* with a *ḍammah* on the *ghayn*, due to the consensus of recitation authorities therein. As this is the case, the interpretation of this passage would be *ghalabat fārisu al-rūma* (Persia defeated Rome).’ (Ṭabarī), 18/446-447)

The accepted opinion is that which Ṭabarī said. The *ghalabat al-rūmu* recitation is incorrect for a number of reasons:

The *ghulibat al-rūmu* recitation is mass-transmitted—solitary narrations cannot rise to contradict mass transmission.

The *ghalabat* recitation from Ibn ‘Umar and Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī ؓ is not authentic:

The narration from Ibn ‘Umar is not authentic. In the chain leading up to him is Sufyān ibn Wakī‘, whose hadith is weak. Ibn Abī Ḥātim accused him of fabricating. Ibn Ḥajar said about him, ‘He is nothing’ ((Mizzī, 1987/1408 AH), 11/202-203). Likewise, the narration has Ḥasan al-Jufri, who is Ibn Abī Ja‘far ‘Ajlān al-Jufri. He was considered weak by Aḥmad, and Nasā‘ī said about him, ‘Abandoned in hadith’ ((Jurjānī, *Al-Kāmil fī Du‘afā’ al-Rijāl*, 1988), 2/304).

In his *Jāmi‘*, Tirmidhī narrated from ‘Aṭīyyah ibn Abī Sa‘īd, who said, ‘When it was the Day of Badr, Rome was victorious over Persia. This pleased the believers, and so *Alif-lām-mīm ghulibat al-rūmu* until *yafrāhu al-mu’minūna* was

2. 'It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it.' (Qur'an, 15:9)

The Qur'an informs us that this book is protected—it cannot be distorted. This is a fact from which the Orientalist Laura Veccia Vaglieri deducted an important point. She says, 'We have still another proof of the divine origin of the Quran in the fact that its text has remained pure and unaltered through the centuries from the day of its delivery until today, and will remain so, God willing, as long as the universe continues to exist.'⁶⁷⁵

The importance of this prophecy is from three angles:

- a. The Messenger ﷺ used to know that the preservation of the Qur'an from distortion or loss was momentous and not to be taken lightly. The proof for this is his eagerness to repeat verses so that he could memorise them straight after their Revelation: 'Do not rush your tongue trying to memorise the Qur'an. It is certainly upon Us to make you memorise and recite it. So, once We have recited a Revelation, follow its recitation.' (Qur'an, 75:16-18) Such a prophecy is informative of a significant matter, which the passage of time could have easily proven a lie.

revealed...' This is a weak narration as it revolves—as per Tirmidhī and others—around 'Aṭiyyah al-ʿAwfī. Mubārakfūrī said, 'There are three issues with 'Aṭiyyah: firstly, he conceals chain discontinuity (*mudallis*); secondly, he is weak according to most experts; and thirdly, he used to take exegetical views of the Qur'an from Kalbī and then refer to him as Abū Saʿīd by saying "From Abū Saʿīd", thereby giving the impression that it is Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ' (Mubārakfūrī, *Tuhfah al-Aḥwadhī*, 6/286).

The *ghalabat* + *sa yaghlibūna* recitation does not fit with the context of the *Rūm* verses. Ṭabarī said, 'As for "*sa yaghlibūna*", all the reciters read the *yā*' with a *fathah*. However, those who read it as *Alif-lām-mīm ghalabat al-rūmu* should read this as *sa yughlabūna* with a *ḍammah*, i.e., 'And after their victory over Persia, the Muslims shall defeat them', so that the meaning of the passage makes sense. Otherwise, if the *yā*' is read with a *fathah*, the passage would not make sense, as the news about what *has happened* would become news about what *is to happen*, which essentially renders each piece of news redundant because of the other' (Ṭabarī, 18/459).

Regarding Sūrah al-Rūm, Ibn al-Jawzī said, 'By their consensus, it is entirely Makkan'—this precludes the notion that these verses came down around the time of the Battle of Badr in the Madinan period (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr*, 1984/1404 AH), 7/286).

675 (Veccia Vaglieri, *An Interpretation of Islam*, 1980), p. 44.

- b. The Qur'an establishes that the Jews and Christians distorted their scriptures. This is a public proclamation by the Qur'an to the Jewish and Christian nations that it is challenging the world to the uniqueness of its preservation, which has indeed occurred. The Missionary William Muir admitted: 'Yet but One Coran has been current amongst them; and the consentaneous use by all of the same Scripture in every age to the present day is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Caliph. There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries⁶⁷⁶ with so pure a text.'⁶⁷⁷
- c. There is agreement among all textual analysts that there is no way to acquire—whether directly, from oral tradition, or from manuscripts—the original text of the Torah. In addition, in the present we have in front of us three different textual renditions of the Torah, all of which are disparate from one another: the Hebrew text, the Samaritan Pentateuch (or Samaritan Torah), and the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament).⁶⁷⁸ As for the New Testament, the Institute for New Testament Textual Research (Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung), the foremost scientific and scholarly institute dealing with the composition of the best Greek text of the New Testament, came to the conclusion—as mentioned in its *Novum Testamentum Graece* or 'NA'²⁸—that the best it can hope for in its historical and critical investigation is to attain the most ancient available text of the New Testament. For all hope to retrieve the original source text is lost.⁶⁷⁹
3. 'And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call your helpers other than Allah, if what you say is true. But if you are unable to do so—and you will

676 i.e., until when Muir wrote his book.

677 (Muir, 1877), appendix pp. 557-558.

678 For the textual differences between the Hebrew and the Samaritan, see (Shoulson, 2008).

679 For an academic presentation on the topic, its evidence, and a refutation of Christian apologists, see (Ameri, *Isti'ādah al-Naṣṣ al-Aṣlī li al-Injīl fī Daw' Qawā'id al-Naqd al-Adnā* (Retrieving the Original Bible Text in Light of Lower Criticism Rules), 2017).

never be able to do so—then fear the Fire fuelled with people and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers.’ (Qur’an, 2:23-24)

The inability of people rivalling the Qur’an is attestable.

4. We find the following verses in the Qur’an:
 - a. ‘As for gains granted by Allah to His Messenger from the people of other lands, they are for Allah, the Messenger, his close relatives, orphans, the poor, and needy travellers, so that wealth may not merely circulate among your rich. Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it. And whatever he forbids you from, leave it. Fear Allah. Surely Allah is severe in punishment.’ (Qur’an, 59:7)
 - b. ‘Say, O Prophet, “Obey Allah and His Messenger.” If they still turn away, then truly Allah does not like the disbelievers.’ (Qur’an, 3:32)
 - c. ‘Say, O Prophet, “If you love Allah, then follow me. Allah will love you and forgive your sins. For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”’ (Qur’an, 3:31)
 - d. ‘But no, by your Lord. They will never be believers until they accept you as the judge in their disputes, and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit wholeheartedly.’ (Qur’an, 4:65)
 - e. ‘For whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, and fears Allah and is mindful of Him, then it is they who will triumph.’ (Qur’an, 24:52)

These verses are clear in mandating the adoption of the Prophetic tradition. All the imams agree that anyone who does not adopt that tradition is outside the fold of Islam. Ibn Ḥazm said, ‘A man who says “We shall only take what we find in the Qur’an” is a disbeliever by the consensus of the *Ummah*.’⁶⁸⁰ Adherence to the Prophetic tradition is not possible without its preservation. As such, the Qur’anic commandment to preserve the Prophetic tradition is a prophecy about the Muslim nation preserving it across its history, which is exactly what happened.

680 (Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*), 2/79.

5. 'Indeed, Allah will fulfil His Messenger's vision in all truth: Allah willing, you will surely enter the Sacred Mosque, in security—some with heads shaved and others with hair shortened—without fear. He knew what you did not know, so He first granted you the triumph at hand.' (Qur'an, 48:27)

The Messenger of God ﷺ saw a dream in which he and his Companions entered Makkah and circumambulated the House of God, then some shaved their hair while others trimmed. He mentioned this to his Companions, at which they became extremely happy and rejoiced. When he went to Ḥudaybiyyah with the Companions, the polytheists prevented the Muslims from entering Makkah, after which the whole event surrounding the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah came to pass. During this episode, there was some unease in the hearts of some Companions: 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ asked the Messenger of God ﷺ about this: 'Did you not inform us that we shall come to the House of Allah and circumambulate it?' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Yes I did—did I tell you that you will attend it this year?' He said, 'No.' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'You will indeed attend it and circumambulate it.'⁶⁸¹ This is also how Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ؓ answered the question.

As the dreams of the Prophets are true, this dream materialised when they entered Makkah for 'Umrah in the year following the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah.

Ibn Kathīr said:

- ♦ 'The statement of God ﷻ, "He knew what you did not know, so He first granted you the triumph at hand" means: So God ﷻ knew what you knew not about the good and the advantage in turning you away from Makkah, and your entry therein the next year.
- ♦ "...so He first granted you..." i.e., before your entrance that you were promised in the dream of the Prophet ﷺ.
- ♦ "...the triumph at hand", which is the treaty that was struck between yourselves and your polytheist enemies.
- ♦ Then God ﷻ, giving the believers glad tidings of triumph for the Messenger ﷺ over his enemies and all people on Earth, said, "He is the One Who has sent His Messenger with right guidance and the religion of truth, making it prevail over all others. And

681 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Conditions, Chapter on conditions in jihad, striking truce with the enemy, and writing up conditions (hadith no. 2583).

sufficient is Allah as a Witness” (Qur’an, 48:28). “He is the One Who has sent His Messenger with right guidance and the religion of truth...” i.e., with beneficial knowledge and good action, as the Shariah comprises of two things: knowledge and action.

- ♦ “...making it prevail over all others”, i.e., over all the people of the world of other faiths, whether Arab and non-Arab, whether denominational (to other faiths) or polytheists.
- ♦ “And sufficient is Allah as a Witness”, i.e., he is indeed His Messenger, and He is his helper.’⁶⁸²

6. ‘Remember, O believers, when Allah promised to give you the upper hand over either target, you wished to capture the unarmed party. But it was Allah’s Will to establish the truth by His Words and uproot the disbelievers.’ (Qur’an, 8:7)

Carrying a vast amount of business goods, the Quraysh caravan was returning from Syria under the stewardship of Abū Sufyān. A promise came to the Prophet ﷺ that he shall get the best of either the caravan or the Quraysh in battle. The Messenger of God ﷺ consulted his Companions—they chose the caravan due to the potential for a smaller battle and greater spoils. When they went, news reached the Makkans. Abū Jahl called on the Makkans to save the caravan. They summoned each other and promptly reached Badr, and the caravan managed to escape. The Messenger ﷺ informed his Companions of this and told them, ‘The caravan has gone to the shores of the sea, and this man (Abū Jahl) has come.’ When the Companions insisted on giving chase to the caravan, the Messenger of God ﷺ became angered. Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādah stood up and said, ‘By the One in Whose Hand my soul lies, were you to command us to plunge them (i.e., our camels) into the sea, we will do so; were you to command us to beat their livers (i.e., hasten them to take us) to the most distant place like Bark al-Ghimād⁶⁸³, we would do so...’ The Messenger of God ﷺ said, ‘So and so shall fall here,’ as he placed his hand on the Earth here and there...None of the Quraysh

682 (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 13/132.

683 Translator’s note: There are varied opinions on the location of Bark al-Ghimād. Some say it is a place on the Western shore in modern day Saudi Arabia, near Abha. Others say it was a place at the tip of Yemen. Another view states it is across the Red Sea, in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Whatever the case, the intended meaning here is that the Companions would be ready to travel wherever the Prophet ﷺ would command them to go.

polytheists who were killed deviated from the place where the Messenger of God ﷺ placed his hand.⁶⁸⁴

The Muslims emerged victorious, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

7. 'So fight them and Allah will punish them at your hands, put them to shame, help you overcome them, soothe the chests of a believing people, and remove their rage from their hearts. And Allah pardons whoever He wills. For Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.' (Qur'an, 9:14-15)

The prophecies in this passage have been met:

- ◆ The polytheists were punished at the hands of the Muslims.
 - ◆ The polytheists were put to shame.
 - ◆ The Muslims emerged victorious.
 - ◆ The hearts of all believers were soothed thanks to the soothing of hearts of one group of believers: the Khuzā'ah.
 - ◆ The rage from the hearts of the believers was removed.
8. 'Say to the nomadic Arabs who stayed behind, "You will be called to fight against a people of great might, who you will fight unless they submit. If you then obey, Allah will grant you a fine reward. But if you turn away as you did before, He will inflict upon you a painful punishment."' (Qur'an, 48:16)

Regardless of whether these people were Hawāzin, the supporters of Musaylamah, or the Romans, it has occurred.

9. 'Surely your Lord knows that you, O Prophet, stand in prayer for nearly two-thirds of the night, or sometimes half of it, or a third, as do some of those with you. Allah keeps a measure of the day and night. He knows that you believers are unable to endure this, and has turned to you in mercy. So recite in prayer whatever you can from the Qur'an. He knows that some of you will be sick, some will be travelling throughout the land seeking Allah's bounty, and some will be fighting in the path of Allah.' (Qur'an, 73:20)

684 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on the Battle of Badr (hadith no. 3336).

Sūrah al-Muzzammil is one of the first chapters of the Qur'an to be revealed. At that time, the believers were small in number and consisted of a group of hounded people, hiding their faith. Despite this, the verse above states that the Muslims will fight the disbelievers. It is known that jihad was legislated only in Madinah, namely after the migration had taken place. Ibn Kathīr said, 'This verse—in fact the whole *sūrah*—is Makkan. Fighting had not been legislated yet. Therefore, this is one of the greatest indicators of Prophethood as it is giving information of future unseen events. This is why He said, "Read whatever is easy from it", i.e. "Stand [by night and read] whatever is easy from it." There is a view that the verse is Madinan, though the position that it is Makkan is more preponderant.'⁶⁸⁵

10. 'Or do they say, "We are all a united front, bound to prevail"? Soon their united front will be defeated and forced to flee.' (Qur'an, 54:44-45)

This occurred on the Day of Badr. The Messenger of God ﷺ recited this when he was out in the open, away from the area of shade. He threw a handful of pebbles at them, and thus came victory and success. This event is corroboration of the passage.

11. 'Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them. He will surely establish for them their faith which He has chosen for them. He will indeed change their fear into security. They worship Me, associating nothing with Me. But whoever disbelieves after this promise, it is they who are the transgressors.' (Qur'an, 24:55)

This promise was revealed when the Muslims were in fear of an enemy attack, after their migration to Madinah. From the heavens, they received an assurance of safety that the world would come to their feet, and their dominion will extend to all corners.

12. "It is only a reminder to the whole world. And you will certainly know its truth before long." (Qur'an, 38:87-88)

Sūrah Ṣād is Makkan. Only a few years went by and Islam was the news of the world; today, it preoccupies the world.

685 (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-ʿAẓīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 8/258.

13. 'If you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you out of His bounty, if He wills. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.' (Qur'an, 9:28)

When Revelation denying polytheists access to the Consecrated Area (*Haram*) came, some people said, 'The markets will die on us, business will perish, and the amenities we used to gain will go away.' So the statement of God ﷻ 'If you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you out of His bounty, if He wills. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise' (Qur'an, 9:28) was revealed. The Companions became so wealthy that they even gained wealth surplus to their needs.

14. 'As for those who emigrated in the cause of Allah after being persecuted, We will surely bless them with a good home in this world. But the reward of the Hereafter is far better, if only they knew.' (Qur'an, 16:41)

This verse was revealed in relation to the Muslim emigrants to Abyssinia, namely when their Makkan brethren feared the scheming of polytheists in the court of the Negus against them, by sending him gifts and inciting him against them. Glad tidings thus came of the emigrants' safety and their secure settlement in the land.

15. 'Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down serenity upon them and rewarded them with a victory at hand, and many spoils of war they will gain. For Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. Allah has promised you abundant spoils, which you will gain, so He hastened this truce for you. And He has held people's hands back from harming you, so it may be a sign for the believers, and so He may guide you along the Straight Path. And there are other gains which are beyond your reach that Allah is keeping in store for you. For Allah is Most Capable of everything.' (Qur'an, 48:18-21)

'Victory at hand' means the Conquest of Khaybar. The first instance of 'many spoils of war' refers to the spoils of Khaybar or Hajar⁶⁸⁶. The second case of 'many spoils of war' refers to the spoils that the nation of Muslims

686 Translator's note: Hajar refers to a thriving region or city in the East of the Arabian Peninsula, traditionally occupied by Magians. It was brought to ruin during the attacks and sieges laid by the Qarmatians (the Qarāmiṭah, of the extinct Sevener Ismā'īli Shias) during the 3rd century AH, after which the exact geographical location of ancient Hajar fell into obscurity.

shall collect in its future days. The term ‘other gains’ refers to the spoils from the Romans, Persians, and other mighty nations capable of defending themselves.

16. ‘This is just another enemy force bound for defeat out there.’ (Qur’an, 38:11)

This is a promise in Sūrah Ṣād—which is a Makkan chapter by the agreement of the scholars—that the Messenger ﷺ will inflict defeat on the forces that would come together to fight him and aim to annihilate both him and his call to Islam.

17. ‘O Prophet, tell the captives in your custody, “If Allah finds goodness in your hearts, He will give you better than what has been taken from you, and forgive you. For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”’ (Qur’an, 8:70)

The verse gives glad tidings to those prisoners of war with the Muslims that, if they accept Islam, they will gain the great good of both the world and the Afterlife—and this is what happened.

18. ‘They were about to intimidate you to drive you out of the land of Makkah, but then they would not have survived after you had left except for a little while.’ (Qur’an, 17:76)

The Qur’an informs the Prophet ﷺ that the Makkans were conspiring to have him expelled from Makkah, and that if he were to leave to seek safety from their scheming, he shall return to Makkah shortly after—with complete power in his hands. This is what occurred: The Prophet ﷺ returned to Makkah victorious, shortly after the migration in 8 AH.

19. ‘Indeed, We have granted you, O Prophet, abundant goodness. So pray and sacrifice to your Lord. Only the one who hates you is truly cut off from any goodness.’ (Qur’an, 108:1-3)

The Makkans did everything to harm the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, both physically and in morale. When a son of the Prophet ﷺ passed away, they said, ‘Rejoice—Muhammad is cut off (i.e., he has no male progeny left to further his lineage).’ The promise of this chapter has been fulfilled: The religions of the Quraysh and the Arabs are extinct, and the Prophet of Islam ﷺ left behind a huge nation.

20. ‘There are also those hypocrites who set up a mosque only to cause harm, promote disbelief, divide the believers, and as a base for those who had previously fought against Allah and His Messenger. They will definitely swear “We intended nothing but good,” but Allah bears witness that they are liars.’ (Qur’an, 9:107)

This verse was revealed in relation to Abū ‘Āmir al-Rāhib, a Christian. He requested his fellow tribesmen to build a mosque⁶⁸⁷ and to prepare weaponry and warfare. He then went to the Roman Emperor to seek an army to help him expel the Prophet ﷺ and the believers. When his people completed the construction of his mosque, he then came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, ‘We have finished building our mosque—we want you to pray in it and supplicate for blessings for us,’ so God revealed: ‘Do not, O Prophet, ever pray in it. Certainly, a mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is worthier of your prayers. In it are men who love to be purified. And Allah loves those who purify themselves.’ (Qur’an, 9:108) This verse thus presented a warning of their secret conspiracy.

21. ‘May the hands of Abū Lahab perish. May he himself perish. Neither his wealth nor worldly gains will benefit him. He will burn in a flaming Fire. His wife, the carrier of thorny kindling, will have around her neck a rope of palm-fibre.’ (Qur’an, 111:1-5)

This chapter informs us about the fate of Abū Lahab and his wife: They would never believe in Islam and they would die on disbelief. The Makkans did end up accepting Islam—only a few like Abū Lahab and his wife did not.

An objector might claim that the Prophet of Islam said this when he lost hope in his uncle and his wife ever accepting Islam. Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī responds to this contention by stating: ‘Before everything, what he said has been realised as per how it was interpreted and explained. It happened in a way that broke norms. These assumptions of yours cannot harm this basic fact, and this should be enough as a response to you...

A lot of people said what Abū Lahab uttered about him; some of these people eventually ended up accepting Islam.

Furthermore, if God said about Abū Lahab “He will accept Islam” before he accepted it, and then he accepted it, the adversary would have turned around and said, “There is no indication in favour of the Qur’an here: The man is his uncle, his two brothers accepted Islam, and the children of his brother Abū Ṭālib—namely Ja‘far and ‘Alī—also accepted Islam. So why would he not have accepted Islam as well?” This prophecy would have

687 Translator’s note: Now known as the infamous Masjīd Ḍirār.

been the more plausible and most obvious to side with and plan for, but the Qur'an did not say that—it in fact said the direct opposite, so that we know that this is the statement and speech of the All-Knower of the unseen ﷺ.⁶⁸⁸

22. 'He said, "This Qur'an is nothing but magic from the ancients. This is no more than the word of a man." Soon I will burn him in Hell. And what will make you realise what Hell is? It does not let anyone live or die. It scorches the skin.' (Qur'an, 74:24-29)

The threat of Hell was revealed in relation to Walid ibn al-Mughirah, after he said that the Qur'an is magic. He died on disbelief.

23. 'Have you, O Prophet, not seen the hypocrites who say to their fellow disbelievers from the People of the Book, "If you are expelled, we will certainly leave with you, and We will never obey anyone against you. And if you are fought against, we will surely help you"? And Allah bears witness that they are truly liars. Indeed, if they are expelled, the hypocrites will never leave with them. And if they are fought against, the hypocrites will never help them. And even if the hypocrites did so, they would certainly flee, then the disbelievers would be left with no help. Indeed, there is more fear in their hearts for you believers than for Allah. That is because they are a people who do not comprehend. Even united, they would not dare fight against you except from within fortified strongholds, or from behind walls. Their malice for each other is intense. You think they are united, yet their hearts are divided. That is because they are a people with no real understanding.' (Qur'an, 59:11-14)

Ibn Kathīr said, 'He ﷺ speaks of the hypocrites like 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy and his ilk when they sent messages to the Jews of Banū al-Naḍīr, making promises of victory to them. He ﷺ said, "Have you, O Prophet, not seen the hypocrites who say to their fellow disbelievers from the People of the Book, 'If you are expelled, we will certainly leave with you, and We will never obey anyone against you. And if you are fought against, we will surely help you.'" He ﷺ said, "And Allah bears witness that they are truly liars", i.e., liars in what they promise, either by telling them something they had no intention of fulfilling, or that they knew what they promised would not come to pass. That is why He said, "And if they are fought against, the hypocrites will never help them", i.e., they would not fight alongside them. "And even if the hypocrites did so" i.e., fought alongside them, "they would

688 (Hamadhānī, *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, 1966), pp. 36-37.

certainly flee, then the disbelievers would be left with no help.” This is a glad tiding in its own right.⁶⁸⁹

24. ‘When the hypocrites come to you, O Prophet, they say, “We bear witness that you are certainly the Messenger of Allah.” Allah knows that you are His Messenger, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are truly liars’ (Qur’an, 63:1); ‘Do you not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the Earth? If three converse privately, He is their fourth. If five, He is their sixth. Whether fewer or more, He is with them wherever they may be. Then, on the Day of Judgement, He will inform them of what they have done. Surely Allah has perfect knowledge of all things’ (Qur’an, 58:7); ‘Remember when two groups among you believers were about to cower, then Allah reassured them. So in Allah let the believers put their trust.’ (Qur’an, 3:122)

In these verses, the Qur’an tells us what the hearts of the hypocrites—and some Muslims—conceal. None of them disputed the truthfulness of what the Qur’an said.

25. “The foolish among the people will say, “Why did they turn away from the direction of prayer they used to face?” Say, O Prophet, “The east and west belong to Allah. He guides whoever He wills to the Straight Path.” (Qur’an, 2:142)

This Qur’anic prophecy was revealed in relation to non-believers, which predicts what they would say when the *qiblah* was set to be changed from Jerusalem to the Ka’bah. What was said by them did indeed come to pass.

26. ‘Most certainly, the One Who has ordained the Qur’an for you will ultimately bring you back home. Say, “My Lord knows best who has come with guidance and who is clearly astray.” (Qur’an, 28:85)

Vis-à-vis the statement of God ﷻ ‘...will ultimately bring you back home,’ Bukhārī reports from Ibn ‘Abbās: ‘He said, “To Makkah.”’⁶⁹⁰ After having migrated from Makkah and being separated from his native homeland, the verse is thus a glad tiding for the Messenger ﷺ that God will return him there.

689 (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 13/496.

690 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Interpreting the Qur’an—Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, Chapter: ‘The One Who has ordained the Qur’an for you...’ (hadith no. 4495).

27. We also find the following verses in the Qur'an:

- a. 'O Messenger, convey everything revealed to you from your Lord. If you do not, then you have not delivered His message. Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the people who disbelieve.' (Qur'an, 5:67)
- b. 'So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists. Surely We will be sufficient for you against the mockers...' (Qur'an, 15:94-95)
- c. 'So let all of you plot against me without delay.' (Qur'an, 11:55)

These verses state that God shall save His Messenger ﷺ from assassination until he conveys what has been sent to him from his Lord. Before the Revelation of this verse, the Messenger ﷺ used to have guards; when the verse was revealed, he relieved his guards and told them, 'O people, go back, for Allah has granted me safety.'⁶⁹¹ Indeed, God saved him in many instances. He passed away only when he had fully conveyed what he was entrusted with, and only after the statement of God, 'Today I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way' (Qur'an, 5:3) was revealed.

The prophecy of protection from assassination was a catalyst to assassinate the Messenger ﷺ, as killing the Messenger ﷺ would have killed two birds with one stone: a) finishing off the leader of the fledgling faith and b) causing Muslims to turn away from the Qur'an and discard it, given that their Holy Book made a false prophecy.

If one objects to the above that the Islamic tradition itself states that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ died because of meat that was laced with poison by a Jewish woman, the answer to that is this story is evidence in favour of Muslims, not against them—for two reasons:

- a. In the story of the goat, it actually informed the Messenger ﷺ that it was laced with poison⁶⁹², which is a miracle related to the unseen.
- b. God's ﷻ statement 'Allah will protect you from the people' is connected to the preceding item in the verse, which is conveying

691 Narrated by Tirmidhī, Book of Interpreting the Qur'an, Chapter: From Sūrah al-Mā'idah (hadith no. 3046); declared sound by Ibn Ḥajar.

692 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Blood Monies, Chapter on one who poisons a man by way of drink or food and he died—can he be retaliated against? (hadith no. 4512).

the message and fulfilling its objectives. As such, protection from assassination is linked to the conveying of the message: ‘O Messenger, convey everything revealed to you from your Lord. If you do not, then you have not delivered His message. Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the people who disbelieve.’ (Qur’an, 5:67) After this event, the Qur’an did actually attest that the conveying of the message was complete: ‘Today I have perfected your faith for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way.’ (Qur’an, 5:3)

28. ‘And from those who say, “We are Christians,” We took their covenant, but they neglected a portion of what they had been commanded to uphold. So We let hostility and enmity arise between them until the Day of Judgement, and soon Allah will inform them of all they have done.’ (Qur’an, 5:14)

In this verse, the Qur’an prophesied a perennial split within the ranks of Christians. It is a description that the Qur’an does not ascribe to Jews or Zoroastrians. Ṭabarī said, ‘The mutual enmity between Christians is only because of their difference in their position on Jesus. This is based on predilections, not Revelation from God.’⁶⁹³ What the Qur’an said came to pass: Christians were never united after the Prophetic mission; rather, they were—and are—in a state of a perennial schismatising to the extent that the number of Christian denominations and associations is 41,000.⁶⁹⁴ Christians continue to split due to their fresh disputes in theology and other various matters related to their tradition.

29. We read in the Qur’an:

- a. ‘And remember, O Prophet, when your Lord declared that He would send against them others who would make them suffer terribly until the Day of Judgement. Indeed, your Lord is swift in punishment, but He is certainly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’ (Qur’an, 7:167)
- b. ‘They will be stricken with disgrace wherever they go, unless they are protected by a covenant with Allah or a treaty with the people. They have invited the displeasure of Allah and have been branded with misery for rejecting Allah’s Revelations and

693 (Ṭabarī), 8/259.

694 (Pew Research Center, 2011).

murdering His Prophets unjustly. This is as a result of their disobedience and violations.' (Qur'an, 3:112)

These two verses point to the fact that the Jews will be in a state of perennial angst as their enemies continue to dominate them. It also states that, after the Prophetic mission, they shall not gain any power on Earth—not unless they are protected by a covenant with God and a treaty with the people. This is what happened: Jews remained in humiliation and misery until they started living in the Islamic state under the protection of God and His Messenger, where the Muslims offered them security. Then when they established what is now known as the State of Israel, they did not establish it of their own volition and power, but rather through God's Will and the aid of Britain.

The essence of this prophecy is that the Jews could not live an honourable existence without external help. This is notwithstanding the fact that they did indeed establish strong nations prior to Jesus through their own efforts, without the intervention of any other nation.

Prophecies in the Prophetic tradition

Prophecies that have come in the Prophetic tradition and proven true in real life are too numerous to mention. These include matters such as who would rule after the passing of the Messenger ﷺ, which of the Companions would die as martyrs, details of the lives of some of his Companions, future tribulations, and future conquests. Many of these have been reported with authentic chains of transmission from reliable narrators, in books such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, and others. Any claim that these prophecies were made up would not only mean that the best people of the earliest Muslim generations—the hadith scholars—publicly and wilfully lied, but also that nobody criticised them for it. This would be the embodiment of evil.

We shall aggregate here some prophecies that came true. Some of these occurred before the Prophetic traditions were compiled in the authoritative books of the Sunnah; others happened after the hadiths were compiled. For the first class, we shall suffice with what was reported by Bukhārī and Muslim.

I. PROPHECIES COMING TRUE BEFORE THE COMPILATION OF HADITH

Pre-compilation prophecies are countless and multi-topical, many of which have been narrated with strong chains.

1. News on the martyrdom of ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān ؓ

Anas ؓ reported that the Prophet ﷺ ascended Uḥud with Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān—it shook with them. He said, ‘Be firm, Uḥud—a Prophet, a truthful man, and two martyrs stand on you.’⁶⁹⁵

2. News that the Messenger ﷺ would pass away in his final illness, and that his daughter would be the first in his family to die after him

‘Āishah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ called ‘his daughter Fāṭimah during his death sickness. He secretly conversed about something with her, and she wept. Then he called her again and secretly conversed with her, and she laughed...I asked her about that—she said, “The Prophet ﷺ told me that he would pass away in what was his death sickness, so I wept. Then he told me that I would be the first of his family to follow him, so I laughed.”’⁶⁹⁶

3. News about the battlefield commanders being killed in order, and the final commander who would carry the flag

It is reported from Anas ؓ that before the news of their death reached them, the Prophet ﷺ informed the people about the martyrdom of Zayd, Ja‘far, and Ibn Rawāḥah. He then said, ‘Zayd assumed the flag and was killed, then Ja‘far took it and was killed, and then Ibn Rawāḥah took it and was martyred’—all the while his eyes were flowing—‘then the flag was taken by a sword among the swords of Allah⁶⁹⁷ until Allah granted them a way out.’⁶⁹⁸

695 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues of the Companions, Chapter on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ ‘Were I to take a very close friend (*Khalīl*)...’ (hadith no. 3472).

696 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Virtues, Chapter on the signs of Prophethood in Islam (hadith no. 3427); and Muslim, Book on the Virtues of the Companions, Chapter on the virtues of Fāṭimah, daughter of the Prophet ﷺ (hadith no. 2450).

697 Translator’s note: i.e., Khālīd ibn al-Walīd.

698 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Battles (*Maghāzī*), Chapter on the Battle of

4. News of the precise locations where the disbelievers would be killed during the Battle of Badr

Anas رضي الله عنه said, ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “So and so shall fall here” as he placed his hand on the Earth here and there...None of the Quraysh polytheists who were killed deviated from the place where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed his hand.’⁶⁹⁹

5. News of the bad death of a warrior on his own side

Sahl ibn Sa‘d al-Sā‘idī narrated: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ faced the polytheists in battle. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ returned to his camp and the pagans returned to theirs, somebody talked about a man among the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who would chase down and kill with his sword any pagan going alone, saying, “Nobody did his job as proficiently today as that man.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “He is from the people of the Fire.” A man among the people said, “I shall accompany him.” He thus went with him. Wherever he stood, he would stand with him; wherever he ran, he ran with him. The man got wounded seriously and he decided to end himself quickly. He planted the sword blade in the ground with its sharp end directed at his breasts, then he leaned forward on the sword and killed himself. The man came back to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, “I testify that you are the Messenger of Allah.”’⁷⁰⁰

6. News of the great post-war reconciliation that Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه would broker between the Muslims

The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘This son of mine is a leader. Perhaps Allah shall bring about a reconciliation between two groups of Muslims through him.’⁷⁰¹ This

Mu’tah in the Levant (hadith no. 4014).

699 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on the Battle of Badr (hadith no. 1779).

700 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter: One should not say ‘So and so is a martyr’ (hadith no. 7242); and Muslim, Book of Faith, Chapter on the prohibition of suicide, that one who kills himself with something would be punished with it, and that only a Muslim would enter Paradise (hadith no. 112).

701 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Tribulations, Chapter on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ about Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī: ‘Indeed, this son of mine is a leader—perhaps Allah shall bring reconciliation between two groups of Muslims through him’ (hadith no. 6692).

occurred in the cessation of hostilities between the army of ʿAlī (عليه السلام) and the army of Muʿāwiyah (عليه السلام).

7. News of naval warfare in the era of the Companions and the participation of Umm Ḥarām (عليها السلام) therein

Umm Ḥarām (عليها السلام) said, ‘I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) saying, “Paradise is granted to the first batch of my nation who shall undertake a naval expedition.” I said, “O Messenger of Allah, am I with them?” He said, “You shall be with them.” Then the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “The first army of my nation who will invade the city of Caesar will be forgiven.” I said, “Am I with them, O Messenger of Allah?” He said, “No.”’⁷⁰²

8. News that the Quraysh would not start a war against the Muslims after the Battle of the Trench

Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad (عليه السلام) said, ‘After he drove out the army clans, I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say, “Now, we shall take the war to them. They will not attack on us. We shall march on them.”’⁷⁰³

9. News of the spoils of war from the Sasanian King

Jābir ibn Samurah said, ‘I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying, “A group of Muslims—or believers—will conquer the treasures of the family of Kisrā (Sasanian King) at the white (palace).”’⁷⁰⁴

10. News of the emergence of the Kharijites at a time when the Muslims would be disunited, and that the group closest to the truth is the one that shall kill them

‘An emerging sect will come out during a moment of dissension among Muslims; the closest of the two to the truth shall kill it.’⁷⁰⁵ The narration mentions three parties: the Kharijites and two groups competing for the

702 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Jihad and State Conduct (*Siyar*), Chapter on what has been said about fighting the Romans (hadith no. 2766); and Muslim, Book of Leadership, Chapter on the virtue of fighting on sea (hadith no. 1912).

703 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Battles (*Maghāzī*), Chapter on the Battle of the Trench, which is the Battle of the Confederates (hadith no. 3884).

704 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Tribulations and the Signs of the Hour, Chapter: The Hour shall not come until a man passes... (hadith no. 2919).

705 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Alms, Chapter on describing the Kharijites and their characteristics (hadith no. 1065).

truth. It says that one of the two shall kill the Kharijites, and that it is closer to the truth. The side of ʿAlī ﷺ fought against the Kharijites at the Battle of Nahrawan in 38 AH, after it had been in an ongoing dispute with the side of Muʿāwiyah ﷺ.

II. PROPHECIES COMING TRUE AFTER THE COMPILATION OF HADITH

The following are some of the prophecies in the Prophetic tradition that materialised after the hadiths were compiled into the canonical collections.

1. The Messenger ﷺ said, ‘There are angels at the entrances of Madinah—neither plague nor the Antichrist shall be able to enter it.’⁷⁰⁶

Despite repeated plagues afflicting the Earth, plague has never entered Madinah.

2. On the signs of the Hour, the Messenger ﷺ said, ‘...and you will see barefooted, barely dressed, destitute shepherds competing in the construction of tall buildings.’⁷⁰⁷

The sudden discovery of the wealth of petrol and gas in the Arabian Gulf has led to rapid economic growth. In the same generation that saw shepherds tending flocks of animals, we have witnessed competition in the construction of tall buildings and skyscrapers. The tallest skyscrapers in the world today are those in the Arabian desert. The prophecy gives information on the material wealth that poor shepherds will receive, transporting them to luxurious tall buildings.

3. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ؓ said, ‘Various natural minerals shall surface. One such mineral will be near the Hejaz. It will be approached by the most wicked people.’⁷⁰⁸

Even though the chain of this narration stops at a Companion (*mawqūf*), it contains information pertaining to the unseen, which is why—technically speaking—it is raised to the Prophet ﷺ (*marfū‘*). As it appears today, the

706 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Virtues of Madinah, Chapter: Dajjal would not enter Madinah (hadith no. 1781); and Muslim, Book of Pilgrimage, Chapter on Madinah remaining safe from plague or Dajjal entering it (hadith no. 1379).

707 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Faith, Chapter on explaining *Īmān*, *Islām*, *Ihsān*, and faith in destiny (hadith no. 8).

708 Reported by Ḥākim (hadith no. 8463). He said, ‘This hadith is authentic in terms of its chain; [Bukhārī and Muslim] did not bring it.’

mineral referred to is oil; the most wicked of people are the multinational corporations that rob the wealth of good nations to feed their capitalist greed.

4. The Messenger ﷺ said, 'The Hour will not come until the Qur'an is a source of shame, and time flies by.'⁷⁰⁹

Nowadays, when a person invites people to live life according to the Qur'an, he would be accused of extremism, radicalism, obscurantism, and backwardness. In our times, the world has become a small place. We now know about the news from the farthest point on Earth right at the moment it occurs, as if we are witnessing it right there.⁷¹⁰

709 'Tabarānī narrated it. Its narrators are trustworthy, but some are disputed over' (Haythamī, 1992/1413 AH).

710 Translator's note: Another interpretation of the second half of this narration is that time will pass quickly, or that it will be perceived as such.

What about the prophecies of the Bible?

To demonstrate the divinity of the Bible, Christian apologists give a great deal of attention to the prophecies in the Bible. They have many works on this topic, which cannot all be listed here. Additionally, the prophecies of future events in the Bible which they claim have come true are the most salient signposts for the Prophethood of the one claiming it.

A person studying the prophecies in the Bible would quickly learn that many of them did not materialise. This is injurious to the divinity and inerrancy of the scriptures. In a book called *Bible Prophecy: Failure or Fulfillment?*⁷¹¹, one researcher collated tens of failed prophecies from the Bible. These prophecies include the following:

1. 'When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the Earth.'⁷¹²

Yet, we read in the rest of the story that Cain settled and built a city, naming it after his son: 'So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch.'⁷¹³

2. The Torah argues that the Lord, in the era of Noah , said that the age of any human would not exceed 120 years: 'Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans for ever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."⁷¹⁴

We know of many people who exceeded this age.

⁷¹¹ (Callahan, 1997).

⁷¹² Genesis 4:12.

⁷¹³ Genesis 4:16-17.

⁷¹⁴ Genesis 6:3.

3. Ruth states that Ruth the Moabite was included in the Lord's assembly. In fact, it suggests that the Prophets David  and Jesus  came from their progeny.⁷¹⁵

Yet, Deuteronomy reads: 'No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, not even in the tenth generation.'⁷¹⁶

4. "He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."⁷¹⁷

This passage is clear in that the Lord would maintain the kingdom of David forever. History suggests otherwise, however.

5. "Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place."⁷¹⁸

However, the following passage suggests that Josiah was killed by the ruler of Egypt: 'While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle, but Necho faced him and killed him at Megiddo.'⁷¹⁹

6. "Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field. Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smouldering stubs of firewood—because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son

⁷¹⁵ Translator's note: See Ruth 4:13-22.

⁷¹⁶ Deuteronomy 23:3.

⁷¹⁷ 2 Samuel 7:13-16.

⁷¹⁸ 2 Kings 22:20.

⁷¹⁹ 2 Kings 23:29.

of Tabeel king over it.” Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “It will not take place, it will not happen...”⁷²⁰

This contradicts the following: ‘Therefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hands of the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him.’⁷²¹

7. “She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; there no nomads will pitch their tents, there no shepherds will rest their flocks.”⁷²²

Yet, Babylon saw multiple civilisations pass through it, and many more nations inhabit it.

8. “Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! Put on your garments of splendour, Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.”⁷²³

This prophecy states that no Gentile (i.e., anyone who is uncircumcised and therefore defiled) would enter Jerusalem. This is obviously a failed prophecy.

9. ‘This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my good promise to bring you back to this place.”’⁷²⁴

This prophecy states that the occupation of Babylon would last for 70 years. This is an error, as it lasted for 48 years—from the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, to 538 BC.

10. ‘Hazor will become a haunt of jackals, a desolate place for ever. No one will live there; no people will dwell in it.’⁷²⁵

The prophecy of Hazor falling into permanent ruin did not come true, as Hazor was inhabited for many centuries.

720 Isaiah 7:3-7.

721 2 Chronicles 28:5.

722 Isaiah 13:20.

723 Isaiah 52:1.

724 Jeremiah 29:10.

725 Jeremiah 49:33.

11. Ezekiel states that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would destroy the city of Tyre and it would never be rebuilt.⁷²⁶

Yet, Tyre has been inhabited numerous times after this event.

12. “I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them”, says the Lord your God.⁷²⁷

The prophecy is the last passage in Amos, which is attributed to a Prophet who lived in the 8th century BC. It suggests that the Jews would never be uprooted from their land, yet they eventually were exiled.

13. Speaking to Peter, ‘Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”’⁷²⁸

Yet, we read in Mark that Peter disowned Jesus only once, not thrice, after the rooster crowed.⁷²⁹

14. ‘Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.’⁷³⁰

However, we read elsewhere that John the Baptist did not change anything, and was in fact unjustly murdered.⁷³¹

15. Jesus told his students that he would be killed: ‘He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.’⁷³²

Mark states that Jesus died on Friday, three in the afternoon, corresponding to the ninth hour in Jewish time. Given that the prophecy is that he would be resurrected three days after μετὰ (meta) death, it would mean

726 See Ezekiel 26:7-14.

727 Amos 9:15.

728 John 13:38.

729 Mark 14:72.

730 Matthew 17:11-13.

731 Matthew 14:10; Mark 6:28.

732 Mark 8:31.

Saturday would be one day after death, Sunday would be two days after, and Monday—the day he was supposedly resurrected—would be three days after. However, it is inferred from Matthew that Jesus arose from his grave before sunrise on Monday.⁷³³

16. 'For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'⁷³⁴

Jesus promised his students that they would witness his return to Earth after he is raised to heaven. This did not happen.

17. 'Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the Earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree: as soon as its twigs become tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.'⁷³⁵

The generation of Apostles left the world, yet Jesus never returned.

18. 'When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.'

The generation of Apostles left the world, yet Jesus never returned.

19. Jesus said to Nathanael, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'⁷³⁶

Yet, Nathanael did not see the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

733 Matthew 27:61 and 27:3.

734 Matthew 16:27-28.

735 Matthew 24:30-34.

736 John 1:51.

20. In a vision, the Lord said to Paul, ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.’⁷³⁷

However, we read elsewhere in Acts that crowds beat up Paul.⁷³⁸ Likewise, Paul mentioned that he ‘was worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.’⁷³⁹

737 Acts 18:9-10.

738 See Acts 21:32.

739 2 Corinthians 11:23.

Summary

- Prophecies in the Qur'an are many. They are of various themes, and are accurate and truthful.
- History has demonstrated that many prophecies in the Bible are false.

Further reading

Aḥmad, Y. H., & Khaṭṭāb, H. (2010). *The Unchallengeable Miracles of the Qur'an*. Riyadh: Darussalam.

Callahan, T. (1997). *Bible Prophecy: Failure or Fulfillment?* Altadena, California: Millennium Press.



SECTION 4

The Qur'anic Miracle of Knowing About the Jews and Christians and Their Affairs

*﴿You could not read any writing before this Revelation, nor
could you write at all. Otherwise, the people of falsehood
would have been suspicious.﴾*

(Qur'an, 29:48)

Study the scriptures diligently.⁷⁴⁰

(Jesus)



740 Translator's note: John 5:39.

The mention of details that the Prophet had not seen: A miracle? Or plagiarism?

Whoever reads the Qur'an detached from the prevailing cultural norm of the term will find, even after a cursory reading of its text, that the first proof clearly advanced by the Qur'an for its divinity—alongside its rhetorical and expressive inimitability—is that it concurs with the stories of the Bible and the other scriptures of the Jews and Christians. This is the case in several verses, such as the following, 'That is from the stories of the unseen which We reveal to you, O Prophet. You were not present when they made up their minds, and when they plotted against Yūsuf.' (Qur'an, 12:102) Here, the Qur'an points to what is found within the book of the Exodus. The same appears in God's statement, 'This is news of the unseen that We reveal to you, O Prophet. You were not with them when they cast lots to decide who would be Maryam's guardian, nor were you there when they argued about it.' (Qur'an, 3:44) Such is also said in the Protoevangelium of James.⁷⁴¹

The question is this: Is the Qur'an's concurrence with the stories of the Jews and Christians, especially those that have been mentioned in their canonical Scriptures, evidence in favour of its divinity? Or is this just a *non sequitur*, given that the stories of Jews and Christians were widespread and known by both the scholar and the shepherd in the farthest points of the Earth?

A Muslim constructs his proof for the divinity of the Qur'an in the following steps:

1. During the era of Prophethood, Jews and Christians knew that those aspects in which the Qur'an agreed with them could not have been from the personal deduction of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, which is why they accused him of learning it from others: 'And so We vary our signs to the extent that they will say, "You have studied (*darasta*)

⁷⁴¹ Protoevangelium of James, or the Gospel of James, is a gospel that the Church today considers apocryphal, even though it was held in high esteem during the first centuries of Christianity.

previous scriptures,” and We make this Qur’an clear for people who know.’ (Qur’an, 6:105) Some Companions and Followers read this as *dārasta* with an *alif*. Ṭabarī said, ‘...i.e., read with, and learnt from, the People of the Book.’⁷⁴²

The school of Wansbrough, whose eponymous founder was a famous American Orientalist, was compelled to deny the Revelation of the Qur’an at the beginning of the 7th century and instead deferred it to the end of the 9th century. The key rationale for this temporal shift was the existence of rich religious stories from the People of the Book inside the Qur’an which were not suited to the Makkan environment at the beginning of the 7th century. This was to the extent that many prominent figures in this school believed that the Qur’an was the handiwork of Christian groups that were engrossed on the knowledge of their religious fundamentals.

2. There was no way the Prophet of Islam ﷺ could have known the details of the Jews and the Christians’ Holy Scriptures.
3. Those areas of the Qur’an that are similar to the stories of the People of the Book cannot be attributed to human deduction; rather, they must be divine Revelation.
4. The Qur’an is a book revealed by God.

On the other hand, a non-Muslim would say the following:

1. In the Qur’an, there are many parallels between it and the scriptures of the Christians and Jews.
2. These similarities are found in such issues that people cannot arrive at the same thoughts.
3. It is possible that the Prophet of Islam came across what is inside both the canonical and non-canonical scriptures of the Christians and Jews during the 7th century.
4. The mutual similarities are due to borrowing from the Christians and Jews.
5. Quoting the stories of ancients is not a miracle.

⁷⁴² (Ṭabarī), 7/471.

The most reiterated evidence in the Qur'an that demonstrates its divinity is its mention of the stories of the Prophets and their respective nations. It is the most study-worthy of all items of evidence, because—alongside the Qur'an's rhetorical inimitability—it has proven to be logically robust for every era.

The Makkan Polytheists negating that the Prophet of Islam gained knowledge of stories from the Bible without a teacher

Ever since the beginning of Orientalist writing, Missionary works have repeated the claim that the Qur'an is only a modified version of the content that is found in the Bible. The primary basis for this accusation is the large degree to which the Qur'an is commensurate with the Bible vis-à-vis a) details of the stories of previous Prophets and their nations, and b) some beliefs. The settled view is that there are two choices when identifying the reason for this similitude: either the Qur'an borrowed from the Bible (whether directly or via a human teacher), or it is Revelation. Given that admitting a divine source for the Qur'an is rejected by adversaries from the outset, the only option left for them is to resort to the claim that the Qur'an is borrowed. Accordingly, they have laid out their evidence in favour of the claim of borrowing—a classic case of drawing the conclusion and then searching for evidence supporting it, not vice versa.

Objective analysis, research, and scrutiny can only lead to the conclusion that Muslim scholars have emphasised for centuries: The historical facts in the Qur'an could not have been attained through personal deduction and could not have come about without Revelation.

A. THE QUR'AN ESTABLISHING ITS DIVINITY BY CONCURRING WITH INFORMATION HELD BY THE CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasises that its agreement with the stories in the Bible is indicative that it is from God, as Muhammad ﷺ could not have known those stories. God ﷻ says:

- 'They said, "If only he could bring us a sign from his Lord." Have they not already received a confirmation of what is in earlier Scriptures?' (Qur'an, 20:133)
- ♦ Ibn Kathīr said, 'God ﷻ speaks of the disbelievers vis-à-vis their statement "If only...", meaning: why does Muhammad not bring us a sign from his Lord, i.e., a sign that proves he is truthful in his claim that he is the Messenger of God? God ﷻ says, "Have they not already received a confirmation of what is in earlier Scriptures?", i.e., that would be the Qur'an that God revealed to him; he is unlettered and is unskilled in writing, nor did he study with the People of the Book, yet he had the stories of the ancients that occurred in times long gone, in which it concurs with authenticated books from the past. As such, the Qur'an governs them (i.e., the past books) by declaring accurate what is authentic and mentioning the errors of lies and fabrications therein, whether for or against the scriptures. This verse is like the statement of God ﷻ found in Sūrah al-ʿAnkabūt: "They say, 'If only some signs had been sent down to him from his Lord.' Say, 'Signs are only with Allah. And I am only sent with a clear warning.' Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book, which is recited to them? Surely in this Qur'an is a mercy and reminder for people who believe.'"⁷⁴³ (Qur'an, 29:50-51)
- Here, the Qur'an says that its greatest miracle—in which the People of the Book should have no doubt—is that it agrees with the stories that are in their Holy Scriptures. In other words, for them to demand a miracle that is clearer than this

743 (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 5/329.

would be insolence on their part and a refusal to accept the manifest truth.

- ‘And so We have sent to you, O Prophet, a Revelation by Our command. You did not know of the Book or faith before. But We have made it a light, by which We guide whoever We will of Our servants. And you are truly leading all to the Straight Path...’ (Qur’an, 42:52)
- ‘You could not read any writing before this Revelation, nor could you write at all. Otherwise, the people of falsehood would have been suspicious.’ (Qur’an, 29:48)
- ‘You were not there, O Prophet, on the western side of the mountain when We entrusted the Commandments to Mūsā, nor were you present. But We later raised several generations, and the ages took their toll on them. Nor were you living among the people of Midian, rehearsing Our Revelations with them. But it is We Who have sent this Revelation to you. And you were not at the side of Mount Ṭūr when We called out to Mūsā. But you have been sent as a mercy from your Lord to warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, so perhaps they may be mindful.’ (Qur’an, 28:44-46)
- ‘Say, “The holy spirit has brought it down from your Lord with the truth to reassure the believers, and as a guide and good news for those who submit to Allah.” And We surely know that they say, “No one is teaching him except a human.” But the man they refer to speaks a foreign tongue, whereas this Qur’an is in clear Arabic.’ (Qur’an, 16:102-103)

B. THE CHRISTIANS AND THE JEWS CHALLENGING THE PROPHET OF ISLAM TO MENTION WHAT THEY KNOW FROM THEIR BOOKS

Makkans of all different backgrounds asked Muhammad ﷺ about the stories of past nations, destroyed sects, and long-forgotten Prophets. Qur'anic stories would come in agreement with much of what was in their scriptures: They would not be able to refute what he mentioned, nor would they see any fault or reason to contest his Prophethood in anything he recited to them.

The fact that the Christians, Jews, and Arab pagans directed questions about stories of the ancients to the Prophet ﷺ is crystal-clear proof that this test was one that should have been extremely tough for this unlettered Arab man. Had the people known that he knew the stories of the ancients, they would not have placed themselves in a position where they would be compelled to attest to his Prophethood. Having disbelieved in him already, Muhammad's ﷺ contemporaries asked him these questions for the sole reason that they honestly believed he knew nothing of the ancients' affairs. It is illogical for a man to hand proof in favour of his enemy on a plate. Rather, what would have been the logical course of action was for them to strive to prove his inability, shut down his evidence, and compel him to negate his initial claim.

When listing the ways in which the Qur'an is inimitable, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ said, 'The fourth aspect of inimitability: The stories of previous times, bygone nations, and extinct legal systems that the Qur'an speaks of, from which the Prophet ﷺ did not know a single story save from the odd scholar from the People of the Book, who had spent his entire life studying them. The Prophet ﷺ would present those stories as they were and would quote them as per their text—a scholar would admit to his accuracy and honesty, and that such a thing would not be acquirable just by education.

They also knew that he ﷺ was unlettered—he did not read, write, engage in study, or sit with poets. He would never take an unexplained leave of absence from them, nor was anybody from them unaware of his state.

The People of the Book used to ask him ﷺ many times about this. Immediately the revelation of the Qur'an would descend to him, which he would then relate to them. This includes stories of the Prophets in relation to their people, the story of Moses, Khāḍir, Joseph, his brothers, the People of the Cave, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Luqmān and his son, and other similar stories, Genesis, the content of the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, and the

scriptures of Abraham and Moses—he would be attested by scholars in all of this. The People of the Book would not be able to discredit what he would mention and would instead accept it. As such, some would be felicitous enough to believe based on the good that was pre-determined for them; others would remain wretched, stubborn, and jealous.

Nevertheless, it is not reported from a single Christian or Jew that he denied it or considered him a liar. Rather, most affirmed his Prophethood, considered his statements honest, and acknowledged that they were the ones who were stubborn and jealous of him. They included the people of Najrān, Ibn Šūriyā, the two sons of Akhṭab, and others. This is despite:

- Their extreme enmity towards him.
- Their wanton disbelief in him.
- The lengths at which the Prophet ﷺ would go to establish evidence against them from their own works.
- His reproof of them through their own scriptures.
- Their constant harassment and questioning of the Prophet ﷺ on news of the Israelite Prophets, the secrets of their knowledge, and the depository of their biographies.
- The Prophet ﷺ telling them about the concealed aspects of their laws and the contents of their scriptures; for instance, they probed him regarding the spirit (*rūḥ*), Dhū al-Qarnayn, the People of the Cave, Jesus, the laws concerning stoning, what Israel (Jacob ʿAlī) had declared forbidden for himself, the animals that have been declared unlawful for them, and the good that was lawful for them, but which was made unlawful as a result of their transgression, God’s statement “This is their description in the Torah and their description in the Gospel” (Qur’an, 48:29), and other aspects of their affairs regarding which the Qur’an came down with evidence.

In all cases, the Prophet ﷺ responded to them, informing them of what was revealed to him.

Whoever contested any of that even in the slightest and claimed that what they have is different to what the Prophet ﷺ reported would have been offered the opportunity to bring his evidence and reveal his claim. It would be said to the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Say, O Prophet, “Bring the Torah and read it, if your claims are true.”’ Then whoever still fabricates lies about

Allah, they will be the wrongdoers.’ (Qur’an, 3:93-94) He upbraided them, lamented them, and called them to present whatever they could. Some of them confessed what they had previously denied; others remained insolent by placing their hands over that which would reveal their faults from their own book.⁷⁴⁴

However, it was not related from any of them that they had demonstrated a statement from their scriptures that was in conflict with what the Prophet ﷺ said. They could not even demonstrate anything authentic—or weak even—from their scriptures that was in conflict with what the Prophet ﷺ was saying. God ﷻ said, “O People of the Book, now Our Messenger has come to you, revealing much of what you have hidden of the Scriptures and disregarding much.”⁷⁴⁵ (Qur’an, 5:15)

744 Translator’s note: This refers to the story—reported by Bukhārī—of a Jew placing his hand on the Jewish scripture in an effort to conceal a verse pertaining to the punishment for adultery.

745 (Yaḥṣubī, *Al-Shifā’ bi-Ta’rīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, 2002/1423 AH), 1/178-179.

C. THE MAKKANS ASSUMING THAT THE SIMILITUDE IS BECAUSE THE PROPHET ﷺ WAS TAUGHT

The Makkans knew that the Qur'anic discourse about the stories of the People of the Book was well beyond the knowledge capabilities of the unlettered Makkan that Muhammad ﷺ was. One of the clearest proofs for this is what the Qur'an quotes from them: 'And they say, "These Revelations are only ancient fables which he has had written down, and they are rehearsed to him morning and evening"' (Qur'an, 25:5)—i.e., they are fables written up for him by someone else; the Makkans did not have the gall to claim it was he himself who composed them. Their claim was that these were rich and imaginative stories that were *dictated to him* throughout the day. Yet, even this would have been an extremely difficult task that the Makkans themselves—the Prophet ﷺ included—would not have been able to undertake, as such an activity was not part of their culture. It would have already been a task to learn such amazing speech auditorily—how hard would it have been to seek out these rich and imaginative stories through personal study?

The Qur'an left the Makkans no choice but to tell the Prophet of Islam, 'What you are telling us is the result of private studies, which is not our environment's culture—even the most knowledgeable of us does not know what you are talking about: "And so We vary our signs to the extent that they will say, 'You have studied previous scriptures,' and We make this Qur'an clear for people who know.'" (Qur'an, 6:105)

The Qur'an emphasises that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not qualify to acquire all that information, which would normally have required an entire lifetime to seek. He had stayed the length of his life within their midst, not having read a single book from the scriptures of the Jews or Christians, nor having studied it under a rabbi or a monk. God ﷻ said, 'Say, "Had Allah willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I had lived my whole life among you before this Revelation. Do you not understand?"' (Qur'an, 10:16)

One may object that the similarity between the Qur'an and the Holy Scriptures is evidence *against* the divinity of the Qur'an, as the scriptures of the People of the Book constitute the source of all sorts of superstition. The response to this is two-fold: one for Christians and the other for non-Christians like atheists.

For the Christian, the similarity between the Qur'an and the Bible cannot in itself be proof to prove the humanness of the Qur'an. This is because both share some truth. Quoting truthful stories is not evidence that it is not Revelation, nor does it negate inerrancy. Missionaries claim that Muhammad ﷺ copied the scholars of the People of the Book in his era. However, any similarity between the Qur'an and the Bible alone cannot be evidence against the Qur'an. The most that Missionaries can claim through this reasoning is that whatever the Qur'an and the Bible agree upon is false and dishonest, which is certainly not something Christian Missionaries would want to prove so long as they remain Christians.

If on the other hand non-Christians like atheists want to use similarity as proof to reject the divinity of the Qur'an, they should then prove that the segments in which the Qur'an shares the same content with the Bible contains errors and falsities of a nature that the intellect would reject and history could negate. That would be their sole method to leverage similarity as a means to criticise the Muslim Holy Book.

Critical studies have attested that this second group, whether situated in the East and West, has not advanced anything that can be subjected to scrutiny in this regard. Rather, all they have managed to advance are ambiguous statements that do not rely on any wholesome evidence. Its basis is the generalised and grandiose claim that the Biblical scriptures only contain fables and superstitions, and that everything therein is from the concoction of authors and the invention of now-extinct nations that used to make up myths and then convert those myths into religious lore.

These types of studies consider the Biblical scriptures to be just a type of primitive folklore, which spread and came into circulation in the 19th century. This was when archaeological and anthropological studies were progressing very slowly due to the limited nature of the ancient content that allowed for analysis and comparison. However, with advances in these fields and the development of autopsied content, it became clear that a number of these claims did not have proof to back them up, and that they were a reaction to everything emblematic of Christianity and what it represented. Perhaps the most famous example of this is what became widespread and known in the 19th century—with a significant role played by the University of Tübingen, Germany—that Jesus, son of Mary, is just a mythical personality falsified by the minds of some people during the beginning of the 1st century. This position was extremely limited in its spread, and is widely rejected today by scholars engaged in “the quest for the historical Jesus”.

Nullifiers of the claim of knowledge acquisition via the reports of the People of the Book

One of the most important ways to establish the divinity of the Qur'an pertaining to the historical data on the stories of Prophets and their people is by proving that there was no human source for the knowledge of these stories during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. This is achieved by setting out the following three points in tandem:

- The Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not seek religious knowledge in any depth, nor was he qualified as such.
- The Holy Scriptures were not accessible for an Arab in Makkah so that he could read them.
- The Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not have a teacher who would explain to him the Holy Scriptures.

The unletteredness of the Messenger ﷺ

Let us assume that the Messenger ﷺ directly borrowed from the scriptures of the People of the Book. This accusation would not have a leg to stand on so long as the conditions for its successful prosecution are not met. One of these conditions is that Muhammad ﷺ should have possessed the acquired scholarly tools to directly study the scriptures from which he borrowed. The Islamic emphasis on the unletteredness of the Messenger ﷺ stands as an obstacle for Missionaries and most Orientalists from realising that claim, for they cannot prove anything without first nullifying his unletteredness.

The first thing facing Missionaries and Orientalists in this regard is that—in addition to the Qur'an—the books of hadith and *sīrah* are the sole historical sources that are to be considered in order to learn about everything concerning Muhammad ﷺ. In other words, Missionaries and Orientalists do not have any other entry point to the topic, nor do they possess any other objective tools that are critical to its study.

One observing the methodologies of these adversaries can clearly see that they resort to weak citations, ambiguous statements, or far-fetched assumptions that the texts do not suggest. In doing so, they leave aside the clear-cut, authentic, and unequivocal texts. It would appear that the cause of this method is twofold:

- i. Their overzealousness to reach a preconceived conclusion to prosecute Muhammad ﷺ and thus deny the divinity of the Qur'an
- ii. Being influenced by unhealthy levels of scepticism when scrutinising religious texts—such that any researcher would start to reject religious texts, both explicit and implicit—and then compensating for that by clinging onto historical and linguistic peripheries, from which he would then launch his entire prospectus of religious and historical understanding.

A Western academic could be somewhat excused if he were to apply this methodology to those scriptures that have been undoubtedly proven to be

historically obscure, are a product of their specific time, and are replete with many scientific and literary faults, such that the signs of Revelation therein have been buried under a mass of interpolation. However, the Islamic scriptures—the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition—are not burdened with these sticking points; they are rather—historically speaking—pure and untainted.

The description of the Messenger ﷺ as unlettered is shown numerous times in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. Missionaries and Orientalists of the Missionary view adopt one of two methodologies when faced with these texts:

- i. They reject the texts outright and consider them to be an Islamic fabrication, and not historical fact. In one way, this position is the easy route to adopt in terms of how to negotiate these sources and reconcile them with other material they consider to be more favourable to their view. Concomitantly, it is the harder route from the standpoint of methodological science and the authority of the sources.
- ii. They accept the general idea of the historical (Islamic) texts, but they reject accepting all of its content and instead seek to interrogate it externally, i.e., from outside the Prophetic and traditional framework.

As the dispute with Missionaries is in the conceptualisation of unletteredness (*ummiyyah*), we should first explain this jargon linguistically, then in its Qur'anic and Prophetic traditional context, so that we would have honestly and fairly interrogated the sole intellectual sources on this matter.

LINGUISTIC TESTIMONY

No lexical definition of an Arabic term is safe from error without resorting to the lexicographers who gathered the Arabs' usages of words, whose meanings require explanation. This is so that it would be possible to extract the term's linguistic indication to the audiences whenever it was expressed. Those who inclined to the hermeneutic of this Arabic term—*ummiyyah*—outside the context it was understood by the first target audience went to extremes in proposing an alternative meaning. This was done by identifying the closest lexical term found in the Hebrew Bible, and then assigning its meaning to the Arabic term. In doing so, they adopted an extremely affectatious approach.⁷⁴⁶ Firstly, they disregarded the mutual differences when they were assigned their technical meanings. Secondly, having an Arabic term interrogated by its Semitic counterparts from Syriac and Hebrew—which share proto-Semitic roots with Arabic—is pointless when there already is a definitive linguistic meaning assigned to the Arabic term within the Arabic language.⁷⁴⁷

In relation to the subject matter here, we note that Orientalist-Missionary writings attempt to create a link between the Qur'anic word **أُمِّي**

746 Semitic languages can be of benefit when trying to understand obscure Arabic terms, regardless of whether such terms are introduced to Arabic from other Semitic languages or the Arabic term possesses a shared root with a similar term from another Semitic language. However, those languages cannot be offered consideration when an unequivocal meaning in the Arabic—whether by explicit mention or through induction—is established as per the idiomatic usage of the term for the timeframe it was used in.

747 Perhaps this research 'trend' is most prevalent in Orientalist circles these days, championed by the new-age experimental thinkers, even though their approach is not rooted in reality. This is why we are unsurprised when we read Gabriel Sawma—a Lebanese Christian who now and again chimes in with his tuppence in Orientalist literature—in his book *The Qur'an, Misinterpreted, Mistranslated, and Misread: The Aramaic Language of the Qur'an*, p. 103, speak to the 'Western World' to prove that the Qur'an is a Syriac book in both wording and meaning. He says, 'Today, those who speak Syriac are more able to understand the meanings of the Qur'an than those who speak Arabic, even though most Qur'anic words have been arabicised over the past 14 centuries.' It is noteworthy that this same author, who asserted that he could interpret the Qur'an in Syriac and that he understands the language of the Qur'an better than the Arab natives, failed to properly read (or transliterate) the Arabic wordings of verses and proper nouns in the Qur'an!

(*ummī*) and the biblical word *أممي*, as this Qur'anic-Arabic term is generally referred back to the Jewish Hebrew term *goyim* “גוים - *goyīm*”. The latter word was used for non-Jews (Gentiles), which means the ‘nations’ (أُمَم), as opposed to the chosen Nation of the Israelites; its singular form is *goy* “גוי - *goyā*”. From the usage of the term, its negative connotation for Gentiles is evident, as they are ‘nations’ as opposed to the Nation of the Israelites. We do not find this meaning in what the Messenger ﷺ described himself or how the Qur'an describes him; rather, the *ummī* description was made for the Arabs, as they were a nation that did not know truth or guidance:

- ‘He is the One Who raised for the illiterate people a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His Revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, for indeed they had previously been in clear misguidance.’ (Qur'an, 62:2)
- ‘So if they argue with you, O Prophet, say, “I have submitted myself to Allah, and so have my followers.” And ask those who were given the Scripture and the illiterate people, “Have you submitted yourselves to Allah?” If they submit, they will be guided. But if they turn away, then your duty is only to deliver the message. And Allah is All-Seeing of His servants.’ (Qur'an, 3:20)

Therefore, to assign the Qur'anic meaning of the terms *ummī* (pl. *ummiyyūn* or *ummiyyīn*) to denote that ‘they were not of the Nation of the Israelites (i.e., the others, or Gentiles) is not something that the Qur'anic verses would agree to. The context of these verses rejects the constriction of this term's meaning to denote religious or racial inferiority. This was stressed by Cyril Glassé⁷⁴⁸ in *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* under the *أممي* entry: ‘*Ummī* (lit. “unlettered”). An epithet of the Prophet. Although *ummī* is understood by Muslims to refer to the fact that the Prophet was unlettered, the etymology of the word is disputed by some Western scholars who have claimed that it means “gentile”, by connecting *ummī* with *ummah* (“nation”) because, they say, the Prophet preached an Abrahamic Revelation to the gentiles or non-Jews. However, *ummah* does not mean a “nation” in the sense of the Hebrew *goy*, and Islam is not a religion coming out of Judaism, as Christianity is; St. Paul's distinction of: “first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” is not meaningful to Islam. Nor is the Muslim understanding of the word *ummī*, as yet other Orientalists have also maintained, a po-

748 Cyril Glassé (b. 1944). American Orientalist from Russia. He was guided to Islam in his youth. He graduated from Columbia and taught comparative religion in a number cities, including New York, Moscow, and Lahore.

lemical support to argue the miraculous quality of the Koran. The Koran is miraculous, were the Prophet literate or not.⁷⁴⁹

The obnoxious position posited here—both etymologically⁷⁵⁰ and philologically⁷⁵¹ speaking—stems from:

- Wilful ignorance of the Arabic vernacular.
- Resorting to Hebrew to establish the meaning of a Qur’anic term in spite of the vast and rich tradition available in the form of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, speeches, and proverbs.
- A disregard of the hermeneutic of the Qur’anic term from the technical Qur’anic and Prophetic understanding of the same term.
- Neglecting the Arab viewpoint by resorting to Hebrew, on the basis that Arabic is a ‘foreign language’ that should be dealt with by way of translation.

Shedding light on Arabic requires an interrogation of the ancient Arabic vernacular, especially the pre-Islamic (*Jāhili*) language customs that shaped the oral language in the 7th century. Lexicographers collated this ancient linguistic tradition in their dictionaries and presented us with the following:

- Ibn Manẓūr said, ‘The meaning of *ummī* is that which is ascribed to the state in which his mother gave birth to him—i.e., that he is unable to write, thus he is *ummī*, as writing is an acquired skill—as if he was ascribed to that state in which he was born, which is the state in which his mother gave birth to him.’⁷⁵²

749 (Glassé, 2001), p. 464.

750 Etymology is from the Greek word ἐτυμολογία (*etumologia*), which itself is from ἔτυμον (*étumon*), i.e., ‘true sense or sense of a truth’, with the suffix -logia denoting ‘the study of’. Technically, it means the study of the history of words in languages. It relies principally on the observation of the phonic evolution of words in different languages and their meanings.

751 Philology is from the Greek word φιλολογία (*philologia*), from the terms φίλος (*phílos*), i.e., love; and λόγος (*lógos*), i.e., word. Technically, it is a discipline dealing with the study of language from a historical point of view in oral and written sources.

752 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH), 12/34.

- Abū Ḥayyān said, ‘*Ummī* refers to the one who does not read or write any book, i.e., those who are not good at books long enough to study the Torah and verify what is contained therein.’⁷⁵³
- Abū Qutaybah ascribed the word *ummī* to *ummah al-‘arab* (the nation of Arabs), which did not read or write. He said, ‘One who does not write is said to be *ummī*, because he is ascribed to the *ummah al-‘arab* (the nation of Arabs), i.e., their group; there were only a few among the Arabs who could write, so those who could not write were ascribed to *ummah* (nation).’⁷⁵⁴
- One very early testimony in the explanation of the word *ummī* is by the historian Ibn Ishāq (d. 151 AH), author of *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah*: ‘The Arabs were *ummiyyīn*—they did not study books or know of any documentation about the Messenger.’⁷⁵⁵
- Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn (d. 223 AH) said, ‘Ja‘far ibn Burqān was *ummī*—who could not write or read.’ He also said, ‘Abū ‘Awānah was *ummī*—he employed the services of a man who would write for him.’⁷⁵⁶

For the native Arabs, the word *ummī* was synonymous with the inability to read and write. The Arabs were *ummiyyūn/ummiyyīn* due to the prevalence of ignorance within them vis-à-vis reading and writing.

753 (Abū Ḥayyān, 2001/1422 AH), 1/442.

754 (Dīnawarī, 1397 AH), 1/384.

755 (Ibn Ishāq), 2/62.

756 (Ibn Ma‘īn, 1400 AH), 3/419.

THE QUR'AN'S TESTIMONY

God ﷻ said, 'You could not read any writing before this Revelation, nor could you write at all. Otherwise, the people of falsehood would have been suspicious.' (Qur'an, 29:48)

This unambiguous verse negates from the Messenger ﷺ any study of the scriptures of the People of the Book. It also disaffirms the transcribing of these books, which indirectly points to the negation of their usage. This is a clear and direct rejection of the notion that the Messenger ﷺ had any deep knowledge of their scriptures.

This verse sets out that Muhammad ﷺ had no knowledge of the scriptures. It takes the silence of his adversaries as proof for this claim being correct. Yet, these newcomers insist on arguing that which even the harshest of the Prophet's adversaries did not contest. One must bear in mind that these contemporaneous enemies of the Prophet ﷺ did not even possess enough piety to stop themselves from attempting to assassinate and dishonour him, yet they could not contest this verse.

Other verses support the notion that the Makkans knew that Muhammad ﷺ was unaware of the scriptures are:

- 'You did not know of the Book and faith before.' (Qur'an, 42:52)
- 'Say, "Had Allah willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I had lived my whole life among you before this Revelation. Do you not understand?"' (Qur'an, 10:16)

THE PROPHETIC CAREER

The Prophetic *sīrah* abundantly attests to the unletteredness of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, revealing that he was the most removed of people when it came to the knowledge of the scriptures.

Testimony from the Prophetic career

In the *sīrah*, there are numerous stories and events that demonstrate the unletteredness of the Messenger ﷺ. In concordant fashion, situations that would have revealed the Messenger ﷺ attending the circles of education and writing, or that he used pen and paper, are conspicuously absent. Being good at reading and writing could not have possibly remained hidden in the life of a man whose environment was dominated by ignorance and unletteredness.

The Madinan period of the call to Islam was distinguished in that there was a specific need for scribes, that is, for matters including correspondences with kings, military regimentation, and administration of the state. The Messenger ﷺ had 61 scribes⁷⁵⁷; in spite of this, there was no indication whatsoever during even this stage of the Prophetic career that the Messenger ﷺ possessed knowledge of reading and writing, as is assumed by the opposing side.

Likewise, the childhood of the Messenger ﷺ was spent largely in harsh conditions, which would have naturally prevented him from seeking out the means of education. Education back then would have required sufficient spare time and a well-off lifestyle, in what was a tough environment with a normally fatiguing lifestyle for most.

Furthermore, how can education be possible without a teacher? In all the reports of the Companions from their Prophet that are in front of us, what is the biography of the Messenger's ﷺ teacher? It is well known that they magnified each and every aspect of his life, and they would honour anyone who had a close relationship with him. Would the teacher of the Messenger ﷺ not be the worthiest of honour out of all the people?

Karen Armstrong said, 'In fact, however, *ummî* and *umma* have no relation to one another and Muslims find this interpretation insulting. We have seen for nearly a thousand years, Westerners have been unable to believe that Muhammad had a genuine Prophetic vocation. This appears as another attempt to explain it away. In fact, it seems perverse to challenge the traditional Muslim interpretation of *ummî*. There is no mention in the early sources of Muhammad reading or writing. When he needed to send a letter he would dictate it to somebody like Ali, who was literate. To have

757 Dr Muhammad Muṣṭafā al-Aḥẓamī researched the number of scribes in his book *Kuttāb al-Nabī* ﷺ (*Scribes of the Prophet* ﷺ). See (Ḥamīdullāh, 1987/1407 AH).

concealed his ability to read and write all his life would have been a major deception. Apart from being uncharacteristic, this fraud would have been very difficult to sustain, given how closely he lived among his own people.⁷⁵⁸

On the other hand, Thomas Carlyle⁷⁵⁹, rejecting the claim of the objectors, stated, 'One other circumstance we must not forget: that he had no school learning; of the thing we call school-learning none at all. The art of writing was but just introduced into Arabia; it seems to be the true opinion that Mahomet never could write! Life in the desert, with its experiences, was all his education. What of his infinite Universe he, from his dim place, with his own eyes and thoughts, could take in, so much and no more of it was he know. Curious, if we will reflect on it, this of having no books. Except by what he could see for himself, or hear of by uncertain rumour of speech in the obscure Arabian Desert, he could know nothing.'⁷⁶⁰

A number of Orientalists have acknowledged the unlettered status of the Messenger ﷺ, such as Marracci⁷⁶¹, Prideaux⁷⁶², Ockley⁷⁶³, Gerock⁷⁶⁴, Armand-Pierre Caussin de Perceval⁷⁶⁵, J. M. Arnold⁷⁶⁶, and Palmer.⁷⁶⁷

758 (Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, 2003), p. 88.

759 Translator's note: Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). Scottish historian, writer, philosopher, mathematician, and lecturer. His main works include *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* and *The French Revolution: A History*.

760 (Carlyle, 1883), p. 40.

761 Ludovico Maracci (1612-1700). Italian Roman Catholic priest. He taught Arabic at Sapienza University, Rome. He translated the Qur'an into Latin. He had an adversarial disposition to Islam.

762 Humphrey Prideaux (1648-1724). Scholar and Professor of Religion. He wrote *Life of Mahomet*, a book full of lies and baseless allegations.

763 Simon Ockley (1678-1720). British Orientalist. He taught Arabic at Cambridge. He is famous for his book *The History of the Saracen Empires*.

764 Carl Friedrich Gerock (1815-1890). Orientalist and author of the book *Versuch Einer Darstellung Der Christologie Des Koran*, which is on the Qur'anic conceptualisation of Jesus.

765 Armand-Pierre Caussin de Perceval (1795-1871). French Orientalist. He taught Arabic at Collège de France. His most famed work is *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme, pendant l'époque de Mahomet* (*Essay on the History of the Arabs before Islamism, During the Time of Muhammad*).

766 J. M. Arnold (d. 1882). Anglican Missionary.

767 (Zwemer, 1905), p. 92.

Testimony of the Messenger ﷺ

‘The Messenger ﷺ said, “We are an unlettered nation—we neither write nor count. The month is so, so, and so”, holding down his thumb the third time, “and the month is so, so, and so”, i.e., the full thirty.’⁷⁶⁸

Mubārakfūrī said, ‘The Prophet ﷺ said, “We are an unlettered nation—we neither write nor count.” What he intended was that they are upon the original state on which their mothers gave birth to them. They did not learn writing or counting. They are therefore on their first condition.’⁷⁶⁹

Here, an unequivocal explanation from the Messenger ﷺ himself for the meaning of *ummiyyah* (unletteredness) has been offered. This prevents any reinterpretative obstinacy and repels any ambiguity or potential homonymy. The *ummiyyah* upon which the Messenger ﷺ was consisted of the lack of knowledge in writing and counting.

768 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Fasting, Chapter on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ ‘We do not write or count’ (hadith no. 1913); and Muslim, Book of Fasting, Chapter on the obligation of fasting Ramadan when the crescent is seen, and of breaking fast when the crescent is seen (hadith no. 1080).

769 (Mubārakfūrī, *Tuhfah al-Aḥwadhī*), 8/212.

The Messenger ﷺ employing scribes for Revelation and other matters

The Messenger ﷺ had a number of scribes, like Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī, Zayd, and Muʿāwiyah. They would write Revelation, treaties, and his letters to the kings and heads of various factions across Arabia, as well as his governing deputies, his collectors of alms and other assets due for the Muslim Treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*). Authentic historical accounts do not record any instance that the Prophet ﷺ wrote Revelation by himself, or that he took the responsibility of writing any of his letters.

Parlance in the Arab environment during Prophethood

The historian Ibn Khaldūn said, ‘Writing among the Arabs was scarcer than vultures’ eggs.’⁷⁷⁰ Most of them were unlettered, especially the villagers, as this skill was one that was associated with urban life.⁷⁷¹ This is why Arabs did not point out the unlettered person for being unlettered; rather, they would have pointed out the one who knew how to read and write for being knowledgeable in this regard. This is because knowledge of reading and writing was the exception, not the default, within people back then. The silence of the Revelation texts and the books on Islamic history in associating Muhammad ﷺ with reading and writing is sufficient to compel any researcher to apply the status quo of that era to him, namely that this Prophet ﷺ could neither read nor write.’⁷⁷²

770 Translator’s note: ‘Scarcer than vultures’ eggs’—an Arabic proverb.

771 (Bin‘alī, 2007/1428 AH), 6/248.

772 For unletteredness in ancient nations, see (Harris, 1989).

THE SCOPE OF REQUISITE INTELLECTUAL AWARENESS

In reality, even dispelling unletteredness from the Messenger ﷺ is not of any benefit to Missionaries and Orientalists. Mere knowledge of the font of letters and sequencing of words does not prove any claim of borrowing. Proving whether the Messenger ﷺ knew the minutiae of past Holy Scriptures is improper without also proving that the Messenger ﷺ had an encyclopaedic affinity with the scriptures of the People of the Book, as well as their beliefs, sectarian differences, and languages. Dr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī was right when he said, ‘Let us say for argument’s sake this assumption is correct. Even then, it would have been necessary for Muhammad to have known Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek. It would have been incumbent upon him to have possessed a large library comprising of all the Talmud texts, the Christian Gospels, the various liturgical books, the resolutions of the Church Councils, at least some works of the Greek Fathers, and the books from different Churches and Christian sects.’⁷⁷³

To the contrary, history tells us that there was not a man among the People of the Book themselves who—in all their immensity, subtleties, and variety—carried the vast level of knowledge found in these disciplines.

The burden of evidence is on the one in denial of the unletteredness of the Prophet ﷺ, not on the one who affirms it. Even if the element of unletteredness is dispelled, it does not by default lead to the Jewish and Christian religious reports being the source of the information for the Qur’an.

773 (Badawī, *Al-Difāʿ ʿan al-Qurʾān ʾDidd Muntaqidih*, 1999), p. 24.

Was the Bible translated into Arabic by the time the Messenger ﷺ came?

As is claimed, the Christian Bible represents the primary source of Qur'anic borrowing. This is why, in countering this hypothesis advanced by adversaries, it is sufficient to dispel the notion that there was an Arabic translation of the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures during the era of Prophethood.

Whether or not there was an Arabic translation of the Holy Scriptures is a purely historical and inductive issue. It has nothing to do with analysis, predilection, zealotry, estimation, or conjecture. For this, we have no choice other than investigating the reliable historical sources. There is no evidence against Missionaries and Orientalists stronger than the testimonies of Western academics themselves, as well as the acknowledgements of adversaries who cannot be considered to be sympathetic towards Islam. This will be done here, but only after the more important and direct sources—the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition—are interrogated.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE QUR'ANIC AND THE PROPHETIC CAREER

A person analysing what is in the Qur'an and the Prophetic *sīrah*—the two foremost reliable historical sources for studying the life of Muhammad ﷺ—would observe that there is a complete absence of any Arabic translation of the Bible. In fact, a direct negation of any such text can be inferred from the Qur'an and the Prophetic *sīrah*.

Perhaps the clearest proof to establish this point is that the enemies of Muhammad ﷺ, as they negated Prophethood from him, did not refer to any such Arabic text. When the Makkans ran out of ideas and the room for scepticism was shut off, they falsely argued that there was a non-Arab boy who taught Muhammad ﷺ that which he was inviting others towards. Had this supposed Arabic translation existed, the hypocrites would have said to this Prophet ﷺ, 'You have read up this text' or even, 'Someone from your family, your childhood friends, or the lads over there read these texts to you—you memorised these from them, and then you recited them to us.'

Had this translation been in circulation, the Arabs would have said to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, 'You are challenging us with information that is widespread among us. You think that your book teaches us that which we do not know, yet what you tell us is already present in the Arabic book sitting nearby us. We should be the ones telling you that which you do not know in it.' They did not do this.

Likewise, it is conclusively understood from the hadith reported by Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that the Arabs did not know of any Arabic text for the Jewish scripture. Speaking on the source of information the Muslims—the native Arabs—had for the Torah during the era of Prophethood, Abū Hui rayrah ؓ said, 'The People of the Book used to read the Torah in Hebrew and used to interpret it in Arabic for the Muslims. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'Do not believe the People of the Book and do not disbelieve them. Say, "We believe in Allah and that which was sent to us."'"⁷⁷⁴

The Hebrew language of the Jewish scriptures stood as a barrier between the Arabs and the knowledge of the contents of the Torah, which the pagans of the Arabian Peninsula did not understand. This is what compelled the People of the Book to read their text in Hebrew first, followed by interpret-

774 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of the Interpretation of the Qur'an, Chapter: 'Say, "We believe in Allah and what is sent to us"' (hadith 4485).

ing it in non-Hebrew. Had they been in Arabic from the outset, the Jews would not have bothered to engage in such a process.⁷⁷⁵

The fact that Muhammad ﷺ outlawed asking the People of the Book is indicative that they had a monopoly over their information. In the Book of the Prophet's Statement 'Do not ask the People of the Book', Bukhārī narrates in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that Ibn ʿAbbās said, 'O congregation of Muslims, how could you ask the People of the Book when your Book, which was revealed to His Prophet ﷺ, has the most recent information about Allah? You recite it—it is untainted. Allah has told you that the People of the Book changed what Allah decreed and altered the Book with their own hands—they claimed "It is from Allah" in order to gain a pittance in exchange. Is the knowledge revealed to you not enough to stop you from making inquiries with them? By Allah, I have never seen any of their people ask you about that which has been sent to you.'⁷⁷⁶

Regarding the Jews, God ﷻ said, 'When they meet the believers they say, "We believe." But in private they say to each other, "Will you disclose to the believers the knowledge Allah has revealed to you, so that they may use it against you before your Lord? Do you not understand?"' (Qur'an, 2:76) It is understood from this that the Jews were well aware that Muslims had no way of learning what was in the Jewish books—except via whatever

775 Some use the hadith of Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh ؓ as evidence to the contrary. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ came to the Prophet ﷺ with a book he acquired from someone belonging to the People of the Book. He read it to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ became angered and said, 'Are you confused about the faith, O Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb? By the One in Whose Hand my life rests, I have brought unto you a faith that is unclouded and clear. Do not ask them about anything, lest they tell you some truth and you disbelieve it, or they tell you falsehood and you believe it. By the One in Whose Hand my life rests, had Moses been alive among you, he would have had no choice but to follow me.'

This narration cannot count as evidence for the opponent—for three reasons:

The narration is not unequivocally suggesting that ʿUmar ؓ had Arabic translations of the Bible. Even if these copies are assumed to be translations for argument's sake, it is possible that they were a compilation of some words of wisdom from them, not full translations.

This narration goes against what is known: There was no Arabic translation.

Upon investigation, this narration is not authentic. Ibn Muḥliḥ said, 'This hadith is well known, and is reported by Aḥmad and others. It is from the narration of Mujālid and Juʿfī—they are weak' (Ibn Muḥliḥ, 1996/1417 AH), 2/100.

Haythamī said, 'It has Mujālid ibn Saʿīd in it. He was declared weak by Aḥmad, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd, and others' (Haythamī, 1992/1413 AH), 1/420.

776 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Testimonies, Chapter: Polytheists are not to be asked for testimony etc. (hadith 2685).

they told them of it. This is acknowledged by Geiger⁷⁷⁷, a Jewish rabbi and a determined antagonist of Islam.⁷⁷⁸

God ﷻ said, ‘There are some among them who distort the Book with their tongues to make you think this distortion is from the Book, but it is not what the Book says. They say, “It is from Allah,” but it is not from Allah. They attribute lies to Allah knowingly.’ (Qur’an, 3:78) This verse reveals that when the Jews used their tongues to distort some aspects of religious information during their discussions—which they did in an attempt to portray that their statement is a quotation from the Holy Scriptures when in fact it was not—the Muslims were unable to crosscheck it with the scriptures for the purposes of ascertaining accuracy and verification. The Jews were content that the Muslims had no way of understanding their scriptures—that could only have been possible if they were not available in Arabic.

777 Translator’s note: Abraham Geiger (1810-1874). German rabbi, considered the founding father of Reform Judaism. His works include: *An Appeal to My Community*; *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam’s Holy Book*; and *Judaism and Islam*.

778 (Geiger, 1970), p. 17.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORICAL INDUCTION

A number of academic experts have attested to the lack of any Arabic translation of these scriptures. This has been acknowledged by specialist encyclopaedias that did not concern themselves with the claim that attempted to dismantle the originality of the Qur'an. It is well established by way of historical induction that there was no extant Arabic translation of the Bible during the era of Prophethood. Perhaps the most significant person who has written on the topic of the history of Bible translations into world languages is Bruce Metzger⁷⁷⁹ in his seminal book *The Bible in Translation*. He said, 'The earliest (Arabic) translations probably date from the eighth century.'⁷⁸⁰ In *The Dictionary of Islam*, the Missionary Orientalist Thomas Patrick Hughes⁷⁸¹ quoted the Orientalist J. M. Rodwell⁷⁸² saying, 'We have no evidence that Muhammad had access to the Christian scriptures...It should also be borne in mind that we have no clear traces of the existence of Arabic version of the Old or New Testament previous to the time of Muhammad...The earliest Ar. version of the Old Testament of which we have any knowledge is that of R. Saadiah Gaon, A.D. 900: and the oldest Ar. version of the New Testament is that published by Erpenius⁷⁸³ in 1616, and

779 Bruce Metzger (1914-2007). Professor of Language and Literature of the New Testament and leading figure in the studies of New Testament textual criticism. He has a number of works on various academic topics related to the New Testament. He participated in preparing the most significant standard Greek text of the New Testament in the 20th century: *The UBS Greek New Testament*, the primary reference point for nearly all subsequent New Testament translations. He also played a role in a number of English translations of the New Testament and left comments in them. His works are considered key reference points in Western university departments specialising on the subject.

780 (Metzger B., *The Bible in Translation*, 2001), p. 46.

781 Translator's note: Thomas Patrick Hughes (1838-1911). British Anglican Missionary. He worked under the auspices of the Church Mission Society (CMS) in Peshawar in British India for 20 years.

782 J. M. Rodwell (1808-1900). English Orientalist.

783 Translator's note: Thomas van Erpe, or Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624). Dutch Orientalist. He studied at Leiden and, after some travel, was appointed Professor of Arabic and other Oriental languages there.

His works include *Grammatica Arabica*.

transcribed in the Thebais⁷⁸⁴, in the year 1271, by a Coptic bishop from a copy made by a person whose name is known, but whose date is uncertain.⁷⁸⁵

To further prove that later Arabic translations do not refer back to an ancient pre-Islamic Arabic translation of the Bible, Hughes stated that there are discrepancies in the literary construct of the later Arabic translation of both the Old and New Testaments. He added that there are also differences among them when it came to writing the names of famous figures. He concludes that these translations came some considerable time after Islam came to the world, and are in fact ostensibly based on different versions of the Bible, like the Septuagint in Greek, the Vulgate in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and others.⁷⁸⁶

The Egyptian and Christian researcher Albert Isteero⁷⁸⁷ wrote his doctorate—namely ‘*Abdullah [ibn ‘Abd al-Majīd ibn] Muslim ibn Qutayba’s Biblical Quotations and Their Source: An Inquiry into the Earliest Existing Arabic Bible Translations*’—on the Arabic translation that Ibn Qutaybah relied upon when citing from the Bible.⁷⁸⁸ In this work, he said, ‘Perhaps the Arabic translations of the Bible appeared in the later period of Umayyad rule, in the beginning of the 8th century.’⁷⁸⁹ Among his evidence for the non-existence of any pre-Islamic Arabic translation is that the Arab Jews were not in need of it, as inscriptions indicate they used Aramaic. As for the Christians, the lack of any Christian community in the Hejaz and the fact that their liturgical language was different both prove that it is illogical that this was concomitant to the existence of an Arabic translation of the Bible.⁷⁹⁰

Perhaps it would be better if we detailed this matter further, to disabuse anybody thinking that what we have set out flies against what the prominent Western authors—who are specialists in these detailed studies—have concluded on this topic.

784 Translator’s note: The Thebais (or Thebaid) was a region in Ancient Egypt. Its name is taken from its proximity to the Ancient Egyptian capital of Thebes, now Luxor.

785 (Hughes, 1895), pp. 515-516.

786 (Hughes, 1895), p. 516.

787 A copy of his doctoral dissertation states that he was born in 1930 in Port Said, Egypt. In 1985, he was appointed a priest of the Evangelical Church. In 1965, he was elected the General Secretary of all churches in the Middle East. He taught biblical literature at an Evangelical church in Egypt.

Translator’s note: Rev Dr Albert Isteero Farag passed away in Cairo, Egypt, in 2017.

788 Examined in 1990 at John Hopkins.

789 (Isteero), p. 236.

790 (Isteero), pp. 7-17.

Arabic translations of the Old Testament

In his palaeographical, philological, and translational work on the Bible, Dr Ira Maurice Price⁷⁹¹ mentioned that the Arab-Islamic conquest of the Levant and Egypt—where Arabic as the vernacular had been solidified—created the need for an Arabic translation of the Bible.⁷⁹² The *Encyclopedia of Christianity* agreed with this assessment and stated, ‘The Arabic versions date to the Islamic period and derive for the most part from the Syriac and Coptic.’⁷⁹³

When *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (ed. 1913) discussed the Arabic translations of the Bible, it did not mention any translation prior to the 10th century. It states, ‘There exist six or seven Arabic translations of portions of the Old Testament according to the Septuagint, some of them belonging to the tenth century...’⁷⁹⁴

It is as the prominent conservative Christian figure Horne⁷⁹⁵ said: ‘Historical evidence, therefore, concerning the Arabic Versions, does not extend beyond the tenth century, when Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, a celebrated Jewish teacher at Babylon, translated, or rather, paraphrased, the Old Testament into Arabic.’⁷⁹⁶

What further underscores the accuracy of this testimony is that ‘the Jewish commentator Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1164) says in his commentary to Gen. 2:11⁷⁹⁷ that “to glorify God,” Saadia⁷⁹⁸ translated the Pentateuch (the Five Books of Moses) into “the language of Ishmael and their writing in

791 Ira M. Price (1875-1964). Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature at the University of Chicago. He was a leader within the Baptist Church (with additions from translator).

792 (Price, 1920), p. 108.

793 (Bromiley, 1999), p. 242.

794 (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1914), 15/369.

795 Translator’s note: Thomas Hartwell Horne (1780-1862). English theologian, librarian, biblical commentator, and Christian apologist.

796 (Horne, 1825), 2/190.

797 Translator’s note: ‘The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.’

798 Saadia Gaon (882-942). Rabbi and Jewish philosopher. He was at the forefront of Arabic Jewish writing. He was influenced by Islam’s dialectical discourses and methods of argument.

order to show that the Torah contains nothing unintelligible.”⁷⁹⁹ This ultimately means that the Five Books in Arabic were first completed by Saadia Gaon in the 10th century.⁸⁰⁰ This is affirmed by Dr Samuel Joseph Khalil in his book *al-Madkhal ilā al-‘Ahd al-Qadīm*: ‘The first and most important

799 (Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 1992), p. 117.

800 The existence of an Arabic translation of the Septuagint in the 9th century, as mentioned by Mas‘ūdī (Translator: 856-956), does not derail what I have set out. His statement in his book (Translator: See bibliography), p. 112, reads: ‘Ptolemy II Philadelphus was king for 22 years. He supervised the translation of the Torah from Hebrew to Greek, which was done by 72 scholars from Alexandria, Egypt. This copy was translated to Arabic by a number of early and late scholars, including Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (809-877). According to most analysts, this is the most accurate rendition of the Torah.’

This is problematic—for a number of reasons:

In the codices, there is not even the remotest of hints for the existence of these translations. See (Polliack, 1997), p. 18. This is despite the fact that Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq is known to have translated many books, including dozens of Galen’s works. See (Johna, 2002). So how can history mention his translations of books on medicine but they all—apart from Mas‘ūdī—overlook a translation of the Torah by him?

Immediately after this passage, Mas‘ūdī says (pp. 112-113), ‘As for Rabbinic Israelites (who are the majority) and Ananites (who have a disposition to justice and monotheism), they rely on a number of well-respected Jews to interpret the 24 books of the Tanakh, comprising of the Torah, the Nevi’im, and the Ketuvim. We have seen most of them, including Abū Kathīr Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā al-Kātib al-Ṭabarānī, a Rabbanite, who died around 320 (AH), and Sa‘īd ibn Ya‘qūb al-Fayyūmī, also a Rabbanite.’ This is a claim without foundation and is extremely implausible as it negates the reasons for publication from the translation of Saadia (whom he calls Sa‘īd). Why would he have toiled to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Arabic immediately after his teacher, Abū Kathīr Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā, translated them? Also, why do we not see any mention of the teacher’s translation? Why is it that only the student’s translation is mentioned when there is every cause to have both of them mentioned, side by side?

According to Muslim scholars, Mas‘ūdī is alleged to have reported false narrations. Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘There are so many lies in Mas‘ūdī’s history work that only God has a count of them. How can he therefore issue verifications in a book (i.e., *Murūj al-Dhahab*) known for its excessive lies? Furthermore, on many occasions, he quotes narrations without providing their chains.’ (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 1986/1406 AH), 4/84.

For further incontrovertible proof on the weakness of his reporting, see (Wu-haybah, 1995/1415 AH), p. 27.

The aforementioned does not preclude the fact that some sections of the Bible—especially the sections of the Psalms used in liturgical readings—or some smaller scriptures were translated into Arabic.

of these translations from the Hebrew language is the one undertaken by Saadia Gaon. He was a learned and well-educated Jewish man. He was the principal at the Jewish Sura Academy in Babylonia. He died in 942.⁸⁰¹

It must be added here that in spite of the *appearance* of an Arabic translation of the Old Testament after the spread of Islam, this translation—and others if they existed—did not gain traction among Muslims of the earlier centuries of Islam; perhaps the exception to this is Andalusia, in Europe.⁸⁰² During these early centuries, Islamic writings tended to quote from the Bible by principally relying on secondary sources and/or verbal transmission.⁸⁰³ Similarly, the works of Akhbārī historians—like Ya‘qūbī and others—conflate citations from the texts of the Jewish Holy Scriptures and the Midrash writings. As the Orientalist Hava Lazarus-Yafeh stated, this negates the notion that there was an Arabic translation in circulation among Muslims during that period.⁸⁰⁴

The aforementioned induction of historical facts underscores the difficulty in dealing with the texts of the Bible that were in the hands of Jews and Christians, even though they may have been in Arabic. So how can it be presumed that the Bible was available and accessible to the Messenger of God ﷺ, such that he could take and leave from with ease, when it did not even exist in Arabic back then?

801 (Khalil, 2005), p. 68.

802 Whether or not an Arabic translation of the Old Testament was extant during the era of Ibn Ḥazm is still a point of dispute among scholars. There is no conclusive proof either way. See (Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 1992), p. 124.

Some scholars are of the view that Ibn Ḥazm relied on an Arabic translation rendered from Latin in the 10th century by Ishāq ibn Balask of Cordoba. See (Christys, 2002), p. 155.

803 Perhaps Abū Jarīr al-Ṭabarī is one of the most significant examples here. He extensively quoted from the People of the Book; however, it was only in a tiny portion of this where he would agree with the literal text of the Old Testament. Even though he stood out for his literal approach in his book *al-Dīn wa al-Dawlah*, it is noteworthy that in the 9th century ‘Alī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī was using a Syriac translation, not an Arabic one, as per indicators inside the book would suggest. See (Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 1992), pp. 112-113.

804 (Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 1992), p. 114.

Arabic translations of the New Testament

Frederic G. Kenyon⁸⁰⁵ was a famous conservative Christian scholar who worked as Director at the British Museum. When listing the extant translations of the New Testament, he said, ‘Several Arabic versions are known to exist, some being translations from the Greek, some from Syriac, and some from Coptic, while others are revisions based upon some or all of these. None is earlier than the seventh century, perhaps none so early; and for critical purposes none is of any value.’⁸⁰⁶ This is acknowledged by the current Pope of the Egyptian Orthodox Church, Pope Tawadros II⁸⁰⁷: ‘The first Arabic translation appeared towards the end of the 8th century, more than 100 years after Islam. It was done by John, Bishop of Seville, Spain. It was a limited translation that did not cover the whole book, nor did it come into wider circulation.’⁸⁰⁸

In his study titled *Early Arabic Versions of the New Testament*, Bruce Metzger listed those figures who translated the New Testament, who are also said to have been the first to do so:

‘According to a story reported by Michael the Syrian⁸⁰⁹ (died 1199) in his *Chronicle* (Chabot 1901: 431 ff.), in the seventh century ‘Amr ibn Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās, the Emir of the Arabs, requested John⁸¹⁰, the

805 Translator’s note: Frederic George Kenyon (1863-1952). British biblical scholar and palaeographer.

806 (Kenyon, 1898), p. 65.

807 Translator’s note: Tawadros II or Theodore II (b. 1952). Current Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark. He succeeded the late Pope Shenouda III as leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria.

808 (Tawadros II, 2013), p. 27.

809 Translator’s note: Michael the Syrian (1126-1199), also known as Michael the Great, Michael Syrus, and Michael the Elder. Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church from 1166 until his death.

810 Translator’s note: John III of the Sedre (d. 648). Patriarch of Antioch and head of the Syriac Orthodox Church from 631 until his death. Confusingly, he is also called John I (which the author uses shortly) as he was the first Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch.

It should be noted that, today, five churches use the Patriarch of Antioch title for their leaders: the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Maronite Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church. However, none are actually based in Antioch (now Antakya).

Evaluation of material

1. All these traditions trace the appearance of these Arabic translations to the period after the emergence of Islam. This proves there is no evidence for a pre-Islamic Arabic translation.
2. Regardless of whether all or some of these traditions are correct, there is a strong indication that there is no transmitted evidence—even weak—for positioning an Arabic translation to pre-Islamic times.
3. Despite its significance, we cannot find any trace within Arabic-Islamic works for the suggestion made by Michael the Syrian. Perhaps he wanted to leverage this story to exalt the virtues of the said patriarch; for he refused to depart from his loyalty with the Holy Scriptures, even though he was living under Muslim rule. This story possesses what is an obviously odd claim: An Arab commander in early Islamic history commissioned the arabicisation of the Gospels. The reasons for its oddity are as follows:
 - ◆ There was no Muslim religious need for it.
 - ◆ It would have conflicted with the tenets of the Islamic faith that prevent from looking inside the scriptures of the People of the Book—unless with the intention of repudiating them or to use them to prove the truth of Islam.⁸¹⁶
 - ◆ There is no historical, religious, or logical imperative for this commander to have commissioned a translation that omitted any signage to the deity of Jesus, crucifixion, or baptism. Muslims do not consider the Gospels to be evidence; they in fact—as a religious tenet—believe that they are distorted. Consequently,

816 'It is impermissible to look in the books of the People of the Book...the books of innovators, or those comprising of both truth and falsehood, or to relate them, as that would corrupt beliefs' (Buhūṭī, 1402 AH), 1/434.

Scholars have stated that these books can be read for the purposes of refutation, not for evidence.

what was the need to rectify something that was not evidence to begin with?

What also invalidates the story of the 11th century Michael the Syrian is that, in an 8th century Syriac history book, there is mention of a meeting between a Muslim commander by the name of ʿAmr, and the Jacobite Patriarch, John I, in which the Muslim side presented some questions about the contents of the Bible.⁸¹⁷ This document does not have any indication of the unusual request that was later attributed to Commander ʿAmr. Had this commander requested for the translation of the New Testament into Arabic, historians would have no doubt pointed it out, if only for its historical value and significance. This did not happen, thereby suggesting that this event did not take place at all.

Louis Leblois⁸¹⁸ believes this story is a *légende*, underscoring that there was no Arabic translation of the Bible during the period of the Messenger ✠.⁸¹⁹ Trimmingham⁸²⁰ agreed with him by stating, ‘Little credence can be given to this story.’⁸²¹ Georg Graf⁸²² raised a number of objections on its historicity.⁸²³

4. Critics disagree over the biography of Bishop John. Most references mention that this bishop lived in the 8th century, according to what the Spanish historian Mariana⁸²⁴ stated. Simonet⁸²⁵ and Tisserant⁸²⁶ on the other hand were of the view that John lived in the 9th century.⁸²⁷

817 (Nau, 1915), pp. 225-279; quoted by (Griffith, 1985), p. 135.

818 Translator’s note: Louis Leblois (1854-1928). French judge, lawyer, and author. He was one of the players in the infamous Dreyfus Affair, a political scandal that divided the Third French Republic in 1894.

819 (Leblois, 1888).

820 John Spencer Trimmingham (1904-1987). Scholar on Islam in Africa and Professor of Theology at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut.

821 Quoted by (Natan, 2006), 1/595.

822 Georg Graf (1875-1955). German Orientalist. He is one of the most important scholars who studied Eastern Christianity.

823 (Graf, 1953), p. 35.

824 Translator’s note: Juan de Mariana (1536-1624). Spanish Jesuit priest, scholar, historian, and member of the Monarchomachs. He taught theology in Rome, Sicily, and Paris.

825 Translator’s note: Francisco Javier Simonet (1829-1897). Spanish historian, lexicographer, and Orientalist.

826 Translator’s note: Eugène Tisserant (1884-1972). French cardinal of the Catholic Church.

827 (Menocal, Scheindlin, & Sells, 2000), p. 423.

Gildemeister⁸²⁸ said that Bishop John lived in the 10th century.⁸²⁹ The first person to mention this story was the Archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Ximenes⁸³⁰, who lived during the reign of Alfonso VIII⁸³¹. He mentioned that Arabs used to call this ‘Johan’ by the name of ‘Çayet almatran’ (Sa‘īd al-Maṭrān)—a claim repeated in *Primera Crónica General* during the reign of Alfonso X⁸³².⁸³³ This claim was even more so repeated by Mariana in the 16th century.⁸³⁴

The chronological gap between the claimed story and the time period in which its mention occurs reveals the flaccidity and fragility of its transmission. Additionally, the oldest Arabic translation that was available in Andalusia goes back to the 10th century, encompassing the Four Gospels and the Psalms.⁸³⁵

5. No person independent of Ibn al-Nadīm is known to have concurred with his position, which weakens his testimony to a large degree. The passage he brings contains much exaggeration:

‘I once read a book that fell into my hands, an ancient transcription, apparently from the library of al-Ma‘mūn. In it, the copyist mentions the names and numbers of the scriptures and revealed books, with their scope and with the things that most of the common people and the populace feel sure of and believe. I have recorded from it what is relevant to this book of mine. This statement in the wording of the ancient book is the passage from it, which is needed by me:

Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām, a protégé of the Commander of the Faithful Hārūn, whom I esteem as al-Rashīd, said, “I have translated this book from *Kitāb al-Ḥunafā’* of the Abrahamic Sabians, who believe in

828 Translator’s note: Johann Gildemeister (1812-1890). German Orientalist. He lectured in Göttingen, Bonn, and Marburg.

829 (Smith W., 1893), 3/1615.

830 Translator’s note: Rodrigo Ximenez (1171-1247). Archbishop of Toledo and historian.

831 Translator’s note: Alfonso VIII (1155-1214). King of Castile from 1158 to his death and King of Toledo. He is remembered for his part in the Reconquista and the downfall of the Almohad Caliphate.

832 Translator’s note: Alfonso X (1221-1284). King of Castile, León, and Galicia from 1252 until his death.

833 Translator’s note: (Pidal, 1906), p. 326.

834 (Menocal, Scheindlin, & Sells, 2000), p. 423.

835 Ibid.

Abraham ﷺ, and who received from him the scripture revealed to him by God.”

It is a long book, but I have deleted such material as is unnecessary for an understanding of the reasons that are mentioned for their disagreements and differences. I have introduced into it that which is needed for proof of these things from the Qur'an and the hadith coming from the Messenger ﷺ, and from his Companions, as well as from the People of the Book who became Muslims, among whom were 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, Yāmīn ibn Yāmīn, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, Ibn al-Tihān, and Baḥīrā al-Rāhib (Baḥīrā the Monk).

Aḥmad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Salām also said, “I have translated the beginning of this book, the Torah, the Gospels, and the books of the Prophets and the disciples from Hebrew, Greek, and Sabian, which are the languages of the people of each book, into Arabic, letter for letter. In so doing I did not wish to beautify or embellish the style for fear of inaccuracy...”⁸³⁶

The loss of this vast knowledge, which would have been the result of great intellectual endeavour for that early era, and indeed the absence of any mention of it—even its name—in other than this obscure book that the author of *al-Fihrist* is quoting from, casts a huge shadow of doubt on the accuracy of this claim. Similarly, the discussion on the disciples of Abraham ﷺ and their Holy Scriptures is a matter that combines both a questionable abstruseness and an oddity, given that the person named as 'Aḥmad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Salām' was not mentioning an event that occurred by chance, in which there is margin for error when reporting on it. Rather, he was speaking of the huge scriptures that he himself—as he claims—translated into Arabic. In addition to weakening this testimony, a number of scholars have expressed doubt over whether this man actually knew Judaism, as well as his Hebrew language expertise based on the methodology he set out for the translation.⁸³⁷

The position of the existence of a pre-Islamic Arabic translation is amplified for its problematic nature by the fact that the earliest extant Arabic translations possess weak language and poor Arabic expressions. Blau⁸³⁸ considers it difficult to be of the position that they were even Arabic translations. There is no doubt that this goes back to the verbatim quotation

836 (Ibn al-Nadīm), pp. 32-22.

Translator's note: Adapted from the English translation of *al-Fihrist* by Bayard Dodge (1888-1972), an American scholar of Islam and President at the American University in Beirut.

837 (Polliack, 1997), p. 18.

838 Translator's note: Yehoshua Blau (1919-2020). Scholar of Arabic language and literature, and Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

from Greek and Syrian manuscripts, as well as the lack of a single ancient translation (or translations) that can be pinpointed as extant during the era of Prophethood.

Another important observation that underscores the previous point is from Baumstark⁸³⁹. He noted that Ibn Qutaybah, Jāḥiẓ, and Ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī—all of whom lived in the 9th century—borrowed passages from the Gospels in Arabic⁸⁴⁰, demonstrating that these adaptations were from a Syriac source. This is demonstrated in the adaptations themselves, as they comprise of Syriac words.⁸⁴¹ This is indicative of the non-existence of a primary Arabic source for the Arabic translations that came into existence after the spread of Islam.

The matter is further clarified by Paul de Lagarde⁸⁴². He says that a number of the Gospels' Arabic translations far exceed what students of theology need. Translations are of a variety to the point of nuisance, and this is the result of the multiplicity of sources in translation. Some translations even relied partly on Syriac sources, while another group was based on Coptic sources, and yet a third cluster depended on the usage of Greek sources. Graf reiterated and stressed this conclusion in his work on the Arabic translations.⁸⁴³

Sidney H. Griffith⁸⁴⁴ pointed out another analytical observation that carries a strong indication as to why Arabic translations came after Prophethood: The oldest of the extant New Testament Arabic translations are obviously connected to the works of Christian apologists writing in the Arabic language, especially the works of Theodore Abū Qurrah⁸⁴⁵. This proves that all these translation works are the product of a specific moment in time.⁸⁴⁶

All of the above proves that the seed to the Arabic translations of the New Testament, which appeared in the Islamic period, did not emanate from Arab lands; rather they were from a non-Arabian environment.

839 Anton Baumstark (1800-1876). German philologist.

840 (Polliack, 1997), p. 5.

841 (Baumstark), p. 169; quoted by (Vööbus, 1954), pp. 276-277.

842 Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891). German Orientalist and biblical scholar.

843 (Vööbus, 1954), pp. 287-288.

844 Sidney H Griffith (b. 1938). Professor of Early Christian Studies at the Catholic University of America. He is considered the foremost specialist in early Syriac and Arabic Christian refutations on Islam and has many works written on this (with alterations from translator).

845 Tawadrūs Abū Qurrah or Theodoros Aboukaras (circa 750-825). Chalcedonian Bishop of Harran and a Melkite Christian theologian. He has many works refuting Islam, Judaism, and other faiths.

846 (Griffith, 1985), p. 134.

Thus, the result is that a researcher cannot extract any evidence from reliable historical sources that the Arabic translation of the New Testament predated Prophethood. All the available signs point to the time well after that. The only options left for a person investigating this are to either accept what the indicators suggest, or to reject that so the proposed Arabic translation timeframe would be even later.

It is noteworthy that there are a number of people manufacturing cheap propaganda against the Qur'an. They themselves acknowledge that there was no Arabic translation of the New Testament until the 7th century. One of these figures is Tisdall⁸⁴⁷, who is considered the foremost person to write in favour of the borrowing claim. In his book *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Bible*, he writes, 'There seems to be no satisfactory proof that an Arabic version of the New Testament existed in Muhammad's time.'⁸⁴⁸

847 Translator's note: William Tisdall (1859-1928). British Anglican priest, linguist, historian, and philologist. He was the Secretary of the Church of England's Missionary Society in Isfahan, Persia. He was proficient in several Middle Eastern languages. He also wrote grammars for Persian, Hindu, Punjabi, and Gujarati.

848 (Tisdall, 1911), p. 140.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE

As historical records show that there was no Arabic translation of the Bible before the age of Prophethood, we should look at the preserved manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments and the judgement of palaeographers and textual critics as to when they were written and how original these translations are. Were they copied from a previous Arabic translation? Or are they later translations based on non-Arabic sources? If the first possibility is correct, that can prolong the retrospective timeline of the Bible's Arabic translations to a period prior to when extant copies came into existence.

Manuscripts of the Old Testament

Though the scholars painstakingly gathered Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament and its ancient translations, the Arabic translations of the Hebrew are of a low standard. This is despite the fact that Jews lived the best period of their intellectual history under Islamic rule, in which they established their greatest schools, and a fervent desire to write on religious topics emerged within their ranks.

Most major academic and intellectual sources agree that the translation of Saadia Gaon is the oldest extant Arabic translation—eastern Jewish history does not mention a translation before this one.⁸⁴⁹ It is worth noting that scholars emphasise that the Saadia translation is not a copy of another Arabic translation, nor is it a revision of a past Arabic edition; rather, it is a direct translation of the Hebrew.⁸⁵⁰ Likewise, the other ancient Arabic translations of the Old Testament are direct translations of Syriac, Greek, and other non-Arabic languages.⁸⁵¹

The Saadia translation and those that came after it were a response to the imminent need for the Arabic language that Jews in Arab lands had adopted. Regarding this, in his seminal work for academic studies *The Text of the Old Testament*, Ernst Würthwein⁸⁵² says, ‘With the victory of Islam the use of Arabic spread widely, and for Jews and Christians in the conquered lands it became the language of daily life. This gave rise to the need for Arabic versions of the Bible, which was met by a number of versions, mainly independent and concerned primarily for interpretation. The version by Saadia Gaon (of Egypt, and from 928 the head of the Jewish academy at Sura in Babylonia), of which only a part has survived,

849 The existence of translation manuscripts in genizahs does not invalidate our claim that the first *complete* translation was undertaken by Saadia Gaon. Otherwise, we would not expect the Jews to be unaware of Arabic translations of portions from the Torah right up to the 10th century. The unearthed segments of translation—in spite of all their differences—prove a number of points: The lack of a standard Arabic translation.

The existence of different Arabic translations for various parts of the Old Testament. That all of these partial translations are sourced from within the Islamic period.

850 (Würthwein, 1979), p. 100.

851 Ibid.

852 Translator’s note: Ernst Würthwein (1909-1996). German Protestant, theologian, and Professor of the Old Testament at Marburg.

was based on the Hebrew text. It was also accepted by the Samaritans at first, but later subjected continually to alterations, as is evident from the manuscripts. The textus receptus of the Arabic version used today among the Samaritans is attributed to Abu Sa'id, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century.⁸⁵³

853 (Würthwein, 1979), p. 100.

Manuscripts of the New Testament

In his piece on the Arabic versions of the New Testament in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, F.C. Burkitt⁸⁵⁴ said, 'It is, however, most improbable that any Christian Arab. literature is as old as the time of Mohammed. There were Christians in the Arab. kingdom of Ghassân, E. of Damascus, and at Nejrân in S. Arabia, but, to judge from our very scanty historical information about the progress of the Church in these regions, the ecclesiastical language was Syriac. It was not till after the success of the Koran had made Arabic into a literary language, and the conquests of Islam had turned large portions of Christian Syria and Egypt into Arabic-speaking provinces, that the need of translations of Scripture in the Arabic vernacular was really felt.'⁸⁵⁵

The latest studies focusing on the Arabic Gospels have revealed they in fact go back to a series of translations and revisions from Greek, Syriac (the Peshitta), Bohairic Coptic, and Latin.⁸⁵⁶ This clearly demonstrates that these translations do not possess any transmission or precedent from the ancient Arabic translation(s), which became the basis for future translations.

Likewise, after lengthy research, Sidney Griffith concluded that the Arabic Gospel was non-existent during the era of Prophethood: 'The oldest known, dated manuscripts containing Arabic translations of the New Testament are in the collections of St. Catherine's monastery at Mt. Sinai. Sinai Arabic MS 151 contains an Arabic version of the Epistles of Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Catholic Epistles. It is the oldest dated New Testament manuscripts. The colophon of this MS informs us that one Bisr Ibn as-Sirri made the translation from Syriac in Damascus during Ramadan of the Higraph year 253, i.e., 867 AD.'⁸⁵⁷

Eberhard Nestle⁸⁵⁸ said, 'The oldest known manuscript is perhaps one at Sinai, written in the ninth century, from which Mrs. Gibson edited the text of Romans, 1 and 2 Cor., Gal., and Ephes. i. 1-ii. 9...'⁸⁵⁹

854 Translator's note: Francis Crawford Burkitt (1864-1935). English theologian and Norris Professor of Divinity at Cambridge.

855 (Burkitt, 2008), 1/136.

856 (Parker, 2008), p. 124.

857 (Griffith, 1985), p. 131-132.

858 Translator's note: Eberhard Nestle (1851-1913). German scholar of the Bible, textual critic, Orientalist, and editor of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

859 (Nestle, 1901), p. 143.

Prior to him, F.C. Burkitt said, ‘The Four Gospels.—(i.) *Trs. from the Syr.* The oldest representative of this class, perhaps the oldest monument of Arab. Christianity, is the tr. of the Gospels in a MS formerly belonging to the Convent of Mar Saba near Jerus., now Cod. Vaticanus Arab. 13...’⁸⁶⁰

Though he ascribed this manuscript to the 8th century, it appears that this historical narrative is not as precise⁸⁶¹ as it should be. The indicators used to place this manuscript in the 8th century are quite flimsy. We see the Arabic letter *mīm* with a short tail that resembles the letter *rā’*; *nūn* at the end of words does not end vertically upwards; the ends of *bā’* and *tā’* are horizontal, not vertical. All of these issues are present in the manuscripts of the 9th and 10th centuries as well. This is why the position of Burkitt did not find much appeal among the critics after him. This manuscript was placed in the 9th century by Graf⁸⁶², Vööbus⁸⁶³, Michel van Esbroeck⁸⁶⁴, *et alia*.

In spite of the keenness of the priest Hikmat Kashouh⁸⁶⁵ to place the Arabic manuscripts at the earliest possible period in time, he could only place the Sinai Ar. N.F. Parchment 8 and 28⁸⁶⁶—the oldest manuscript in his view—in the 8th or 9th century.⁸⁶⁷

As for the oldest dated⁸⁶⁸ manuscript of the Four Gospels that is extant, the famous position is that it is the manuscript Sin. Ar. 72.⁸⁶⁹ The metadata

860 (Burkitt, 2008), 1/136.

861 Burkitt pointed out that only Ignazio Guidi (1844-1935), an Italian Syriac scholar, described this manuscript to be accurate ((Burkitt, 2008), 1/136; with additions from translator).

862 (Metzger B., *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations*, 1977), p. 261.

863 (Vööbus, 1954), p. 288.

Translator’s note: Arthur Vööbus (1909-1988). Estonian theologian, Orientalist, and historian of the Church.

864 (Van Esbroeck, 1998), p. 403.

Michel van Esbroeck (1934-2003). Philologist of Eastern Christianity at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

865 Translator’s note: Hikmat Kashouh (b. 1975). Senior pastor of the Resurrection Church in Beirut. He gained his doctorate in textual criticism from Birmingham, UK.

866 This manuscript was split into two, after it was found at St Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai Peninsula, in 1975.

867 (Kashouh, 2012), 1/89.

868 Dated according to the period of its writing, as presented on the manuscript.

869 Sinai Arabic MS 72.

Yūsuf Zaydān, director at the Alexandria Manuscripts Museum, is of the view that the virtually unknown manuscript found at the St Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai, is the ‘oldest Arabic manuscript of the Four Canonical Gospels,’ which are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The manuscript is dated back to 284 AH.

of the manuscript states that it was prepared by Aṣṭāfnā (or Istipana), known as Ramli in 283 AH, corresponding to 897.⁸⁷⁰ However, a number of manuscripts were unearthed in Sinai's St Catherine's Monastery in 1975; the text of one of them –Ara. N. F. Parch 16—states that it was transcribed in 859.⁸⁷¹

Griffith concluded: 'All one can say about the possibility of a pre-Islamic, Christian version of the Gospel in Arabic is that no sure sign of its actual existence has yet emerged.'⁸⁷²

William Henry Pinnock⁸⁷³ stated that the position of Arabic translations appearing only after the emergence of Islam was the position of most scholars during the mid-19th century.⁸⁷⁴ However, the Christian theologian Adam Clarke⁸⁷⁵ is considered an exception for his rejection of this opinion.

In an interview with Reuters, Zaydān said, 'The manuscript bears the date and name as follows: "The wrongdoer, the destitute, the weak, the sinful Aṣṭāfnā (or Istipana), known as Ramli...The destitute wrote this in the month of March as per the calendar system of the non-Arabs, the year of which is 6389 as per the calendar of the Church of Jerusalem (the Glorious Resurrection), and in the month of Muḥarram 284 AH as per the calendar of the Arabs."'

He added that the manuscript is recorded on leather in Kufic script. The number of parchments is 119. It is placed in an engraved wooden cover, wrapped up in leather skin adorned with delicate writing. In the last parchment, it states, 'In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as One God, this Holy Gospel is for the blessed monastery—may God keep it inhabited—and may it not be sold or bought. It was written by the lowly Mikhail, the sinful, may God forgive his sins and the sins of those who read and say amen' (Reuters, 2007).

Translator's note: The Reuters link is defunct, so a secondary link has been provided in the bibliography.

870 (Griffith, 1985), p. 132.

871 See (Meimaris, 1985), pp. 24-25.

The Arabic N. F. Parch 16 only contains John 20:16 to 25:21. Recently, Priest Hikmat Kashouh has been of the view that Arabic N. F. Parch 16, which goes back to the year 859, is a completion of Arabic N. F. Parch 14 which is undated and contains the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. See (Kashouh, 2012), 1/75.

It remains to be seen whether the two manuscripts are actually one. This requires a scientific and evidence-based study, especially considering that Yianni Meimaris—who was the first to describe the manuscripts uncovered in 1975—said about Arabic N. F. Parch 16, 'It is possible to say at best that the date of the manuscript goes back to the 10th or the beginning of the 11th century' (Meimaris, 1985), pp. 24.

872 (Griffith, 1985), p. 166.

873 Translator's note: William Henry Pinnock (1813-1885). British cleric and educationalist.

874 'The Arabic version is thought by most critics to have been made subsequent to the time of Mohammed' (Pinnock, 1854), p. 19.

875 Translator's note: Adam Clarke (1762-1832). British Methodist theologian and biblical scholar of the Bible's multilingual eastern tradition.

Yet, an analysis of the evidence in his works reveals that he himself clearly acknowledged that there is no material evidence for his opinion. The only evidence for his position is a mere assumption: He was unable to explain how the Messenger ﷺ came to know the details of the New Testament without having come across any Arabic translation in his time.⁸⁷⁶ As can be seen, this is simply an appeal to intuition that has been cloaked up as evidence.

Academic studies by Western textual critics continue to remain unable to detach themselves from the claims of Missionaries vis-à-vis the existence of a pre-Islamic Arabic translation of the Bible.

Gerhard Bowering⁸⁷⁷ proffered a summary of the most recent Orientalist studies on the Qur'an's written material sources. He states in this regard, 'During his lifetime, Muhammad had a good number of his Qur'anic proclamations copied down by scribes, but there is no evidence that he used foreign written source materials for the composition of the Qur'an. Until the appearance of evidence to the contrary, one has to support the position that it was oral information on which the Qur'an drew directly...' ⁸⁷⁸ This is precisely what the renowned Orientalist work *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition), at the tail end of its discussion on the Arabic translations of the Gospels, said: 'We can deduce with Graf (*Geschichte*, i, 41) that it is not possible—with the knowledge we have today—to suggest that Muhammad and his early followers were able to acquire knowledge of the Gospels directly from the Arabic language.'⁸⁷⁹

This follows what the German Orientalist Georg Graf, in his book *Geschichte Der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, concluded as part of the monumental 20th century scientific study he carried out on the Arabic manuscripts of the Gospels.

In 2008, a doctoral thesis by the Lebanese priest Hikmat Kashouh was examined at the University of Birmingham, UK. Spanning over 1000 pages, it was published by De Gruyter at the end of 2010 under the title *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels—The Manuscripts and Their Families*.⁸⁸⁰ Kashouh conducted a thorough historical and palaeographical study of all the material available on the New Testament, as well as a comparative analysis of conclusions by various studies that had already been made on

876 (Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour*, 1844), p. 8.

877 Gerhard Bowering (b. 1939). Professor of Islamic Studies at the Department of Religious Studies, Yale.

878 (Bowering, 2007), p. 83.

879 (De Vaux, 1927).

880 After his viva voce, this priest was immediately appointed the head of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon.

the subject. He travelled to several countries to attain those studies⁸⁸¹ and collated 210 Arabic manuscripts. He could not find a single manuscript that could be placed in the period prior to Prophethood, or even the period immediately after.⁸⁸²

Having assessed the possibility of an Arabic translation of the Bible existing during the era of Prophethood, we can conclude the following:

- There is no material proof whatsoever for the existence of an Arabic translation of the Bible during the Prophethood era. Such a claim would need tangible evidence that cannot be disproved unless with evidence that is either equal to it or quantitatively stronger.
- One cannot find any trace of an Arabic translation of the Bible in the Muslim religious tradition, as well as pre-Islamic literature.
- The fact that the oldest Arabic translations of the Bible relied on Greek, Syriac, and Coptic sources highlights the lack of a more ancient Arabic translation from which copies could have been made.

881 Its manuscripts were collated from nine countries.

882 (Kashouh, 2012).

Did Muhammad ﷺ have a human teacher?

There is no historical basis for the position stating that Muhammad ﷺ was aware of the scriptures of the People of the Book, or that he conducted a deep and critical study of them directly. This is because in addition to being unlettered, there was a lack of any Arabic translation of the Bible. What remains for the adversary is to assume that Muhammad ﷺ, the unlettered Arab, gained the knowledge of the People of the Book from others.

The possibilities we have to explore in this regard are as follows:

1. Muhammad ﷺ learned from the scholars of the People of the Book before his Prophetic mission.
2. He learned from them after his mission.
3. He received knowledge of the Bible from the Arabs.
4. He received it from a Roman boy, as his contemporaries alleged.

FIRST POSSIBILITY: THE TEACHERSHIP OF THE SCHOLARS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK PRE-PROPHETHOOD

- a. The life of Muhammad ﷺ was known to all, which automatically renders void the suggestion that he sat for months and years studying the Bible. Had his people known that he spent a large amount of time studying the Jewish and Christian faiths at the feet of their scholars, they would have most certainly pointed out the time and place where he was taught the vast knowledge of the Bible. Even if this did happen, this does not translate into the Prophet ﷺ being able to answer—with great competence—all the questions that they were posing to him, to the extent that he did not even need to refer back to those sources when answering those questions.
- b. Knowledge of religious minutiae is not acquired in large bursts. One who seeks knowledge goes step by step and progresses in stages: He would start by seeking out those who are at the forefront of analysis, then he would accompany the people of knowledge, after which he would gradually progress from questioning the basic details to analysing advanced data. These situations in education would not have been concealed from anyone who was with him, let alone those who were seeking to ambush him with any sort of allegation. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ lived in Makkah among his would-be adversaries. His own family had people who sought to repudiate his call to Islam. They knew everything about him, right to the smallest detail. It is not known that any of them exposed the educational institution the Prophet ﷺ had attended in order to gain the knowledge of the People of the Book, let alone that he delved deep to access their most hidden particulars.
- c. The fact that Muhammad ﷺ simply met Jewish and Christian scholars pre-Prophethood would not have given him access to their entire trove of religious knowledge. As per the books of the *ṣīrah*, he had not met anybody apart from the monk Baḥīrā, when he was 12 years old. It was a meeting that was also attended by his uncle, Abū Ṭālib. The long and short of this meeting was that this monk informed Abū Ṭālib that he had seen the signs of Prophethood in the

Messenger ﷺ. It was a fleeting encounter—there is no information that it was an operation in education, imparted by this man to the Messenger ﷺ.⁸⁸³

883 Yet, after investigating the chain and text of this story, the preponderant position is that it is fabricated and denounced (*munkar*), for it conflicts with what is in the authentic narrations of the *sīrah*. Abū Ṭālib expressed no awareness vis-à-vis the Prophethood of the Messenger ﷺ; in fact, before he first met Gabriel, the Messenger ﷺ himself did not know that he would be one of the Lord's chosen ones for this position. In addition, he was taken by surprise when he met Gabriel and was compelled to ask Waraqah ibn Nawfal about what had transpired in the cave. Dhahabī declared this narration to be a lie, stating, 'It is a highly denounced hadith. Where was Abū Bakr? He was 10 years old—2½ years younger than the Messenger of God ﷺ. Where was Bilāl all this time? Abū Bakr purchased him only after the Prophethood was conferred, and he had not even been born yet. Also, as he had a cloud giving him shade, how could it then be envisaged—as is mentioned in Baḥīrā's story—that the tree's shade would curve for him, as the cloud's shadow would have covered the tree's shadow anyway? We have not seen the Prophet ﷺ ever reminding Abū Ṭālib of the monk's statement, nor did the Quraysh ever have a discussion with him about it, nor did any of their elders relate it to him. Had this occurred, they would have most certainly had the motivation and incentive to report something like this, and it would have become extremely famous among them. The sense of impending Prophethood would have remained with the Prophet ﷺ, and he would not have initially been in denial of the coming of Revelation, firstly in the Cave of Ḥirā' and after he came to Khadijah when he feared for his mental faculty... Additionally, had this fear of keeping Muhammad ﷺ away from Makkah—as is mentioned in Baḥīrā's story—impacted Abū Ṭālib, why would he have been at ease in allowing him to travel to Syria as a businessman for Khadijah?' (See (Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, 1999/1419 AH), 1/57).

Moreover, in his notes on the *Mustadrak* of Hākim, Dhahabī said, 'I think it is fabricated, and some of it is baseless' (Dhahabī, *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (with Dhahabī's Critiques), 1997/1417 AH), 2/724).

Another person who also pointed out that its text is odd is Ibn Sayyid al-Nās in his book *Uyūn al-Athar*. He says, 'There is an oddity in its text, which is that Abū Bakr sent Bilāl with the Prophet ﷺ. How is this possible when Abū Bakr at that time had not even reached 10 years of age? The Prophet ﷺ was older than Abū Bakr by more than 2 years; the Prophet ﷺ was 9 years old as per what Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī and others stated, or 12 as per what others stated. Also, Bilāl did not transfer into the ownership of Abū Bakr (as a slave) until over 30 years after this—he belonged to the Banū Khalaf branch of the Banū Jumaḥ. It was only when he was tortured in the Name of God and for the sake of his Islam that Abū Bakr ﷺ bought him out of mercy and saved him from their clutches' (Ibn Sayyid al-Nās), 1/108).

The upshot of this analysis is that 'the story of Baḥīrā cannot be verified by hadith criticism standards. If we assume for argument's sake that it did indeed

d. It is impossible that any human on the face of the Earth completes

occur, then the meeting would have only lasted for an hour or two. The age of the Prophet ﷺ was 12 years. Had the meeting occurred, this would have thrown up a huge dispute within the Quraysh. However, we cannot find any discussion on their part, which suggests that it is baseless. And what can a 12-year-old boy take from Baḥīrā anyway, when Baḥīrā's audience was the Quraysh for most of this time?' (‘Umārī, *Marwiyyāt al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah Bayn Qawā'id al-Muḥaddithīn wa-Riwāyāt al-Akhbāriyyīn*)).

It is both strange and breath-taking that notwithstanding the fact that this personality—Baḥīrā the Monk—is obscure with his mention only being found in this flimsy story, and despite the fact that the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* was compelled to state that ‘the keys to access this story (i.e., authentic sources) are all lost—which is why not much can be said about it’ ((Gibb & Kramers, 1905), p. 56), Missionaries still claim that they possess historical information about the story from non-Islamic sources. As they tend to concoct stories from their fantasies, they have floundered in identifying his name, his region, and even his religious denomination:

‘As for our knowledge about Baḥīrā, the sources cannot agree to anything about him. They even conflict with each other on his name—some say Jirjīs; some say Jirjis; a third says Sirjīs; a fourth claims Sirjis. Some sources say it is taken from the Aramaic language, and means “the chosen one”; some say it is from Syriac, and means “erudite”. Some attribute him to the tribe of ‘Abd al-Qays, which would as a result confer him the endonym ‘Abqasī; others claim he was a Christian; and another group claims he was a Jew.’ (‘Umārī, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah al-Ṣaḥīḥah: Muḥāwalah li-Taṭbīq Qawā'id al-Muḥaddithīn fī Naqd Riwāyāt al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1994/1415 AH), pp. 110–111.

‘The name Baḥīrā has come only in extremely flimsy narrations. Wāqidi is in one; he is a liar. Muhammad ibn Ishāq—the author of the *sīrah* book—is in the other; he narrated it without a chain. These two narrations are the primary references for all historians who gave him this name’ (Albānī, 1379 AH).

For the differences among Christian apologists over the name and beliefs of this monk, see (Abel, 2010).

A number of Western critics held back from acknowledging the authenticity of the Messenger's ﷺ meeting with Baḥīrā the Monk, including Clément Huart*, who said, ‘The Arabic texts that have been found, published, and studied since then do not permit us to see—apart from sheer fantasy—any significant role that can be attributed to this Syrian monk’ ((Huart, 1904), p. 127).

* Clément Huart (1854–1962). French Orientalist. He served as Professor in Extant Oriental Languages and was a director at École pratique des hautes études (EPHE) in Paris. He also served in the French occupation of Muslim lands.

Translator's note: The author provides two scans in his book, from *A Christian Bahira Legend* by Richard Gottheil (1862–1936). According to De Gruyter, ‘This book relates the legend of the monk Bahira and his alleged interactions with the Prophet Muhammad.’ It is an English translation of various Arabic and Syriac source materials. Below are the two scans translated—the first is from Arabic and

his education and training, and then reaches a miraculous level of maturity to become the teacher of the entire world in what he learned

the second is from Syriac.

‘Upon me be it to command my people not to levy toll upon a monk. They shall be honoured, their needs attended to so that they may look after their affairs. In regard to all other Christians, I shall give the command that no one shall be inimical to them or jealous of them in their religious practices. Their churches shall be kept in order, their leaders honoured. On the Day of Resurrection, I shall be an enemy to anyone who practices tyranny towards them.’

‘Relying upon the might of God, our Lord Jesus Christ our hope, I now write the story of our master Sargis, who is called Sarāyā, Behīrā and Suryāyā (they also call him the hater of the cross, the anchorite, who dwells on Mt. Sinai), and how he instructed Mohammed. Amen! My Beloved! This Rabban Sargis related to me, Išo‘yabh the monk, the story of his sickness, of his journeys to the holy Mountain of Sinai, of the kingdom of the Ishmaelites, one thing after another, until the end; especially of the belief of the sons of Hagar, of the conversation which Sargis had with Mohammed the Prophet of the Saracens, of the questions and the answers given by Sargis to Mohammed, of the going of Rabban Sargis to the wilderness of Yathrib among the Ishmaelites; how he was driven away by the bishops who lived at that time—but [not,] as they say, because he hated the cross, was he driven from the Church, but because he said that only one cross should be erected in a church, and that it was proper to bow down only to one, because the Messiah had been crucified upon one cross and not upon many. He also said that it was not proper to bow down to a cross of stone, or silver, or gold, or copper, or of any material other than wood; that this material be not like the idols which idolatrous nations have fashioned, they who bow down to idols. After he had been driven out by the bishops and elders because of this which he had said, Rabban Behira went away and came to the wilderness of Yathrib, to the Ishmaelites. He lived with them in peace and quiet; and was held by them in love and confidence through the instrumentality of Mār Sabhrīšō‘, the monk—he who had worked many great miracles, and for whom No‘man, ruler of the Arabs, had sent because of a sickness, with which he, No‘man, was sick. For he was troubled by an evil spirit of the Devas, just as was Saul at the time of the Prophet David. Now this No‘man dwelt in the primitive city of the Ishmaelites, ‘Arabī, which belonged to them in the days of Kesrōn, king of the Persians, and [at the time] when the true flocks of the innocent sheep of the Messiah were under the guidance of Mār Sabhrīšō‘, Katholikos of the East, and of Mār Išo‘zakkai, the anchorite. No‘man became relieved of the evil spirit of the Devas, which was troubling and torturing him grievously. And because there were few monks at that time and they were found only in certain places and certain lands, No‘man and all his Arabian city received the right of baptism at the hands of Mār Sabhrīšō‘, Katholikos of the East. For, before the time of No‘man they had been accustomed to worshipping Uzzi—which is Aphrodite Zuhra—whom they mention even now when they swear, saying “No, by all-Uzzi”. But I said to them, who is this by whom ye swear? He is the strong god, they answered, still keeping to their old tradition.’

and was trained in, just because he—by chance—happened to meet one monk out of many. This ‘student’ of his was preoccupied with business—and unlettered, i.e., unable to read and write. He was very young and was accompanying his uncle during the first trip. In his second trip to Syria, he had assumed the burden of a great trust, which he was tasked to repay in full—the trust of guarding and acting in sincerity with Khadijah’s wealth and business.⁸⁸⁴

- e. The meeting of the Messenger ﷺ with Waraqah ibn Nawfal was after the Revelation of the first verses of the Qur’an. History states that Khadijah attended this meeting; it also states that when Waraqah listened to Muhammad’s ﷺ description of Revelation, he saw the characteristics of the angelic confidante (Gabriel) that descended on Moses ﷺ, causing him to acknowledge his Prophethood and wish that his life would be prolonged enough for him to become his aide and helper. This is all that was said between the two. As he was an old man, Waraqah died shortly after this meeting took place.
- f. Christianity cannot be the source of Muhammad ﷺ with regard to what he filled the pages of his book with, as there were no recognisable Christian institutions in the Arabian Peninsula in the first place. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states, ‘The Hejaz had not been touched by Christian preaching. Hence organization of a Christian church was neither to be found nor expected.’⁸⁸⁵ Bell⁸⁸⁶ said, ‘From the south, Christianity does not seem to have made much headway; from the north-east it spread down the shores of the Persian Gulf. From the north-west it spread into the northern centre of the peninsula and southward to the shores of the Red Sea, but—and this is important—in spite of traditions to the effect that the picture of Jesus was found on one of the pillars of the Ka’ba, there is no good evidence of any seats of Christianity in the Hijāz or in the near neighbourhood of Mecca or even of Medina.’⁸⁸⁷

When Islam emerged, there were three major groups that were the standard-bearers of Arabian Christianity:

884 See (Zurqānī, 1995/1415 AH), 2/326.

885 (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003), 1/722.

886 Translator’s note: Richard Bell (1876-1952). British scholar of Arabic disciplines. He lectured in Arabic studies at Edinburgh. He published a translation of the Qur’an. He is most known for his investigations surrounding Christian influences on the development of Islam.

887 (Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, 1968), p. 42.

1. The Ghassanids. They lived at a considerable distance from Makkah, having migrated from Yemen to Hauran in the Levant. They suffered ongoing instability by the time of Prophethood, thanks to the Sassanid attack on their state during 613 or 614.⁸⁸⁸
2. The people of Najran, in the northern regions of Yemen. They were not known for their literary or religious authority by the Makkans.
3. The Lakhmids (or Manādhirah), who lived in Ḥīrah, Iraq. They adopted Christianity towards the end of the 6th century.⁸⁸⁹

So, how is it then that Makkah had any connection with Christian religious culture?

Arthur Vööbus supplements this by pointing out an important historical fact: 'To be sure, we notice that in the province of Arabia the Christians who entered the ranks of the clergy became Hellenized and adopted Greek as their language. It must be also admitted that, as the manuscripts testify to it, in the territories farther in the East the Syriac idiom occupied a similar place and absorbed the Arabic element.'⁸⁹⁰

- g. History attests that Arab Christians possessed only a rudimentary understanding of their faith. They were not known for liturgical activities, theological polemics, or any significant participation in the sectarian disputes within Christianity. In addition to the fact that they were on the sidelines of the pagan society that dominated the Arabian Peninsula, Arab Christians did not possess any degree of knowledge that was worthwhile of being deliberated. The Orientalist Dozy says, 'In Mohammed's time three religions shared Arabia—Judaism, Christianity, and a vague form of Polytheism. The Jewish tribes alone, perhaps, were sincerely attached to their faith, and were alone intolerant...Christianity could count but few adepts, for most of those who professed the faith had but a very superficial knowledge of its tenets.'⁸⁹¹
- h. Due to his unletteredness, it was not possible for Muhammad ﷺ to have directly come across the Bible. This is well established in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition.

888 (Power, 1913), p. 205.

889 (Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*, 1968), p. 42.

890 (Vööbus, 1954), p. 275.

891 (Dozy, *Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain*, 1931), p. 13.

Makkah—where the Qur'an's most significant chapters speaking on the stories of past Prophets and their people were revealed—is the last conceivable place where any alleged human source for the Qur'an can be unearthed.

**SECOND POSSIBILITY: THE TEACHERSHIP OF THE
SCHOLARS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK POST-
PROPHETHOOD**

This means Muhammad ﷺ studied the Bible with the scholars of the People of the Book *after* he announced his Prophethood. Whether assumed for the Makkan period or the Madinan period, this possibility is rejected.

In the Makkan period

1. The People of the Book used to keep their knowledge to themselves and would only disclose a small portion of it. At the same time, they also presented a picture of their faith that was radically different from what was contained in their scriptures:
 - ♦ ‘And they have not shown Allah His proper reverence when they said, “Allah has revealed nothing to any human being.” Say, O Prophet, “Who then revealed the Book brought forth by Moses as a light and guidance for people, which you split into separate sheets by revealing some and hiding much?”’ (Qur’an, 6:91)
 - ♦ ‘There are some among them who distort the Book with their tongues to make you think this distortion is from the Book, but it is not what the Book says. They say, “It is from Allah,” but it is not from Allah. They attribute lies to Allah knowingly.’ (Qur’an, 3:78)
2. Makkah had not seen any Jewish group residing in it, as per the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ: ‘The Prophet ﷺ came to Madinah. He saw the Jews fasting on the Day of ‘Āshūrā’. He said, “What is this?” They said, “This is a noble day. This is the day when Allah delivered the Children of Israel from their enemy, so Moses fasted it.” He said, “I am worthier of Moses than you.” So, he fasted it and commanded for it to be fasted.’⁸⁹² Interactions with the Jews started in Madinah, not Makkah.
3. Apart from the one meeting he had with Waraqah ibn Nawfal, we cannot find an actual meeting between Muhammad ﷺ and any scholar from the People of the Book throughout the Makkan period. We already know that it was a swift meeting (assuming the meeting did take place), and it is illogical and absurd to suggest that everything the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ came with was based on that meeting.

892 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Fasting, Chapter on fasting the Day of ‘Āshūrā’ (hadith no. 2004), and Muslim, Book of Fasting, Chapter on fasting the Day of ‘Āshūrā’ (hadith no. 1130).

4. Paganism dominated the Makkan environment. There were no disputes between the People of the Book and the pagans, or between the Jews and Christians for that matter. Likewise, the knowledge of the People of the Book was not accessible to either the laity or the elite.
5. Makkah had not witnessed any Missionary activity. Christians there did not have a conspicuous presence. In 1981, when Lüling⁸⁹³ wrote a paper on Christianity in Makkah in his last work *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad: Eine Kritik am Christlichen Abendland*, he could not mention a single Christian personality in Makkah. The reality is that those who are said to be Makkan Christians and contemporaries of the Messenger ﷺ were no more than three: Waraqah ibn Nawfal, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Jahsh, and ‘Uthmān ibn al-Ḥuwayrith.⁸⁹⁴ Some of the most significant factors that are identifiable in these three are:
 - ◆ They were first-generation Christians. For any first generation, it is assumed that they would not be as influential, especially considering that they were not preoccupied at all with proselytising, nor were they considered to be leading figures in the Church.
 - ◆ They lived separately from each other. They were not known for gathering, nor did they build a church that would gather them under one roof.
 - ◆ The stories of their adoption of Christianity vary, both in terms of background and geography, giving preponderance to the notion that they were of different Christian denominations.
 - ◆ Their leaders were not known for influencing the religious culture of the Makkans.⁸⁹⁵
 - ◆ Waraqah ibn Nawfal’s connection to the Prophet ﷺ is known, which was no longer than a single short encounter.

893 Translator’s note: Günter Lüling (1928-2014). German Protestant theologian, philologist, and researcher into the origins of Islam. From 1962 to 1965, he was the Director of the German Goethe-Institut in Aleppo, Syria.

894 See (Ibn Hishām, 1990/1410 AH), 1/251-262.

895 (Osman, 2005).

- ♦ ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Jaḥsh accepted Islam, and afterwards he emigrated to Abyssinia. It is said that he became a Christian there. According to the hadith scholars⁸⁹⁶, the chains of the reports concerning his acceptance of Christianity are not free of defects—there is doubt in whether it can be established as authentic or not. Even if it is authentic, it does not prove anything as there is no indication that ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Jaḥsh taught the Messenger ﷺ at all, nor did ‘Ubaydullāh or the Makkans claim such a thing.
- ♦ As for ‘Uthmān ibn al-Ḥuwayrith:
 - i. He became a Christian and left Makkah for Syria, where he stayed until his death.
 - ii. His death was before Prophethood, by three or so years.⁸⁹⁷

896 See (‘Awshan, 2002/1423 AH).

897 See (Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 1990/1410 AH), 2/302.

In the Madinan period

For Muhammad ﷺ, the Madinan period represented a shift from an environment engulfed by ignorance to one that had a religiously organised group of people with its own Holy Book: the Jews. This leads to the question as to whether it is possible that the followers of the Torah are the ones who informed Muhammad ﷺ of what is contained in their Holy Scriptures.

The answer is obviously in the negative—for a number of reasons:

1. Only 28 chapters were revealed in the Madinan period, compared to the Makkan period in which 86 chapters were revealed.
2. The most significant point of similarity between the Qur'an and the Bible, like the sceptics seem to insist on, is the mention of the stories of the Prophets in both. If we ponder over the Qur'anic text, we can see that the Makkan chapters are the ones that present the lengthiest stories—with all their minutiae—that were already in the Torah.⁸⁹⁸ This left the Madinan chapters the ability to only derive a few lessons from the Makkan chapters, and that too was in the form of concise and indirect references.

898 We can shed some light on the Makkan verses that deal with these stories:

Qur'an, 7:11-25 on Adam; 102-176 on Moses

Qur'an, 10:75-92 on Moses

Qur'an, 11:25-49 on Noah; 69-82 on Abraham and Lot

Qur'an, 12 on Joseph

Qur'an, 15:26-77 on Adam, Abraham, and Lot

Qur'an, 17:4-8 on the Israelites

Qur'an, 18:9-25 on the People of the Cave; 60-82 on Moses

Qur'an, 19:1-33 on Zechariah, John, Mary, Jesus, *et alia*

Qur'an, 20:9-98 on Moses

Qur'an, 21:51-70 on Abraham; 78-82 on David and Solomon

Qur'an, 26:10-189 on Moses, Abraham, Noah, *et alia*

Qur'an, 27:7-44 on Moses, David, and Solomon

Qur'an, 28:3-43 on Moses; 76-82 on Korah

Qur'an, 29:14-35 on Noah, Abraham, and Lot

Qur'an, 34:10-14 on David and Solomon

Qur'an, 38:17-44 on David, Solomon, and Job

Qur'an, 51:24-37 on Abraham

(Taken from (Darāz, *Madkhal ilā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 1981/1401 AH), p. 156).

3. That the Qur'an criticised and upbraided the Jews in both the Makkan and Madinan periods suggests that the notion of Muhammad ﷺ learning from Jewish rabbis in Madinah is rejected *a priori*:
 - ♦ From the Makkan period:
 - 'By Allah, We have surely sent Messengers to communities before you, O Prophet, but Satan made their misdeeds appealing to them. So he is their patron today, and they will suffer a painful punishment.' (Qur'an, 16:63)
 - ♦ From the Madinan period:
 - 'The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah but failed to uphold it is that of a donkey carrying books. How evil is the example of those who reject Allah's signs. Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.' (Qur'an, 62:5)
 - 'So woe to those who distort the Scripture with their own hands then say, "This is from Allah," seeking a fleeting gain. So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned. Some of the Jews claim, "The Fire will not touch us except for a number of days." Say, O Prophet, "Have you taken a pledge from Allah? For Allah never breaks His word. Or are you just saying about Allah what you do not know?"' (Qur'an, 2:79-80)
 - 'There are some among the People of the Book who, if entrusted with a stack of gold, will readily return it. Yet there are others who, if entrusted with a single coin, will not repay it unless you constantly demand it. This is because they say, "We are not accountable for exploiting the Gentiles," and because they attribute lies to Allah knowingly.' (Qur'an, 3:75)
 - 'Do you believers still expect them to be true to you, though a group of them would hear the word of Allah then knowingly corrupt it after understanding it?' (Qur'an, 2:75)
4. The Qur'an speaks in the language of a teacher, not a student. It condemns the People of the Book for their manifestations of ignorance, exposes their superstitions, and dispels their errors:

- ◆ ‘O People of the Book, why do you argue about Ibrāhīm, while the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until long after him? Do you not understand?’ (Qur’an, 3:65)
- ◆ ‘Do you claim that Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, Ishāq, Ya‘qūb, and his descendants were Jews or Christians? Say, “Who is more knowledgeable: you or Allah?” Who does more wrong than those who hide the testimony they received from Allah? And Allah is never unaware of what you do.’ (Qur’an, 2:140)
- ◆ ‘All food was lawful for the children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for himself before the Torah was revealed. Say, O Prophet, “Bring the Torah and read it, if your claims are true.”’ (Qur’an, 3:93)
- ◆ ‘Some Jews said, “Allah is tight-fisted.” May their fists be tied and they be condemned for what they said. Rather, He is open-handed, giving freely as He pleases. That which has been revealed to you, O Prophet, from your Lord will only cause many of them to increase in wickedness and disbelief. We have stirred among them hostility and hatred until the Day of Judgement. Whenever they kindle the fire of war, Allah puts it out. And they strive to spread corruption in the land. And Allah does not like corruptors.’ (Qur’an, 5:64)
- ◆ ‘The Jews and the Christians each say, “We are the children of Allah and His most beloved.” Say, O Prophet, “Why then does He punish you for your sins? The reality is you are only humans like others of His Own making. He forgives whoever He wills and punishes whoever He wills. To Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens, the Earth, and everything in between. And to Him is the final return.”’ (Qur’an, 5:18)
- ◆ ‘Indeed, those who say, “Allah is Jesus, son of Maryam” have fallen into disbelief.’ (Qur’an, 5:17)
- ◆ ‘Those who say “Allah is one in a Trinity” have certainly fallen into disbelief. There is only One God. If they do not stop saying this, those who disbelieve among them will be afflicted with a painful punishment.’ (Qur’an, 5:73)

5. Had Muhammad ﷺ studied with Jewish rabbis, some followers of the Torah would have taken advantage of that in their war against him and his call to a new faith. They would have announced the name of his teacher and his hometown. They would have demanded from this teacher to expose this fact. They would have done and said all sorts to prove their point.
6. A number of prominent personalities from the People of the Book within the Arabian Peninsula ended up having faith in the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. The Qur'an mentions this fact, proving that Islam, the Qur'an, and the religion's corpus of beliefs are from God, not from Muhammad ﷺ:
 - ♦ 'As for those faithful to whom We had given the Scripture before this Qur'an, they believe in it. When it is recited to them, they declare, "We believe in it. This is definitely the truth from our Lord. We had already submitted even before this." Those believers will be given a double reward for their perseverance, responding to evil with good, and for donating from what We have provided for them.' (Qur'an, 28:52-54)
 - ♦ 'Indeed, there are some among the People of the Book who truly believe in Allah and what has been revealed to you believers and what was revealed to them. They humble themselves before Allah, never trading Allah's Revelations for a fleeting gain. Their reward is with their Lord. Surely Allah is swift in reckoning.' (Qur'an, 3:199)
 - ♦ 'But those of them well-grounded in knowledge, the faithful who believe in what has been revealed to you, O Prophet, and what was revealed before you—especially those who establish prayer—and those who pay alms and believe in Allah and the Last Day, to these people We will grant a great reward.' (Qur'an, 4:162)
 - ♦ 'Say, O Prophet, "Believe in this Qur'an, or do not. Indeed, when it is recited to those who were gifted with knowledge before it was revealed, they fall upon their faces in prostration, and say, 'Glory be to our Lord. Surely the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled.' They fall down upon their faces weeping, and it increases them in humility.'" (Qur'an, 17:107)

- ◆ ‘You could not read any writing before this Revelation, nor could you write at all. Otherwise, the people of falsehood would have been suspicious.’ (Qur’an, 29:48)
- ◆ ‘The believers among those who were given the Scripture rejoice at what has been revealed to you, O Prophet, while some disbelieving factions deny a portion of it. Say, “I have only been commanded to worship Allah, associating none with Him in worship. To Him I invite all, and to Him is my return.”’ (Qur’an, 13:36)
- ◆ ‘You will surely find the most bitter towards the believers to be the Jews and polytheists and the most gracious to be those who call themselves Christian. That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not arrogant.’ (Qur’an, 5:82)
- ◆ ‘Ask them, O Prophet, “Consider if this Qur’an is truly from Allah and you deny it, and a witness from the Children of Israel attests to it and then believes, whereas you act arrogantly. Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”’ (Qur’an, 46:10)

THIRD POSSIBILITY: THE TEACHERSHIP OF THE MAKKAN PAGANS

No person is known to have held this position, i.e., that Muhammad ﷺ studied the Bible with the Makkan Arabs. Such a viewpoint cannot stand firm against the many objections against it, which include the following:

1. The Makkans were an unlettered people. They were far more ignorant than ever having possessed all the facts that would allow them to present—let alone disprove—the information that the People of the Book had in their Holy Scriptures.
2. Even though it is possible that the Makkans were aware of some stories of previous Prophets, this knowledge would not have surpassed a laity-level of comprehension, such as information on names and places—not the detailed minutiae that would have landed them into making up fabrications had they attempted to make any mention of them.⁸⁹⁹
3. The Arabs were not interested in the stories of the Bible. This is for a number of reasons, the most important of which are:
 - ♦ The lack of religious topics in their literature.
 - ♦ The scarcity of new religious converts to either Judaism or Christianity.
 - ♦ The geographical dispersal of Jewish and Christian converts.
 - ♦ The Arabs not having a passion for religious stories.⁹⁰⁰

899 In his poetry, Nābighah al-Dhubyānī focused on King Solomon. This means that competition over reputation and wealth was in vogue at the time. It is known that discussions on reputational competition among ancients meant the concoction of mythical stories in order to attract the attention of people. See (Darāz, *Madkhal ilā al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, 1981/1401 AH), p. 145.

900 This point is highlighted in the case where Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith attempted to compete with the Qurʾān—he began by telling fictitious stories about the old kings of Persia and the gladiatorial heroics of its legends, such as the Battle of Rostam and Esfandiyar (Darāz, *Madkhal ilā al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, 1981/1401 AH), p. 145.

4. In favour of its divinity, the Qur'an used as evidence the stories of the Prophets and the previous nations:
 - ♦ 'You were not there, O Prophet, on the western side of the mountain when We entrusted the Commandments to Mūsā, nor were you present. But We later raised several generations, and the ages took their toll on them. Nor were you living among the people of Midian, rehearsing Our Revelations with them. But it is We Who have sent this Revelation to you.' (Qur'an, 28:44-45)
 - ♦ 'This is one of the stories of the unseen, which We reveal to you, O Prophet. Neither you nor your people knew it before this. So be patient. Surely the ultimate outcome belongs to the righteous.' (Qur'an, 11:49)
 - ♦ 'This is news of the unseen that We reveal to you, O Prophet. You were not with them when they cast lots to decide who would be Maryam's guardian, nor were you there when they argued about it.' (Qur'an, 3:44)

Had these stories been known to the Arabs, the Qur'an would not have employed its mention of previous Prophets as evidence. Had the Arabs already known those stories, how exactly would the Qur'an have been able to prove its divinity, and how would it have established the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ?

5. The many minutiae in which the Qur'an concurs with the scriptures of the People of the Book could not have been transferred to Muhammad ﷺ from the route of a people who did not know anything about the People of the Book—apart from lists of a few names that were floating around back then. Perhaps this point can be explained further through two clear examples:
 - ♦ Elijah and Baal (Īlīyā and Baʿl in Arabic).

God ﷻ said, 'And Ilyās was indeed one of the Messengers. Remember when he said to his people, "Will you not fear? Do you call upon the idol of Baʿl and abandon the Best of Creators—Allah, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers?"' (Qur'an, 37:123-126)

This verse is clearly alluding to the story of the Prophet Elijah, who is also mentioned in the Bible. His Hebrew name is אליהו (*Īliāhu*); in Greek, it is Ἠλίας (*Ēlias*); in Syriac, one of the two ways to write it is ܐܠܝܐܘܬܐ. Christian Arabs in Syria name many historical and religious places after this Proph-

et, such as ‘Monastery of Ilyās’ or ‘Church of Ilyās’. The Bible tells us that Elijah prohibited his people from worshipping the Baal god—or “*Ba‘al*” in Hebrew—after the Jews had added worshipping Baal to their liturgical practices because the wife of Ahab, King of Israel, used to worship it.⁹⁰¹

A person analysing the earlier works of Qur’anic exegesis—which are what concern us here—would comprehend that most hermeneuts are of the position that the ‘Baal’ mentioned in the verse means ‘Lord’. This is on the basis that the most significant meanings of the word in the lexicon are *rabb* (lord) and *sayyid* (master). Ibn Kathīr said, ‘Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, Mujāhid, ‘Ikrimah, Qatādah, and Suddī said, “*Ba‘l* means *rabb*.”’⁹⁰² What is more perplexing is that many earlier exegetes from the first centuries just after Prophethood—including some Companions ؓ—were of the view that Ilyās (Elijah) is Idrīs. They said this despite the fact that the Qur’an does not normally offer two distinct names for one Prophet. Likewise, the Bible does not mention a Prophet by the name of Idrīs. In addition, the preponderant view according to a number of researchers is that the Idrīs ؑ mentioned in the Qur’an is actually Enoch, who is also cited in the scriptures of the People of the Book.

Therefore, after what has been mentioned, how could it be that the Arabian Peninsula offered Muhammad ؐ any knowledge of the Bible?

901 See 1 Kings 16, 17, and 18.

902 (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 4/1979.



Inscription of Baal

A word-for-word reference to the Zabūr

The Qur'an is so precise that it gives a reference to a particular book within the Bible, even quoting it verbatim. This was unprecedented for the pre-Islamic pagan Arabs. The Qur'an says, 'Surely, following the heavenly Record, We decreed in the Zabūr: "My righteous servants shall inherit the land."' (Qur'an, 21:105) This precisely corresponds to what has come in the Psalms 37:29: 'The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it for ever.'

What is interesting to note here is that when mentioning the difference between the scholars of the early period vis-à-vis this verse, Ṭabarī said that most scholars stated that the Zabūr is not a book of David ﷺ. In fact, Ṭabarī preferred the position that the meaning of Zabūr here is 'book', not the Psalms of David ﷺ⁹⁰³, even though the Qur'anic scripture is clear that the Zabūr is the book of David ﷺ: 'And to David We gave the Zabūr.'⁹⁰⁴ (Qur'an, 4:163) This is indicative of the difficulty faced by scholars of that era in identifying the Holy Scriptures of the People of the Book.

903 See (Ṭabarī), 9/98.

904 Translator's note: The Qur'an does, however, use the term *Zabūr* without the definite particle. The literal translation of it would therefore be: 'And We gave David a *Zabūr*.' Further discussion on this can be found in the books of exegesis.

What we are proposing is that, a) given that Muslim scholars⁹⁰⁵—who b) in the period when information about the Bible had become widespread, and c) when there was an abundance of Jews and Christians to ask—could not get this detail in regard to the Bible right, how then could Muhammad ﷺ—who was a) unlettered and b) living in an environment that was not naturally good with information about the Bible—get it right in matters far deeper and more subtle, unless it was through Revelation?

Ignorance of the most basic information contained in the Torah and the Gospel in past centuries—and even today—is the default for people who are not Jews or Christians.

905 Even those who said that the reference in the verse is to the Psalms of David did not suggest they knew where it was borrowed from. This is why there is a difference between exegetes in the meaning of Zabūr before they even discussed whether it is Psalms 37:29 that is referred to by Anbiyā' 105 in the Qur'an.

FOURTH POSSIBILITY: THE TEACHERSHIP OF THE IRONMONGER FROM ROME

Given we have established that the position stating Muhammad ﷺ studied the Torah and Bible with the People of the Book is problematic, it is incredulous to then see the prestige of this supposed education attributed to a Roman ironmonger, which is what some contemporaries of this Prophet ﷺ claimed. This fourth possibility is rejected for a number of reasons:

1. This person known as Jabr was a Christian ironmonger from Rome who could read and write. However, he was at heart a layman who only knew lies about the Scripture. He was a non-Arab whose reading was not comprehensible to Muhammad ﷺ—or anybody from his people. So, how could it be possible that this non-Arab layman was the teacher of Muhammad ﷺ, who had opened up his book full of the subtle religious secrets of the Jewish and Christian faiths and—on top of that—exposed what the People of the Book had kept concealed from the people? Is it possible that ignorance (personified by this ironmonger) had a favour over knowledge (personified by the Prophet ﷺ)? Was this ironmonger anything other than a common youngster? In fact, would the Christian laity of today—in spite of all the material that is available—know all the beliefs and stories contained in their Holy Scriptures?⁹⁰⁶ If the answer is no—which is the case—then would it be right for us to ascribe all the knowledge of the Qurʾān to a Christian layman in the 7th century? Does it make any sense to attribute all of this vast knowledge to this young man?⁹⁰⁷
2. Had Jabr been the teacher of Muhammad ﷺ, he would not have flinched in letting the Quraysh know, as this would have secured him some favours with the enemies of this Prophet. His followers had started to increase, and this was a threat to the interests of those within this Arabian tribe who were profiting otherwise. Those who were against him had also thought of assassinating him, as they were

906 Statistics reveal that only 14% of Americans know the Ten Commandments of the Torah. See (Cureton).

907 See (Darāz, *Al-Nabaʾ al-ʿAẓīm*, 2005/1426 AH), pp. 63-66.

unable to come up with an effective way to bury his call to Islam and stem its spread.

3. The statement of the polytheists ‘No one is teaching him except a human’ (Qur’an, 16:103) did not arise because the Quraysh actually believed that this youngster from Rome was dictating to Muhammad ﷺ with regard to what he was calling towards. Rather, they made up this claim as they knew that the message of Muhammad ﷺ—especially in relation to the stories of past Prophets and the histories of previous nations—could not have possibly emanated from an unlettered Arab, and that Muhammad ﷺ must have received these stories from someone who was fully aware of those nations. As we know that the polytheists denied the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, there was no option left for them other than attributing the edification of this man to someone who had encompassed those stories; in this situation, the closest people in the minds of the stubborn individuals would have been the scholars from the People of the Book. But they could not even claim that, as there were no Jewish or Christian scholars in Makkah. The only option the Makkans had left in order to grant a speck of plausibility to this lie was to claim the source of this knowledge was a Christian boy. This boy happened to fulfil two of their stipulations: a) he was a resident of Makkah, so it could be claimed that he met Muhammad and made him rehearse that information day and night, and b) he was not of their race and nation, so they could ascribe knowledge to him that they themselves did not know of. And this is exactly what happened—these trumped-up charges came from them out of a dire need to preserve their self-interests, not out of any genuine search for the truth.⁹⁰⁸
4. Orientalists themselves disregarded this linkage and gave it no thought, as it is extremely flimsy even in their view. We know that they are not the type to turn their backs on a lie against Islam if it carried even a shred of potential of being possibly correct, whether fully or partially.

908 See (Darāz, *Al-Naba’ al-‘Azīm*, 2005/1426 AH), p. 64.

What about Christianity?

Given that awareness of the stories from the People of the Book evidences the divinity of the Qur'an, the lack of knowledge of such stories from the People of the First Book—the Old Testament—is evidence to dispel the notion that the Gospel authors were divinely inspired, which is what Christians believe. Looking at how they borrowed from the Old Testament is enough to nullify the claim of divine inspiration, as they were—on many occasions—ignorant of the meanings of the Holy Scriptures, and even distorted them. This is an open and evident phenomenon in Matthew. The famous minister and academic William Barclay⁹⁰⁹ wrote, 'We shall see, again and again, that this is typical of Matthew's use of the Old Testament. He is prepared to use as a prophecy about Jesus any text at all which can be made verbally to fit, even though originally it had nothing to do with the question in hand, and was never meant to have anything to do with it. Matthew knew that almost the only way to convince the Jews that Jesus was the promised Anointed One of God was to prove that he was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. And in his eagerness to do that, he finds prophecies in the Old Testament where no prophecies were ever meant. When we read a passage like this, we must remember that, though it seems strange and unconvincing to us, it would appeal to those Jews for whom Matthew was writing.'⁹¹⁰

The cases of improper borrowing by the Gospel authors, due to their ignorance of the Old Testament or their distortion of it, are many. We will suffice with the mention of some examples here.

909 Translator's note: William Barclay (1907-1978). Scottish author and Church of Scotland minister. He was Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at Glasgow. He wrote a popular set of commentaries on the New Testament.

910 (Barclay, 2001), 1/41-42.

1. NAZARETH AND THE NAZARENE

Matthew reads: ‘And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the Prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.’⁹¹¹

The Old Testament did not prophesise that Jesus, the King, would be Nazarene. This is a deception of sorts from the author of the Gospel of Matthew, who did his level best to establish that the Old Testament prophesised the coming of Jesus . The objections to this alleged prophecy are many, which include the following:

1. Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament at all. This is acknowledged by the following footnote in *The New American Bible*, ‘The town of Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, and no such prophecy can be found there.’⁹¹²
2. There are no references in the Old Testament which support what the author of the Gospel of Matthew claims. William Barclay acknowledged this fact by stating, ‘Matthew has set us an insoluble problem, for there is no such text in the Old Testament. In fact Nazareth is never mentioned in the Old Testament. No one has ever satisfactorily solved the problem of what part of the Old Testament Matthew has in mind.’⁹¹³
3. We do not know the source of the quoted text. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, John Fenton declared, ‘The source of this prophecy is not known.’⁹¹⁴ St John Chrysostom admitted that this prophecy is not present in the Old Testament. He went on to baselessly assume that this prophecy was in one of the lost scriptures.⁹¹⁵
4. It is doubtful whether Nazareth was even established in the era of Jesus.⁹¹⁶

⁹¹¹ Matthew 2:23.

⁹¹² Translator’s note: (Bible Gateway, 2021).

⁹¹³ (Barclay, 2001), p. 46.

⁹¹⁴ (Fenton, 1963), p. 51.

⁹¹⁵ (Chrysostom, 1844).

⁹¹⁶ (Salm, 2008).

5. The oldest reference to Nazareth outside the Bible is by Eusebius in the 4th century, quoting from Sextus Julius Africanus⁹¹⁷ in the beginning of the 3rd century. However, the account given by Africanus does not geographically correspond to the description of Nazareth provided in the Gospels, as it is a town, not a city. Additionally, it is in Judea, which is in the southern region of Palestine, not in Galilee towards the north.⁹¹⁸
6. The Greek text of Matthew 2:23 describes Nazareth as *πολις* (*polis*) ‘city’. It is improbable that the early historians and specialists in urban studies would have remained aloof from a bustling city.
7. A number of Christians have attempted to conceal the error in the Gospel of Matthew by claiming that the prophecy is in Isaiah: ‘A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.’ In Hebrew, the term for Branch is “*Netser*- נֹצֵר”.⁹¹⁹ Our answer is that a similitude in wording is of no help to Christians, as ‘Branch’ is different from ‘Nazareth’, which is indicative of a city. The prophecy cannot be read as ‘Jesus being born in Nazareth so that it would be named “Branch”’.
8. The author of the Gospel of Matthew thought that the Prophets τῶν προφητῶν (*tōn prophētōn*) ‘the Prophets’ (plural) had prophesised about Nazareth. Yet, the term ‘Branch’ only came in Isaiah.
9. The author of the Gospel of Matthew wrote Nazareth as Ναζαρετ (*Nazaret*) with the Greek letter ζ (*z*). However, the term Branch uses the Hebrew letter *tsade* (*Sādē*, *Sādi*). Olshausen⁹²⁰ said, ‘The derivation of the name from נֹצֵר (*Netser*) “bush; shrub” is incorrect, since the ζ corresponds to י.’⁹²¹

917 Translator’s note: Sextus Julius Africanus (160-240). Greek Christian traveller and historian.

918 ‘Nazara and Cochaba, villages of Judea’ (Ναζάρων καὶ Κωχαβα κωμῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν). See (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*Church History*), 1890) 1.7.14, p. 39.

919 Isaiah 11:1.

920 Translator’s note: Hermann Olshausen (1796-1839). German theologian and New Testament exegete.

921 (Olshausen, Ebrard, & Wiesinger, 1857-1859), 1/195.

2. VIRGIN OR YOUNG WOMAN?

Matthew states, ‘All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the Prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).’⁹²²

Here, the author of the Gospel of Matthew makes reference to the passage in Isaiah: ‘Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.’⁹²³

The problems associated with this prophecy are numerous:

1. The Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 states young woman (*ha‘almā*-הַעַלְמָה), not virgin (*habətolā*-הַבְּתוּלָה). This is why the most important contemporary English translations like *The New American Bible* and *The Revised Standard Edition* have translated it as ‘young woman’. One indicator that the term *‘almā*—with the Hebrew definite particle ה (*Hə*) removed—means a woman who is young in age (regardless of virginity or not) is that its masculine form “עֶלֶם-*‘elem*” is used twice in the Old Testament, which has been rendered in all English translations as young man or boy⁹²⁴, not virgin.
2. By the testimony of the Gospels themselves, nobody ever called Jesus ‘Immanuel’.
3. The passage in Isaiah has no connection with the prophecy that would be fulfilled centuries later. Rather, the sign is connected to King Ahaz, whereby a young woman (not a virgin) would give birth to a child whom Ahaz would name Immanuel, as a sign of God’s assistance of him in the war with the kingdoms of Northern Israel and Syria: ‘Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.” Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He

922 Matthew 1:22-23.

923 Isaiah 7:14.

924 See 1 Samuel 17:56 and 20:22.

will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right...”⁹²⁵

4. How can the prophecy be about Jesus the deity when the passage concludes with this: ‘...for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.’⁹²⁶ How can Jesus grow in knowledge when he is God?

925 Isaiah 7:10-15.

926 Isaiah 7:16.

3. IS THE SON ISRAEL OR JESUS?

Matthew states, ‘So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the Prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”’⁹²⁷

The author of the Gospel of Matthew makes reference to Hosea: ‘When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.’⁹²⁸ This passage has no connection to the travel to Egypt and the return to Jerusalem attributed to Jesus—for a number of reasons:

1. Linguistically and contextually, the passage of Hosea has no connection to the prophecies of the future. Rather, it contains information about the past: ‘When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realise it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them. Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent?’⁹²⁹
2. The author of the Gospel of Matthew fell into a comical mistake that was effectively explained by the New Testament Studies scholar Robert J. Miller, in his book *Helping Jesus Fulfill Prophecy*. He says, ‘It is confusing when Matthew tells us that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy “I called my son out of Egypt” (Hos 11:1) by fleeing toward Egypt (Matt 2:15). The prophecy refers to the exodus, in which Egypt is the place of slavery and death, whereas in Matthew’s story Egypt is the place of safety.’⁹³⁰
3. The wording of the passage is clear in that it is connected to the Lord taking the Children of Israel out from Egypt, during the

927 Matthew 2:14-15.

928 Hosea 11:1.

929 Hosea 11:1-5.

930 (Miller, 2017), p. 119.

period of Moses ❧. Jesus had no influence over this event. The scholar and priest W. D. Davies⁹³¹ said, ‘The application of Hos. 1:11 to Jesus inevitably seems to us gratuitous. In its original context the verse unambiguously refers to Israel...’⁹³² This is so clear that the conservative author Pierre E. Bonnard⁹³³ wrote, ‘Matthew misappropriated the text from its historical context.’⁹³⁴

4. The ancient understanding of Hosea 11:1 was settled on the fact that it is related to the Children of Israel, not Jesus. The Greek Septuagint puts it like this: ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλεσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ (ex Aigypou metekalesa ta tekna autou) ‘I called my son from Egypt’, i.e., the children of Israel, or Jacob ❧.

931 W. D. Davies (1911-2001). British theologian and scholar. His focus was on Judaism’s influence on Christianity. His works include *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*.

932 (Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2004), 1/263.

933 Translator’s note: Pierre E. Bonnard (1867-1947). French Christian theologian.

934 (Bonnard, 2002), p. 29.

4. 'HERE IS MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN'

Matthew states, 'But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. He warned them not to tell others about him. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the Prophet Isaiah: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope."⁹³⁵

The author of the Gospel of Matthew stated that the passage found in Isaiah 42:1-4 is connected to the Church's Christ. The passage in question states: 'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on Earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.'⁹³⁶ This claim is rejected from a number of angles:

1. Isaiah states *ʔ27* ('*abdi*'). This term in Hebrew is the same as Arabic, written with the same letters and carrying the same meaning of 'my servant'. Yet, Christ according to Christians is a god.
2. The appointed one is supported by God to complete His message. But according to Christians, Christ is completely divine.
3. The appointed one would not be fatigued until he establishes the truth on Earth. Yet, the Church's Christ was overpowered by his enemies, who then crucified him. With these measures, they in fact broke him.
4. The author of the Gospel of Matthew distorted the original text in more than one section. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, D. A. Hagner writes, 'Although the text of the quotation is

935 Matthew 12:14-21.

936 Isaiah 42:1-4.

in agreement with the LXX at a few points, for the most part it must be described as non-Septuagintal. On the other hand, it does not follow the Hebrew Masoretic Text closely either. Matthew may well have formed the translation from sources available to him (e.g., the Targums) or produced his original translation (so Davies-Allison) in order to suit his own purposes.⁹³⁷

John Fenton also censured the author of the Gospel of Matthew. He wrote, ‘This is the longest New Testament quotation in Matthew and it has been shown that Matthew did not follow any one text of Isa. 42.1-4 (in Hebrew or in Greek) but drew upon several, according as they fitted into his purpose, which was to show the fulfilment of the prophecy in Jesus and his Church... Matthew has omitted two lines from Is. 42.4, but retained the last line, because it fitted his purpose.’⁹³⁸

937 (Hagner, 2002), p. 336.

938 (Fenton, 1963), p. 195.

5. BETHLEHEM IS EPHRATH

Matthew states, ‘When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where Jesus was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the Prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”’⁹³⁹

The author of the Gospel of Matthew borrowed two passages:

- ‘But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.’⁹⁴⁰
- ‘In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, “You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall become their ruler.”’⁹⁴¹

The borrowing here is influenced by the Greek Septuagint, not the Hebrew text. Some observations on the odd nature of this supposed Messianic prophecy are as follows:

1. The author of the Gospel of Matthew attributes this prophecy to του προφητου του (prophētou) ‘the Prophet’ in the singular form, even though it actually refers to two Prophets.
2. In 2 Samuel 5:2, the Lord said to David that he would look over the Children of Israel, and that he would be their leader. This text is not a prophecy on the awaited Messiah; it is rather directed at Prophet David ☩.
3. Jesus was not a leader of the Children of Israel. John states, ‘He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.’⁹⁴² Jesus said of himself, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were,

939 Matthew 2:3-6.

940 Micah 5:2.

941 2 Samuel 5:2.

942 John 1:11.

my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.⁹⁴³

4. Christians believe that Jesus is God, and that he is one component of the Trinity. However, we read the following in Micah: 'He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.'⁹⁴⁴ The person spoken of here moves with the help of the Lord and the magnificence of his God.
5. Though the larger portion of the prophecy is taken from Micah 5:2, Matthew distorts the text. The scholar and priest R. T. France⁹⁴⁵ said, 'The text cited differs considerably from the Hebrew and other known versions of Micah 5:2.'⁹⁴⁶ Ulrich Luz⁹⁴⁷ echoed this by saying, 'The wording of the quotation differs from all known forms of the text of Mic 5:1.'⁹⁴⁸ W. D. Davies⁹⁴⁹ wrote, 'The quotation follows neither the LXX nor the MT of Mic. 5.2. The differences are in fact sufficient to tempt one to speak of an "interpretation" instead of a "quotation" of Scripture. The text has been freely altered by Matthew in order to make it best serve his ends.'⁹⁵⁰ Other discrepancies include:

943 John 18:36.

944 Micah 5:4.

945 R. T. France (1938-2012). Scholar with a focus on New Testament studies. He supervised a number of translations of the Bible and has numerous critical notes on the Gospels.

946 (France, 1985), p. 88.

947 Ulrich Luz (1938-2019). Swiss theologian. He taught at International Christian University in Tokyo, then at Göttingen and Bern. He has a number of studies on the Gospel of Matthew.

948 (Luz, 1989), p. 130.

949 Translator's note: William David Davies (1911-2001). Welsh Congregationalist minister and Professor of Religion. He lectured in various institutions in the UK and America.

950 (Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2004), 3/242.

It reads: 'Matthew's citation may seem "a hotch-potch of misquotation and irrelevance" (Maccoby (v), p. 45), a presentation of OT words which have, without regard for original context (cf. 2:23 and 13:35), been imposed upon a piece of fiction. Here we see Matthew's "over-ingenious manner of citing holy scripture" (C.C. Torrey), his "sovereign freedom in reworking and combining OT citations to make them fit NT events" (J. P. Meier). Less kind is Beare, p. 527: "Matthew botched it badly."

- Matthew changing Ephrathah (*Ifrātā*) to Judea.
- Matthew changing ‘you are small among the clans of Judah’ (*tsa^cir lehiut b’alfie Yəhudā*) to ‘...by no means least among the rulers of Judah’.
- Matthew changing ‘clans’ (*’alfie*) to ‘rulers’.
- Matthew omitting ‘for me’ (*lī*).

Though the author of the Gospel of Matthew normally used the Septuagint for the Old Testament, we can only find 8 words out of the 22 from the Septuagint text for Micah.⁹⁵¹

951 (Brown R. E., *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1993), 1/186.

6. THE KING RIDING ON AN ASS AND A FOAL

Matthew states, 'As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the Prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.''"⁹⁵²

The passage referred to here is in Zechariah: 'Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'⁹⁵³

The manner in which the author of the Gospel of Matthew understands Zechariah is peculiar. He thinks that the person spoken of is a man who will ride a foal and an ass, as if he were orchestrating an animal circus. Nevertheless, the assumed prophecy is incorrect, for a number of reasons:

1. The prophecy states that the king to come will be victorious. The following passage adds: 'His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the Earth.'⁹⁵⁴ However, Christians believe that Jesus was crucified and did not rule Jerusalem for a single day.
2. What Jews have understood from Zechariah 9:9 for a long time is that it is speaking of one animal: an ass's foal. The "wāw" in the Hebrew source text is explicative, not conjunctive. 'The Semitic parallelism of MT Zech 9.9 requires that the "donkey" and the "colt, the foal of a donkey", be the same animal.'⁹⁵⁵ This is why one scholar accused the author of the Gospel of Matthew of being unfamiliar with the nature of Hebrew poetry.⁹⁵⁶

952 Matthew 21:1-5.

953 Zechariah 9:9.

954 Zechariah 9:10.

955 (Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2004), 3/120.

956 (McCasland, 1961), p. 145.

3. Mark 11:7 states that Jesus rode only one foal in this story. This reveals that the author of the Gospel of Matthew distorted Mark in order for him to concur with his odd understanding of Zechariah 9:9. Luke 19:29-40 agrees with Mark in its narration, which is also what the author of the Gospel of John chose in 12:12-15. Indeed, this passage has exhausted Christians, for as Lee Martin McDonald⁹⁵⁷ said, 'It is an interesting and challenging text for any interpreter.'⁹⁵⁸

957 Lee Martin McDonald (b. 1942). President Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies of Acadia Divinity School at Nova Scotia, and Adjunct Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. His works include *The Biblical Canon*.

958 (McDonald, 2009), p. 214.

7. SILVER AND THE POTTER'S FIELD

Matthew states, 'So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the Prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."⁹⁵⁹

This is problematic for many reasons:

1. Critics agree that Matthew did not borrow from Jeremiah. Conservative Christian scholars then disagree over the interpretation of the issue:
 - ♦ In the 3rd century, Origen wrote that one of the scribes erred by placing 'Jeremiah' instead of 'Zechariah', or that the text referred to is a secret work of Jeremiah, which is different from the canonical book.⁹⁶⁰
 - ♦ Eusebius said, 'But as this passage is not found in the prophecy of Jeremiah, you must consider whether it is to be supposed that they have been removed through any evil intention, or whether there has been an error in copying, through the mistake of some careless transcriber of the Holy Gospels, who wrote Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, where he ought to have copied, "Then was fulfilled that which was written by Zechariah the Prophet," and instead of, "And they cast them into the house of the Lord, into the furnace," wrote in error, "And they bought with them the field of the potter."⁹⁶¹

959 Matthew 27:5-10.

960 (Origen, *Comm. ser. Matt.*) 117.

961 (Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 1920), 10.4.13.

- ◆ Hieronymus (Jerome) was of the position that the prophecy was taken either from a non-canonical text attributed to Jeremiah⁹⁶², or that it was taken from Zechariah with some imprecisions.⁹⁶³
- ◆ Augustine stated that the author of the Gospel of Matthew erred in his ascription of the prophecy to Jeremiah.⁹⁶⁴
- ◆ In his commentary on Zechariah, Luther says, ‘This chapter gives rise to the question, Why did Matthew attribute the text concerning the thirty pieces of silver to the Prophet Jeremiah, whereas it stands here in Zechariah? This and other similar questions do not indeed trouble me very much, because they have but little bearing upon the matter; and Matthew does quite enough by quoting a certain scripture, although he is not quite correct about the name, inasmuch as he quotes Prophetic sayings in other places, and yet does not even give the words as they stand in the Scripture. The same thing may occur now; and if it does not affect the sense that the words are not quoted exactly, what is to hinder his not having given the name quite correctly, since the words are of more importance than the name?’⁹⁶⁵

What has preceded underscores the fact that the author of the Gospel of Matthew erred in ascribing his borrowing to Jeremiah, though he did take from Zechariah. Any attempt to wriggle out of this quagmire without acknowledging that the author of this Gospel erred is pure deception.

2. Zechariah states, ‘And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter” – the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord.’⁹⁶⁶ This passage has no connection whatsoever to the story of Judas Iscariot’s betrayal of Jesus, or that he placed 30 pieces of silver in the hands of the chief priests, who purchased a potter’s field. The difference between the wording and the context of the two passages is quite substantial; this was explained in detail by Crawford Toy⁹⁶⁷.⁹⁶⁸

962 (Hieronymus, *Commentary on Matthew*, 2008), 27:10.

963 (Hieronymus, *To Pammachius: On the Best Method of Translating*, 1974), p. 7.

964 (Augustine, *Confessions*, 1844), 3.29.

965 (Keil, 1868), 2/337.

966 Zechariah 11:13.

967 Crawford H. Toy (1836-1919). Biblical scholar and Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages at Harvard.

968 (Toy C. H., 1888), p. 127.

W. D. Davies summarised the scholars' position vis-à-vis the conduct of the author of the Gospel of Matthew by stating the following: '[I]t is a mixture of misunderstood quotations and scrambled contexts (Maccoby, p. 45), presenting snippets from the Old Testament whilst ignoring their original context (e.g., 2/23 and 13/35), and has been predicated upon the foundation of a fictional story. We see in the doctrine of Matthew exaggeration in the testimonies of the Holy Writ (i.e., the Bible) (Torrey), and an arbitrary reformulating and combining of testimonies to make them correspond with the formulations found in the Books of the New Testament (Meyer). The least sympathetic of the critics was Pierre when he said, on page 527: "Matthew profoundly confused the issue."⁹⁶⁹

That the Qur'an is aware of reports carried in previous religious scriptures is evidence for its divinity. The Gospels' ignorance of the same is an indication of their non-divine basis.

969 (Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2004), 3/570.

Summary

- In numerous instances, the Qur'an emphasised—either explicitly or implicitly—that the stories of past Prophets and previous nations mentioned in its verses constitute a proof of its divinity, as there is no way the Prophet of Islam ﷺ could have known about their details.
- The Makkans knew there was no way for someone in Makkah—through directly accessing the Holy Scriptures—to acquire knowledge about the historical events that the Qur'an mentions.
- All direct and indirect historical testimonies are united in affirming that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was unlettered.
- Serious historical studies conducted by Christians in both the West and the East have affirmed that prior to Islam, Arabia was not known to have a Arabic translation of the Bible.
- Given that direct access to the Bible would have been impossible thanks to the lack of an Arabic translation and the unletteredness of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, the only option left for adversaries was to claim that a teacher must have dictated the knowledge of the People of the Book to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. This claim was fabricated simply in order to negate the divinity of its contents.
- On the Prophet of Islam ﷺ having a teacher, the four enumerated possibilities are weak and unsupported by any proper evidence.
- The fact that the authors of the Gospels were ignorant of the texts of the Old Testament, and that they distorted them in both meaning and wording, is evidence to negate the notion that the Gospel authors were divinely inspired.

Further reading

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SECTION 5

An Applied Study of Inimitability in the Imperceptible: The Story of Joseph



*﴿We relate to you, O Prophet, the best of stories through
Our Revelation of this Qur'an, though before this you were
totally unaware of them.﴾*

(Qur'an, 12:3)

*But test them all; hold on to what is good.*⁹⁷⁰

(Paul)



970 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

The Qur'anic story of Joseph ﷺ: Original? Or plagiarised?

A Muslim would say, 'Qur'anic stories are a clear proof for the divinity of the Qur'an. A detailed observation would fill the heart with conviction that it is impossible for the Prophet of Islam ﷺ to have fabricated stories from his own devices. The very nature of the Qur'anic stories prevents the notion that they are copied from the stories of its predecessors.

The Qur'an is free of historical errors, myths, and contradictions. It is in fact in a class of its own. No man in the 7th century could have produced anything like it. Putting aside the Qur'an's rhetorical and expressive inimitability, the environment was not conducive for even the type of information that the Qur'an brought forth.'

An adversary would say, 'Actually, Qur'anic stories are just a case of copying the stories of the Jews and Christians without any significant additions. It merely represents the adoption of all the myths of the ancients, alongside their mistakes and errors. An analysis would clearly underscore that the Qur'an copies stories without scrutiny.'

In response, I say the following:

The Qur'an and the Torah both share a detailed and expansive mention of the story of the Prophet Joseph ﷺ. As Missionaries and most Orientalists believe that Qur'anic borrowing from the scriptures of the People of the Book principally manifests itself in the genre of stories (i.e., from the viewpoint that these stories contain information and details that can only be known through either copying or divine Revelation, with the latter possibility being rejected by them), we—in the following pages—shall present a direct comparison between the story of Joseph ﷺ that is mentioned in the Qur'an and its counterpart in the Book of Genesis 37, 39, and 50. This will be a live and breathing illustration of the details and minutiae found in the narrative, as well as related historical issues.

We shall not be straying far from the texts of the two camps, and will instead scrutinise the texts as they are in their respective wordings. We shall analyse the events and the statements of the narrative's protagonists

and ultimately uncover the difference between the two narratives, thereby determining the scope of logical and historical feasibility in whether there was any Qur'anic borrowing from the Bible.

The significance of the story of Joseph lies in the fact that it has been presented in great detail in the Qur'an—it has in fact taken up the best part of a lengthy Qur'anic chapter. Likewise, Missionaries have used this chapter as the primary evidence in their claim that the Qur'an borrowed from the Bible.

So that we can make it easier for the reader to appreciate the Qur'an's originality in this regard, we shall compare the Qur'an and the Torah's constructs of the story of Joseph ﷺ from the following angles:

- Differences in the details of the story.
- The Qur'an correcting the mistakes found in the narrative of the Torah.
- The Qur'an avoiding the mistakes found in the narrative of the Torah.
- The Qur'anic narrative being free of contradictions plaguing the narrative of the Torah.
- The Qur'anic narrative's link to monotheism and the infallibility of Prophethood, as opposed to the narrative of the Torah.
- The plausibility of the Qur'anic narrative, as opposed to the narrative of the Torah.
- The difference between the Qur'anic narrative and the narrative of the Torah in the philosophy and lessons of the story.⁹⁷¹

Accordingly, would the comparison reveal elements of humanness within the Qur'an, proving that it was a case of replication from the Torah, only with some cosmetic adjustments added to suit the temperament of the new faith? Or would it reveal a fundamental shift in the story's theology, narrative methodology, and historical reality?

Before we start collating the differences, we should be cognisant of two core issues:

971 An important source that was of benefit to me in collecting these differences is Dr Muhammad Bayyūmī Mahrān's book, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.

1. In its discussion of the ancients, the inimitability of the Qur'an is principally based on the finding that it *corresponds* to the Bible, and not that it disagrees with it. One of the greatest ways in how the Qur'an proves itself to be inimitable is that it mentions the stories of the ancients such that the People of the Book attested to its accuracy through their Holy Scriptures. This is in spite of them knowing that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was unlettered. Such a finding then compels us to carefully study every instance where the Qur'an differs with the narrative of the Torah, as there would not be a conflict between the two except without a specific reason. In other words, the default is agreement.
2. Were we to accept the humanness of the Qur'an, we would also have to believe the following sequence of events:
 - i. The Prophet of Islam studied the narrative of the Torah of the story of Joseph and gained knowledge of its details, either by way of personal study or educational discussion.
 - ii. He then isolated himself from people in order to ponder, determine, and scheme.
 - iii. He then personally concocted, after much development and refinement, a new narrative for the story, with its own expressive style and historical detail.
 - iv. After much plotting and scheming, he announced the story to his Companions—in one go.

This is something a non-Muslim must reconcile with what they by now must know with regard to the lofty morals of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, as has been mentioned before.

Given that the materialistic and conspiratorial reading of the Qur'an has failed in its attempt to identify the source of the Qur'an's agreement and disagreement with the Torah, it is posited that the Qur'an's partial agreement and partial disagreement on the details in the Torah vis-à-vis the story of the Prophet Joseph ﷺ is evidence of its divinity.

Many angles for contemplation

Sūrah Yūsuf was sent down in a single episode of Revelation. In a unique expressive mould, the Qur'an fashioned the story of the Honourable Prophet after whom the chapter is named, his tribulation at the hands of his own family members who betrayed him, his enslavement by strangers, and women wanting to entrap him.

Can anybody's fair-mindedness allow them to imagine the highly odd scenario in which the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is personally fabricating these verses at ease, after studying the story of the Torah for a lengthy period, making omissions from it, adding material to it, toying around with the order of the narrative, and then giving it a fresh sequence? If you, without vacillation, do not have the temerity to believe that he was an extreme fraudster, then you simply cannot conclude that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ is to be censured in this regard. Given what we know about the morals of the Prophet of Islam, we already know that his close family, closest Companions, and even malevolent enemies from afar were all united in exonerating him of such an accusation.

A sceptic's befuddlement only multiplies when he learns of the nuances between the narratives of the Qur'an and the Torah. These differences mean that the Qur'anic story—which happens to also be a literary miracle from beginning to end—was fashioned in an incomparable style of storytelling, an unassailable presentation of theology, and a historical proficiency that is all-aware of the secrets of a long-lost past.

There are many points that speak to the differences between the two narratives. Therefore, there is no need to give yourself up to the claim that the Qur'anic story was borrowed until you have digested this material which explains why the Qur'an is different from the Bible. Otherwise, you should consider accepting the Qur'an's miracle in this regard and place yourself at the doors of safety from the whisperings of doubt.

1. The story of Joseph in the Torah comes across to be merely some disjointed sections within a larger story. Its events are told, one after

another, without leading the reader to some higher truth or greater message about how the Prophets spent their lives in calling others towards adopting monotheism and abandoning polytheism. The aim of the narrative of the Torah is reduced to the overcoming of an oppressed child against his brothers who were unjust to him and ended their brotherly connection with him.

On the other hand, the Qur'an within its narrative clearly points to monotheism, around which the lives of the Prophets, their core call, and the fuel of their movement pivoted. The Qur'anic verses showcase that Joseph عليه السلام was someone entangled in the heart of tribulation and the stranglehold of prison. And yet, he turns with all sincerity to the fellow inmates, wins over their hearts by interpreting each of their dreams, and invited them to the monotheism of God. He does so in an exhibition of live leadership and as a true role model, not with ornate but lifeless words. God says:

- 'Yūsuf replied, "I can even tell you what kind of meal you will be served before you receive it. This knowledge is from what my Lord has taught me. I have shunned the faith of a people who disbelieve in Allah and deny the Hereafter. I follow the faith of my fathers: Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb. It is not right for us to associate anything with Allah in worship. This is part of Allah's grace upon us and humanity, but most people are not grateful. O my fellow prisoners, are many different lords better, or Allah, the One, the Supreme? Whatever idols you worship instead of Him are mere names which you and your forefathers have made up—a practice Allah has never authorised. It is only Allah Who decides. He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the upright faith, but most people do not know.' (Qur'an, 12:37-40)
2. With the many names it mentions and the account details it offers, the length of the narrative of the Torah⁹⁷² detracts from the story's wisdom and admonishment. The detailed historical narrative takes away from the potential of lessons to be learned. On the other hand, in the Qur'anic narrative, admonishment and wisdom clearly manifest themselves. The Qur'an gives pointers to certain events and singles out small segments from Joseph's عليه السلام long career. The strategic absence of burdensome details such as lists of names, places, and times is a masterstroke. This fact has been directly alluded to in a number of verses in Sūrah Yūsuf:

972 The story in the Torah is almost three times longer than the Qur'anic story.

- ♦ ‘In their stories there is truly a lesson for people of reason. This message cannot be a fabrication, rather it is a confirmation of previous Revelation, a detailed explanation of all things, a guide, and a mercy for people of faith.’ (Qur’an, 12:111)
 - ♦ ‘We relate to you, O Prophet, the best of stories through Our Revelation of this Qur’an, though before this you were totally unaware of them.’ (Qur’an, 12:3)
 - ♦ ‘Indeed, in the story of Joseph and his brothers there are lessons for all who ask.’ (Qur’an, 12:7)
3. There is a complete absence of any mention of the Afterlife in the story of the Torah, as if the world itself is the abode for both action and recompense, that there is no ultimate outcome to which man would be returned to, and that there is no final abode after being tested on Earth. The Qur’an is unique in that it mentions the Afterlife and that it is the destination of every person alive who did good deeds:
- ♦ ‘This is how We established Yūsuf in the land, to settle wherever he pleased. We shower Our mercy on whoever We will, and We never discount the reward of the good-doers. And the reward of the Hereafter is far better for those who are faithful and are mindful of Allah.’ (Qur’an, 12:56-57)
4. The Torah shows Joseph , 17 years of age, perpetrating an obnoxious act that was harmful to his brothers, in which he enraged his father’s heart against them. The act in question was that he used to relay bad information about them to Jacob: ‘...and he brought their father a bad report about them.’⁹⁷³ This caused a number of rabbis to say some harsh words about Joseph in the exegetical works.⁹⁷⁴ This is completely non-existent in the Qur’an. Its strategic lack of mention of this detail underscores the link of infallibility to Prophethood, and the link of moral perfection to being a conveyor of a message on behalf of the Lord of the Worlds. This is because Prophethood at its core is a divine selection of a pure human.

973 Genesis 37:2.

974 (Goldman, 1986), p. 86.

5. The Torah mentions that Jacob was the one who asked Joseph to go to his brothers, who were tending to their flock near Shechem⁹⁷⁵, which is possibly Tell Balata, east of present-day Nablus. The Qur'an, on the other hand, sets out that Joseph's brothers were the ones who requested their father to allow Joseph to go with them, because their father feared for him due to their jealousy:
 - 'They said, "O our father, why do you not trust us with Yūsuf, even though we truly wish him well? Send him out with us tomorrow so that he may enjoy himself and play. And we really will watch over him.'" (Qur'an, 12:11-12)

The Qur'anic passage is thus congruent with the foresight of a father who was keen on looking after his son, whereas the passage in the Torah opposes this narrative and seemingly conflicts with the mindset of an affectionate and mindful father.

6. It is understood from Genesis that Judah was instrumental in how to get rid of Joseph ⁹⁷⁶. He proposed to his brothers that they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites for shekels. However, in the same book⁹⁷⁷, we see that Reuben was the prime instigator in throwing him into a well, and everyone agreed to that, after which he was taken by Midianite merchants.⁹⁷⁸

There is a similar case of discrepancy in relation to Joseph's sale to Poti-phar. In the beginning of the story, the sellers are a group of people from Midian⁹⁷⁹, whereas towards the end of the story, they are said to be Ishmaelites.⁹⁸⁰ This contradiction was acknowledged in the footnotes of the Catholic translation, *The New American Bible*, at 37:21-36. It states that Genesis 37:25-27 refers to the Jahwist source, which mentions that Judah was the one who proposed selling him to the Ishmaelites, whereas Genesis 37:21-24 and Genesis 37:28-36 refers to the Elohist source.⁹⁸¹

975 Genesis 37:12-16.

976 Genesis 37:26-28.

977 Genesis, 21:24.

978 See Genesis 37:28.

979 Genesis 37:36.

980 Genesis 39:1.

981 Translator's note: The footnote reads: 'The chapter thus far is from the Yahwist source, as are also vv. 25-28a. But vv. 21-24 and 28b-36 are from another source (sometimes designated the Elohist source). In the latter, Reuben tries to rescue Joseph, who is taken in Reuben's absence by certain Midianites; in the Yahwist

The Qur'an has no such contradiction.

7. The Torah shows Jacob  believing the lie of his sons after they had conspired against their brother, as well as his fall into despair and hopelessness after the conspiracy: 'He recognised it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.'⁹⁸²

The Qur'an, on the other hand, points to the doubt Jacob had in his sons after the conspiracy was carried out:

- 'They said, "O our father, we went racing and left Yūsuf with our belongings, and a wolf devoured him. But you will not believe us, no matter how truthful we are." And they brought his shirt, stained with false blood. He responded, "No. Your souls have tempted you to do something evil. So I can only endure with beautiful patience. It is Allah's help that I seek to bear your claims.'" (Qur'an, 12:17-18)

This is how a believer's heart is when it is filled with faith and enlightened by purity—he can sense with his heart things that are imperceptible to the senses. This is an honour bestowed by the Lord, which He grants to whom He wishes.

8. The Torah mentions that Jacob's sons presented their brother's bloodstained garment to their father; they did not mention how he was killed.⁹⁸³ The Qur'an, however, points out that Jacob's sons clearly claimed that the wolf killed their brother (Qur'an, 12:13-14, 17). This is more suited to the position which states that Joseph's brothers were seeking to excuse themselves, as opposed to sufficing with merely presenting their brother's bloodstained garment. This is especially the case given that wolves roamed freely in that part of the world. According to the Qur'an, before they went out with Joseph, their father had told them:
- 'He responded, "It would truly sadden me if you took him away with you, and I fear that a wolf may devour him while you are negligent of him.'" (Qur'an, 12:13)

source, it is Judah who saves Joseph's life by having him sold to certain Ishmaelites.'

982 Genesis 37:33-34.

983 Genesis 37:32-32.

9. The Torah states that the well in which Joseph was thrown was empty with no water.⁹⁸⁴ As for the Qur'an, it stated the opposite: 'And there came some travellers, and they sent their water-boy who let down his bucket into the well. He said, "Oh, what a great find—here is a boy."' (Qur'an, 12:19) This is the logical position, as travellers come to wells to fill up with water—they do not approach dry wells.
10. The Torah mentions that, when in Egypt, Joseph forgot about his father and brothers.⁹⁸⁵ This denotes that he had severed the rope of hope in ever meeting them again. The Qur'an states that, right from when his tribulation started whilst he was thrown into the well, God ﷻ revealed to Joseph he would meet them again:
 - ♦ 'And so, when they took him away and decided to throw him into the bottom of the well, We inspired him: "One day, you will remind them of this deed of theirs while they are unaware of who you are."' (Qur'an, 12:15)

The hope of deliverance and God's mercy was thus firmly set in the heart of Joseph, the chosen servant of God. This is why, towards the end of the story, Joseph said,

- ♦ "I am Yūsuf, and here is my brother. Allah has truly been gracious to us. Surely whoever is mindful of Allah and patient, then certainly Allah never discounts the reward of the good-doers." (Qur'an, 12:90)
11. The Torah mentioned that the one who purchased Joseph was 'Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's eunuchs, the captain of the guard'.⁹⁸⁶ This claim flies against the nature of the events here. How can Potiphar be one of Pharaoh's eunuchs, yet at the same time be captain of the guard and husband to one of the most beautiful women of Egypt? In fact, the Torah suggests that all the palace attendants were eunuchs, including the chief drinks attendant and the chief bread chef.⁹⁸⁷ It would seem that the impact of the Babylonian imprisonment and the environment in which the Jews had to live in there influenced the imaginations of the Torah

984 Translator's note: '...and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.' Genesis 37:24.

985 Genesis 41:51.

986 Genesis 39:1.

987 Genesis 40:2.

authors relating the events of this era. The Qur'an is free from this confusion found in the Torah. God ﷻ says:

- ♦ “Perhaps he may be useful to us or we may adopt him as a son.” (Qur'an, 12:21)

This suggests that the man was sterile and childless.

12. The Torah depicts the Prophet of God, Jacob, in the most deplorable of situations, the weakest state of faith, and utmost angered at God's decree and fate. Whenever a calamity would befall him, he would fall down in utter despair, and his heart and mouth would start spasming in objection to God's decree. Genesis states, “Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.” So his father wept for him.”⁹⁸⁸ He comes across as someone who is extremely weak in terms of faith, even before any such calamity. He says, ‘But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my grey head down to the grave in sorrow.”’⁹⁸⁹

As for Jacob in the Qur'an, he is portrayed as a role model for any person facing extremely difficult circumstances. You do not see him in any challenging situation without him turning to his Lord. He is resolute and does not bow to the destructive forces brought about by the calamitous event that struck him. When he lost his first son, he said,

- ♦ “So I can only endure with beautiful patience. It is Allah's help that I seek to bear your claims.” (Qur'an, 12:18)

When he lost his second son, he said:

- ♦ “So I am left with nothing but beautiful patience. I trust Allah will return them all to me. Surely He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.” (Qur'an, 12:83)

Marilyn Robinson Waldman⁹⁹⁰ said, ‘Jacob's roles differ, too. In the Qur'an, Jacob is an aid and mentor for Joseph, whose humanness and manipulability

988 Genesis 37:34-35.

989 Genesis 42:38.

990 Marilyn Robinson Waldman (1943-1996). Jewish American Orientalist.

are stressed as marks of his dependence on God. Through his existence and ability to read God's signs, others learn to understand God's signs as well. The Biblical Jacob is not a Messenger of God or an insightful mentor for Joseph; rather, he seems more a victim of circumstances, and more psychologically and emotionally expressive of that condition.⁹⁹¹

13. The Qur'an reveals that, when Jacob's sons returned and wanted to take their brother Benjamin (who was still with his father) on a second journey back to Egypt, Jacob ﷺ held on to the rope of trust in God ﷻ as he ordered them to take all necessary precautions:

- ♦ 'When Yūsuf's brothers returned to their father, they said, "O our father, we have been denied further supplies. So send our brother with us so that we may receive our measure, and we will definitely watch over him." He said, "Should I trust you with him as I once trusted you with his brother? Allah is the Best Protector, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful."... Ya'qūb said, "I will not send him with you until you give me a solemn oath by Allah that you will bring him back to me, unless you are totally overpowered." Then after they had given him their oaths, he concluded, "Allah is a Witness to what we have said." He then instructed them, "O my sons, do not enter the city all through one gate, but through separate gates. I cannot help you against what is destined by Allah in the least. It is only Allah Who decides. In Him I put my trust. And in Him let the faithful put their trust.'" (Qur'an, 12:63-67)

The image portrayed in the Torah is the opposite: 'Then their father Jacob said to them, "If it has to be that way, then do this: Take some of the best foods in our land in your packs. Give them to the man as a gift: some balm, some honey, spices, myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. Take twice as much money with you this time. Take back the money that was returned to you in your sacks last time. Maybe it was a mistake. And take Benjamin with you. Now leave and go to the man. I pray that God All-Powerful will cause the governor to be merciful to you. I pray that he will allow Simeon and Benjamin to come back with you. If I am robbed of my children, then I am robbed of them!"'⁹⁹²

She was a member of several academic bodies such as the American Academy of Religion, the American Society for the Study of Religion, and the American Institute of Iranian Studies.

991 (Waldman, 1985), p. 6.

992 Genesis 43:11-14.

So, Jacob here comes across as someone who is extremely attached to material means, to the extent that he spelt out in great detail the matter of the gifts. He then follows that up with a few small words in the hope that God places mercy in the heart of this man (Joseph). Note that the one beseeched for mercy here is Joseph; as for God, he suggests that He *ought* to create the means for that.

14. In the Torah, Jacob ﷺ appears to have lost all hope and resolve because of how he was afflicted in relation to his son: “Their father Jacob said to them, “You are robbing me of all my children. Joseph is gone. Simeon is gone. And now you want to take Benjamin away, too. Everything is against me.” Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put my 2 sons to death if I don’t bring Benjamin back to you. Trust him to my care. I will bring him back to you.” But Jacob said, “I will not allow Benjamin to go with you. His brother is dead. He is the only son left from my wife Rachel. I am afraid something terrible might happen to him during the trip to Egypt. Then I would be sad until the day I die.”⁹⁹³

However, the Qur’an depicts Jacob ﷺ to be full of hope despite the sting of pain—he did not lose hope in God’s mercy:

- ♦ ‘O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother. And do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah, for no one loses hope in Allah’s mercy except those with no faith.’ (Qur’an, 12:87)
15. From the beginning to the end of the story, the Qur’an portrays Joseph ﷺ as patient and of a firm heart, as he moved from one tribulation to another. Joseph ﷺ showcased every type of patience: patience in the obedience of God, patience in refraining from the disobedience of God, and patience in the painful decrees that God had willed. In heart and limb, he had submitted to the decree of God. He is an image of the fire of faith blazing in a manner only befitting a Prophet who is selected to convey a message from the Lord of the Worlds.

At the end of the story, the Qur’an focuses on explaining the greatest lesson from the narrative, which is the traveller’s motivation when facing tribulations in this world. That lesson is that the final outcome of patience is sweeter than honey, even if its path is infested by thorns. The highest

993 Genesis 42:36-38.

station of patience is beautiful patience (*ṣabr jamīl*), in which the afflicted person does not showcase his ordeal, but instead submits himself and his affair to his Lord.

The signposts of admonishment are absent, or are almost non-existent, in the narrative of the Torah, thus becoming a static stack of ancient events. The spiritual features of faith in Joseph's  image do not come to light. The story is almost restricted to the narrative portrayal, without even a faint light of faith offered therein.

16. The Torah states that the captain of the guard's wife seduced Joseph. Then when he ran from her and left his garment, '...she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed."⁹⁹⁴

The captain of the guard's wife says 'to make sport of us' (*lātsachek bānu* - לִצְחֹק בָּנוּ), where the affixed pronoun is plural, not singular. In his *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Genesis*, George Spurrell⁹⁹⁵ said that the captain of the guard's wife wanted to say here that Joseph seduced all the women in the household⁹⁹⁶, which is peculiar when considering the story's context. By granting her husband the opportunity to ask the other women in the house whether her claim was correct, the captain of the guard's wife was opening the door of doubt and exposing herself to scrutiny. Additionally, the same passage of the story is muddled up. In one place, it assumes that there was nobody in the house when the captain of the guard's wife was alone with Joseph⁹⁹⁷; on another occasion, it assumes that she shouted for help from those inside the house.⁹⁹⁸

As for the Qur'an, it bypasses all these contradictions by stating that when the wife of the captain of the guard seduced Joseph , the latter arrived. She then came to him to disprove the allegation against her by accusing Joseph  of wanting to commit the shameless deed with her. She immediately questioned her husband in an abrupt fashion about the punishment given to a person harming his family:

994 Genesis 39:14.

995 Translator's note: G. J. Spurrell (fl. 19th century). Lecturer in Hebrew studies, Semitic languages, and the Hebrew and Greek New Testament at Oxford and London.

996 See (Spurrell, 1896), p. 284.

997 See Genesis 39:11.

998 See Genesis 39:14.

- ♦ “They raced for the door and she tore his shirt from the back, only to find her husband at the door. She said, “What is the penalty for someone who tried to violate your wife, except imprisonment or a painful punishment?” (Qur’an, 12:25)
17. Only the Qur’an illustrates how God exonerated Joseph, as a result of the testimony of a family member of the captain of the guard’s wife:
- ♦ ‘Yūsuf said, “It was she who tried to seduce me.” A witness from her own family testified: “If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth and he is a liar. But if it is torn from the back, then she has lied and he is truthful.” So when her husband saw that his shirt was torn from the back, he said to her, “This must be an example of the cunning of you women. Indeed, your cunning is so great.’ (Qur’an, 12:26-28)

Likewise, the women who cut their hands exonerated him:

- ♦ “Allah forbid—we know nothing indecent about him.” (Qur’an, 12:51)

The Torah did not go further than merely mentioning that when the captain of the guard heard the story, ‘he burned with anger. Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.’⁹⁹⁹

18. The Qur’an portrays Joseph ﷺ as someone who was relying on his Lord, beseeching His protection in all of his matters, and turning to Him in all his affairs. As the tribulation of the woman—first in seeking him, then exerting her influence against him—befell Joseph ﷺ during his enslavement to her husband, he—with utmost humility and reverence to God, and in a plea for mercy—beseeched the One Who controls everything:
- ♦ ‘And if You do not turn their cunning away from me, I might yield to them and fall into ignorance.’ (Qur’an, 12:33)

999 Genesis 39:19-20.

- ♦ This is the utmost level of sincerity in beseeching the protection of the All-Powerful, the Almighty, Who in turn accepted his plea:
 - ♦ ‘So his Lord responded to him, turning their cunning away from him. Surely He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.’ (Qur’an, 12:34)
 - ♦ As for the Torah, it forgoes any mention of this great virtue. It comes across as if it is unable to pause, even for just a few moments, to issue some lesson or admonishment.
19. Only the Qur’an points out that Joseph ﷺ preferred prison over perpetrating the shameless deed. This was when he was given a choice of either letting the woman get what she wanted, or either he would be sent to jail which would devour his prime years:
- ♦ ‘Yūsuf prayed, “My Lord, I would rather be in jail than do what they invite me to. And if You do not turn their cunning away from me, I might yield to them and fall into ignorance.” So his Lord responded to him, turning their cunning away from him. Surely He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.’ (Qur’an, 12:33-34)
20. The Qur’an spells out the exoneration of Joseph ﷺ in clear terms. It made use of a good few verses to demonstrate that, such that any ill-thought would be warded off from the pure Prophet. The Torah could not spare an ample amount of space to spell this out, as if the exoneration of a Prophet, who is carrying the divine message of purity for his people, was insignificant.

In addition, only the Qur’an—and not the Torah—mentions the acknowledgement of the captain of the guard’s wife exonerating the man whose reputation she had publicly tarnished:

- ♦ ‘Then the Captain of the guard’s wife admitted, “Now the truth has come to light. It was I who tried to seduce him, and he is surely truthful. From this, Joseph should know that I did not speak dishonestly about him in his absence, for Allah certainly does not guide the scheming of the dishonest...”’ (Qur’an, 12:51-52)

This statement also serves as a reminder for those who turn away from the paths of peace: The doors of repentance are not shut, even if it means

repenting from fabricating lies against a Prophet and causing him harm with a lengthy multiyear imprisonment.

21. The orientalist Marilyn R. Waldman said, 'The clearest evidence of the Qur'an's totally different orientation is the role the sub-plot of the master's wife plays in the story as a whole and what it reveals of Joseph's character as a Messenger. This episode also marks the widest divergence from the Biblical telling and demonstrates how the Qur'an is making different use of available materials, no matter what their sources. As a result of what emerges from the Qur'an's use of this sub-plot, Joseph appears more dependent on God *Himself*, rather than on His plan, and less *invested* with the ability to carry out God's will on his own. In fact, this episode in the Qur'an has Joseph save another person, the wife, before saving himself, and thereby has him show himself even more to be the instrument of God.'¹⁰⁰⁰
22. The Torah describes the dream of Egypt's ruler as follows: 'After them, seven other ears of corn sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind.'¹⁰⁰¹ Scholars mention that the wind that flows in Egypt and causes fruits to dry are southerly desert winds.¹⁰⁰² As for easterly winds, they are in Palestine. Vis-à-vis the climate of Egypt, this error exposes the ignorance of the one who added this passage. George Spurrell said, 'The narrator here mentions the wind that was most destructive in Palestine; cf. Hos. 13, 15. Jon. 4, 8. Ez. 17, 10.'¹⁰⁰³

The Qur'an here does not fall into the same scientific error as the Torah.

23. The Torah is of the position that Pharaoh¹⁰⁰⁴ summoned a person to Joseph in prison to interpret his dream: 'So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.'¹⁰⁰⁵ He interpreted his dream for him, then he recommended to him to appoint a man with insight and wisdom to take charge of Egypt.¹⁰⁰⁶

1000 (Waldman, 1985), pp. 9-10.

1001 Genesis 41:6.

1002 (Wenham, 1998).

1003 (Spurrell, 1896), p. 291.

1004 The term 'Pharaoh' was not yet in use during this era.

1005 Genesis 41:14.

1006 Translator's note: See Genesis 41:33.

The image presented in the Qur'an is different (Qur'an, 12:45-48). The companion of Joseph, who had left prison, was the one who advised the king to send him to *Ṣiddiq*¹⁰⁰⁷, to learn from him the interpretation of the king's dream. Joseph did not go to the king; he only interpreted the dream. Not only that, but he also pointed out the solution that allowed the lands to deal with this tribulation, and he gave glad tidings of a year in which people would receive abundant rain, such that they would be able to press oil and juice. During all this time, he was still a prisoner (Qur'an, 12:49).

24. Only the Qur'an mentioned that Joseph—having interpreted the dream of Egypt's king and mapped out the safe and proper path out from the impending crisis—refused to take up the dangerous position in government that was offered to him. He rejected it out of a sense of honour and self-esteem so that the king and his men—in fact all people—could ascertain his moral uprightness and exonerate him from the allegations made in relation to the captain of the guard's wife. This was the reason why he remained in prison for a number of years:

- ♦ “Go back to your master and ask him about the case of the women who cut their hands. Surely my Lord has full knowledge of their cunning.” (Qur'an, 12:50)

Once the king was made aware of the reality of the situation, he was pleased and ordered his release from prison. Only then did *Ṣiddiq*, confident and self-composed as he was, put himself forward:

- ♦ ‘Yūsuf proposed, “Put me in charge of the store-houses of the land, for I am truly reliable and adept.” (Qur'an, 12:55)

This is how Joseph fulfilled his responsibility—with honesty and courage. He ultimately succeeded in anchoring the ship to the docking station of security and safety.

In the Torah, the issue is completely the opposite: He accepted the position immediately after he interpreted the king's dream and the king offered the position to him.¹⁰⁰⁸

25. Explaining a point of differentiation between the Qur'anic story and the story in the Bible in relation to how God's Will operates

1007 Translator's note: 'The Truthful'—an Islamic epithet for Joseph ﷺ.

1008 Genesis 41:37-46.

in the steering of events, Marilyn R. Waldman said, ‘God is ever-present in the narrative (of the Qur’an), his cosmic omnipresence thus underscored. As the brothers put Joseph into the pit, God reveals to him that someday he will tell them what they have done. Even the brothers’ jealousy is viewed as a sign. When the brothers bring back falsified evidence of what they have done, the father is suspicious and puts his trust in God, telling them that they have been tempted by “spirits.” The travellers who find Joseph try to hide him, but the Qur’an reminds us that God knows what they are doing. After Joseph is established in the buyer’s house, God reminds the listener again that He has established Joseph and is about to make him prosper according to His purposes.’¹⁰⁰⁹

26. The Torah says that when the seven-year famine hit: ‘And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.’¹⁰¹⁰ Both scientifically and historically, this is a baseless claim.

Scientifically, it is clear that the author did not understand that the scope of dry land was far greater than whatever he had in mind. It is absurd that people would travel to Egypt from the corners of Europe, or from the pole of the Earth, in order to acquire food during the famine. Aside from the fact that there were no means of mass communication back then that would have informed them of the food stockpiles in Egypt, it is natural that people struck by famine do not have the capacity to travel for months to acquire food, as they would not possess the means of travelling for such a duration to begin with.

Historically, it is not unequivocally established that the whole Earth was subject to famine in the era of Joseph ﷺ.

By contrast, the Qur’an does not fall into these scientific and historical errors.

27. The Torah states, ‘There was famine in all the other lands.’¹⁰¹¹ However, the Torah adds that Jacob told his sons, ‘Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh,

1009 (Waldman, 1985), p. 11.

1010 Genesis 41:57.

1011 Genesis 41:54.

some pistachio nuts and almonds.”¹⁰¹² This ultimately demonstrates that the famine had not hit them.

On the other hand, the Qur’anic text shows that the family of Jacob was almost penniless:

- ♦ ‘When they entered Yūsuf’s presence, they pleaded, “O Chief Minister, we and our family have been touched with hardship, and we have brought only a few worthless coins, but please give us our supplies in full and be charitable to us. Indeed, Allah rewards the charitable.” (Qur’an, 12:88)

It shows that the brothers were in hard times, with a few worthless coins (*biḍā‘ah muzjāh*). Zamakhsharī said, ‘*Muzjāh* is that which every merchant gives away, as they are uninterested in it and think nothing of it...’¹⁰¹³

28. In the Torah, it states that when Yūsuf returned the goods to his brothers without their knowledge, one of the brothers spotted this before reaching their father, Jacob: ‘At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. “My silver has been returned,” he said to his brothers. “Here it is in my sack.” Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?”’¹⁰¹⁴ After this, however, we read that all the brothers were surprised by this when they had returned to their father: ‘As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.’¹⁰¹⁵

The Qur’anic narrative is free from this contradiction. It mentions that the knowledge of this (i.e., the goods being returned) happened for all brothers in one go and in front of their father:

- ♦ ‘When they opened their bags, they discovered that their money had been returned to them. They argued, “O our father, what more can we ask for? Here is our money, fully returned to us. Now we can buy more food for our family. We will watch over

1012 Genesis 43:11.

1013 (Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ‘an Haqā’iq al-Tanzīl wa-‘Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta’wīl*, 2009/1430 AH), p. 528.

1014 Genesis 42:27-28.

1015 Genesis 42:35.

our brother, and obtain an extra animal-load of grain. That load can be easily secured.” (Qur’an, 12:65)

29. The Torah believes that Joseph bought out the entire land of Egypt—with all its people and contents—for the Pharaoh after starvation had overtaken the land.¹⁰¹⁶ This claim is in fact negated by history.

Most historians believe that the rule of the Hyksos¹⁰¹⁷ did not ever reach as far as Cusae¹⁰¹⁸ southwards, except for a brief occupation of the Pi-Hathor region by Apophis¹⁰¹⁹, who is perhaps the last person to carry this title. There is no real evidence that anyone else from the Hyksos achieved this. As for their receipt of taxes from Upper and Lower Egypt, there is scepticism surrounding this at the very least. This is because the viewpoint that believes in the occupation of the Hyksos over all lands is nothing other than a myth that was dispelled by the great tablet¹⁰²⁰ of King Kamose¹⁰²¹, which suggests that his fighters did not advance beyond Gebelein at all. This points to the notion that they were forced to secure their boundary at Khmun (near Hermopolis or El Ashmunein, which is now at the centre of Mallawi in Egypt).¹⁰²²

30. The Torah depicts Joseph ☞ as if he were a tool of vengeance and punishment against the Egyptians, since he leveraged the famine years to enslave them to the ruler and misappropriate their lands to him.¹⁰²³ Likewise, it claims that, when Joseph called his father and

1016 Genesis 47:13-26.

1017 Translator’s note: In Egyptology, Hyksos is a term designated for the foreign dynastic rulers of the 15th Dynasty of Egypt, circa BC 1650-1550.

1018 (Labib, 1936), p. 18.

Translator’s note: Known today as El Quseyya (al-Qūṣiyyah), in Egypt.

1019 Translator’s note: Apepi or Apophis (early 16th century BC). Ruler of Lower Egypt during the 15th Dynasty and the end of the Second Intermediate Period that was dominated by the Hyksos.

1020 Translator’s note: Known as the Carnarvon Tablet, named after Lord Carnarvon (1866-1923) who discovered it in 1908 at the entrance of a tomb near the mouth of the Deir el-Bahari valley.

1021 Translator’s note: Kamose (r. BC 1555-1550). The last Pharaoh of the Theban 17th Dynasty. His reign saw military action against the Hyksos, who had ruled much of Ancient Egypt.

1022 (Mahrān, *Ḥarakāt al-Taḥrīr fī Miṣr al-Qadīmah*, 1976), pp. 143-145.

1023 Genesis 47:20.

family, he promised to give them ‘the best of the land of Egypt’¹⁰²⁴, as if the natives had no right over their own land.

The Qur’an is free of this racist discourse which denigrates the Egyptians. It is free of projecting the halo of holiness on the Israelites. The mission assigned to the Prophets was all about mercy and bestowing the bounty of the divine message upon the people, not to bring about punishment or evil.

31. The Torah claims that Joseph  used to repeatedly swear by the life of the Pharaoh.¹⁰²⁵ This goes against the notion of Prophethood and a Prophet’s infallibility. The matter is made worse given that we know that this king was a polytheist. The Qur’an never mentions such a thing.
32. Through the personalities of Jacob and Joseph , the Qur’an showcases the beauty of thinking positively of God ¹⁰²⁶, its value in the heart of a believer, and the taste of sweetness after the bitterness of being tested. We see Jacob , even after the long years of separation from his son, spontaneously saying:
 - ♦ “I trust Allah will return them all to me. Surely He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.” (Qur’an, 12:83)

His belief in God was so immense that his hope was not confined to the safety of his second son who was taken away from him—this time under the allegation of theft—as well as his eldest son who remained in Egypt,

1024 Genesis 45:18.

1025 Genesis 42:9-16.

In the New Testament, there is a categorical prohibition on swearing—see Matthew 5:33-37 and Jacob 5:12.

1026 On the authority of Abū Hurayrah : The Prophet  said, ‘Allah Most High says, “I am near to the thought of My servant as he thinks about Me. I am with him as he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his heart, I also remember him likewise. If he remembers Me in an assembly, I remember him in an assembly that is better than his. If he draws near Me by a handspan, I draw near him by a forearm. If he draws near Me by the length of a forearm, I draw near him by an arm span. If he comes to Me walking, I come to him jogging.”’ Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Monotheism; and Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance, and Seeking Forgiveness.

but he was hopeful for even the first son he had lost all those years ago.¹⁰²⁷ None of this is in the Torah.

33. Marilyn R. Waldman said, 'The Torah is, moreover, a continuous, extended historical account. The Qur'ān contains very little narrated history (in fact, very little narration at all) and, in the standard order of the suras, is a disjunctive and discontinuous book of lessons, warnings, instructions, and exhortations. The Torah is written in expository prose; the Qur'ān, in compact, often elliptical, quasi-poetic style. The Qur'ānic story, like much of the narrative in the book to which it belongs, is less detailed and faster paced, one-third the length of the Biblical story. The Biblical story, approximately three times as long as the Qur'ānic, is, like its container, very detailed and frequently interrupted by narrative digressions and genealogical materials. Qur'ānic language presents itself as God's speech, verbatim; the Torah is not constructed throughout as God's quoted speech but rather as a reliable third-person narration of divine action.'¹⁰²⁸ This is an important point of distinction as it shows the purpose of the Qur'ānic narrative, its direct link in issuing an unequivocal message of faith to the reader, and its remoteness from wanting to present a narrative for the purposes of entertainment or amusement.

34. The Qur'an shows that the ultimate purpose of a believer is to seek the peace and bounties of Paradise. Listing the favours of God on him, we see the Prophet of God Joseph ﷺ saying,

- ♦ 'My Lord, You have surely granted me authority and taught me the interpretation of dreams. O Originator of the heavens and the Earth, You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Allow me to die as one who submits and join me with the righteous.' (Qur'an, 12:101)

This is the final destination of every person of good:

- ♦ 'And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be in the company of those blessed by Allah: the Prophets, the people of truth, the martyrs, and the righteous. What honourable company.' (Qur'an, 4:69)

¹⁰²⁷ (Munajjid M. S.).

¹⁰²⁸ (Waldman, 1985), p. 5.

er man who heralded, not Joseph . As such, it would appear that this other person was not aware of Joseph's discreetly devised plan, so when they were ready to go back, he said what came to his mind first about the disappearance of the king's measuring cup.¹⁰³⁴ Note that the Torah and the Qur'an agree that it was Joseph who placed one of the king's belongings¹⁰³⁵ in their provisions.

37. The notes on the Catholic translation *The New American Bible*, under Section 45:9-15, point out that the two passages found in Genesis 46:31-47:5¹⁰³⁶ refer to the Yahwist source, which mentions that Joseph was the one who, in his own name, summoned his father and brothers to Egypt. But Genesis 45:16-20¹⁰³⁷—which refers to the Elohist source—mentions that it was Pharaoh who invited the family of Joseph to emigrate to Egypt.

1034 (Sa'c̣dī, 2002/1423 AH), pp. 402-403.

1035 The Torah states that Joseph ordered that a silver bowl be placed in the caravan of Binyamin, his brother.

1036 Translator's note: 'Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.' When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians." Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen." He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?" "Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were." They also said to him, "We have come to live here for a while, because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen." Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you..."

1037 Translator's note: 'The news reached Pharaoh's house: "Joseph's brothers have come." Pharaoh and his officials were pleased. So Pharaoh told Joseph: "Say to your brothers: 'This is what you shall do: Load up your animals and go without delay to the land of Canaan. There get your father and your households, and then come to me; I will assign you the best land in Egypt, where you will live off the fat of the land.' Instruct them further: 'Do this. Take wagons from the land of Egypt for your children and your wives and bring your father back here. Do not be concerned about your belongings, for the best in the whole land of Egypt shall be yours.'"

38. The Torah mentions¹⁰³⁸ that Joseph ﷺ and his brothers lived in Rameses. This is a historical error because the word ‘Rameses’ was not used before the 19th Dynasty (BC 1307-1194) and is not from the period of the Hyksos (BC circa. 1725-1575), i.e., the era of Joseph ﷺ.¹⁰³⁹ The Catholic *New American Bible* acknowledges this historical error in its notes on Genesis 47:11.¹⁰⁴⁰
39. The Torah states that Joseph dreamt that the Sun, the Moon, and eleven stars prostrated to him, and when he related this dream to his father, he rebuked him: ‘When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?”’¹⁰⁴¹ It is inferred from the Torah itself that Joseph’s mother had passed away some considerable time before Jacob and his sons emigrated to Joseph in Egypt, after he had become influential within the circles of the king of Egypt.¹⁰⁴² Here, the Torah points out its own error: There would be no point to the Prophet Joseph’s dream—which in reality is a vision of truth—given that his mother died before he came out on the other side of his tribulation.

On the other hand, the Qur’anic story’s perfection and congruence in this same place is apparent. It starts the story off saying:

- ♦ ‘We relate to you, O Prophet, the best of stories through Our Revelation of this Qur’an, though before this you were totally unaware of them. Remember when Joseph said to his father, “O my dear father, indeed I dreamt of eleven stars, and the Sun, and the Moon. I saw them prostrating to me.”’ (Qur’an, 12:3-4)

and it ends with God’s ﷻ statement:

- ♦ ‘Then he raised his parents to the throne, and they all fell down in prostration to Yūsuf, who then said, “O my dear father, this is

1038 Genesis 47:11.

1039 (Mahrān, *Banū Isrā’īl—Al-Ḥadārah: Al-Nubuwwah wa al-Anbiyā’*, 1999/1419 AH), 3/111.

1040 ‘The name Rameses, however, is an anachronism, since this royal name did not come into use before the end of the 14th century B.C., long after the time of Joseph’ (Bible Gateway, 2021).

1041 Genesis 37:10.

1042 See Genesis 35:18.

the interpretation of my old dream. My Lord has made it come true...” (Qur’an, 12:100)

Here, the Qur’an corrected the error of the Torah in its contradiction that the dream was indicative that Joseph’s mother would remain alive until she met him, with political authority vested in him.

40. Only the Qur’an points out that the first dream was achieved, towards the end of Joseph’s story with his father and his brothers:

- ♦ ‘When they entered Yūsuf’s presence, he received his parents graciously and said, “Enter Egypt, Allah willing, in security.” Then he raised his parents to the throne, and they all fell down in prostration to Yūsuf, who then said, “O my dear father, this is the interpretation of my old dream. My Lord has made it come true. He was truly kind to me when He freed me from prison, and brought you all from the desert after Satan had ignited rivalry between me and my siblings. Indeed my Lord is subtle in fulfilling what He wills. Surely He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.” (Qur’an, 12:99-101)

This is how the story appears as one coherent piece. Its beginning builds up to its ending, and its initial segments are connected to its final segments. Additionally, this is how the truthfulness of God’s promise manifests for His pious servants.

Conversely, towards the end of its account, the Torah disregards the dream of Joseph ﷺ that is found in the beginning of the story, thus rendering the dream inconsequential.

41. It is understood from the phrases ‘young son’¹⁰⁴³ “*yeled zākenīm* *kātān*-ילד זקנים קטן” and ‘boy’¹⁰⁴⁴ “*hanaʿar*-הנער” that Benjamin was a child when he travelled with his brothers to Egypt. It is, however, inferred from elsewhere in Genesis that he had ten children shortly after the previous event.¹⁰⁴⁵ The Qur’an contains no such contradiction.

1043 Genesis 44:20.

1044 Genesis 44:22.

1045 Genesis 46:21.

42. Genesis states that Jacob was buried in the field of Machpelah¹⁰⁴⁶, whereas it is understood from Acts that Jacob was buried in Shechem.¹⁰⁴⁷ The Qur'an does not have this contradiction.
43. Genesis states that the Lord promised Jacob that He would not call him 'Jacob', but would rather refer to him only by the name of 'Israel'.¹⁰⁴⁸ However, elsewhere in Genesis, it is mentioned that the Lord called out to him by saying 'Jacob! Jacob!'¹⁰⁴⁹ The Qur'an does not have this contradiction.
44. Genesis reads that the Lord promised Jacob that He would take him to Egypt, then He would return him.¹⁰⁵⁰ However, it is understood from elsewhere in Genesis that Jacob died in Egypt.¹⁰⁵¹ The Qur'an does not have this contradiction.
45. Ten children of Benjamin—who was the son of Jacob—are mentioned in Genesis¹⁰⁵², whereas their number in the Numbers¹⁰⁵³ is 4. As for their number in 1 Chronicles, it is 3¹⁰⁵⁴, whereas it is 5 elsewhere in the same.¹⁰⁵⁵ What is more odd is that these lists do not share a single name. There are no such contradictions in the Qur'an.
46. Genesis and Exodus state that the number of Jacob's family members who travelled with him to Egypt were 70¹⁰⁵⁶; Acts states that they were 75.¹⁰⁵⁷ The Qur'an does not comprise of any such contradiction.

1046 Genesis 50:13.

1047 Acts 7:16.

1048 See Genesis 32:28 and 35:10.

1049 See Genesis 46:2.

1050 See Genesis 46:4.

1051 See Genesis 47:28-29.

1052 See Genesis 46:21.

1053 See Numbers 26:38-40.

1054 See 1 Chronicles 7:6.

1055 See 1 Chronicles 8:1-2.

1056 See Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:5.

1057 See Acts 7:14.

47. Genesis states that Jacob informed Joseph that the Lord had previously appeared to him.¹⁰⁵⁸ The Qur'an negates the Lord assuming a body or revealing Himself to the creation in this world.
48. Genesis states, "Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days. When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favour in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, 'My father made me swear an oath and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan.'" Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'" ¹⁰⁵⁹

The Egyptologist Musā Bayyūmī Mahrān says, "This is in fact an error. The period of embalming lasts for 70 days, not 40 days; and that too is at its cheapest and most affordable level, which is done only to the poorest of people. There are three types of embalming. If the materials used and the method of embalming are different, then all these factors can come together to allow the period of embalming to last for 70 days."¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁸ See Genesis 48:3.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Genesis 50:2-5.

¹⁰⁶⁰ (Mahrān, *Banū Isrā'īl—Al-Ḥadārah: Al-Nubuwwah wa al-Anbiyā'*, 1999/1419 AH), 3/228-229.

Revelation? Or quotation?

We are faced here with a story from the ancients. Its existence in the Qur'an cannot be explained except through either one of two options: education, or Revelation. For a non-Muslim to establish any evidence in favour of the former, he must prove a number of points:

- This story was the brainchild of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. He sequenced the passages of its chapter and adorned its verses, before going out to his people in order to inform them that the story of Joseph ʿalayh al-salam was revealed to him from Heaven.
- ♦ This assumption is in conflict with the honesty of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, and his aversion to lying even when dispensing humour, which is well established from him. How can we therefore reconcile the fame he earned for being honest and trustworthy with this alleged deed of actively scheming to construct a career based on lying?
- The Prophet of Islam ﷺ was aware of the story of the Torah in either its Hebrew wording or its Arabic translation, as both narratives are very similar in wording.
- ♦ This is contradicted by the fact that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ did not know Hebrew, and that there was no Arabic translation of the Torah during the Prophethood era.
- The Prophet of Islam ﷺ strove hard to alter the story of the Torah in order for it to align with the objectives of the Qur'an. For this, he perpetrated omissions and interpolations in the Torah, brought about changes in its primary objectives, and—after much consideration and deliberation—gave the story a new lease of life.

- ♦ This conflicts with the basic fact that one would need extensive knowledge and experience for this, which the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was simply not known for. Likewise, the concoction of religious stories was not part of the culture of the Quraysh to begin with.
- The Prophet of Islam ﷺ picked up on the scientific and historical errors in the story of the Torah.
- ♦ This conflicts with the fact that he was an unlettered man from an unlettered nation. It also goes against the fact that the studious scholars of the People of the Book did not pick up on these errors.

Summary

- The Qur'anic text lacks all historical errors that are present in the text of the Bible.
- The Qur'anic text is free from the contradictions that are in the text of the Bible.
- The Qur'anic narrative is congruent and accounts for a logical historical narrative, whereas the vacillating narrative of the Torah contains—inside the very same story—the mention of details that are incongruent with logical historical facts and the sequence of events.
- The Qur'anic narrative of the story is congruent with the rest of Muslim beliefs, as this story represents a piece that is harmonious with the rest of the Islamic religious apparatus. On the other hand, the narrative of the Torah conflicts with certain axiomatic aspects of faith dear to both Jews and Christians.
- The Qur'anic text is replete with wisdom, admonishment, and spiritual points, whereas these issues are not in the text of the Torah—save for a meagre amount, which in turn are rendered redundant thanks to the nature of the details contained in the story.
- The Qur'an firmly establishes the infallibility of the Prophets; the Torah conflicts with this.
- The Qur'an maintained its miraculous literary construct that surpassed the capabilities of leading rhetoricians when the issue was in the headlines, all while sustaining an effective presentation of detailed historical events.

The Jewish historian of religion Marilyn R. Waldman concluded her investigation by saying, ‘I will argue, after comparing the two, that despite the extensive presence of numerous such formal affinities, the two do not tell the same story in thematic, theological, or moral terms. In fact, they are probably just as much like other stories as they are like each other... [There are] some general observations about the larger texts within which the individual stories appear. The two scriptures in question differ in a number of obvious and fundamental ways.’¹⁰⁶¹

1061 Translator’s note: (Waldman, 1985), p. 5.

Further reading

A number of Orientalist studies vis-à-vis Sūrah Yūsuf have been published, comparing it to what is in the Torah and other ancient Jewish writings. However, most of these studies were not dedicated to this topic, but rather came under the umbrella of larger topics. On the other hand, some studies dedicated specifically to this topic have come out, including:

- Shalom Goldman, *The Joseph Story in Jewish and Islamic Lore*, New York: New York University, Doctoral Dissertation, 1986.
- Marc Steven Bernstein, *The Story of Our Master Joseph: Intertextuality in Judaism and Islam*, Berkeley: University of California, Doctoral Dissertation, 1992.
- Marilyn R. Waldman, 'New Approaches to "Biblical" Materials in the Qur'an', *The Muslim World* v. 75 n. 1, January 1985.



SECTION 6

The Inimitability of the Qur'an Vis-à-vis Ascertaining the Nature of the Divine

﴿Allah has the Most Beautiful Names.﴾

(Qur'an, 7:180)

Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl.¹⁰⁶²

(The Lord)



¹⁰⁶² Micah 1:8.

On divinity, does the Qur'an follow in the footsteps of others? Or does it take control of the discourse?

Since the beginning of what is now known as the Enlightenment, academic studies have revealed that the scriptures of the Jews and Christians—in their current form, and indeed the form they were in during the period of the Muhammadan mission—had for long been distorted with omissions and interpolations, while also absorbing many teachings of external civilisations. On top of this, they added ancient myths to the Bible and took on board a lot of its conceptualisations of God from ancient Babylonian pagans and others. In addition, the authors of these works were influenced by the legal codes of nations who—along with their primitive and unsophisticated epistemologies—were at their peak.

Our definitive knowledge of what has preceded in previous sections now opens up the door to the following test. This test should clearly demonstrate whether there is a connection between the Qur'anic conceptualisation of divinity and that of the scriptures of the People of the Book. So, do we see a case of human borrowing on the part of the Qur'an? Or is the Qur'an setting its own narrative on this subject, which is thus indicative of it being from a divine source?

We also ought to inquire about the connection the Qur'an has to the understanding of divinity according to the near neighbouring pagans, as well as the Greeks who were at the cutting edge of philosophy. So, is there a resemblance between the Qur'an and those traditions? Or is there distance and disharmony? And what was the influence of the pre-Islamic monotheists (*Aḥnāf*), who believed in God and continued to search for Him, on the fledgling faith? Is there a basis for assuming a link between the two? Or is it a fantasy?

In response, a Muslim would say, 'The Qur'an is divine Revelation. It was not influenced by the dominant culture. This is why its discourse on the theology of the Divine—the largest subject matter in theology—is free from the superstitions of pagans, the contradictions of the People of the

Book, the disengagement of Deists, and anthropomorphism of the Lord of the Worlds by other ancients.

Muhammad ﷺ, the unlettered Makkan who lived in an environment that was disconnected from discourses on divinity and detailed religio-historical information, would not have possessed the ability of framing a Qur'anic conceptualisation of divinity. He would not have been able to raise himself or his capabilities above the culture of his time and its improper or incomplete conceptualisations of divinity.'

An adversary would say, 'In regard to theology, the Prophet of Islam ﷺ quotes the beliefs of the People of the Book, either by way of dictation or his personal deduction -We can see this because the Qur'an speaks to the anthropomorphic nature of the Jewish and Christian conceptualisation of divinity- or took from the Hellenistic philosophers, the perennial masters of philosophy. If none of this is true, then it is perhaps influenced by the pre-Islamic monotheists (*Aḥnāf*) who preferred monotheism over polytheism.'

We consequently face two possibilities that are mutually exclusive. The truthfulness of one and the invalidity of the other can only be decided through a close and deep critical analysis which directly deals with the relevant texts.

Details on assessing the merits of the two aforementioned possibilities follow in this section.

Divinity according to Jews

From a number of angles, God's image was different in the pre-Messianic Jewish tradition compared to its counterpart in paganism, which had assigned all types of human behaviours to its gods. According to the latter, the gods were jealous of each other and constantly engaged in infighting, waging extremely bloody battles. In the irrational polytheistic environment, the Jewish discourse on the One Magnificent God, which was defined by not allowing God's Lordship to be contested by anyone else, represented a huge leap.

In spite of this, Judaism did not differ with all the customs of the religious environment it came in. Rather, it adopted a lot of errors from outside itself, landing it in self-contradiction. Alongside transcendentalism (*tanzih*), we read a number of passages ultimately confirming that God is, to a large degree, close to the pagan gods. On other occasions, we read passages in the Torah describing God with such defects and faults that even pagans would absolve themselves from such expressions.

A corporeal god

The Qur'an mentions the Jewish tendency to describe God materially and corporeally: 'And remember when you said, "O Mūsā, we will never believe you until we see Allah with our own eyes," so a thunderbolt struck you while you were looking on.' (Qur'an, 2:55) This is quite an ancient old tendency among them: 'We brought the Children of Israel across the sea and they came upon a people devoted to idols. They demanded, "O Mūsā, make for us a god like their gods." He replied, "Indeed, you are a people acting ignorantly."' (Qur'an, 7:138) This is why when the Jews rewrote their Torah, they inserted therein plenty of unequivocally anti-transcendental references, namely bodily attributes for the Lord. One passage that is indicative of clear corporealism is that the Lord appeared to Abraham and told him, "Walk before me."¹⁰⁶³ Moses ﷺ and a group of Israelites also saw

1063 Genesis, 17:1.

Him: ‘Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky.’¹⁰⁶⁴ Additionally, there is mention of people seeing His back.¹⁰⁶⁵

A racist god

The authors of the Old Testament leveraged the Prophets’ stories to curse and demean their adversaries. This was done through stories that ultimately ended up being injurious to the perfection of divine justice. Such instances include the statement of the Prophet Noah, ‘He also said, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem.”’¹⁰⁶⁶ This was after Ham, father of Canaan, inadvertently saw the private parts of his father Noah, after he had become naked due to consuming wine. This passage offers a justification of the enslavement of Hamite Africans. Also, this God declares the blood of nations lawful for His Prophet Joshua, without any moral principle, just to please His mollicoddled son, Israel.¹⁰⁶⁷

A bloodthirsty god

The most salient characteristic of the God of the Torah, which might come as a shock to a contemporary reader, is His excessive bloodthirstiness and obsession to spill blood.

- ◆ He chastised Samaria by saying, ‘The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open.’¹⁰⁶⁸
- ◆ He is a god that hideously broadens the possibility of shedding blood—He says, ‘Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’¹⁰⁶⁹
- ◆ He chastises children of even the fourth generation due to the sins of their forefathers.¹⁰⁷⁰

1064 Exodus 24:10.

1065 See Exodus 33:23.

1066 Genesis 9:26.

1067 See for example Joshua: 12:1-24, 13:13, 16:10, 17:12-13, *et al.*

1068 Hosea 13:16.

1069 1 Samuel 15:3.

1070 See Exodus 34:7.

- An incapable and defective god
 - ◆ He is a god that is often full of regret.¹⁰⁷¹
 - ◆ He suffers from an extreme conspiratorial siege mentality to the extent that He was forced to jumble up tongues of people so that they could not speak in one language, for the fear that they would conspire against Him.¹⁰⁷²
 - ◆ He looks for Adam in Paradise and says to him, ‘Where are you?’¹⁰⁷³
 - ◆ He rests after hard effort.¹⁰⁷⁴
 - ◆ He is overcome by his weakness to the extent that He was defeated in a wrestling tussle with his servant Jacob.¹⁰⁷⁵

1071 See Genesis 6:6, Exodus 32:14, and 1 Samuel 15:11.

1072 See Genesis 11:1-9.

1073 See Genesis 3:9.

1074 Genesis 2:3, Exodus 20:11, 31:17.

Christians and Jews have attempted to rid themselves of the literal meaning of Genesis 2:3—‘On the seventh day, God completed His task which He had set out on doing, then He rested in it (i.e., the seventh day) from all that He had worked’—which denotes that God was resting after He had become tired. This is an attempt to portray the Qur’anic statement—which refutes the Jews and Christians—a lie: ‘And We did certainly create the heavens and Earth and what is between them in six days, and there touched Us no weariness’ (Qur’an, 50:38).

Yet:

The Arabic term *istarāḥa* is clear, and the ‘rest’ mentioned in Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 denotes a physical resting (*Shabāt - Nouah*).

The Aramaic Targum Onkelos used the term “*Nāh*” (נח) in Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 20:11 as the counterpart to the Hebrew term “*Shabāt*” (שבת), which is even more explicit in denoting the meaning of rest.

Exodus 23:12 clarifies the meaning of the previous two words: ‘Work for six days only, and you shall rest (from the root *sha-bā-t*) on the seventh day so that your bull and donkey also rest (from the root *nou-uah*).’

Exodus 31:17 follows on from the resting of the Lord by stating, ‘He took a breath’ (*yinposh*), i.e., He found His breath after hard work.

1075 Genesis 32:24-31.

Pope Shenouda III (1923-2012) of Alexandria, the previous Pope of the Coptic Church, wrote, ‘God wanted to raise the spirits of this fearful person by showing him that he could wrestle and overcome. So He appeared to him in the form of a man so that Jacob could wrestle Him and overcome Him like a father playing with his child, so he could show this child that he can overcome and be joyous.’ (Shenouda III, 1996), pp. 55-56.

- ◆ He is forced to come down to Earth to ascertain the situation: “Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”¹⁰⁷⁶
- ◆ He angers Esau for no apparent reason.¹⁰⁷⁷
- ◆ He strives to lead people astray so that He could punish them.¹⁰⁷⁸
- Describing God with improper traits

The zealotry of the Bible’s authors and their desire to fabricate grandiose and fearsome depictions of the Israelites’ God pushed them to describe Him with extremely obnoxious traits. Consider the following passages:

- ◆ “Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, as a warrior wakes from the stupor of wine.”¹⁰⁷⁹
- ◆ “The Lord will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies. “For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant.”¹⁰⁸⁰
- ◆ “Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl.”¹⁰⁸¹
- Assimilating God with lowly creatures

There are peculiar illustrations of the Lord given in the Bible, such as likening Him with a moth¹⁰⁸², lion¹⁰⁸³, bear¹⁰⁸⁴, and owl¹⁰⁸⁵; He has also been

¹⁰⁷⁶ Genesis 18:20-21.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Malachi 1:2-3.

¹⁰⁷⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Psalms 78:65.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Isaiah 42:13-14.

¹⁰⁸¹ Micah 1:8.

¹⁰⁸² See Hosea 5:12.

¹⁰⁸³ See Numbers 24:9.

¹⁰⁸⁴ See Lamentations 3:10.

¹⁰⁸⁵ See Micah 1:8.

likened with inanimate objects such as a cart loaded with grain¹⁰⁸⁶, as well as terrifying mythical creatures like those whose noses expel smoke and mouths emit fire¹⁰⁸⁷. Even though these depictions are allegorical, they are—axiomatically—terrible for any person to describe the higher being he intends to worship.

The God of the Torah is ‘of terrific character, cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust.’¹⁰⁸⁸ (Thomas Jefferson¹⁰⁸⁹)

1086 See Amos 2:13.

1087 See 2 Samuel 22:9.

1088 (Jefferson, 1820).

1089 Translator’s note: Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). American statesman, Founding Father, and 3rd president of the United States from 1801 to 1809. He was a Deist.

Divinity according to Christians

Regarding the Christians, Ibn Ḥazm said, ‘Were it not that God ﷻ described their statement in His Book—for He ﷻ says, “Indeed, those who say ‘Allah is Jesus, son of Maryam’ have fallen into disbelief” (Qur’an, 5:17); He ﷻ quotes them saying, “Allah is one in a Trinity” (Qur’an, 5:73); and He says, “...did you ever ask the people to worship you and your mother as gods besides Allah?” (Qur’an, 5:116)—there would not have been any believer whose tongue could have mustered the courage to repeat this highly obnoxious, repulsive, and absurd statement.’¹⁰⁹⁰

This stark verdict from the greatest scholar of comparative religion of the Middle Ages agrees with what the Greek philosopher, Porphyry of Tyre¹⁰⁹¹, said in the 3rd century: ‘Even supposing some Greeks are so foolish as to think that the gods dwell in the statues, even that would be a much purer concept (of religion) than to admit that the Divine Power should descend into the womb of the Virgin Mary, that it became an embryo, and after birth was wrapped in rags, soiled with blood and bile, and even worse.’¹⁰⁹²

Christian theology somehow managed to combine the bad aspects of Jewish theology and the bad aspects of paganism, alongside the fantasies of its scholars on divinity and the Church Councils. Prior to this, the Gospels’ authors and the inventions of Paul had already distorted Jesus’s

1090 (Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal*), 1/111-112.

1091 Porphyry of Tyre (234-305). Neoplatonic philosopher. He was a student of Plotinus and the most significant person who spread his works. He is famous for his work in Aristotelian logic, *Isagoge*, which became widespread among Arab logicians. His other works include *Adversus Christianos* (*Against the Christians*).

1092 (Stevenson & Frend, 2013), p. 257.

Translator’s note: The wording from Berchman is as follows: ‘But if anyone among the Greeks were so frivolous that he would assume the gods live in these statues, his idea would be a much purer one than those who believe that deity came down into the womb of the Virgin Mary and became an embryo. And then when he was born he was placed in swaddling clothes. For this is a place full of blood and gall and things even more disgusting than these’ (Berchman, 2005), p. 217.

story. The result was a theological system that combined various types of abominable ideas:

- God is one in three and three in one—each of the three is a complete god but all combine to be one god.
- God the Son was born yet he is uncreated—it is a birth without beginning.
- The Father sent the Son to Earth, even though the Father and the Son are one, not two. The sender and the sent one are one, but they are still two.
- The Father and the Son are one, even though the Father is greater than the Son.¹⁰⁹³
- The Son is a complete god, but he does not know from the unseen.¹⁰⁹⁴
- The Holy Spirit is a complete god, travelling between Heaven and Earth. He is the third entity of the Three and is one part of a tripartite monotheism.
- The Trinity is the essence of faith, even though no previous Prophet explicitly stated that the gods are three.
- God the Son was sent to the Children of Israel who did not know the Trinity, nor did he inform them of this belief.
- God made a covenant with the Prophet Abraham ﷺ that his progeny would adhere to the religious path for the purpose of reaching piety and righteousness. God was then surprised that humanity was so deeply corrupt that this prevented them from fulfilling the responsibilities of this covenant.
- God found Himself in a quandary. He previously set out that sins can only be forgiven through sacrifice, so how would He then offer a sacrifice for all sinful humans, considering that the sacrifice must be sinless?
- The only solution to have the sins of all sinful men forgiven was that God the Father would offer God the Son to be the sacrifice on the

1093 John 14:28.

1094 Matthew 24:36.

cross. This would become the new covenant that would be based on faith, not solely on good deeds.¹⁰⁹⁵

- When he learned of their conspiracy to capture and assassinate him, God the Son ran off to a hamlet to hide from his enemies. He prayed to God the Father and begged in prostration to have himself absolved of this test: ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’¹⁰⁹⁶
- Salvation is for whoever believes that God the Son was killed on the cross for the sin of Adam  and the sins of humanity. Whoever does not carry this belief would be sent to damnation.
- God the Father sacrificed His only son, God the Son, for mankind’s salvation and to establish justice, even though He destroyed His son through no fault of his own.
- There is no salvation without the death of God the Son; however, God the Son did not really die, as death for a god means perishing. What did die was the earthly body that the Son had occupied—that was a perishable and non-divine body.
- God is just, even though He created all of mankind on an irredeemably and innately corrupt state.¹⁰⁹⁷
- God the Father sent His son to die on the cross for the sake of humanity. The Romans and the Jews killed God the Son. The Romans and the Jews are sinful for killing the Son, even though the Father decreed that He be killed at their hands.
- God the Father sent His son to die on the cross for the sins of humanity, but those who conspired to kill His Son and eventually crucified him did not kill him for the sake of humankind’s sins, but rather for other reasons.

These are the beliefs that the major Christian sects had agreed upon by the time of the Muhammadan Prophethood. Such notions add a degree of deplorability to Jewish theology, as Christians believe in the holiness of the Jewish scriptures as well.

1095 Catholics consider action to be part of salvific faith, but not Protestants.

1096 Matthew 26:39.

1097 Romans 3:9-12.

The perverse nature of the Church's beliefs was a direct cause for the spark to Deism in the 18th century. Theology and the stories of the Bible were catalysts for disbelief, the sanctification of the intellect, and sufficing with 'natural theology' (i.e., by observing nature). This was concomitant to getting rid of 'revealed theology'. The famous Deist Thomas Paine said, 'Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the grovelling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.'¹⁰⁹⁸ He described the beliefs of the Church vis-à-vis the deity of Jesus, and his subsequent death, to appease the wrath of God as 'fabulous inventions, dishonourable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty.'¹⁰⁹⁹

1098 (Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 1819), part II, p. 94.

1099 (Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 1819), part II, p. 74.

Divinity according to pagans

Pagan theology is the farthest possible potential source for Islam's conceptualisation of divinity. The Qur'an takes aim at the pagans' conceptualisation of divinity by critiquing and dismantling it right from the start of Islam:

- Pagans used to ascribe themselves to the faith of Abraham عليه السلام, except they assigned intermediaries unto God: 'As for those who take other lords besides Him, they say, "We worship them only so they may bring us closer to Allah."' (Qur'an, 39:3)
- They also took jinns as partners unto God: 'Yet they associate the Jinns with Allah in worship, even though He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters out of ignorance. Glorified and Exalted is He above what they claim.' (Qur'an, 6:100)
- They considered angels to be the daughters of God: 'And they attribute angels as daughters to Allah—glory be to Him—the opposite of what they desire for themselves.' (Qur'an, 16:57)
- They considered stringent monotheism as outrageous: 'Has he reduced the gods to one god? Indeed, this is something totally astonishing.' (Qur'an, 38:5)

They clung onto superstitious customs, such as adopting polytheistic amulets and talismans. They believed in bad omens. They drew lots for decisions, as a mechanism to seek advice from their gods, and in order to finalise their decisions. Soothsayers among them carried a privileged status.

With this, the Jāhiliyyah was theologically impoverished and deformed. It had fallen into the two greatest theological cesspits: multiplicity of gods, and anthropomorphism. The Jāhiliyyah had abandoned seeking out guidance through monotheism in favour of attributing natural phenomenon—good or bad—to the intervention of unseen entities.

The Qur'an was revealed at a time when the Judeo-Christian conceptualisation of divinity and the idolators' version of the same had reached their closest proximity to each other in issues pertaining to the knowledge of God.

Divinity according to the pre-Islamic monotheists (*Aḥnāf*)

Monotheists in the Arabian Peninsula were numerically few and on the peripheries. They did not believe in the Jāhiliyyah of idols. These people believed that God is above all those beliefs and transcendent from those fantasies, and that He is One and Most Exalted. The monotheists then stopped at that point. In other words, their act was a negative revolt, with no positive construct to it nor an alternative theology. They ascribed themselves to the faith of Abraham, but not the Abrahamic scriptures or teachings. Though their hearts were independent, they were susceptible to confusion as they long yearned for information about the True God without ever finding a way to acquire that.

Some information about the monotheists is depicted in the statement of Asma' bint Abi Bakr ؓ: 'I saw Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl with his back leaning against the Ka'bah saying, "O assembly of the Quraysh, by the One in Whose hands Zayd's soul lies, none of you—other than myself—is on the religion of Abraham." He then would say, "O Allah, were I to learn the most beloved of ways to You, I would have worshipped You with it. But I do not know." He would then prostrate on his ride.'¹¹⁰⁰

This is why upon the advent of Prophethood, the honest ones among these monotheists embraced Islam, as they now found a preconstructed meaning to monotheism. 'Amr ibn 'Abasah al-Sulamī ؓ narrates the story of his acceptance of Islam: 'When I was in the state of Jāhiliyyah, I used to think that people were upon misguidance, and that they were upon nothing. They used to worship idols. I heard a man in Makkah relating pieces of information. I sat on my ride and came to him. I found the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taking cover as his people were persecuting him. So, I proceeded stealthily until I came to him in Makkah. I said to him, "What are you?" He said, "I am a Prophet." I said, "What is a Prophet?" He said, "Allah has sent me." I said, "And what has He sent you with?" He said, "He sent me

1100 Narrated by Ibn Ishāq with a sound chain. See (Ibn Ishāq), p. 96.

with strengthening the ties of kinship, breaking idols, ensuring that Allah alone is to be worshipped, and that nothing is to be associated unto him as a partner.”¹¹⁰¹

Indeed, ʿAmr too stopped where other pre-Islamic monotheists had stopped: a general faith in one god, and the rejection of paganism and its misguidance. This simple conceptualisation of theology could not have been the source for Islamic theology in all its fundamentals and details.

¹¹⁰¹ Narrated by Muslim, Book of the Prayer of Travellers and Shortening It, Chapter on the Islam by ʿAmr ibn ʿAbasah (hadith 832).

Divinity according to the Greeks

In the world of theology surrounding the Arabian Peninsula, the philosophy of the Greeks did not have a presence save for the Greek concept of *logos* (word) that influenced Christian beliefs, primarily through Neoplatonist philosophers. *Logos* is God's intermediary instrument in the creation of the world, as the Absolute (God) can have no tangible contact with the temporal.

In Aristotle's paradigm, divinity only had a weak presence, even when incorporated in Christian theology. The exception to this is the Aristotelian proofs of God's existence, which were extensively deployed in the 13th century alongside the five proofs of Thomas Aquinas¹¹⁰², at the forefront of which was the idea of the 'Prime Mover' or the 'Unmoved Mover'.

Aristotelian divinity did not gain traction in Christian or Jewish theology, as it was considered a 'cool theology' that did not contain the 'heat of divine providence' in the living existence. In other words, He is a god that is uninvested in the world and occupied with Himself, because 'God is intellect as per reality; He also is the one who is understood as per reality. As such, He is both intellect and the one who is understood. He is to be understood for what He is—the honour of knowledge is concordant with the honour of the subject of knowledge. Given that God is the most honourable of all things in existence, then knowledge about Him should be the most honourable information.'¹¹⁰³ The material existence is self-sufficient with the material means that it has been provided with. This dry, Deistic conceptualisation is cut off from the capacious and religious meaning of God, Who is connected to this realm in order to influence and instruct it, and to show His mercy and love.

1102 Translator's note: Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Italian philosopher, Catholic priest, philosopher, and theologian. He was a proponent of natural theology. His influence on Western thought runs deep. He embraced several concepts put forward by Aristotle.

1103 (Badawī, *Al-Mawsū'ah al-Falsafiyyah*, 1984), p. 104.

Likewise, the God of Aristotle (and also Plato) is a god of negatives. His theology is negative¹¹⁰⁴, or *via negationis* as is the Latin term, e.g., ‘He is not like this,’ ‘He does not have so and so attributes because He is absolutely above what is witnessed and what is known.’ In the 3rd century, the philosopher Plotinus¹¹⁰⁵ represented this theological method in his book *The Enneads*.¹¹⁰⁶ However, pure negation does not reveal the reality of God, nor does it bring Him closer to people’s minds, but rather increases His remoteness from the mind and heart. As such, this form of theology is different to that of Islamic theology.

1104 Translator’s note: Apophatic theology.

1105 Translator’s note: Plotinus (c. 204-270). Greek philosopher, born and raised in Roman Egypt, considered to be the founder of Neoplatonism. His philosophy was influential during Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. His works have influenced scholars of all major religions hailing from the Near East region.

1106 (Carabine, 1995).

Divinity according to the Qur'an

We have observed the God of the Bible, who is not free of incapacity, fault, and weakness; we have seen the multiple gods of the pagans, the ambiguous God of the pre-Islamic monotheists, and the apophatic Prime Mover according to the Greeks. Can you see any trace of these depictions in the Qur'an? Is it possible, even by the standards of some fantasy notion, that these people can lead a person to the Islamic concept of God, as elucidated in the Qur'anic chapters that speak of the Attributes of the Lord?

In the Qur'an, God ﷻ is the One. He has no partner in either divinity or Lordship:

- 'Say, O Prophet, "He is Allah—One." (Qur'an, 112:1)
- 'He is the Originator of the heavens and Earth. How could He have children when He has no female as partner? He created all things and has perfect knowledge of everything.' (Qur'an, 6:101)
- 'With Him are the keys of the unseen—no one knows them except Him. And He knows what is in the land and sea. Not even a leaf falls without His knowledge, nor a grain in the darkness of the Earth or anything—green or dry—but is in a perfect record.' (Qur'an, 6:59)
- 'The places of worship are only for Allah, so do not invoke anyone besides Him.' (Qur'an, 72:18)
- 'Say, "No one can protect me from Allah if I were to disobey Him, nor can I find any refuge in anything other than Him..." (Qur'an, 72:22)

In both divinity and Lordship, and in the unique workings of creation and the requirements of absolute obedience, these verses represent absolute transcendentalism from all remnants of polytheism. We cannot see anything like this in Judaism or Christianity. The Orientalist Ignác Goldziher—considered one of the most prominent critical voices against Islam

throughout the West's long history of critiquing it—stated in his notes that Islam is 'the only religion in which superstition and heathen elements were forbidden not by rationalism but by orthodox teaching.'¹¹⁰⁷ He went on to say, 'My way of thought was thoroughly turned towards Islam, and so was my sympathy...I was not lying when I said that I believed in the Prophetic missions of Muhammad...My religion was henceforth the universal religion of the Prophets.'¹¹⁰⁸

Footnoting on Goldziher's statement, the Christian historian Albert Hourani¹¹⁰⁹ says, 'Above all, Islam appeared to him to be that towards which other religions should strive: a pure monotheism, an uncontaminated response to the call of God to the human heart...Islam, as he perceived it during these months, provided a touchstone by which he could judge the other monotheistic religions.'¹¹¹⁰

It is interesting to note here that the French Orientalist Ernest Renan—who detracted from Islam and its history by projecting the shade of his racialised fantasies onto it, for which he was known in his reading of history and his observations of nations—could not help but say, 'Arabic civilization's great gifts to the world were monotheism and the Arabic language.'¹¹¹¹

Voltaire switched from denigrating Islam in his play *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète* (*Fanaticism, or Mahomet the Prophet*) to later defending Islam against the falsehoods levelled against it by the Church. In honouring Islam, he wrote that one of the unique features of this religion is that it is founded on monotheism that does not contain any secrets, is in agreement with human logic, and has attracted numerous nations to its law.¹¹¹²

The Orientalist Jacques Berque¹¹¹³ said it best: 'The Qur'an could perhaps be summed up in one word: the unity of God.'¹¹¹⁴ This happens to be exactly

1107 (Goldziher, 1978), p. 59; quoted by (Hourani, 1991), p. 38.

Though this testimony is in the context of praising Islam, it is still incorrect. The Qur'an is replete with passages that nullify paganism and animism. It does this by negating will and power from idols and the natural world. This address by the Qur'an is both logical and definitive.

1108 (Goldziher, 1978), p. 71; quoted by (Hourani, 1991), p. 38.

1109 Albert Hourani (1915-1993). British-Lebanese Catholic historian. He taught at a number of universities in America and elsewhere.

1110 (Hourani, 1991), p. 38.

1111 (Quinn, 2008), p. 99.

1112 (Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*, 1834), 1/268.

1113 Jacques Berque (1910-1995). French sociologist and Orientalist. He was a member of the Arabic Language Academy of Cairo. He wrote one of the most famous French translations of the Qur'an.

1114 (Berque, 1993), p. 20.

the words of Ibn Taymiyyah: ‘Monotheism is the secret of the Qur’an and the quintessence of faith.’¹¹¹⁵

Qur’anic monotheism was an incredible revolution against the beliefs of its times. Up to this day, it continues to confound Islam’s adversaries.

The Qur’an stresses the Creator’s superiority in His Dominion—the creation does not even come close to the magnificence of His Lordship:

- ‘He reigns supreme over His creation. And He is the All-Wise, All-Aware.’ (Qur’an, 5:18)
- ‘He is the One from Whom nothing in the heavens or the Earth is concealed: ‘Not even an atom’s weight is hidden from your Lord on Earth or in heaven, nor anything smaller or larger than that, but it is written in a perfect record.’ (Qur’an, 10:61)
- He is the One Who ‘provides for all and is not in need of provision.’ (Qur’an, 6:14)
- He is the One Who, when He wishes for something, says to it ‘Be,’ and it is: ‘All it takes, when He wills something, is simply to say to it “Be”—and it is.’ (Qur’an, 36:82)
- ‘And He is the One Who originates the creation then will resurrect it, which is even easier for Him. To Him belong the finest attribute in the heavens and the Earth. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.’ (Qur’an, 30:27)
- He is the One Who ‘No vision can encompass Him, but He encompasses all vision. For He is the Most Subtle, All-Aware.’ (Qur’an, 6:103)
- He has Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes. He is not subject to deficiency or incapacity: ‘There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing’ (Qur’an, 42:11)—He has nothing that is similar or alike unto Him.

1115 (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 1995), 1/368.

If we analyse the Names of God in the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition, we will deduce that they are of five categories:

1. Those Names that denote the affirmation of the Creator in repudiation of atheists and negationists (i.e., those who deny Him or His Attributes, respectively; negationism of Attributes is called *ta'tīl*). Names like *Hayy* (Ever-living), *Bāqī* (Everlasting), and *Wārith* (Inheritor) fall under this category.
2. Those Names that denote His monotheism, repudiating those who worship others alongside Him, such as *Kāfī* (Sufficient), *ʿAlī* (Exalted), *Qadīr* (Omnipotent), *et alia*.
3. Those Names that denote His transcendentalism, ﷻ, in repudiation of anthropomorphists, such as *Quddūs* (Transcendent), *Majīd* (Majestic), *Muḥīṭ* (All-Encompassing), *et alia*.
4. Names denoting that everything in existence is from His creation and innovation, such as *Khāliq* (Creator), *Bārī* (Originator), *Muṣawwir* (Fashioner), *Qawī* (Powerful), *et alia*.
5. Names denoting that He manages what He brings into existence and causes it to turn as He pleases, like *Qayyūm* (Sustainer), *ʿAlīm* (Omniscient), *Ḥakīm* (Wise), *et alia*.¹¹¹⁶

In both the textual Revelations of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, God ﷻ is described as 'Most Merciful of the merciful' (Qur'an, 7:151), 'Most Just of all judges' (Qur'an, 11:45), 'Swiftest of Reckoners' (Qur'an, 6:62), 'Best of Creators' (Qur'an, 23:14), and that He is the Greatest, the Most Magnificent, the Most Knowing, and the Most Powerful.

In the Qur'an, the Lord ﷻ is described as 'Best of Judges' (Qur'an, 6:57), 'Best of Providers' (Qur'an, 22:58), 'Best of Successors' (Qur'an, 21:89), 'Best of Aides' (Qur'an, 3:150), 'Best of the Merciful' (Qur'an, 23:109), 'Best of Adjudicators' (Qur'an, 7:89), 'Best of Forgivers' (Qur'an, 7:155), and that 'Allah is far superior and far more lasting' (Qur'an, 20:73).

Qur'anic verses came to guide minds to employ *argumentum a fortiori* in relation to Him: For every faultless perfection associated with the creation, the Creator is worthier of being described with it if it is appropriate for Him.¹¹¹⁷

On the Attributes and Names of God as mentioned in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, Ibn al-Qayyim says, 'All of God's Attributes are attributes of sheer perfection. He is described with the most perfect of

¹¹¹⁶ (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*), 11/223.

¹¹¹⁷ (Ashqar ʿ. S., 1914/1414 AH), pp. 107-108.

attributes. He possesses the greatest of perfection. Likewise, His Names that denote His Attributes are the best and most perfect of names. There are no names more beautiful than those of His. They have no substitutes that could render their meaning.¹¹¹⁸

They are attributes of magnificence and perfection, far removed from the dryness of divine attributes in the Torah, or the puzzling allegorical stance on attributes adopted by the Church. This is why Voltaire said, '[Mahomet's] faith is wise and unwavering. It calls to chastity and honouring humanity. It is wise because it did not fall into the idiocy of associating partners unto God, and because it has no secrets.'¹¹¹⁹

Pope John Paul II¹¹²⁰ himself admitted that 'Some of the most beautiful names in the human language are given to the God of the Koran.'¹¹²¹

Fair analysis and a balanced position require that, had Muhammad ﷺ been aware of what is in the Bible, he would have most certainly been influenced by the theological tradition of the Jews, Christians, or pagans. Correspondingly, had he falsely claimed Prophethood, he would have attempted to charm the People of the Book by echoing the Attributes of God as they understood them to be.

The Qur'an raised the topic of theology and at the same time disregarded the status quo. Due to the burdensome nature of the collective unconscious¹¹²²—in which people would simply accept the religion of their forefathers without argument or inquisition—Muhammad ﷺ would not have been able to accomplish on his own initiative had he been the author of this book.

During the era of Prophethood, Arabia was incapable of even offering anybody a coherent and unified theological construct, let alone something like the Qur'an. The residents of Makkah and of neighbouring towns were either pagans who worshipped rocks, Jews who believed in a national god, or the odd few Christians who had mutually contradictory beliefs. As for the pre-Islamic monotheists, they indeed rejected the status quo in front of them, though they never managed to attain the truth they so desperately sought.

1118 (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badā'ir al-Fawā'id*, 1996/1416 AH), 1/177.

1119 (Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire: Discours d'un Turc*, 1837), 16/58.

1120 John Paul II (1920-2005). Pope at the Vatican between 1978 and 2005.

1121 (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 1995), p. 92.

1122 Collective unconscious is a concept in analytical psychology, denoting what an individual's subconscious possesses as a result of social interaction with a group of people, of which the said individual is a part.

Attributes of God in the story of exile from Paradise

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to make a direct comparison between the Old Testament and the Qur'an vis-à-vis the story of Adam and Eve eating from the forbidden tree, and the Lord's stance in relation to their deed. This will shed light on the yawning chasm between the two texts in their respective discourses on God and His Attributes.

1. The story of this test starts in both the Bible and the Qur'an with a command prohibiting any consumption from the tree. The Qur'an does not reveal the nature or type of tree as the purpose here is to test Adam and his wife, and whether they conform to the command or disobey it: 'We said, "O Adam, live with your wife in Paradise and eat as freely as you please, but do not approach this tree, or else you will be wrongdoers."' (Qur'an, 2:35)

In this context, the text of the Torah seemingly takes the reader by surprise by claiming the tree is the tree of knowledge, and that whosoever eats from it will be granted insight to discern between good and evil.¹¹²³ The issue thus is no longer connected to the test of Adam and his wife, but rather the Lord's fear that He might have to grant this knowledge to man, which was the real reason He warned them against eating from it.

2. The Qur'an states that Satan, who was on his way to cause Adam and his wife to deviate, stated that this tree is the tree of life, namely that anyone who eats from it will live forever: 'But Satan whispered to him, saying, "O Adam, shall I show you the tree of Immortality and a kingdom that does not fade away?"' (Qur'an, 20:120)

On the other hand, the Torah says that the tree of life is another tree, separate from the tree of knowledge from which Adam and his wife ate. It mentions that after the couple ate from the tree of knowledge, the Lord issued the

¹¹²³ See Genesis 3:22.

following statement, ‘And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.”’¹¹²⁴ God therefore is afflicted with agitation and trembling, as He feared that He would be deceived once more, and that the couple would take the opportune moment to eat from the tree of life. If that were to come to pass, they would never be overtaken by death, in which case God could not cause them to die. In other words, God here is alarmed by their cleverness and attempts to pre-empt the problem before it could occur. God is restless and is not relieved until after He assigned a group of attentive angels to act as guards, and an agile flaming sword. This is to prevent Adam and his wife from conspiring to evade His command and prohibition, from taking advantage of His lack of awareness, and from Adam ultimately sharing with Him the attribute of eternity: ‘After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.’¹¹²⁵

3. In the Torah, Satan comes across as more honest than the Lord, as he informs Adam and Eve of the tree’s true nature and the real reason why the Lord stopped them from eating from it. The rest of the narrative of the Torah underscores Satan’s honesty in what he said to them. The Lord comes off as a liar—He said to Adam, ‘... but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’¹¹²⁶ When they did eat from it, they did not die.

As for the Qur’an, it depicts Satan as a lying and deceiving creature: ‘Then Satan tempted them in order to expose what was hidden of their nakedness. He said, “Your Lord has forbidden this tree to you only to prevent you from becoming angels or immortals.” And he swore to them, “I am truly your sincere advisor.” So he brought about their fall through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness was exposed to them, prompting them to cover themselves with leaves from Paradise. Then their Lord called out to them, “Did I not forbid you from that tree, and tell you that Satan is your sworn enemy?”’ (Qur’an, 7:20-22) Satan therefore is one who whispers falsehood, and he is a liar and a deceiver.

1124 Genesis 3:22.

1125 Genesis 3:24.

1126 Genesis 2:17.

4. In the story of the Torah, God comes across as one afflicted with ignorance and poor perception. He first creates Adam. After creating him, it appears to Him that Adam needs a female companion¹¹²⁷, and He creates Eve as a result. In other words, he temporally acquired knowledge, having been ignorant of what the state of a lonely Adam would have been after he was created.

When this same God was walking in Paradise, both Adam and Eve—having eaten from the fruit of the tree and with their private parts coming into view—attempt to hide from him, causing God to call out to Adam, ‘Where are you?’¹¹²⁸

When Adam informs the Lord that he had hidden himself because he was naked, the ignorant Lord asks him about the events that had occurred: ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’¹¹²⁹

The Qur’an does not carry any of these obscenities—God is ‘the Knower of the seen and unseen.’ (Qur’an, 9:94)

5. In the story of the Torah, God is portrayed to be convulsing, to the point that He loses all wisdom. When He became angry at Satan—who appeared as a snake to Adam and Eve:
 - a. He punished all snakes, even though snakes committed no crime at all. Rather, it was Satan who appeared as one of them. One manifestation of this punishment was that He made the snake slide on its belly¹¹³⁰—does this mean that snakes used to walk on four legs prior to this? Also, He punished snakes by making them eat Earth dust for life¹¹³¹—has anybody seen a snake consume Earth dust?
 - b. He made the pangs of childbirth a punishment for every woman.¹¹³² How can the act of Eve be considered a crime perpetrated by all of womankind? Additionally, would a woman have escaped the punishment of God after anaesthesia was discovered?

¹¹²⁷ See Genesis 2:18.

¹¹²⁸ Genesis 3:9.

¹¹²⁹ Translator’s note: Genesis 3:11.

¹¹³⁰ See Genesis 3:14.

¹¹³¹ See Genesis 3:14.

¹¹³² See Genesis 3:16.

- c. The Lord punished the female by making every woman long for her husband.¹¹³³ Can any person with the slightest degree of intellect say that a woman's yearning for her husband is a divinely sanctioned punishment?
- d. He made man's responsibility for the woman a curse for her, which is generationally passed down.¹¹³⁴ But how can that be correct when the Bible is keen to stress the virtue of a woman obeying her husband?¹¹³⁵
- e. The Lord chastised Adam by making him eat the grass from the Earth, or—as the text quite literally states, 'It will produce thorns and thistles for you' (*‘əšev hašādē* - עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה).¹¹³⁶ If we say that the grass mentioned here refers to what is commonly known as grass today, then man does not eat that to begin with. If we say that the objective is all greens and fruits that the Earth produces, we will say that, rather than punishing them, this is actually God being merciful to His servants. The Torah itself mentions that God created that which the Earth yields, from which man consumes¹¹³⁷, and that he considered this to be 'very good'.¹¹³⁸

The Qur'an does not possess any of the aforementioned obscenities.

1133 See Genesis 3:16.

1134 See Genesis 3:16.

1135 See Colossians 3:18 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

1136 See Genesis 3:18.

1137 See Genesis 1:29.

1138 See Genesis 1:31.

Summary

- Judeo-Christian theology is engrossed in the anthropomorphism of God by ascribing human deficiencies unto Him.
- Pagan theology is devoted to affirming partners for the Lord in His dominion.
- The theology of the pre-Islamic monotheists is more about theological non-commitment (*tawaqquf*) than it is about the affirmation of Who God is.
- The theology of the Hellenistic philosophers is extremely dull in the sense that it restricts the conceptualisation of the Lord to that which He is not.
- The theology of the Qur'an is cut from an entirely different cloth, for it considers the Lord transcendent from deficiency and proclaims His perfection and magnificence.

Further reading

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SECTION 7

The Inimitability of the Qur'an Vis-à-vis Prophethood

﴿These [Prophets] were rightly guided by Allah, so follow their guidance.﴾

(Qur'an, 6:90)

*All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.*¹¹³⁹

(Jesus)



¹¹³⁹ John 10:8.

Prophethood: Does Islam derive it from its original concept? Or does it borrow its conceptualisation from elsewhere?

Are the missions of the Prophets and their work in calling people to the divine message—as stated in the Christian and Jewish scriptures—the same as what is in the Qur'an, so that they would be—as Missionaries would claim—the source of the Qur'an? Or is the Qur'an completely original in its understanding of Prophethood?

A Muslim would say, 'Prophethood in the Qur'an assumed a fresh outlook that was unprecedented and not known to the scriptures of the Jews and Christians. In the Qur'an, it returns to its original understanding. Prophethood is portrayed there as a splendid endeavour and the purveyor of good. It is pure from the filth of sins that the Torah ascribes to the Prophets. By returning to its original understanding, it regained its connection to God's flawless divinity and the great wisdom that is carried in the descent of Revelation to man.'

An adversary would consider Prophethood in the Qur'an to be a repetition of claims made by the Torah and the Gospel. In other words, whatever changes found in the Qur'an are peripheral and not indicative of a macro-evolution in the conceptualisation of Prophethood.

To which camp should a fair-minded researcher be inclined?

Prophethood in the Bible

The Bible comprises of many stories of the Prophets and their proselytisation activities. The topic of Prophethood is thus central to this discussion, even though the authors of the Holy Scriptures did not tackle the reality of Prophethood head on.

OBSCURITY IN THE MEANING OF PROPHETHOOD

The Old Testament uses three words to describe the Prophet:

1. 'Prophet'—*Nāvī* - נביא (נבי).
2. 'Seer'¹¹⁴⁰—*ro'e* - רואה (ראי).
3. 'Seer'¹¹⁴¹ – *hoze* - חזה.

The connotations of these words revolve around the central theme of 'bringing news from the Lord' and 'bringing news about the unseen.' These are significant indicators to explaining the essence of a Prophet's activity.

Rather than being a source to uncover the meanings of Prophethood, the existence of many Prophets in the Bible was in fact a source of confusion vis-à-vis the aforementioned momentous and primary meaning, which denotes that Prophethood is about people being intermediaries between God and His creation in conveying His message. Though Prophethood is connected to Revelation and conveying news about the unseen, the insubordination and deviances of Prophets in the Bible made the overall picture of Prophethood obscure, in which its fine features could not come to the fore.

Christians deified Jesus, thus rejecting Prophethood's value in that it could show the way to God through pure monotheism and adherence to the law brought by Moses. This gave rise to two mutually conflicting understandings of Prophethood: one pre-Jesus; the other during his time and after.¹¹⁴²

Furthermore, the understanding of Prophethood broadened within Christianity to the extent that it lost its distinct and specific meaning. Gerhard Dautzenberg¹¹⁴³, one of the greatest readers of the New Testament, observed that ever since the beginning of the 3rd century Christianity has

1140 See 1 Samuel 9:9.

1141 See 1 Chronicles 29:29.

1142 Christians believe that Jesus was simultaneously divine and a Prophet.

1143 Translator's note: Gerhard Dautzenberg (1934-2019). German Catholic theologian.

failed to understand the task associated with Prophethood, and that this ignorance lingers on to this day.¹¹⁴⁴

¹¹⁴⁴ (Dautzenberg, 2012), p. 153; quoted by (ʿAbd al-Muḥsin, 2001/1421 AH), pp. 400-401.

IGNOBLE ACTS OF THE PROPHETS

The most eloquent of ethical judgements passed on the Prophets of the Old Testament is what the Missionary David O'Brien said in his book *Today's Handbook for Solving Bible Difficulties*, which he had compiled in defence of the Bible and refutation of its adversaries: 'But in fact, there's hardly a person in the Old Testament who would even be allowed to join most of our churches without some major modifications in behaviour.'¹¹⁴⁵ In other words, according to him, most of the Prophets in the Bible are so depraved and contemptible that even the Church Christians of today would not be willing to accept them.

In the Bible, Prophets are not necessarily distinguished with any unique moral standards that would put them head and shoulders above the rest of people, for they are portrayed as falling in all categories of sin, even the most deplorable forms of transgression. For example, David fornicated with a married woman and conspired to have her husband killed in war so he could be with her.¹¹⁴⁶ Jacob stole the blessing of God from his brother Esau.¹¹⁴⁷ What is astonishing is what Jesus says in relation to the previous Prophets: 'All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.'¹¹⁴⁸

Even as they were conveying the divine message, the Prophets are portrayed as having perpetrated obnoxious acts. One example of this is that Saul became naked in order to achieve Prophethood: 'He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the Prophets?"'¹¹⁴⁹

The Prophet Isaiah also became naked in front of people. In fact, his rear privates remained exposed for three years: '...at that time the Lord spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. He said to him, "Take off the sackcloth from

1145 (O'Brien, 1990), p. 233.

1146 See 2 Samuel 11:2-26.

1147 See Genesis 27.

1148 John 10:8.

1149 1 Samuel 19:24.

your body and the sandals from your feet.” And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot. Then the Lord said, “Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt’s shame.”¹¹⁵⁰

The Lord is even said to have commanded the Prophet Joshua to marry an adulterous woman.¹¹⁵¹

The Lord would end the life of his Prophet in the most hideous way, as punishment for his crime and shortcoming. One example of this is what He said to Moses: ‘There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.’¹¹⁵²

Paul, the founder of Christianity, accused the Prophets of God of conveying His message with faults and shortcomings: ‘The former regulation is set aside because it was weak ἀσθενες (asthenes) and useless ἀνωφελος (anopheles) (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.’¹¹⁵³

1150 Isaiah 20:2-4.

1151 Joshua 1:2-6.

1152 ‘On that same day the Lord told Moses, “Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, opposite Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel” (Deuteronomy 32:50-52).

1153 Hebrews 7:18-19.

DISBELIEF PERPETRATED BY THE PROPHETS

The sins of Prophets are not restricted to immoral obscenities. They in fact exceed to what is far more damning: disbelief in God. Even though the Prophets would receive Revelation and great signs would manifest at their hands, there are those among them who fell into major disbelief.

- One key example is Aaron, who made a calf for the Israelites from their jewellery so that they could worship it.¹¹⁵⁴
- The biggest apostate was Solomon—his wives turned his heart to their gods when he became senile.¹¹⁵⁵
- Moses said to the Lord, ‘Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors?’¹¹⁵⁶
- Job said, ‘I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I say to God: do not declare me guilty, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the plans of the wicked?’¹¹⁵⁷
- The Prophet Habakkuk said, ‘How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save?’¹¹⁵⁸

1154 Exodus 32:3-4.

1155 1 Kings 11:4.

1156 Numbers 11:11-12.

1157 Job 10:1-3.

1158 Habakkuk 1:2.

- The Prophet David said, ‘Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep (*tīshan*—תִּישָׁן)? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us for ever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?’¹¹⁵⁹
- Solomon highlighted that human existence was pointless and without value, and that the ultimate destination of man is the same as that of an animal.¹¹⁶⁰
- The Jewish Prophet Caiaphas passed an edict¹¹⁶¹ to assassinate Jesus.¹¹⁶²

1159 Psalms 44:23-24.

1160 Ecclesiastes 3:19-21.

1161 John 11:49-52.

1162 Matthew 26:57-67.

Prophethood in the Qur'an

The Qur'an was revealed in Makkah, where not much about Prophethood was known apart from what the Jewish minority had attested to. The information that Christians in neighbouring suburbs had about Prophethood was scattered, contributing only further confusion to the Jewish understanding. Despite this, Qur'anic verses were revealed to depict Prophethood and the Prophets in a manner that was well removed from the distorted heritage of the People of the Book that emerged later on, both in their scriptures and their oral tradition.

THE REALITY OF PROPHETHOOD

The Qur'anic notion of Prophethood is shared by the Bible in terms of its tri-letter linguistic construct, *n-b-y* or *n-b-'*. It likewise shares its meaning, i.e., conveying—on behalf of the Lord via Revelation –the message sent to the creation by the Creator, so that He is believed, His command is obeyed, and His prohibitions are avoided.

Aims of Prophethood

In the Qur'an, the most salient feature of the Prophets' call to the divine message was making people aware of their Lord. Principal to this was instilling the concept of monotheism in a world that was partial to polytheism. It was also about teaching people those things that would rectify their lives in matters pertaining to laws and morality, giving glad tidings of divine bounties for the pious, and warning those who rejected the message with the punishment of Hell.

1. AWARENESS AND MONOTHEISM OF THE LORD

The entire Qur'an is a presentation, an explanation, and an argument of theology. Even the stories and laws discussed therein have some connection to that. It brings man in all his affairs back to the Creator and the Fashioner, Who brought this universe into existence through His Word, and Whose permission is required for death to befall. He is the First, the Last, the Highest, and the Nearest. Everything shall return unto Him.

God in the Qur'an is far removed from the God of the Torah, who engages in onerous disputes, sometimes with adversarial nations, and on other occasions with false gods.

In Job, there is a strange debate between the Lord and Satan: "Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on Earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Satan then went out from the presence of the Lord."¹¹⁶³ Here, we see an argument between the Lord and Satan—as if it were an argument of equals and a dispute between genuine rivals.

In the Qur'an, the greatest aspect of the Prophets' message is the intense emphasis on the centrality of monotheism when calling their nations to the true faith. They called to the idea that God, the One, has no partner or competitor:

- Abraham, the father of the Prophets, says precisely this to his people as he debates and argues with them: 'Are you arguing with me about Allah, while He has guided me? I am not afraid of whatever idols you associate with Him. None can harm me unless my Lord so wills. My Lord has encompassed everything in knowledge. Will you not

¹¹⁶³ Job 1:8-12.

be mindful? And how should I fear your associate-gods, while you have no fear in associating others with Allah—a practice He has never authorised? Which side has more right to security? Tell me if you really know.’ (Qur’an, 6:80-81)

- Relentless, he openly and publicly rejects their beliefs. In fact, he confronts his father in their presence on this: ‘And indeed, We had granted Ibrāhīm sound judgement early on, for We knew him well to be worthy of it. Remember when he questioned his father and his people, “What are these statues to which you are so devoted?” They replied, “We found our forefathers worshipping them.” He responded, “Indeed, you and your forefathers have been clearly astray.” They asked, “Have you come to us with the truth, or is this a joke?” He replied, “In fact, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the Earth, Who created them both. And to that I bear witness.”’ (Qur’an, 21:51-56)
- In an engaging and impactful passage, the Qur’an presents Abraham advising his father out of concern for him: ‘O dear father, do not worship Satan. Surely Satan is ever rebellious against the Most Compassionate. O dear father, I truly fear that you will be touched by a torment from the Most Compassionate and become Satan’s companion in Hell.’ (Qur’an, 19:44-45)
- In what is a most engaging discussion, Moses invites Pharaoh to believe in God: ‘Pharaoh asked, “And what is the Lord of all worlds?” Mūsā replied, “He is the Lord of the heavens and the Earth and everything in between, if only you had sure faith.” Pharaoh said to those around him, “Did you hear what he said?” Mūsā added, “He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.” Pharaoh mockingly said, “Your Messenger, who has been sent to you, must be insane.” Mūsā responded, “He is the Lord of the east and west, and everything in between, if only you had any sense.” Pharaoh said, “If you take any other god besides me, I will certainly have you imprisoned.”’ (Qur’an, 26:23-29)
- Hūd adopts a position of perseverance and true faith as he defends monotheism and condemns polytheism and associating rivals unto God: ‘They argued, “O Hūd, you have not given us any clear proof, and we will never abandon our gods upon your word, nor will we believe in you. All we can say is that some of our gods have possessed you with evil.” He said, “I call Allah to witness, and you bear

witness too, that I reject whatever you associate with Him. So let all of you plot against me without delay. I have put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no living creature that is not completely under His control. Surely my Lord's Way is perfect justice.” (Qur'an, 11:53-56)

- Ṣāliḥ was on the receiving end of harm after having once been beloved to his people. This was when he openly rejected polytheism and called to monotheism: ‘They argued, “O Ṣāliḥ, we truly had high hopes in you before this. How dare you forbid us to worship what our forefathers had worshipped? We are certainly in alarming doubt about what you are inviting us to.” He said, “O my people, consider if I stand on a clear proof from my Lord and He has blessed me with a mercy from Him. Who could help me against Allah if I were to disobey Him? You would only contribute to my doom.”’ (Qur'an, 11:62-63)
- Summarising the greatest purpose of sending Prophets, the Qur'an states, ‘We never sent a Messenger before you without revealing to him: “There is no god worthy of worship except Me, so worship Me alone.”’ (Qur'an, 21:25)

Monotheism is thus the lynchpin of the Prophets' call in the Qur'an.

As for the Torah, even though it articulates the notion of monotheism (which is in fact the first of the Ten Commandments given to Moses), it would appear that monotheism is not a decisive factor in the trajectory of events and the instruction of the Prophets. Furthermore, it is not the monotheism of God, Lord of the Worlds; it is rather the monotheism of only the Nation Lord of the Israelites, as it was they whom God chose.¹¹⁶⁴ As for other people, they have no lord besides the false gods they select for themselves. What Baentsch¹¹⁶⁵ mentioned in this matter is then true: Jewish monotheism is ethnocentric. Islamic monotheism, on the other hand, is universal.¹¹⁶⁶

As for the Church, it laid down the foundations of polytheism and worshipping the creation by inventing the Trinity (the Father, the Son, and

¹¹⁶⁴ See Exodus 19:64; Deuteronomy 4:20 and 43:21.

¹¹⁶⁵ Translator's note: Bruno Baentsch (1859-1908). German Protestant theologian.

¹¹⁶⁶ (Baentsch, 2015); quoted by (Badawī, *Al-Difā' 'an al-Qur'ān Didd Muntaqidih*, 1999), p. 75.

the Holy Spirit). It is a position that creates a rival unto God, which was also the position of certain ancient pagan nations.

As one can see, there is a difference between monotheism being the manifest reality of the Qur'an—from every angle including its content, context, and impact—and the narrow monotheism of the Bible, which is problematised further by the Church's polytheism.

2. LAWS OF STEADFASTNESS AND LEGAL ETHICS

In the Qur'an, the call of the Prophets is not a set of dull lessons regarding universal truths and the meaning of existence. Rather, it is about reviving souls by cleansing them from incorrect beliefs, outlooks, and ideas. It is also about nurturing them to adhere to steadfastness by carrying out those deeds that purify man, as well as uniting people upon good and spreading truth, justice, and virtue on Earth. The Prophets were the ideal role models in conveying the divine message. They combined their verbal teachings with leading by example. God ﷻ said, 'You already have an excellent example in Ibrāhīm and those with him.' (Qur'an, 60:4)

3. GLAD TIDINGS OF PARADISE AND CAUTION FROM PUNISHMENT

Motivating souls to carry out good deeds, and reassuring grieving and sad souls when they are overburdened by tribulation and traversing the towering waves of affliction, is a pinnacle worth aspiring for. This pinnacle cannot be achieved by humans without being promised Paradise in the Afterlife, where there is only comfort and no hardship, where there are only bounties and no suffering, and where there are only the means of pleasure without anything to spoil them. It is the ultimate final abode where there is no death.

In his deep wisdom and without assistance from Revelation, Socrates arrived at the reality of the Afterlife, and the determination that the story of life cannot possibly end in the grave. He said, 'When the soul leaves the body, it is submerged in eternal fortune, as it will live next to the gods in the ideal realm.'¹¹⁶⁷

In many of its verses, the Qur'an mentions the Prophets inviting their people to Paradise, promising them its eternal bounty and pure station, and that they would be made to return to it. It also quotes them saying that pleasure is not to be derived from this perishing world, but rather this will be realised in a pleasing and everlasting abode.

Just as human action is animated by encouragement and positive development, it is also motivated by the fear factor and the threat of a negative outcome. These two factors combined are the fuel for the human soul to remain afar from bad beliefs and lowly action, and for it to embrace the true faith and honesty in good action.

Analysing the stories of the Prophets in the Qur'an, the threat of punishment on the Last Day is made abundantly clear. The audience of the religious call consisted of pagans and others who were inclined to faiths that had distorted the message of the previous Prophets. Therefore, the threat of punishment was way more effective for many souls, when compared to hearing about the positive outcomes that may come to pass for them on the Day of Reckoning should they choose to accept Islam.

¹¹⁶⁷ (Ṭawīl, 1978), p. 32.

Instilling the fear of the punishment of Hell is repeatedly mentioned. The Qur'an invites the polytheists to be steadfast on the path of righteousness and guidance. We find Noah ﷺ initiate his religious call to the divine message by warning people from the punishment of Allah and His severe vengeance: "O my people, worship Allah. You have no other god except Him. I truly fear for you the torment of a tremendous Day." (Qur'an, 7:59)

We also see Shu'ayb proclaim to his people, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. And do not give short measure and weight. I do see you in prosperity now, but I truly fear for you the torment of an overwhelming Day." (Qur'an, 11:84)

However, if we are to look in the direction assumed by others to be the source of the Qur'an, we can observe that the New Testament—which represents the highest Jewish reference point and the lengthiest Christian reference point—does not mention the Final Day except rarely, and that too would be towards the end of the scriptures they authored.¹¹⁶⁸ Scholars—who were observing the distorted Bible's text—are of the position that belief in the Final Day only appeared at a later stage in the sequence of events surrounding the call of the Israelites to the divine message. "The first references in Jewish literature to the resurrection of individuals at the end of time appear in the Book of Daniel."¹¹⁶⁹

In the Bible, there is an explicit declaration that human existence is pointless, maintaining that its beginning is as a foetus in the womb, its ending is a perishing corpse, which then ultimately leads to non-existence: 'Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: as one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the Earth?'¹¹⁷⁰

According to Jews, the meaning of resurrection is not the revival of bodies for accountability. Stimpson¹¹⁷¹ says, 'In Old Testament times the

1168 The delay in the appearance of any mention of the Final Day in the Old Testament is proof for the notion that it is distorted. The Islamic concept is unequivocal in that previous Prophets conveyed the news of the Day of Recompense (the Final Day) to their nations. A wise person's mind cannot fathom the idea that any Prophet would mention the minutiae to his people yet neglect the mention of the never-ending Afterlife.

1169 (World Book, 2003), 16/264.

1170 Ecclesiastes 3:19-21.

1171 Translator's note: George William Stimpson (1896-1952). Author, lawyer, and lecturer. His works include *Nuggets of Knowledge*, *Uncommon Knowledge*, *A Book About the Bible*, and *A Book About American History*.

hope of a life after death was linked solely with the resurrection that would occur with the coming of Jesus.¹¹⁷²

As for the New Testament, it is a brief and scattered collection of discourses that does not in any way represent a complete, systemised, and organised depiction of the Afterlife.¹¹⁷³

1172 (Stimpson, 1945), p. 38.

1173 See Matthew 35:46 and 19:27-29; Mark 9:43-48 and 14:23-25; Luke 22:18-30; and John 14:2.

Aims of mentioning the Prophets' stories

In the Qur'anic layout and storytelling format, the essence of the Prophet's task is represented in the sharing of knowledge that God grants all Prophets. This knowledge informs people about their Creator, the Fashioner of this universe and its Planner, His Lofty Attributes, as well as the connection between Him and His servants. It also informs them what the stance of a human in relation to the world, his beginning, and his end should be, what pleases the Lord and what displeases Him, what renders man felicitous or reprobate in the Afterlife, the details of the beliefs he should adopt, the realm of actions and ethics, and what would come about as a result of whatever statements, beliefs and actions he commits to, and their recompense.¹¹⁷⁴

On the other hand, the picture depicted in the Old and New Testaments is at best restricted to inviting people to the worship of Yahweh, waging unjust and bloody wars to achieve that end, inviting people to only some virtuous actions, following the law of Moses as per the Old Testament with all its burdensome detail, and going into extremities about ritual practices that are for the most part empty and void of any live meaning.¹¹⁷⁵

In the Torah, the Prophets' stories appear to be detached for the large part from offering any wisdom—they are cases of constant storytelling as if they are merely concerned with relating historical events. It is difficult for any reader to properly follow the trajectory of these narratives, due to the many names, numerical figures, and detailed descriptions that take up long pages without any spiritual benefit that could be derived from them, whether apparent or concealed between the classes of words and sentence structures.

Ask for the Qur'an, it limits itself to the administering of admonishment and lessons. From its verses, it is clear that the stories of the Prophets were not revealed simply to fill up pages or increase information about ancient events. Rather, they were revealed for greater wisdoms and thought-provoking benefits, the most important of which are:

1174 See (Nadwī, 1974/1394 AH), p. 22.

1175 See for example: 1 Samuel 7:17 and 16:13, and 1 Chronicles 9:22.

- i. Clarifying the fundamentals of calling to God, and explaining the fundamentals of the laws with which all Prophets were sent.
 - ♦ He ﷺ said, ‘We never sent a Messenger before you without revealing to him: “There is no god worthy of worship except Me, so worship Me alone.”’ (Qur’an, 21:25)
- ii. Reinforcing the heart of the Prophet ﷺ and the hearts of the people in the nation on the religion of God, and strengthening the trust of the believers in that the truth and its army will gain victory, and that falsehood and its people will lose.
 - ♦ He ﷺ said, ‘And We relate to you, O Prophet, the stories of the Messengers to reassure your heart. And there has come to you in this chapter the truth, a warning to the disbelievers, and a reminder to the believers.’ (Qur’an, 11:120)
- iii. Acknowledging previous Prophets, reviving their mention, and ensuring their influence remains.
- iv. Showcasing the honesty of Muhammad ﷺ with regard to the stories of previous people across centuries and generations.
 - ♦ He ﷺ said, ‘This is one of the stories of the unseen, which We reveal to you, O Prophet. Neither you nor your people knew it before this. So be patient. Surely the ultimate outcome belongs to the righteous.’ (Qur’an, 11:49)
- v. Reprimanding the People of the Book via evidence for concealing proofs and guidance to the truth.
 - ♦ He ﷺ said, ‘All food was lawful for the children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for himself before the Torah was revealed. Say, O Prophet, “Bring the Torah and read it, if your claims are true.”’ (Qur’an, 3:93)
- vi. Stories are a type of literature—people pay attention to them and their lessons can gain traction in their hearts.
 - ♦ He ﷺ said, ‘In their stories there is truly a lesson for people of reason. This message cannot be a fabrication, rather it is a con-

firmation of previous Revelation, a detailed explanation of all things, a guide, and a mercy for people of faith.¹¹⁷⁶ (Qur'an, 12:111)

1176 See (Nu'aymī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*).

Infallibility of the Prophets

In the Qur'an, a Prophet is not a mere tool to convey the divine message. Rather, he is both a verbal purveyor of truth and a role model in whose steps those seeking salvation can be guided on Earth. Prophethood is the selection of a man who is sound in his predisposition, impeccable in his inner disposition, and physically unblemished from the stains of sins. The implication of this is that Prophets are completely free of that which is ascribed to them by the scriptures of the Torah, or the obscenities and contemptible behaviours that the oral tradition of the People of the Book states in that regard.

In exonerating the Prophets from ethical and moral misdeeds, the Qur'an adopts three fundamental methods:

1. It highlights their great virtue, and that they are the role models and the ideal human beings in belief and action. Listing the names of Prophets from the progeny of Abraham ﷺ, the Qur'an states: 'And We blessed him with Ishāq and Ya'qūb. We guided them all as We previously guided Nūḥ and those among his descendants: Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Ayyūb, Yūsuf, Mūsā, and Hārūn. This is how We reward the good-doers. Likewise, We guided Zakariyyā, Yaḥyā, 'Īsā, and Ilyās. They were all of the righteous. We also guided Ismā'īl, Yasa', Yūnus, and Lūṭ. We favoured each over other people of their time. And We favoured some of their forefathers, their descendants, and their brothers. We chose them and guided them to the straight path. This is Allah's guidance with which He guides whoever He wills of His servants. Had they associated others with Him in worship, their good deeds would have been wasted. Those were the ones to whom We gave the Scripture, wisdom, and Prophethood. But if these pagans disbelieve in this message, then We have already entrusted it to a people who will never disbelieve in it. These Prophets were rightly guided by Allah, so follow their guidance. Say, "I ask no reward of you for this Qur'an—it is but a reminder to the whole

world.” (Qur’an, 6:84-90) They are thus the role models which Muhammad ﷺ and his nation after him were commanded to follow.

2. The Qur’an relates that which explicitly conflicts with the obscenities concocted by the People of the Book. An example of this is the story of the calf, which was made for the Jews so that they could worship it. It is mentioned in the Torah that Aaron     made it, whereas the Qur’an ascribes this evil deed to Sāmirī the deviant: ‘They said, “We did not break our promise to you of our own free will, but we were made to carry the burden of the people’s golden jewellery, then we threw it into the fire, and so did the Sāmirī.” He had then moulded for them an idol of a calf that made a lowing sound. They said, “This is your god and the god of Mūsā, but Mūsā forgot where it was.”’ (Qur’an, 20:87-88)
3. The Qur’anic text brings that which has been ascribed to the Prophet and then proceeds to directly negate it. An example of this is the exoneration by the Qur’an of Sulaymān     from the falsehoods levelled at him by the People of the Book: ‘They instead followed the magic promoted by the devils during the reign of Sulaymān. Never did Sulaymān disbelieve, rather the devils disbelieved. They taught magic to the people, along with what had been revealed to the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, in Babylon. The two angels never taught anyone without saying, “We are only a test for you, so do not abandon your faith.”’ (Qur’an, 2:102)

The Qur'an and the Torah's portrayal of David: a comparative assessment

There is no example that brings together two mutually contradictory items—between which there is no middle ground—like the depiction provided by the Torah of David¹¹⁷⁷, the powerful king of the Jews. He is portrayed as a brave person and the killer of Goliath without a sword, whereby he simply relied on his catapult slingshot.¹¹⁷⁸ With this, he becomes an outcast from the Philistines; however, he quickly re-joins them to wage war against one of their enemies. In fact, he hands his sword over to them in order for it to be used against their Jewish compatriots.¹¹⁷⁹ On one day, he carries the weaponry of Saul the Israelite, then as a guard for Achish on another day.¹¹⁸⁰ He started his rule under the leadership of the Philistines, then he ended his rule having completely dismantled their influence. He was the mortal enemy of Saul, but at the same time he was his son-in-law as well as being the most beloved to his son and most Israelite girls.¹¹⁸¹ He worked as a singer at Saul's palace because he was good at playing the harp and at singing with his tender voice. At the same time, he was the fighting horseman, bearer of the king's weaponry, and the exterminator of his enemies.¹¹⁸²

David was strict and rough by nature. Yet at the same time, he was ready to forgive his enemies, just like the Caesar and Jesus forgave their enemies. He killed prisoners of war *en masse* like the Assyrian kings would do. In

1177 David is described as a Prophet in the New Testament as well: "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he *was a prophet* and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay." (Acts 2:29-31).

1178 See 1 Samuel 17:50.

1179 See 1 Samuel 29:2.

1180 See 1 Samuel 28:1-2.

1181 See 1 Samuel 17:1-7.

1182 See 1 Samuel 16:21-23.

fact, he used to go into excesses with his strictness. For example, he ordered that the vanquished enemy be set on fire, skinned, and cut open with saws.¹¹⁸³ When Saul asked for the foreskins of 100 Philistines from him as the bridal gift for his daughter Michal, David went out and killed 200 Philistines and presented their foreskins as the bridal gift to Saul's daughter.¹¹⁸⁴ Additionally, on his deathbed, he advised his son Solomon vis-à-vis Shimei son of Gera—who had cursed David for many consecutive years—as follows: 'But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his grey head down to the grave in blood.'¹¹⁸⁵

Taking advantage of his reputation and dominion, David would forcefully usurp wives from their husbands. To meet Abner, commander of Saul's army, he stipulated that he bring Michal, Saul's daughter—whose bridal gift was 200 Philistines—from her husband Paltiel, son of Laish, who was grief-stricken for being separated from her. Crying, he then followed her until Bahurim and did not return until Abner's order came, or out of fearing him.¹¹⁸⁶ He then took the wife of Uriah the Hittite and sent her husband to the frontline of battle in order to get rid of him.¹¹⁸⁷

He faced humiliating criticism from Jonathan, but he still managed to hang onto the beautiful Bathsheba. He forgave Samuel numerous times, only taking away his armour from him when he could have ended his life. He forgave Mephibosheth and assisted him, even though he was the grandson of Saul and could have been called upon to assume the throne of his uncle and his grandfather who had previously occupied it.¹¹⁸⁸ He forgave his son Absalom after he was arrested in an armed revolt, having him publicly humiliated.¹¹⁸⁹ In fact, he forgave Saul—who had tried to have him killed—after having gained full control over him a number of times. He offered him unconditional security and complete protection.¹¹⁹⁰

The depiction of the Qur'an is totally different from the above, as it portrays David as a personality surrounded by virtuous enlightenment:

- David is given virtue, deep wisdom, and beneficial knowledge by God:

1183 See 2 Samuel 12:29-31.

1184 See 1 Samuel 18:25-27.

1185 See 1 Kings 2:9.

1186 2 Samuel 3:12-16.

1187 2 Samuel 11:2-26.

1188 2 Samuel 4:4-5.

1189 2 Samuel 16:23 and 18:23.

1190 1 Samuel 24:2-22.

See (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārikhiyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 1/64.

- ◆ ‘Dāwūd killed Jālūt. And Allah blessed Dāwūd with kingship and wisdom and taught him what He willed.’ (Qur’an, 2:251)
- He is a knowledgeable and ever-thankful Prophet:
 - ◆ ‘Indeed, We granted knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaymān. And they said in acknowledgement, “All praise is for Allah Who has privileged us over many of His faithful servants.”’ (Qur’an, 27:15)
- The mountains and birds were subjected to sing the glory of God alongside him, and miracles that were of benefit to people manifested at his hands:
 - ◆ ‘We guided Sulaymān to a fairer settlement. We granted each of them wisdom and knowledge. We subjected the mountains and the birds to hymn Our praises along with Dāwūd. It is We Who did it all.’ (Qur’an, 21:79)
 - ◆ ‘Indeed, We granted Dāwūd a privilege from Us, commanding: “O mountains, echo his hymns with the birds.” We made iron mouldable for him: “Make full-length armour and balance the links. Work righteousness, O family of Dāwūd. Indeed, I am All-Seeing of what you do.”’ (Qur’an, 34:10-11)
- He was given strength in his intellect, heart, and fingertips:
 - ◆ ‘Be patient with what they say. And remember Our servant, Dāwūd, the man of strength. Indeed, he constantly turned to Allah. We subjected the mountains to hymn Our praises along with him in the evening and after sunrise. And We subjected the birds, flocking together. All turned to him echoing his hymns. We strengthened his kingship and gave him wisdom and sound judgement.’ (Qur’an, 38:17-20)
- Out of all the Prophets, he was chosen by God, out of His favour, to receive the Zabūr:
 - ◆ ‘Your Lord knows best all those in the heavens and the Earth. And We have surely favoured some Prophets above others, and to Dāwūd We gave the Zabūr.’ (Qur’an, 17:55)

Summary

- Prophethood in the Qur'an entails infallibility and embodied guidance.
- The Prophets of the Torah are depicted as perpetrators of heinous deeds and calamitous acts that reach the level of disbelief.

Further reading

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Mahrān, M. B. (1999/1419 AH). *Banū Isrā’īl—Al-Ḥaḍārah: Al-Nubuwwah wa al-Anbiyā’*. Alexandria, Egypt: Dār al-Ma‘rifah al-Jāmi‘iyyah.



SECTION 8

Islamic Law as a Legislative Miracle

﴿How could He not know His Own creation when He is the Most Subtle, All-Aware?﴾

(Qur'an, 67:14)

It must also be kept in mind that the Qur'an was by no means meant to reform the morals of pre-Islamic Arabia (alone), but that it brought, on the contrary, a perfect and eternal law applicable to human realities and social necessities of all times.

(Marcel A. Boisard, Swiss diplomat and international law expert)



Flagrant plagiarism? Or serene inimitability?

One of the most important objectives of Prophethood is the systemisation of people's livelihoods, which brings about prosperity in this world and felicity in the Afterlife. The Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition set out in detail many issues pertaining to prohibition, legalisation, lawfulness, impropriety, instruction, and limitation. This system of legislation offers the researcher the ability to test the truthfulness of Islam's divinity. It allows him to analyse evidence of the wisdom built into this system, which concurs with our conceptualisation of heavenly legislation that establishes truth and prevents injustice.

People are of two positions vis-à-vis Qur'anic law. Muslims believe that the Qur'an offers a unique legislative system that is proper for every place and time. They believe that it has taken into consideration both the apparent and the hidden conditions innate to the soul, that it has granted the individual his rights without excess or deficiency, that it has organised communities so that they come together and do not fall apart, that it created justice for the weak, and that it prevented the powerful from perpetrating injustice. All of these are irrefutable proofs that the man who lived in a nation of Bedouin life and global isolation did not fabricate this Qur'an from his own fantasies; rather, it is a magnificent Revelation.

On the other hand, adversaries believe that Islamic law is merely the amalgamation of various laws of the Jews, or the Jews and the Romans. In other words, they claim that it has no originality to it; rather it is borrowed, following previous nations without offering anything unique.

Some legitimate questions on Islamic law

Muslim jurists repeatedly discuss Islamic law by noting that it is a capacious source for the Islamic renaissance in ancient times, and that it is the source of political, economic, and penal legal systems, under the shadow of which people can live in safety and justice. Adversaries, on the other hand, consider this to be an emotionally driven discourse, lacking any support from established facts. They claim that, in fact, history not only testifies against the inimitability of the Shariah, but also against its propriety.

If we are to summarise the objections of those criticising the divinity of Islamic law, we can say the following:

- Muslims claim that this legislation is vast and powerful enough to create a renaissance in our age. This is despite the fact that it appeared at the hands of an unlettered man who lived in a primitive environment and obscure land. They add that it would be improper to ascribe this legislative system to a man who lived in these dark ages—or to any man who lived in any era for that matter. Adversaries, on the other hand, say that the legislative inimitability of the Qur'an is just a claim that Muslims have ran with. It is therefore simply a faith-based claim, such that nobody would agree with them.
- Islamic law is a collection of regulations passed down from the ordinances of previous nations, especially the Jews.
- The laws of Islam are primitive and unjust, as is clearly manifested in its legislations pertaining to war and inheritance.

Other than these objections, I cannot find anything worth mentioning. This is why the response to these objections should be enough in ascertaining what exactly is the source of Islamic law: whether it should be ascribed to a man who lived in the 7th century among many other unknown men of

the Arabian desert, or whether it is far greater than what any human mind in that era could have acquired.¹¹⁹¹

1191 Muslims say that it is a legal apparatus that rises above the minds of men in every era. This is an issue that we will not debate here. Rather, we suffice with the topic that is of concern to us in this book, which is the source of Islamic legislation in the 7th century and whether it is from a natural human source or a supernatural source.

Non-Muslim testimony in favour of the Qur'anic legislative system

The vile attacks against Islamic law by secularists and their attempts to bring it into disrepute are counterbalanced by what Western legalists, who are aware of the treasures of Islamic law and have attested to its uniqueness and magnificence, have attested. They are testimonies that cannot be criticised for being emotionally driven or ignorant, as they have emanated from people who arrived at this conclusion after much reading and study.

In his recently published book *al-Minah al-Ilāhiyyah fī Iqāmah al-Hujjah ‘alā al-Bashariyyah*, the Chairman¹¹⁹² of the Commission on Scientific Signs in the Qur'an and Sunnah mentioned what one Western economist said at the end of an Islamic economics conference held in Baden-Baden, Germany. He says, 'I was one of the attendees there. It gathered 110 Muslim economists and 120 Western economists from Western Europe, to debate the issue of Islamic economics. On the final day of the conference, the head of the Western economists stood up and said, "It has become clear to me and the team working with me that the solution to safeguard the world from its economic crisis is with you Muslims."¹¹⁹³

Close to the above is the affirmation by Vincent Beaufigs¹¹⁹⁴, a writer for the famous French economics magazine, *Challenges*, in an article titled *Le Pape ou le Coran (The Pope or the Qur'an)*. He stated that the West—in its ongoing economic crises—can find a solution in Islamic law that prevents the exchange of money for money with interest if both are of the same category.¹¹⁹⁵

For many prominent non-Muslim legal experts, the distinctiveness of Qur'anic legislation and its originality is now a fact. The International Comparative Law Congress, which was held in August 1937, acknowledged

1192 Dr ‘Abdullāh al-Muṣliḥ.

1193 (Muṣliḥ, 2012/1433 AH), p. 32.

1194 Translator's note: Vincent Beaufigs (b. 1953). French journalist. He was the editor of the *Challenges* magazine from 2001 until 2020.

1195 (Beaufigs, 2008).

that Islamic law is a standalone law and not taken from anything else.¹¹⁹⁶ This alludes to the distinctive nature of Islamic law when compared to Roman law.

In a number of its fundamental legal maxims that legalists consider to be major steps in the evolution of statutory law, Islamic law preceded Western law. Among these maxims are the abuse of rights doctrine¹¹⁹⁷, the extenuating circumstances doctrine, the liability doctrine, and the principle of non-discrimination.¹¹⁹⁸

In the first half of the 20th century, Leon Ostroróg¹¹⁹⁹ spoke of the Islamic legislative system in the field of human rights. Offering due respect and deference to Islamic law, he said, 'Considered from the point of view of its logical structure, the system (Islamic law) is one of rare perfection, and to this day commands the admiration of the student.'¹²⁰⁰

Likewise, in his book *Islamic Jurisprudence: Some International Perspectives*, Christopher Weeramantry¹²⁰¹, the former judge at the International Court of Justice and Professor Emeritus at Monash University, acknowledged the greatness of Islamic law—especially in relation to international law—and its influence on European law. In his book, he expressed his deep admiration for Islamic legal principles and their detail. His discussion did not consist of mere platitudes—it is full of clear references to the texts of the Qur'an and the hadith. He severely condemned Western writers for overlooking Islamic law in their discussions on the history of international

1196 (Manşūr, 1970/1390 AH), pp. 67-68.

1197 The doctrine of 'abuse of rights' has baffled Western legalists of the 20th century. When a Muslim scholar wrote a treatise on abuse of rights and stayed within the confines of what the Muslim jurists set out, readers jumped on it and the book was sold out in six months. Western law journals wrote about it; the famous German legalist Josef Köhler (1849-1919) stated in an article, 'Germans used to be elated in front of others for believing they were the ones who developed the concept of abuse of rights, having made it part of the civil legal code of Germany in 1787. Given that now Dr Faṭḥī's book has appeared, in which he has commented on this doctrine by quoting from Muslim legalists, it is high time that German legalists back down from the glory they ascribe to themselves and finally admit where virtue here belongs—the Islamic jurists. They knew about this doctrine and commented on it extensively, ten centuries before the Germans' (Manşūr, 1970/1390 AH), p. 42.

1198 See (Manşūr, 1970/1390 AH), p. 42.

1199 Translator's note: Leon Walerian Ostroróg (1867-1932). Scholar of Islamic law, jurist, and advisor to the Ottoman Government.

1200 (Weeramantry, 1988), p. 113.

1201 Translator's note: Christopher Gregory Weeramantry (1926-2017). Sri Lankan lawyer, judge at the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka between 1967-1972, and judge at the International Court of Justice between 1991 to 2000.

law. He stressed that Islamic law in fact preceded the laws that were developed in this field by Grotius¹²⁰² in the 17th century. Weeramantry clarified two important things:

- i. Compared to Islamic legislation, neither the Greeks nor the Romans—nor the Church for that matter—possess a systemised legal theory on international law.¹²⁰³
- ii. He proved from many angles the fact that Grotius was aware of Islamic law, and that he was influenced by it.¹²⁰⁴

Reading the book of Weeramantry, a non-Muslim reader can only ask himself: How could Muhammad have been given a supernatural power to create this legislative edifice without relying on a previous human tradition, if it is not anything other than divine Revelation? And how can this Qur'an be the product of a 7th century distant desert land, and in spite of that, continue to shower humankind with its intellectual generosity in the fields of legislation today, and impress the minds of the greatest Western legal experts even in the 21st century, while they have not yet entered its depths?

The abrupt appearance of a legal code in the Arabian desert during the 7th century at the hands of an unlettered man—which continues to confound Western legislators today—is either one of two options. It either has a material explanation, or it should be accepted as a miracle. There is no third solution to this question. The lack of any convincing material explanation is evidence in favour of its divinely sourced nature.

1202 Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Dutch lawyer and theologian.

1203 '...neither the Greeks nor the Romans had produced a coherent theory of international law and that the medieval Christian Church was only groping towards this concept...' (Weeramantry, 1988), p. 151.

1204 (Weeramantry, 1988), pp. 150-158.

Human sources for the canonical Islamic laws?

Many adversaries of Islam have understood that the law of the Qur'an cannot be assigned to a man who was unlettered and led a simple life—day and night—in a parallel fashion to his people. That is why they started looking for an external material source for this body of law.

THE TORAH AND THE TALMUD

Only a few Orientalists consider the Torah and Talmud to be sources for Qur'anic legislation. In fact, even though he has a dedicated section speaking on the borrowing of Qur'anic law from Judaism, Geiger—the most famous author claiming the Qur'an extensively borrowed from Judaism—said he could not find anything other than an extremely limited number of similarities between Qur'anic law and Jewish law that could be construed as borrowing. In other words, he himself dismantled the evidence of his own claim. This is despite the fact that he painstakingly compared Qur'anic law with the vast body of Talmudic law. He further dismantled his own argument when—in addition to these few similarities—he acknowledged that it is possible to posit they were general eastern customary practices, and not necessarily cases of borrowing.¹²⁰⁵ As such, these would not be unique factors to Jewish law. Furthermore, the fact of the matter was that the people in the East would have needed these customary practices and laws anyway.

The differences between Qur'anic law and Jewish legislation are pervasive:

1. There is no systemised legal body in the Torah that covers all details of life and plugs the gap for both nation and individual units. Islamic law—both the Qur'an and the Sunnah—cover both micro and macro-level issues.
2. The text of the Torah is full of detailed ritualistic laws that are disconnected from the lives of people. We do not see any trace of this in the Qur'an.
3. The Qur'anic text is a treasure trove of universal legislative principles that offer the jurist far-reaching tools to extract legal rulings for every single context and situation, whereas the text of the Torah is laden and encumbered with granular legislative details.
4. It is easy for a reader to observe the impact of the environment on many of the legislative rulings in the Torah, whereas the Qur'anic legislative text seemingly regulated the environment around it.

1205 (Geiger, 1970), p. 70.

In other words, the Qur'an was engineering and shaping its surroundings.

5. Islamic law covers the needs of man, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. On the other hand, the law of the Torah suffices by taking into consideration only the needs of the Israelites.
6. Many laws of the Torah are discriminatory between the religious elite and the laity, whereas Islamic law does not offer any special status for its religious elite. All Muslims are liable to adhere to the law when they reach puberty and understand the divine address.
7. Even though Islamic law is founded on the principle that Islam overpowers and cannot be overpowered, it still respects a person's humanity regardless of what his theological affiliation is. It acknowledges human needs without any religious distinction.
8. The rules of military engagement in Islam are precisely set, with limits that prevent war from falling into vengeance or the unjust exploiting of resources. The texts of war in the Old Testament, on the other hand, come across as extremely bloody and highly exorbitant.
9. Penal law in the Torah is founded on the principle of punishing the criminal principally out of spite, albeit within the limits of the law. However, the same in Islam is founded on a number of principles: punishment, safeguarding, granting the ruler the power to forgive, and encouraging him to do so.
10. In the Torah, a woman is barred from inheriting as a mother or a daughter. She has no right to separate from her husband. The punishment of her rapist, if she is a virgin, is that he has to marry her. Her father can sell her off if he so likes. The overriding idea here is that the woman is chattel owned by the man, and that transgression against her is, in reality, transgression against her father or her husband, as she falls under their proprietorship. As for the Qur'an, it sets out that a woman is like a man in everything (with the exception of some areas where there is a considered reason); she is independent from both financial and intellectual perspectives.¹²⁰⁶

¹²⁰⁶ On women's rights and their status in the Qur'an compared to the Bible, see Ameri, *Al-Mar'ah Bayn Ishrāqāt al-Islām wa-Iftirā'āt al-Munaṣṣirīn*, 2010.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CANON LAW

Given that it is impossible for Jewish legislation to be the source of Qur'anic legislation, we shall now investigate Christian law. Is that the source of the law in the Islamic religion?

The Church has no law

The New Testament is clear that the law of the Torah is a faulty, void law.¹²⁰⁷ Paul explicitly sets out that people are not in need of a ritualistic law; rather, for salvific purposes, they can suffice with a rudimentary belief in God.¹²⁰⁸

As for Church law, it started off with some of the Councils, the results of which were a number of decisions, most of which were related to theological, ritual, and procedural issues pertaining to Church hierarchy. Then the Bishop of Rome—the Pope—became the new source of determining what was lawful and unlawful in legislative issues at a granular level; these too are small in number. It was said, '*Roma locuta est, causa finite est*' (Rome has spoken, the case is closed).

For the periods before and during the Muhammadan Prophethood, Church law was in no way a complete legislative system in its truest meaning. Rather, there were a limited number of teachings that were not connected in any meaningful way to the reality of people's daily lives.

1207 See, for example, Galatians 3:13.

1208 See, for example, Ephesus 2:15, Romans 3:27-28, and Titus 3:4-5.

The era of canonisation

The first attempt to record Church law in systematic and encyclopaedic fashion was in the 11th century—centuries after the Revelation of the Qur'an—at the hands of a monk¹²⁰⁹. This work was called *Decretum Gratiani*.¹²¹⁰ This is indicative of the fact that Church legislation during the lifetime of the Messenger of God ﷺ was considered a difficult issue, thereby requiring deep study, collection, and knowledge of the Greek, Latin, and Syriac languages.

Before the Muhammadan Prophethood, Church law did not exceed for the most part beyond general spiritual and moral advice related to honesty and chastity, with some details on ritual worship and ecclesiastical polity.¹²¹¹ Likewise, the Christian Councils in the centuries prior to the Messengership of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ were not preoccupied with legislative issues, save for some individual matters that had no connection to most people beyond the elite. Their primary concern was to arrive at decisions pertaining to theological matters.

As such, between this legal development and the Muhammadan Prophethood is a) a chronological gap spanning centuries, b) a geographical gap between the Arabian Peninsula and Europe, and c) a language gap in terms of a lack of expertise in non-Arabic languages.

The position that the Qur'an borrowed from the scriptures of the New Testament and the Church canon law for its legislation does not stand up to even the most basic scrutiny by preliminary comparative studies, which is why this position has no known advocates.

1209 Translator's note: Gratian (12th century). Jurist from Central Italy.

1210 Translator's note: *Decretum Gratiani*, also known as the *Decretum*, is a collection of canon law compiled in the 12th century as a legal textbook. It served as the main source of law for Catholics from 1234 until 1917.

1211 This includes the *Didascalia* and the *Didache*.

ROMAN LAW

Those criticising the Qur'an were then forced to look at Roman law, and over time started claiming that this was the source of Islamic law. However, this claim did not survive for long before it fell apart. Orientalist authors such as the Italian scholar Nallino¹²¹² refuted it; the latter dismissed the thesis in a lecture delivered at the International Congress for Roman Law—held in Rome in 1933—titled *The Influence of Roman Law on Muslim Law*¹²¹³. The fact is that the Messenger ﷺ was not aware of the Roman vernacular. The Roman Emperor Justinian¹²¹⁴ had shut down all schools of Roman law across the state except for the schools in Rome, Constantinople, and Beirut, in accordance with a decree he issued on 16 December 533.¹²¹⁵ Furthermore, Arabia was completely detached from the legal customs of other nations,

1212 Carlo Nallino (1872-1938). Italian Orientalist. He taught at a number of Italian universities. He was a member at the Royal Academy of Arab Language in Cairo.

1213 This lecture was rendered into Arabic and published by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid in his book *al-Muntaqā min Dirāsāt al-Mustashriqīn*.

Translator's note: The following is adapted from (Shuayb, 2012), p. 251 ff.:

'*The Influence of Roman Law on Muslim Law* paper was translated by Muhammad Ḥamidullāh from the original Italian work *Considerazioni sui rapporti fra diritto romano e diritto musulmano*, (*Islamic Review*, vol. XLI, no. 12, December 1953), 9. Nallino first delivered the paper as a lecture at the International Congress of Roman Law, Rome, 1933. In 1942, it was published posthumously by his daughter in a work entitled *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti* (85-94).

On the question of Roman influence on Islamic law, the first scholar to introduce the notion might have been Dominico Gatteschi in 1865. In his *Manuale di diritto pubblico e privato ottomano*, he contended that Muslim law was substantially derived from Roman law and critiqued Nallino. In the West, this became the dominant view on the origins of Islamic law during the 19th century. Alfred von Kramer popularized it in 1865. In 1880, Henri Hughes held that the two systems of law—Roman and Islamic—were scarcely different from each other. Goldziher thought that parallels between the two systems of law encompassed positive law as well as legal science. Among early 20th century contributors to this paradigm were Santillana, Morand, and Ion who wrote a lengthy article on the subject entitled *Roman Law and Mohammedan Jurisprudence*. Around the same time, Nallino was the first Orientalist to challenge the view that Roman law influenced Islamic law...'

1214 Translator's note: Justinian I (482-565). Byzantine emperor from 527 to 565.

1215 (Abū Ṭālib, 1963), p. 48; quoted by (Zaydān, 1998/1419 AH), p. 65.

and the vast differences between Qur'anic law and Roman law would invalidate any claim that the former borrowed from the latter.¹²¹⁶

¹²¹⁶ For details of the refutation, see (Zaydān, 1998/1419 AH), pp. 62-75.

ISLAM INFLUENCED THE LAWS OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

The Orientalist Joseph Schacht, considered one of the most important Orientalists who dealt with Islamic legal studies, affirmed that Islamic law influenced Jewish and Christian law. He said:

- 'One of the most important bequests which Islam has transmitted to the civilised world is its religious law, the *Sharīʿa*. It is a phenomenon so different from all other forms of law that its study is indispensable in order to appreciate adequately the full range of possible legal phenomena.'¹²¹⁷
- 'At the opposite end of the Mediterranean, Islamic law has exerted a deep influence on all branches of the law of Georgia, including the law of maritime commerce, during a period extending from the Seljuqs to the Şafavids (c. 1100 to 1500). There is finally the effect of Islamic law on the laws of the tolerated religions, the Jewish and the Christian, within the Islamic state.'¹²¹⁸
- 'On the Jewish side, it seems that Maimonides (d. 1204) was influenced by some features of Islamic works in the arrangement of the subject matter of his Code, the *Mishnah Torah*, which is unprecedented in Jewish literature; he also says in his Commentary he wrote in Arabic...'¹²¹⁹

In his discussion on the wide influence of Arabic-speaking Muslims on Jews, the Jewish Orientalist Naftali Wieder¹²²⁰ analysed the most important Jewish legal work in the Middle Ages: the *Mishneh Torah* משנה תורה. In his book *Islamic Influences on Jewish Worship*, he said, '*Prima facie*, Jews

1217 (Schacht & Bosworth, 1974).

1218 (Schacht & Bosworth, 1974).

1219 (Schacht & Bosworth, 1974).

1220 Translator's note: Naftali Wieder (1905-2001). Jewish rabbi and professor. He was born in Hungary and studied in Berlin, before coming to England in 1939 and becoming part of a Jewish refugee academics community at Oxford. In 1948, he was appointed to the orthodox rabbinical seminary in London, the Jews' College (now known as London School of Jewish Studies), where he taught for almost 25 years. In 1972, he moved to Jerusalem and taught at Bar Ilan University.

adopted the taxonomies of the Arabs for the religious subsidiary issues, morals, grammar, scriptural hermeneutics, and even in the subject of law. The Mishneh Torah—which continues to astound us with its construct and sequencing—is nothing other than the sequencing of the vast body of [Jewish] law according to the system that the Muslim scholars of law put in place [for Islamic law].¹²²¹

Likewise, in his introduction to *Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's Commentary on the Book of Creation*, the Orientalist Moshe Zucker spelt out the widespread Islamic influence on Jewish jurists in the primary issues pertaining to both juristic and theological fundamentals.

1221 (Wieder, 1947), p. 9; taken from (Zucker, 2003), p. 13.

Obnoxious laws? Or a brilliantly systemised body of legislation?

One fine line of Arab poetry, which became a proverb, was composed by Buḥturī:

When [what you consider to be] my sins are actually virtues that I
am proud of,
then pray tell me: How should I apologise?

This is exactly the example of those who defend Islamic law from allegations of corruption or impropriety. Whatever Islamic law is condemned for is exactly what denotes its divinity. However, this cannot be understood by someone who is driven by the subjectivities of the people of the day.

This matter requires the understanding of the reality of the Islamic legislation that has been the target of condemnation, and its connection to (or contrast with) other legislative systems, so that the subtle wisdom therein becomes clear. This then needs to be placed in its historical context, that is, in relation to the laws of the pagan Arabs as well as the People of the Book in the 7th century. Only at that point can the doubt be removed, which would most certainly be replaced with admiration for Islamic law. Perhaps we cannot find any examples for this better than the laws pertaining to war and inheritance in Islam, as these are the first targets of allegations against Islam during any discussion regarding the divine nature of Islamic law.

WAR LAWS COMPARED: QUR'AN AND SUNNAH V. TORAH

We are unaware of any aspect of Islamic law today that has been subject to the type of academic and media vilification levelled against the laws of war. It has been defamed by adversaries to such an extent that many Westerners today have reduced Islam to the spilling of innocent blood and the violation of innocence. Unfortunately, even some of the Muslim youth consider Islamic war to be a point of objection and discomfort. If both these groups spent just some time to understand the true essence of the laws of war in Islam, they would know that it is a law that broke away from the heinousness of the laws of the Torah and the laws of the pre-Islamic Arabs. In fact, it established a new model of military engagement that lays out new ethics for war that the world, neither before nor after, has been aware of.

Perhaps the best explanation for the laws of war and their unique manner in denoting the divine nature of the Qur'an is for us to first present the most important principles and ethics of war in Islam, and then to have them compared with those in the Torah. This is so we can appreciate the legal and moral revolution that Islam brought about in this area, all without any external factor motivating it to act against the status quo it emerged in.

- **War is to defend the weak.** God ﷻ said, 'And what is it with you? You do not fight in the cause of Allah and for oppressed men, women, and children who cry out, "Our Lord, deliver us from this land of oppressors. Appoint for us a saviour. Appoint for us a helper."' (Qur'an, 4:75)
- **War is to repel persecution.** God ﷻ said, 'Fight against them if they persecute you until there is no more persecution, and your devotion will be to Allah alone. If they stop, let there be no hostility except against the aggressors.' (Qur'an, 2:193)
- **The option of peace is always better so long as a genuine peace is established.** God ﷻ said, 'If the enemy is inclined towards peace, make peace with them. And put your trust in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.' (Qur'an, 8:61)
- **War is to defend minorities and freedom of worship.** God ﷻ said, 'Had Allah not repelled the aggression of some people by means of

others, destruction would have surely claimed monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's Name is often mentioned. Allah will certainly help those who stand up for Him. Allah is All-Powerful, Almighty.' (Qur'an, 22:40)

- **War is to repel oppression:** 'Fight in the cause of Allah only against those who wage war against you, but do not exceed the limits. Allah does not like transgressors.' (Qur'an, 2:190)
- **War disallows the murder of children.** When some of his Companions killed children in war, the Messenger ﷺ said, 'Behold—the best of you are the children of polytheists. Behold—do not kill children. Behold—do not kill children. Every soul is born upon the monotheistic predisposition (*fitrah*).'¹²²²
- **War disallows the killing of women.** The Messenger ﷺ saw people gathered around something. He sent a man and told him, 'See what is it that they have gathered around.' He came back and said, 'Around a dead woman.' He said, 'She was not one to fight.'¹²²³
- **War disallows the killing of the elderly.** The Messenger ﷺ said, 'Do not kill an elderly person.'¹²²⁴
- **War disallows the killing of monks.** Abū Bakr said to Yazīd, '...and you will find people who believe they have endowed themselves to God, so leave them to the belief for which they have endowed themselves to Him.'¹²²⁵
- **War disallows the killing of someone who is not carrying weaponry.** The Messenger ﷺ said, 'Do not kill children or labourers.'¹²²⁶

1222 Narrated by Aḥmad (hadith no. 15282), Dārimī (3/1601), and Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*, who said, 'Authentic as per the condition of the two Shaykhs.'

1223 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Jihād, Chapter of killing women (hadith no. 2669). Declared sound by Albānī.

1224 Ibid.

1225 Narrated by Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (hadith no. 17929).

1226 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Jihād, Chapter of killing women (hadith no. 2669).

- **War disallows the killing of non-combatants.** The Messenger ﷺ said, ‘Whoever throws down weaponry is safe. Whoever closes his door is safe.’¹²²⁷
- **Prisoners of war should be treated with dignity.** God ﷻ said, ‘And they give food, in spite of their desire for it, to the poor, the orphan, and the captive.’ (Qur’an, 76:8)
- **Treachery is unlawful.** God ﷻ said, ‘And if you, O Prophet, see signs of betrayal by a people, respond by openly terminating your treaty with them. Surely Allah does not like those who betray.’ (Qur’an, 8:58)
- **Mutilating the enemy is unlawful.** The Messenger ﷺ said, ‘Do not be treacherous. Do not mutilate.’¹²²⁸
- **Burning the enemy with fire is unlawful.** The Messenger ﷺ said, ‘Only Allah punishes with fire.’¹²²⁹
- **Cutting down trees is unlawful.** Abū Bakr, one of the Rashidun Caliphs, told his military commanders, ‘Do not cut down date palm trees—or any tree.’¹²³⁰

These are the terms of military engagement in Islam. Though we do not claim that the history of Islamic conquest is free from error—it is after all human history—the impact of Islamic legislation on how the bulk of those conquests were conducted is clear. Fair-minded people have attested to the fact that the nature of Muslim warfare was an aberration in the history of war, with the latter mostly consisting of the powerful exercising vengeance and retribution with impunity.

In his discussion on the Arab conquest of India, the Orientalist Gustave Le Bon¹²³¹ testified that the conquerors had softened the hearts of people

1227 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct, Chapter on the Conquest of Makkah (hadith no. 1780).

1228 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Jihad and State Conduct, Chapter on the Head of State appointing the heads of military expeditions and advising them to adhere to the etiquettes of battle etc. (hadith no. 1731).

1229 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Jihad and State Conduct, Chapter: One cannot punish with the punishment of God (hadith no. 2853).

1230 Narrated by Mālik in *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, Book of Jihad, Chapter on the prohibition of killing women and children in battle (hadith no. 1627).

1231 Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931). French sociologist and anthropologist. His works include *Les Premières Civilisations de l’Orient* (*The First Civilisations of the Orient*).

towards Islam with their judicious political administration, and that the people of India wilfully accepted the novel religion, not out of fear of the sword.¹²³²

Justice Christopher Weeramantry wrote, ‘The respect for these laws were recorded by contemporary European writers at the time of the Crusades. One writer, Oliverus Scholasticus, relates how the Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil supplied a defeated Frankish army with food: “Who could doubt that such goodness, friendship and charity come from God? Men whose parents, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, had died in agony at our hands, whose lands we took, whom we drove naked from their homes, revived us with their own food when we were dying of hunger and showered us with kindness even when we were in their power.”’¹²³³

‘Authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence.’ (Pope Francis)¹²³⁴

As for the depiction of war in the Torah, it is bloody, menacing, and laden with trepidation:

- **Cursing those who seek peace:** ‘A curse on anyone who keeps their sword from bloodshed!’¹²³⁵
- **Denying the enemy any clemency:** ‘As I listened, he said to the others, “Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, the mothers and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the old men who were in front of the temple. Then he said to them, “Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go!” So they went out and began killing throughout the city.’¹²³⁶
- **Ordering the murder of children:** ‘Now kill all the boys.’¹²³⁷

1232 (Le Bon, 2013), pp. 178 ff.

1233 (Weeramantry, 1988), pp. 137-138.

1234 (Francis, 2013).

1235 Jeremiah 48:10.

1236 Ezekiel 9:5-7.

1237 Numbers 31:17.

- **Ordering the mutilation of children's corpses:** 'Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.'¹²³⁸
- **Making mutilation into art:** The Prophet David offered an odd bridal gift for a woman, which was 200 foreskins taken after the circumcision of 200 Philistines he had murdered.¹²³⁹
- **Ordering the murder of women:** 'And kill every woman who has slept with a man...'
- **Ordering the murder of suckling infants:** 'Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'¹²⁴⁰
- **Ordering the murder of foetuses in the wombs of their mothers:** 'The people of Samaria must bear their guilt, because they have rebelled against their God. They will fall by the sword; their little ones will be dashed to the ground, their pregnant women ripped open.'
- **Ordering the killing of animals:** 'They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.'¹²⁴¹
- **Cutting down flora:** 'You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, block up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones.'¹²⁴²
- **Ruining the Earth so it does not yield again:** 'The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulphur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it.'¹²⁴³
- **Declaring the burning of the enemy lawful:** '...and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labour with saws and with iron picks and axes, and he made them work at brickmaking.'

1238 Psalms 137:9.

1239 See 1 Samuel 18:25-27.

1240 1 Samuel 15:3.

1241 Joshua 6:21.

1242 2 Kings 3:19.

1243 Deuteronomy 29:23.

David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then he and his entire army returned to Jerusalem.¹²⁴⁴

- **Declaring the burning down of entire cities lawful:** ‘As soon as he did this, the men in the ambush rose quickly from their position and rushed forward. They entered the city and captured it and quickly set it on fire.’¹²⁴⁵
- **Ordering the total destruction of the enemy:** ‘However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes.’¹²⁴⁶

These are the rules of engagement in the Torah. It is from here that the Church found divine sanction for butchering Muslims, Jews, and North American pagans. In fact, these passages have also been used as justification for the Catholic slaughter of Protestants, and the Protestant slaughter of Catholics and other sects. Alexander Leighton¹²⁴⁷, the puritan Missionary, said, ‘God is an excellent Man of War.’¹²⁴⁸

Why would the Qur’an and Prophetic tradition completely change the rules of engagement, and become the regulator for governing the sword? If the Qur’an is supposed to be an altered form of the Jewish tradition, why would the Qur’an change the status quo? Why would the Qur’an place limits on war that prevent injustice, tyranny, and shedding blood with impunity, even though the Arabs in the era of Prophethood could not find within themselves any desire to repel the customs of total war that they inherited? One must bear in mind that they were the same people who would engage in war for years on end—in wars like ‘Dāḥis and Ghabrā’—over issues so trivial that they clearly did not warrant the killing of souls.

This change could only have been instigated by Revelation that is above the circumstances of the status quo. History has written stories about Islam that were not accurate vis-à-vis the conquest of cities. The Orientalist Émile

1244 2 Samuel 12:31.

1245 Joshua 8:19.

1246 Deuteronomy 20:16.

1247 Translator’s note: Alexander Leighton (c. 1570-c. 1649). Scottish medical doctor and puritan preacher. He studied at St Andrews and Leiden. He is best known for his 1630 pamphlet *Zion’s Plea Against Prelacy: An Appeal to Parliament*, which attacked the Anglican church, leading to his torture at the behest of King Charles I.

1248 (Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, 2014), pp. 265-266

Dermenghem¹²⁴⁹ said, ‘The Koran and the *hadiths* are replete with counsels of tolerance. The first Mussulman conquerors followed this advice on the whole faithfully. We do not see entire populations put to the sword and the mass conversions were sincere, generally speaking. When ‘Omar entered Jerusalem, he ordered the Christians not to be molested, neither them nor their churches, and he showered favours upon the patriarch. When the patriarch invited him to pray in the cathedral he refused only because he feared that this might be used later as a pretext for seizing the church.

What a contrast, we cannot help saying, with the entry of the crusaders, advancing in a river of blood up to the knees of the knights and the bridles of the horses, deciding to cut the throats of all Mussulmen who had escaped the first slaughter.’¹²⁵⁰

If one objects that war was legislated to force other nations into Islam, the answer to this is what the Christian lawyer Edmond Rabbath¹²⁵¹ said, ‘For the first time in history, it became possible for a unified faith, which clearly delineated (those inside from those outside it) and sought to dominate the other, to acquire an almost magical expression that encouraged its new leaders to hold onto a great concept—“Let there be no compulsion in religion” (Qur’an, 2:256)—and acknowledged that those who did not adopt it had a right to exist as [other] religious groups, with full freedom to have their own beliefs, liturgies, and communal practices.’¹²⁵²

The Islamic conquests did not seek to compel people to accept Islam. It is known by the consensus of the Muslim jurists that the Islam of someone who is forced to accept it is void. This is why the person who is coerced can safely return to his old faith whenever he wishes. Pushing back on the allegation that Islam was forced onto people, the German Orientalist Sigrid Hunke said, ‘It is a lie with no historical authenticity or actual fact backing it up... “Let there be no compulsion in religion” is a foolproof phrase in the Qur’an, which is in the 256th verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The aim or end-goal from the Arab Conquests was not to spread the Islamic faith¹²⁵³, but rather to spread the Dominion of God on His Earth. A Christian could remain Christian and a Jew could remain a Jew, like before. Neither was anybody

1249 Émile Dermenghem (1892-1971). French Orientalist, journalist, archivist, and librarian. His works include *La Vie de Mahomet (The Life of Muhammad)*.

1250 (Dermenghem, 1930), p. 331.

1251 Edmond Rabbath (1902-1991). Syrian historian and jurist hailing from the Syrian Catholic Church. He was a specialist in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and the history of Islam. He studied political science from Paris. His works include *Tajribah al-Salām fī al-Tārīkh (The Experience of Peace in History)*.

1252 Rabbath’s foreword to (Corm, 2011), p. 41.

1253 i.e., forcing people, just like the Crusaders did in the Middle Ages and thereafter.

prevented from performing the faith rituals, nor did Islam allow anybody to do so. Nobody would harm or hurt their rabbis, priests, authorities, synagogues, monasteries, or churches...

Given the state of the Jews and Christians, followers of other faith systems took the initiative to adopt Islam and the culture of the conquerors. They became obsessed with it, infinitely more so than the Arabs themselves. They adopted Arab names, Arabian attire, Arabian customs and practices, and Arabic. They married in Arab style and they uttered the testimonies of faith.¹²⁵⁴

An Israelite testimony in favour of the above is by Abū al-Faṭḥ Ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Sāmīrī¹²⁵⁵: ‘Muhammad did not wrong anyone from [other] religious laws. One utterance of a *ḥakīm* (or sage) I heard—as quoted from his scribe, the most knowledgeable, the virtuous one in existence, the Shaykh, Nafīs al-Dīn Abū al-Faraj ibn Kaththār—was that the ancients mentioned about Muhammad: “Muhammad is a good man. He believed in God. He had good conduct with all Jews.”’

1254 (Hunke, *Allah ist ganz anders*, 1991), p. 43.

1255 Translator’s note: Abū al-Faṭḥ Ibn Abī al-Ḥasan (fl. 1355). Samaritan chronicler and historian.

INHERITANCE LAWS COMPARED: QUR'AN AND SUNNAH V. TORAH

The laws of inheritance appeared in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition in a backdrop of a pagan environment that had interaction with Jewish tribes nearby, and a number of Christian tribes a bit farther out. It created an unexpected revolution in the customs of inheritance. A person analysing the law of inheritance in the Bible and within the laws of the Jews and the Christians would observe the following interesting details:

1. The Old Testament reveals that the law of the Torah prevents the daughter from inheriting when her father has her son. The Lord says to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘If a man dies and leaves no son, give his inheritance to his daughter.’”¹²⁵⁸ Jews were unable to offer daughters any inheritance in the presence of male children—except through illegal stratagem that they concocted in the Middle Ages, which state that the father should assume he is in debt to his daughters before his death; then he seeks the payment of his debt to them from his estate.
2. The texts regarding the inheritance of daughters are self-conflicting. On one occasion, the passage from Numbers sets out that when the deceased has daughters, they would inherit and disinherit the deceased's paternal uncles.¹²⁵⁹ On the other hand, Joshua sets out that the law of the Lord is that daughters do not disinherit uncles, but rather uncles would share the estate with the daughters.¹²⁶⁰
3. Mothers in Judaism do not inherit from their sons, whereas fathers would.
4. The Bible states that the share of inheritance a woman should be entitled to would be acquired by her only in token terms. The reality is that it is her husband—and not her—who would access the share. Numbers states, ‘Every daughter who inherits land in any Israelite tribe must marry someone in her father's tribal clan, so that every Israelite will possess the inheritance of their ancestors. No

1258 Numbers 27:8.

1259 See Numbers 27:9.

1260 See Joshua 17:4.

inheritance may pass from one tribe to another, for each Israelite tribe is to keep the land it inherits.¹²⁶¹ The Talmud sets this out in more emphatic terms: ‘...any item that a woman acquires, her husband automatically acquires it from her...’¹²⁶² Matilda Joslyn Gage¹²⁶³ spoke the truth: ‘Wherever the canon law has been the basis of legislation, we find laws of succession sacrificing the interests of daughters and of wives...’¹²⁶⁴—something she took verbatim from Lecky¹²⁶⁵.¹²⁶⁶

5. A woman is nothing other than chattel that her father can sell on, just like he can sell on any other piece of chattel. Exodus reads, ‘If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do.’¹²⁶⁷ This is a provision that allows the sale of the daughter—one’s own flesh—just like how a person would get rid of any of his other possessions. Furthermore, this legislation does not mention selling sons, probably because the daughter brings in more wealth and makes those who want to take sexual advantage of her drool from their mouths. As for male children, they cannot be taken advantage of like this; their benefit is restricted to farming, harvesting, and herding.
6. Jesus refused to issue any law in inheritance. Luke states, ‘Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”’¹²⁶⁸ The Jesus of the Church is the one who, in Matthew¹²⁶⁹, requested from his followers that, for their

1261 Numbers 36:8-10.

1262 Nazir 24b.

1263 Translator’s note: Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826-1898). Suffragist, Native American rights activist, abolitionist, freethinker, and author.

1264 (Gage, 1893), p. 116.

1265 William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903). Irish historian, essayist, and political theorist. His major work was his voluminous *History of England during the Eighteenth Century*. His other famous work, *A History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, was on the subject of morals in Europe from the viewpoints of systemisation and realism (with additions from translator).

1266 (Lecky, 1921), 2/359.

1267 Exodus 21:7.

1268 Luke 12:13-14.

1269 Translator’s note: ‘Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.” (Matthew 23:1-3)

dealings, they refer to the Old Testament in light of what Jews were teaching in his era. The result is that the law of the Torah was to be applied to Church followers. This led to disinheriting when the deceased has a son, as well as disinheriting mothers, as the Bible did not assign a share for her from the estate of her son or her daughter.

7. History informs us that the law known as Salic law—canonised in the 6th century during the reign of the Christian king Clovis I¹²⁷⁰, whose code is known for its detail in inheritance laws to the extent that it became famed only for the inheritance law therein—disinherited females when males are present.¹²⁷¹ The influence of this law remained in Europe since the beginning of the Middle Ages for centuries. Females were also prevented from inheriting under the law known as Lombard law.¹²⁷²

As for the distribution of the estate in Islamic law, it is founded on three principles that have nothing to do with belittling women or denying their existence at the death of their loved ones:

- i. There should be a connection between the heir and the deceased. The closer the connection, the greater the share; the further the connection, the lesser this share will be. The deceased's daughter (or group of daughters, as a share *in toto*), for example, would inherit more than the deceased's father.
- ii. The stage of life in which the heir is in. This means that those generations that are expected to have most of their life ahead of them would, on most occasions, inherit more than those generations

1270 In French, German and Latin, it is written as Clovis, Chlodwig/Chlodowech, and Chlodovechus respectively.

Translator's note: Clovis I (466-511). The first king of the Franks to unite all of the Frankish tribes in France under one ruler. He is considered the founder of the Merovingian Dynasty, which ruled the Frankish kingdom for two centuries.

1271 There is some detail to the stages of development for this rule, its application, and its refinement. One of the most infamous passages mentioned here is that a woman is to be prevented from inheriting houses and land. See (Stanton, Anthony, & Gage, 1881), 1/774.

The law was modified by the decree issued by Chilperic I (539-583; r. 561-584), which stated that women may inherit if there are no male heirs. See (Stuard, 2012), p. 14.

1272 (Lewis & Lloyd, 2000), p. 420.

Lombard law is a custom-based set of rulings that was codified and adopted in 634 by the Kingdom of the Lombards in Italy.

who are on the cusp of leaving this life. Therefore, the daughter—for example—would inherit more than the father.

- iii. The burden of financial responsibilities that the Shariah binds the heir to is taken into consideration. A male would inherit double the amount of the female, as females are not liable for spending on their husbands, children, fathers, or their materially disadvantaged relatives. In this scenario, it becomes apparent that the distinction in shares between males and females are not sexist in nature; they are connected to the burden of financial responsibility.

Deficient and reductionist analysis has caused some people to turn away from learning about the beauty and perfection of Islamic inheritance laws. Adversaries constrict themselves to looking at the fact that daughters inherit half of what their brothers inherit, so that they can criticise this provision and also incite Muslim women against this divine law. A fair-minded person would appreciate that he cannot grasp the reality of this provision from the Islamic legal framework without connecting it to the rest of the Islamic legal structure pertaining to expenditure and financial responsibility.

Anyone aware of Islamic legislation would know that the female is financially taken care of either as a daughter, a sister, or a mother (women who are taken care of and are not any of these three are an exception). Whatever the relationship, she is taken care of financially by her male relatives. Her close male relative who inherits double her share must also spend on her in most situations, in accordance with the number of females present. The Shariah has placed the burden of spending on them on the males. The following is the detail for this:

As a daughter

Ibn Ḥajar reported that the majority of scholars state that the father is required to spend on his daughter until she marries. With marriage, she would move from being the financial responsibility of the father into the financial responsibility of the husband. If she is divorced, the obligation of her expenditure would return to the father.¹²⁷³ It can be deduced from this that a daughter that inherits can benefit simultaneously from her wealth on her own (i.e., without sharing it with anyone) and from the expenditure of her father; if she does not have a father, her brother must spend on her, even if she possesses her own wealth. This is how the responsibility of her finances switch between the male members of the family, all without a single penny from her wealth being taken off her.

1273 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*), 9/500.

As a wife

Ibn Qudāmah said, ‘Scholars are in agreement that the expenditures of wives are obligatory on their husbands.’¹²⁷⁴ As such, a wife can benefit from her wealth for herself—it is not necessary for her to spend on her husband or her sons. Therefore, she has a share in inheritance and also has a share in the husband’s personal wealth. Some scholars even said that a man is liable for the historical expenditure of his wife for the period in which he did not offer her any expenditure.¹²⁷⁵

As per the jurists, a man is liable to offer his wife a private residence suitable for her status, with good ventilation and among pious neighbours. He must cater for sufficient, varied, and nutritious food for her, a pair of garments for the summer and another pair for the winter, a pair for the day and another pair for the night, underclothes and public-facing garments, a garment for prayer, and a garment for outside the home. The jurists also mention that part of the wife’s financial rights is to cater for her health and beauty products such as soap, hair oil, eye kohl, and sweat removal products. They likewise emphasise that the wife is entitled to a maid—if she was served as such when she was with her family and her husband is well off—as well as a washing device and a heater. On top of this, he is responsible for the extra care she would need when pregnant, during and after childbirth, and when breastfeeding.

As a mother

The Shariah granted the mother a special status. The expenditure of children is the responsibility of the father—and not the mother—by the consensus of scholars.¹²⁷⁶ Her financial burden as a wife would be on the shoulders of her husband, or her son if there is no husband. A woman is also entitled to her personal wealth that she may inherit from others. She is also not required to spend it on her husband or children; rather, it is for her alone.

There is an authentic narration that a man came to the Messenger of God ﷺ asking, ‘Who is the most worthy of people of my good companionship?’ He said, ‘Your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then who?’ He replied, ‘Then your mother.’ He asked, ‘Then who?’ He replied, ‘Then your mother.’ He said, ‘Then who?’ He replied, ‘Then your father.’¹²⁷⁷ The majority of jurists have

1274 (Ibn Qudāmah, 1997/1417 AH), 11/348.

1275 (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zād al-Ma‘ād*, 1998/1418 AH), 5/508.

1276 (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zād al-Ma‘ād*, 1998/1418 AH), 5/502.

1277 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Etiquette, Chapter: Who is the most deserving of one’s good company? (hadith no. 5971); and Muslim Book of Kindness, Adjoining Relations, and Etiquettes, Chapter on kindness to the parents and they are the most deserving of it (hadith no. 2548).

derived from this that the financial rights of the mother take priority over the financial rights of the father in the scenario where the son's wealth is not sufficient for both the mother and father.¹²⁷⁸ Hārith al-Muḥāsibī reported consensus on giving preference to the mother over the father in obedience.¹²⁷⁹

From the shares of the woman in inheritance, one contemporary researcher deduced three important points. He did this after presenting real mathematical examples of a woman's share as a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a grandmother in comparison to other family members who would share the estate with her, and the differences within their shares. His deductions are as follows:

- If a woman has a strong and definite suretyship, her share would be less in proportion to the share of the man due to the strength of her expenditure rights over him.
- When the avenues for her suretyship are less certain, the woman would inherit a share similar to that of a man, like in the case of uterine sisters. She may inherit more than him, and she can also inherit with her male counterparts not inheriting at all.
- If we put aside the expenditure and inheritance rights a woman has, it will become apparent that the woman is actually in far better financial shape than the man. This is not unjust to men; rather, it takes into consideration the weakness of the woman in terms of having a profession and her earning power. God ﷻ compensated her with all these extra rights that guarantee her an honourable life, whether she is a daughter, a wife, or a mother.¹²⁸⁰

Furthermore, the share of the female is sometimes more than that of the male; in other instances, the female inherits whereas the male does not inherit at all:

- a. Scenarios in which the female inherits more than the male:
 - ♦ If a man dies and leaves behind a wife, a daughter, a mother, two uterine sisters, and a germane brother, we would find that

¹²⁷⁸ We also note that, conversely, the legal code of Ancient Ireland states that when a son is poor and unable to support his parents, he should carry his father back to his home and leave his mother to die in a ditch. This law is attributed to St Patrick. See (Gage, 1893), p. 364.

¹²⁷⁹ (Sulṭān, 1999/1419 AH), p. 51.

¹²⁸⁰ (Sulṭān, 1999/1419 AH), pp. 65-66.

the wife would receive $\frac{1}{8}$, the mother $\frac{1}{6}$, the germane brother $\frac{5}{24}$, and the daughter would block the uterine sisters. The daughter in this case inherits more than the germane brother. This is also the case if the daughter is substituted by a paternal granddaughter, howsoever low she may be as a descendant, or if the germane brother is substituted by a father, a consanguine brother, a germane paternal uncle, or a consanguine paternal uncle. In inheritance, childhood takes priority over fatherhood and brotherhood.

- ◆ If a woman died and left behind a husband, a daughter, a germane sister, and a consanguine sister, the husband would receive $\frac{1}{4}$, the daughter $\frac{1}{2}$, and the germane sisters $\frac{1}{4}$. As for the consanguine sister, she would be blocked by the germane sister. Here, the husband inherits half the daughter's share. It is the same if the daughter is replaced by a paternal granddaughter, howsoever low she may be as a descendant; she would gain more than the husband. Likewise, if she is replaced by a germane or a consanguine sister—without the presence of any counterpart brothers, or an inheriting descendant (male or female)—and she is with a germane or consanguine paternal uncle of the deceased, then she would inherit more than the husband and the uncle.

b. Scenarios in which the female inherits to the exclusion of the male:

- ◆ As per the 'bad agnate' scenario, if a woman dies and leaves behind a husband, a daughter, a paternal grandson, a paternal granddaughter, a father, and a mother, the husband would receive $\frac{1}{4}$, the daughter $\frac{1}{2}$, and there would be nothing left for the grandchildren. The daughter would have received more than the husband and the father; likewise, she would have disinherited the paternal grandson. Likewise, the mother would have disinherited the paternal grandson.
- ◆ Male cognatic folk do not inherit if there are apportioned female relatives (with the exception of the female spouse), nor would they share the estate with female heirs by way of agnation.
- ◆ The above scenarios are in addition to those in which the female is entitled to a share and receives it whilst a male—even if he is apportioned or an heir by way of agnation—is denied, like when

an inheritance block is in play, such as wilful murder, quasi-wilful murder, and apostasy.

In summary, the examples we have supplied unequivocally prove that the Shariah of God in inheritance does not prefer one gender over another. Rather, there are considerations for both males and females that truth, logic, and equity demand to be taken into account.¹²⁸¹

¹²⁸¹ (ʿAwartānī W. ʿ., 1998/1419 AH).

Summary

- The Prophet of Islam ﷺ grew up in a primitive environment vis-à-vis legislative systems.
- Islamic law was not influenced by Jewish law. This is by the acknowledgement of those who consider Islam to be a modified version of Judaism.
- Church law is extremely weak, which is why allegations of Islam borrowing from it cannot be taken seriously.
- The historical, geographical, and linguistic gap between Islamic law and Roman law negates that the former ever borrowed from the latter.
- In the Middle Ages, Islamic law influenced the laws of the People of the Book.
- Many legal experts who have studied the law of the Qur'an acknowledge that it is a unique and peerless body of legislation.
- Western legalists who are aware of the richness of Islamic law recognise it to be a vast piece of legislation that is worthy as a source of guidance and practice, which renders it at the very least worthy of marvel, admiration, and adulation.

Further reading

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SECTION 9

Inimitability of Islam's System of Morality

﴿So be steadfast as you are commanded, along with those who turn in submission to Allah with you. And do not transgress. Surely He is All-Seeing of what you believers do.﴾

(Qur'an, 11:112)

Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.

(C. S. Lewis)



The Islamic system of morality: Original? Or a lacklustre adaptation?

Due to his status as an openly civil being in this world, man cannot do without a system of morality that keeps him on the path of good and refines his soul by removing its evils and polishing up its inclinations. This system of ethics should prepare a large group of people to enact mercy, a sense of togetherness, mutual assistance, and warding off evil and its causes. These objectives can ultimately lead to uniting hearts and minds on the heavenly message. However, without responding to the summon of their crier—Muhammad ﷺ—religious proselytisation cannot successfully achieve these objectives.

Those who believe that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ received his message from Heaven claim that the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition guide to the best of morals and guidance in dealing with oneself and others. This is why they use the Islamic system of morality as evidence for the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ.

Islam's adversaries do not believe that the Qur'an's system of morals is unprecedented, nor do they consider it to be a break from the past. They argue that the morality of the Qur'an is cut from the same cloth as that of the pre-Islamic Arabs, or that it is derived from the various moral codes from the scriptures of the People of the Book: the Jews and Christians.

This is why we should ask the arbiters of intellect and history: Is the Qur'anic system of morality a heavenly intervention? Or is it merely an earthly creation?

Arabs and the misfortune of the new approach

It would not be fair for a historian to completely deny any moral virtue within the pre-Islamic Arabs. There is never a group that is completely void of good, no matter how deep they may be wallowing in misguidance. The soul is predispositioned to the enlightenment of the heart. History testifies that the Arabs possessed a desire to give, be generous, entertain guests, exercise forbearance during rough times, and exercise courage when battlelines were drawn and death stared them in the face.

That the Arabs upheld praiseworthy moral positions does not negate the fact that they also possessed three negative traits:

1. They were fundamentally disunited. Their beliefs did not refer back to a universal theoretical foundation that systemised all their philosophies under one banner, or could have combined their morality into a single system that was at harmony with itself.
2. Arabs had fallen into extremely terrible customs, which attest to that era being one of *Jāhiliyyah* and the darkness of lowly traits. One aspect of this was female infanticide and treating femininity to be dishonourable or a source of shame: 'Whenever one of them is given the good news of a baby girl, his face grows gloomy, as he suppresses his rage. He hides himself from the people because of the bad news he has received. Should he keep her in disgrace, or bury her alive in the ground? Evil indeed is their judgement.' (Qur'an, 16:58-59) In fact, a man would inherit his stepmother: 'O believers, it is not permissible for you to inherit women against their will...' (Qur'an, 4:19)
3. Arabs used to combine aspects of good with their polar opposites. They did possess virtue, but then they would mix it with iniquity. This is why one Orientalist said, 'Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the Arabs was that they were a people of contraries. Pillaging and generosity, looting and munificence, roughness and nobility,

and other traits in Arabs that simultaneously invoke disgust and admiration. They should not be excused for this; however, we see the trajectory their lands were governed by, which also happened to be the most barren land in the world. The Arabs can be excused for looting as their lands were extremely poverty-stricken...and that they could ward off any semblance of injustice with their spears. They believed it was legitimate to pillage caravans and loot what was in the possession of others as a recompense for the yield their sterile lands could not bear.¹²⁸²

Arabs were acutely aware of the shortcomings in their moral system, the harmful embers of which they were treading on. This is why when the Qur'an introduced a body of ethics and created a justice system to support the downtrodden, returned dignity to man, put a stop to excessive egoism, stopped people from hoarding for the purposes of worldly pleasure, directed the soul to achieving self-perfection, scrubbed the malice off the hearts, and passed the hand of mercy over people's souls, as a result the hearts of pagans—which were subjugated to the deep-rooted customs—were stirred and came alive. They all figuratively spoke in unison, 'I am ready for this, for how beautiful indeed is this state and how sweet is that tongue.'

Prior to being assigned Prophethood, the Prophet of Islam had a unique way of dealing with people. After what he had seen in the Cave of Hira' he feared for himself, but his wife told him, 'Be happy. By Allah, Allah shall never humiliate you. By Allah, you join ties of relationship, you speak the truth, you bear people's burden, you help the destitute, you entertain guests, and you help against the vicissitudes that affect people.'¹²⁸³ When he went public with his invitation to Islam, the description that was given of him to those whom his affair had reached was that he called men to adopt good morals. When the Negus asked the Companions—who had migrated to his kingdom—about their Prophet, they explained his state and religious call by saying, 'It has been brought by a man from among ourselves. We know what he looks like and what his lineage is. Allah sent him to us just like He sent Messengers to those before us. He commands us to do good, be charitable, fulfil promises, and return trusts. He prohibits us from worshipping idols. He commands us to worship Allah alone, without any partner. So we have believed him, we know what the Word of Allah is, and

1282 (Le Bon, 2013), p. 75.

1283 Narrated by Bukhārī, Book of Beginning of Revelation, Chapter on the beginning of Revelation (hadith no. 4); and Muslim, Book of Faith, Book of Beginning of Revelation, hadith 160.

we know that what he has brought forth is from Allah.¹²⁸⁴ Therefore, the first piece of knowledge the Arabs had about Muhammad was that he was the Messenger of God, and that the belief and moral system he presented was different to the customs and traditions of the Arabs.

The Qur'an encouraged many aspects of morality that were not willingly accepted within the customs of the Jāhiliyyah:

- Its greatest command is represented in the introduction of an entirely new principle that underpinned its system of morality: connecting people to God the One, obeying His command, and focusing solely on Him during worship: 'Say, "I am commanded to worship Allah, being sincerely devoted to Him alone."' (Qur'an, 39:11)
- It discourages from the harsh Bedouin morals known for their crassness. It ripened the hearts with the dew of brotherhood. It eliminated the causes of social disunity. This is why the Qur'an encourages people to act in good faith, in situations of hardship and toughness, with both close ones and those who are not: 'They are those who donate in prosperity and adversity, control their anger, and pardon others. And Allah loves the good-doers.' (Qur'an, 3:134)
- It invites people to exercise forbearance in places where they can otherwise exact revenge and exercise power: 'And be gracious to the believers who follow you.' (Qur'an, 26:215)
- It calls to forgiveness and repelling harshness: 'Had you been cruel or hard-hearted, they would have certainly abandoned you.' (Qur'an, 3:159)
- It commands people to think positively of others: 'O believers, avoid many suspicions, for indeed, some suspicions are sinful. And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that. Fear Allah. Surely Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.' (Qur'an, 49:12)
- It encourages people to incline towards reconciliation: 'So be mindful of Allah and settle your affairs.' (Qur'an, 8:1)
- It elevated the value of patience: 'Only those who endure patiently will be given their reward without limit.' (Qur'an, 39:10)

1284 (Bayhaqī, 1405 AH), 2/294.

The Prophet of Islam repeatedly condemned the customary practices of the Jāhiliyyah, which Islam ultimately not only boycotted but also strove to uproot its entrenched roots in Arabia. Such practices included intoxication and the loss of one's sense by consuming alcohol, denigrating the weak, reputational arrogance, criticising the lineages of others, wailing, and wanton display of beauty for women. He said, 'Among my nation, there are four characteristics belonging to the Jāhiliyyah which they do not abandon: boasting of high rank, reviling the genealogy of others, seeking rain from the stars, and walling.'¹²⁸⁵ He ﷺ also said, 'Allah has removed from you the pride of the Jāhiliyyah and boasting over ancestors. People are one of two men: a pious believer who is honourable unto Allah, and a miserable sinner who is nothing in the eyes of Allah. People are the children of Adam, and Adam is of dust. Allah said, "O humanity, indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware."¹²⁸⁶ (Qur'an, 49:13) The Qur'an lamented evil appearances and poor manners of walking on the part of women when they were among people in public: 'Settle in your homes, and do not display yourselves as women did in the days of pre-Islamic ignorance.' (Qur'an, 33:33)

The Orientalist Thomas Arnold said it well: 'For the introduction of Islam into Arab society did not imply merely the sweeping away of a few barbarous and inhuman practices, but a complete reversal of the pre-existing ideals of life.'¹²⁸⁷

¹²⁸⁵ Narrated by Muslim, Book of Funerals, Chapter on the severity of wailing (hadith no. 934).

¹²⁸⁶ Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, Book of Etiquette, Chapter on boasting of high rank (hadith no. 5116); and Tirmidhī, Book of the Interpretation of the Qur'an, Chapter: From Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt (hadith no. 3956); declared sound by Albānī.

¹²⁸⁷ (Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, 1896), p. 39.

The core of Jewish morality

The moral system to which a Prophet—who is sent by the Lord—invites people is connected to the theological conceptualisation of the message he carries. In some ways, moral systems are a reflection of their theological roots.

The Jewish system of morality is considered to be connected by the umbilical cord to the belief of the Old Testament, where the Israelites are presented as God's chosen people; anybody else is considered to be *goyim* (gentiles, or 'others'), who have no place in the mercy of God. This delin-eation comes across in its most salient manifestation in the lawfulness of offering an interest-bearing loan to a Gentile and the prohibition of the same vice versa. This reveals the elitist nature of the Israelite moral system. This attitude becomes clearer in the Talmud, in which the term 'human' is restricted to the Israelites: 'You (i.e., the Jewish people) are called adam, but gentiles are not called adam (i.e., human) (*'atem karuyin ādām, v'en ha'uvdy kokhavim karuyin ādām*).¹²⁸⁸ Rabbi Hanina said, 'One who slaps the cheek of a Jew is considered as though he slapped the cheek of the Divine Presence (*hasoter lo'o shel yešrā'el ke'ilu soter lo'o shel shchīna shen'mar mukesh ādām yāla' khodesh*).'¹²⁸⁸ This is a brazen case of the Israelite being identified as the Lord himself.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the morality found in the Torah is that its worldly ethics are not connected to reward and punishment in the Afterlife. In other words, they are a set of *quid pro quo* morals that are confined to the scope of harmonious living and mutual exchange of services between Israelites on the basis that they are the Lord's sons and His chosen ones.

¹²⁸⁸ Sanhedrin 58b.

Is there a moral system in Christianity?

It has become widespread that the biblical system of morality is excessively idealistic. It denies the individual every want and desire and calls on him to forfeit any right that he may have during a dispute with someone else. It also calls the individual to be in denial of his spontaneous compassion that accompanies his core human nature. However, the reality is that this depiction—though it is true—does not represent even half the reality.

The position of unadulterated Church propaganda reveals that what Albert Bayet¹²⁸⁹ said was correct: There is no set system of ethics in the Gospels; rather, there are multiple conflicting moral systems, and the Church has been selective about which ones to adopt, exercise, and preach based on the pragmatic considerations of the Church's weakness or strength, or in accordance with the social, political, and economic transformations in ethics as a result of a change of eras.

Bayet summarised his valuable study on this topic in a section called 'There is no biblical morality', in his book *Les Morales de l'Évangile (The Morals of the Gospel)*. He states, 'Let us summarise the conclusions of our paper. It is a simple conclusion: There is no evangelical morality. On the one hand, in the Gospel, there are contradictory ideas on what we today refer to as theoretical morality. On the other hand, there is a system of morality in practice...

There are three doctrines in how the relationship between morality and rites is. One affirms the independence of morality from rite and does not admit anything other than moral stain. The second supports the rites of purification as per the old Mosaic Law, without changing any part of it. The third institutes new rites.

Affecting the relationship between morality and faith are two doctrines. The first is the supremacy of morality: it affirms the salvation of the Jews and proclaims that faith without deeds cannot lead to salvation. The second

¹²⁸⁹ Albert Bayet (1880-1961). French sociologist. He taught at Sorbonne and EPHE.

affirms the supremacy of faith, condemns Israel, and declares that whoever had faith is saved, and whoever does not believe is lost.

In relation to responsibility and freedom, there are two doctrines. The first declares that all men are free, that they will all receive the word, that it is up to them to be observant, and that their choices will declare them guilt-free or sinners. The second declares that all of mankind cannot gain the word, that God purposely blinds some and enlightens others, and that the chosen ones are not who chose God, but rather they are the ones chosen by God.

Concerning sanctions, there are three doctrines. The first states that a believer will gain the salvation and glorifies Israel that was delivered from his enemies. The second proclaims a resurrection, fortune, and punishment that are physical. The third promises only a spiritual resurrection that comes to pass ever since this world leaves—it is the passage from error to reality...

If we consider these teachings in their relation to practice, we find to the contrary that they are almost divided into two groups.

The first group: Never kill—not for punishment and not even out of self-defence. If someone slaps you, offer them your other cheek. If he grabs your shirt, offer them your overgarment. Do not ever draw your sword—what good is that? If you are persecuted, sing praises out of joy. Saving your own life is like to kill it. Sell all your wealth and give the money to the poor—everything should be shared among you. Do not work to earn—lilies do not do any work. If you are a bachelor, do not get married. Castrate yourself for the Kingdom of Heaven. If you are married, refrain from having children. Here come the days when it will be said, “Blessed are the sterile!”

Despise your family of carnal organs. Leave your parents and children. Look at the political authorities like you would look at Satan. Do not become a king, judge, or master. Await the great revolution that will witness thrones collapsing, the rich becoming destitute, and those last in line standing in front of the queue. Do not call anyone “father” or “doctor” even inside the Church itself, for Jesus alone is the doctor and teacher. All men under him are fraternal equals.

Can we all not see that these teachings are in harmony with each other? Everything had a clear principle: turning away from the world in horror.

The world? That is the society we are part of, the destiny of which we are invested in. It is the family that links us up to it with a thousand ties, whether strong or tenuous. It is the wealth that sustains the life of mankind, even if its distribution is unjust. It is after all life itself—everything else is nothing.

Hatred of the world, therefore, logically speaking, is to hate society, family, wealth, and life itself...

The second group's stance on the teachings: Buy a sword. Execute criminals. When death threatens your life, run off into the mountain. If you are persecuted in one city, run to another city. Take a purse and a bag. Work to earn. Grow your money by investing it with bankers.

Give charity, but no one demands that you give up all your possessions. Leave a field to receive a hundred fields and a house to receive a hundred houses. Get married and be with your wife as if you were one body. Rejoice if she gives birth to a son. Honour your father and mother. Love your children. Be indulgent with them. Submit to the authorities. Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Judge your brothers: If they are rebels, excommunicate them. Let your followers serve you. Let your slave serve you your meal with his girdle on. Within the Church, respect the leaders and the shepherds who gave themselves up to the truth. They are the masters who will relieve you of your sins—or will have you retain them.

Here again, how can we not see that the precepts are mutually harmonious, and that a common principle governs them? How can we not see that this principle completely opposes the principle of other morals, and that its backbone is, precisely, respect for the world?¹²⁹⁰

It is thus a mixed bag of mutually conflicting concepts, teachings, and commands.

Whatever the case, as it pursued its Missionary activity ever since the Muhammadan Prophethood, the Church has always promoted Christianity as the sole religion with a complete moral system. This itself emphasises the fact that there is no relationship whatsoever between the Christian and the Islamic systems of ethics.

From the biblical era, the laws and stories contained in the Torah have remained evidence for the dominance of the morals of tyrants, and the sword of scheming against the weak when believers are given power over the Earth. This is made clear in the discussion on the laws of war in the Bible. As a result, Thomas Paine had no qualms in suggesting this: 'Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a Demon, than the word of God.'¹²⁹¹

1290 (Bayet A., 1927), pp. 129-134.

1291 (Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 1819), part I, p. 17.

Principles of Islamic ethics

An analysis of the Qur'anic system of ethics reveals its distinctiveness. Its philosophy combines catalysing the inclination of man to adopt higher stances and giving due consideration to training a person's inner self over what his desires and Satan's instigations challenge him with. The Islamic system of ethics is founded on a number of fundamentals, the most important of which are:

Singularity of purpose

Before Prophethood, Arabs used to laud a number of praiseworthy traits such as generosity and assistance in the face of adversities. However, many a time, they used to link their deeds to either praising people or criticising them. When Islam came, the desire to seek out the praise of people and to ward off their criticism was shaken off. God ﷻ said, 'And they give food, in spite of their desire for it, to the poor, the orphan, and the captive. They say, "We feed you only for the sake of Allah, seeking neither reward nor thanks from you. We fear from our Lord a horribly distressful Day."' (Qur'an, 76:8-10) Everything in Islam revolves around monotheism and freedom from grandiose self-claims of power. Man carries out good deeds in response to the lordly command that is in tandem with the innate good nature of the soul.

Being rooted in fact and reality

The Qur'anic ethical system is far removed from the hopelessly idealistic vision that veils man's weakness and deficiency: 'Indeed, We have created humankind in constant struggle.' (Qur'an, 90:4) It is also detached from the defeatist attitude that surrenders to the human soul's deficiency and its whims; the Qur'an acknowledges that this is part and parcel of the human construct: 'It is not Allah's Will to burden you, but to purify you and complete His favour upon you, so perhaps you will be grateful.' (Qur'an, 5:6) In Islam, the human is not treated as a caveman with an animalistic nature

powering his primal motivations (which is the position of Hobbes¹²⁹²). Nor is he—as the gnostics and Church philosophers would say—a dual-natured being with his pure soul in a constant tussle with his impure physical body. Rather, according to Islam, the human being is one entity that has the potential to do both good and bad, and that both his body and soul have the potential to ascend to the highest of stations or fall to the lowest of depths.

Islamic ethics acknowledge that man is not infallible. It also affirms that, by inclining towards good and treating evil as repulsive, he possesses the ability to rise above many faults innate to his predisposition: ‘And by the soul and the One Who fashioned it, then with the knowledge of right and wrong inspired it...’ (Qur’an, 91:7-8) Furthermore, Islamic ethics imbibe the contextual situation of man, and that he is being tested in this world. Man walks on the path of tribulations thrown up by his inner self that tells him to perpetrate evil, which also happens to be the path of Paradise that God promised him with—wherever he turns to, that will be his final abode: ‘Every soul will taste death. And We test you with good and evil as a trial, then to Us you will be returned’ (Qur’an, 21:35); ‘Whoever does good, it is to their own benefit. And whoever does evil, it is to their own loss. Your Lord is never unjust to His creation.’ (Qur’an, 41:46)

Acknowledging legal rights, but encouraging the more virtuous course of action

Islamic law emphasises that inter-personal relationships must be based on justice, so that no person can be the subject of oppression without being able to seek redress. However, affirming rights alone does not create a nation of mutual assistance, mercy, and brotherhood in a single and larger body—the Muslim nation (*Ummah*). This is why the importance of forgiveness and looking the other way is repeated in the Qur’an:

- God ﷻ said, ‘If it is difficult for someone to repay a debt, postpone it until a time of ease.’ (Qur’an, 2:280) This would be justice, but Allah then follows that up with: ‘And if you waive it as an act of charity, it will be better for you, if only you knew’ (Qur’an, 2:280), which is the more virtuous course of action.
- God ﷻ said, ‘It is not lawful for a believer to kill another except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer unintentionally must free a believing slave and pay blood-money to the victim’s family...’, adding

1292 Thomas Hobbes (1577-1679). English writer of multiple philosophical interests. He is famed for his political theory, which he expounded upon in his book *Leviathan*. He is the one who said, ‘Man to man is an arrant Wolfe.’

that the more virtuous course of action is: ‘...unless they waive it charitably.’ (Qur’an, 4:92)

- God ﷻ said, ‘If you retaliate, then let it be equivalent to what you have suffered’; for virtue, He adds: ‘But if you patiently endure, it is certainly best for those who are patient.’ (Qur’an, 16:126)
- The default position in every case of retribution is that ‘the reward of an evil deed is its equivalent’; what is yet better than that is: ‘But whoever pardons and seeks reconciliation, then their reward is with Allah.’ (Qur’an, 42:40)

With this, the Islamic system of morals is a middle path between the two cultural norms of that time: that of the Makkan pagans and Jews: that retribution is not only the default but the line that distinguishes between truth and falsehood, and the ideals¹²⁹³ of Christianity that call to act virtuously, while completely disregarding the acknowledgement of one’s own rights.

Acknowledging the innate goodness of man

The structure of Islamic morals is founded on the notion that man by nature is good; yet, in spite of that, he possesses the ability to incline towards both good and evil whenever he wishes. God ﷻ said, ‘Indeed, We created humans in the best form. But We will reduce them to the lowest of the low in Hell, except those who believe and do good—they will have a never-ending reward.’ (Qur’an, 95:4-6) Ibn ‘Āshūr said, ‘What we can take from this verse is that man is created upon the state of the default human predisposition that God created for this species so that it may assume its effects. It is that human predisposition which is perfect in its ability to soundly grasp those truthful (i.e., in concurrence with the reality of things) perceptibles that can be attained thanks to the soundness of what the working senses offer and what the sound intellect attains from that by engaging in systemic analysis and composition. This is so that, if he is faced with deviant prompts, condemnable habits, delinquent dispositions, or harmful thoughts, and if they somehow tried to sway him but he was able to repel them with the proofs of what is true and proper, he would remain steadfast in all his affairs and only righteous deeds would emanate from him. However, he can trip up on the trails of his self-conceit or slacken for his predilection that can land him in all sorts of deviances, or the criers at the gates of misguidance can overpower him by either frightening him or making him covetous, so he

¹²⁹³ These are the ideals in the holy texts. However, they never played out in Christian practice, as they conflict with man’s natural predisposition.

ends up following them either wilfully or inadvertently. It is only a short while before what he adopts becomes entrenched in him, thus he becomes habituated to it and forgets what is correct and proper.¹²⁹⁴

It is clear from this that the Qur'an opposes the Christian concept of original sin. The Epistles of Paul repeatedly claim that man is irredeemably corrupt—they, for example, quote from Psalms: 'All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.'¹²⁹⁵

Felicity being found in both this world and the Afterlife

The Qur'an did not declare felicity to be a matter only for the Afterlife. It rather emphasised that the purpose of life is to achieve felicity in both worlds. Whoever brings about wretchedness on himself in this world will be wretched in the Afterlife: 'But whoever is blind to the truth in this world will be blind in the Hereafter, and even far more astray from the right way' (Qur'an, 17:72)

This does not mean that the Qur'an calls to a set of values that were completely unknown to the Judeo-Christian scriptures, as that would not be possible nor is this the claim being made. This is because those scriptures possess a set of moral structures that the pious among humanity would naturally agree to, as dictated to them by their human predisposition. Likewise, the Qur'an itself, as one of its aims, is there to preserve the good that the People of the Book previously were guided to: 'It is Allah's Will to make things clear to you, guide you to the noble ways of those before you, and turn to you in mercy. For Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.' (Qur'an, 4:26)

Detailed research in the high moral values of the Bible would reveal that they are even more so established in the Qur'an¹²⁹⁶; however, this inimitable and unique book does not suffice with concurring and aggregating, but rather it adds new lines of mutual dealings and behaviours in a fashion that serve the universality of this religion. Additionally, its rulings—which can never be superseded—are decisively laid out as there is no message after the message of Muhammad. Likewise, the Qur'an repelled the harshness and narrowness of the Torah's laws, as well as many of the laws of the Gospel that are extremely lax and soft.¹²⁹⁷ The result is a set of robust moralistic models that create good for every time and place.

1294 (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1984), 30/425.

1295 Romans 3:12.

1296 For this interesting detail, see (Darāz, *Madkhal ilā al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, 1981/1401 AH), pp. 93-102.

1297 What is intended here is the Torah and the Bible after distortion crept into them.

Summary

The Islamic construct of ethics is unprecedented, though it did not completely break away from the praiseworthy aspects in the Arab and the Judeo-Christian moral systems. It preserved the good and rectified the egocentrism and evil therein. It further established a methodical and comprehensive framework, the least of which is doing good to oneself without arrogance, and the pinnacle of which is to achieve a symmetry with the moving universe in both obedience and hardship as one ascends to the station of worshipping the Lord. This is the unique nature of the system of Islamic ethics that attests to the Qur'an's divinity. The Orientalist Hamilton Gibb said, 'This, then, is the message which the Koran conveyed to the first generation of Muslims and has conveyed to all generations ever since. It is a record of direct living experience of God, both absolutely and in relation to the common affairs of life, and a summons so to order one's life as to be able to share it. By following its precepts, by striving to grasp, not with his intelligence only but with his heart and soul, the spirit of its teaching, the Muslim seeks to recapture something of the intuitive vision and of the experience of the beloved Prophet. The significance of its every phrase is enhanced for him by his belief that it is the literal Word of God, yet even if this were not an article of doctrine its value to him as a living source of religious inspiration and insight would scarcely be affected.'

From this point of view (which is the essential one) the question of the sources of Muhammad's doctrines, which so greatly interests Christian and Jewish scholars in the west, is entirely irrelevant. Learned Jewish scholars have demonstrated that many or most of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels are recorded in Hebrew writings as the sayings of one or other of the great rabbis, but this does not alter the fact that the structure of even primitive Christian thought is entirely distinct from that of Judaism. Similarly, whatever Islam may have incorporated of earlier religious ideas does not alter the fact that the religious attitudes expressed in and mediated by the Koran constitute a new and distinctive religious structure.¹²⁹⁸

1298 (Gibb H., 1962), p. 192.

Muhammad ﷺ was sent to perfect the nobilities of character (*makārim al-akhlāq*). He redressed the shortcomings therein, raised the bar, reconciled man with his soul and other men, refined his horizons, elevated his interests, and honed his connection with the world of heaven and the world on Earth.

Further reading

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SECTION 10

Inimitability of History in the Qur'an

*This is news of the unseen that We reveal to you, O Prophet.
You were not with them when they cast lots to decide who
would be Maryam's guardian, nor were you there when they
argued about it.*

(Qur'an, 3:44)

*In Albright's lifetime, archaeology was believed to support
the essential historicity of the biblical account (not
necessarily in all the details), although there were some
troubling discrepancies...In the last quarter of the century,
however, the tide has turned on the subject. Discrepancies
between the archaeological record and the biblical narrative
are now seen to outweigh the points of convergence.*

(John J. Collins- Professor of Old Testament Criticism and
Interpretation at Yale Divinity School)



The Qur'an: A miraculous portrayal of history? Or a simple case of borrowing?

If the Qur'an is the product of a human from the Arabian Peninsula living in the 7th century, it would be necessary for this book to reflect the cultural and historical status quo of that region. Here, we should map out the Qur'anic historical reports and compare them with the reports in the Torah and the Gospel, as there was no source—apart from Judeo-Christian written literature—for the stories of the Prophets and their nations.

A Muslim who believes in the historical truth of the Qur'anic stories and the miracle of its historical reporting of their details would say, 'Whoever reads the stories of the Qur'an in light of our historical knowledge today would most certainly end up affirming the miracle of the Qur'an from a historical viewpoint. This is by taking into consideration the following issues:

- One cannot find a historical incentive as to why the Qur'an—during the Prophetic era—disagreed with the details in the Bible narratives, as this disagreement put a wedge between the Qur'an and the People of the Book. Conflict naturally creates tension.
- There is no ancient or recent scientific justification to conflict with the historical stories that were known as part of that era's culture. Knowledge of history and the world would have been what it was for centuries—right until the time of the Muhammadan Prophethood.
- During the Prophetic era, the Bible and its commentaries from the written and oral Judeo-Christian heritage was the sole source for stories about the ancients. The Qur'an would come to agree with the Bible in places where it was correct and contest it in places where it was false by rectifying its errors. It would provide original historical information that would only be demonstrated to be accurate many centuries later. This is precisely what is expected of a divine book.'

On the other hand, someone who denies the divinity of the Qur'an would refute the previous claim by saying, 'There is nothing of that nature found in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is simply borrowing the stories of the People of the Book.'

The difference between these two groups cannot be decided without a historical analysis of the Qur'anic stories and their counterparts within the Torah and the Gospel, to identify the breadth and depth of the differences between the two.

Prelude to analysis

A person analysing the Qur'anic stories in depth from a historical perspective must proceed with the following tools at his disposal:

- i. Dealing with the Qur'anic text directly, away from external projections.
- ii. Considering all details in which the Qur'anic text differed with the Torah and the Gospel, whether by way of omissions, additions, or alterations.
- iii. Knowing the history of ancient civilisations, especially Ancient Egypt.

Such a researcher would ultimately have his investigation lead him to the following facts:

- iv. The Qur'anic stories are historical breakthroughs, as they provide additional historical details that came to light only recently.
- v. The Qur'an rectifies the historical errors of the Torah and the Gospel in a manner that could not have been normally attained without it having been made aware of discoveries on history that only came to light recently.
- vi. The Qur'an avoids the historical errors of the Torah and the Gospel, even though the context of the Qur'anic presentation would have meant it should have followed the Bible in these errors.

The Qur'an's inimitability in terms of its historical reporting of events comes to light when its reports are compared to those of the Torah and the Gospel for interpolation, alteration, and omission.

1. The Qur'an containing information never seen before

The unprecedented mentioning of historical details related to ancient nations, which the pre-Islamic Arabs and others in the 7th century would have had no knowledge of, is indisputable evidence that the Qur'an is divine Revelation. This is because such information could not be acquired by any amount of effort, deduction, brilliance, or cleverness.

We shall make mention of a number of these cases of miraculous historical reporting, which ultimately suggests that this unique book emanated from a heavenly source. It should suffice for an intellectual person from asking for more.

I. PHARAOH'S CLAIM TO DIVINITY

The Torah is void of any indication to Pharaoh's claim to divinity, whereas the Qur'an affirms the historicity of this obnoxious claim:

- 'Pharaoh declared, "O chiefs, I know of no other god for you but myself.'" (Qur'an, 28:38)
- 'Pharaoh said, "If you take any other god besides me, I will certainly have you imprisoned.'" (Qur'an, 26:29)

In the Torah, the matter is not confined to its lack of awareness of Pharaoh claiming divinity for himself. The Torah instead makes Moses a God—metaphorically—for Pharaoh: 'Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your Prophet."¹²⁹⁹ He is presented once more as a God—metaphorically again—for Aaron: 'He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him.'¹³⁰⁰

Here are three historical Qur'anic assertions not mentioned in the Bible and unknown in the 7th century:

1. As opposed to the silence of the Torah vis-à-vis Pharaoh's claim to divinity, history states that the founder of the 1st Egyptian Dynasty managed to forge a central government around 3200 BC for Egypt that was strong and functioning. It was headed by its king, who was considered divine and autocratic. It was a government in which the king was the focal point. He was the 'greatest god'. He was the god by the name of Horus, a falcon that had assumed the form of a human. The king was also considered in the eyes of his citizenry a god that was alive in the shape of a human, equal to other gods in the rights due to them, from which it was also assumed that he had

¹²⁹⁹ Exodus 7:1.

What is interesting here is that the *Arabic Life Application Bible* translates it as *أنا جعلتك كإله فرعون* ('I have made you like the God of Pharaoh'), which goes against what the manuscripts from the Hebrew (*Natetechā Iluhīm ləpār'ō* נַתַּתֵּכָה לִפְאָרֹה), Greek *δέδωκα σε θεὸν Φαραώ* (*dedōka se theon pharaō*), and Syriac *ܐܢܐ ܕܥܠܝܬܐ ܕܦܪܥܐ* state. It also adds the letter *kāf*, which has no corresponding word in the Hebrew text of any of its ancient translations.

¹³⁰⁰ Exodus 4:16.

the right to contact them. As such, he possessed the same right to be glorified as a deity, and the right to directly communicate with the other gods.¹³⁰¹

On the Pharaoh of Egypt, John Currid¹³⁰², a specialist in the Torah and archaeological studies, said, ‘The Egyptians considered him omnipotent because of those imputed powers. He ruled the land as a god, as the incarnation and son of Re, as the Horus, and as a combination of the goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt. The stele of Sehetep-ib-Re from Abydos enjoins worship of King Ni-Maat-Re (Amenemhat III, 1844-1797 B.C.) as a divinity:

Worship King Ni-Maat-Re, living forever, within your bodies
And associate with his majesty in your hearts.
He is Perception which is in (men’s) hearts,
And his eyes search out every body.
He is Re, by whose beams one sees,
He is one who illumines the Two Lands more than the Sun disc...
He who is to be is his creation,
For he is the Khnum¹³⁰³ of all bodies.

The Egyptians described Pharaoh as eternal, worthy of worship, and omniscient; he imbued Egypt with existence and power. They taught that he was *ka*, the life force and soul of Egypt. And the serpent-crested coronet symbolized his deification and majesty. When Moses had Aaron fling the rod-snake before Pharaoh, he was directly assaulting that token of Pharaonic sovereignty—the scene was one of polemical taunting. When Aaron’s rod swallowed the staffs of the Egyptian magicians, Pharaonic deity and omnipotence were being denounced and rejected outright. Pharaoh’s cobra-crested diadem had no power against Yahweh. Its magic was wanting and weak. It afforded no protection in the face of the reproach of the Hebraic God. Clearly, Yahweh alone was in control of the entire episode.¹³⁰⁴

The author of the book *Gods and Humans in the Ancient Near East* summarised the claim of Pharaoh’s divinity during the reign of Ramesses II by

1301 (Mahrân, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/214.

1302 Translator’s note: John D. Currid (d. 1951). Professor of the Old Testament at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Mississippi. He earned his Doctorate at Chicago. His works include *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*.

1303 Khnum. An Ancient Egyptian god who created man from the silt of the Nile.

1304 (Currid, 1999), pp. 93-94.

stating, ‘Ramesses II carried his own divine self-conception to a whole new level.’ Stele 410 in the Hildesheim Museum designates Ramesses II: ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt, the Lord of the Two Lands, Ramesses-Meryamun, the God’. Ramesses II not only declared himself king or god-ordained ruler, instead, he actually declared himself to be none other than ‘*the God*’.¹³⁰⁵

2. The Qur’an quotes Pharaoh’s claim: ‘Then he summoned his people and called out, saying, “I am your lord, the highest.”’ (Qur’an, 79:23-24) This is an accurate depiction of the Pharaohs, each of whom believed that he was the greatest god, to whom all affairs of the kingdom and the people would be referred, and that he knew every major and small issue concerning the people.¹³⁰⁶
3. In addition to Pharaoh’s claim of divinity, one also observes the Qur’an quoting his people as saying, ‘The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people protested, “Are you going to leave Mūsā and his people free to spread corruption in the land and abandon you and your gods?”’ (Qur’an, 7:127) Pharaoh was the highest god of Egypt, and the other gods were his gods in the sense that he chose them to be gods. Egyptian antiquity testifies that Pharaoh would offer a present to the gods—if they did not return an offering of the same class, Pharaoh would deny them the right to be worshipped.¹³⁰⁷ The Pharaohs would sometimes shuffle up the list of worshipped gods. This happened repeatedly in Ancient Egypt. The assignment of divinity onto the Pharaoh reached its peak during the reign of Ramesses II to the extent that inscriptions in many places of worship from his era carry phrases like ‘Ra of Ramesses, Amun of Ramesses, Ptah of Ramesses’. This is why Kenneth Kitchen¹³⁰⁸, the famous Christian Egyptologist and specialist in the Ramesside reign, said, ‘In these three, therefore, Amun, Re, and Ptah, the gods of Empire were ostensibly worshipped—but (as at Abu Simbel) the actual barque-image in the sanctuary was in fact that of the deified Ramesses II, as a form of Re, as “Amun of Ramesses”, and as “Ptah of Ramesses”. Such temples, therefore, were almost additional ‘memorial-temples’ of the king. Not only Amun, Re and Ptah, but also other gods (Seth,

1305 (Putthoff, 2020), p. 42.

1306 (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/214.

1307 (Jacq, 1985), p. 11.

1308 Translator’s note: Kenneth Kitchen (b. 1932). British biblical scholar, Ancient Near Eastern historian, Professor Emeritus of Egyptology, and Honorary Research Fellow at the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology at Liverpool.

Herishef, etc.) were gods “of Ramesses”—and even goddesses: Udjo, Hathor, Nephthys, and Anath from Canaan.¹³⁰⁹

There are subtle miracles in the Qur’an here whose traces cannot even be located in the Torah, despite the fact that they are of extreme importance in understanding the situational context between Moses ﷺ and the Pharaoh of Egypt.

In the context of the 7th century, the mention of the Pharaohs’ claim to divinity was unexpected. The Torah had overlooked this, the knowledge of which had ceased to exist thanks to the lack of expertise in deciphering the language of Egyptian hieroglyphs.



An image in the wall of a tablet, showing the gods Set and Horus crowning Ramesses II (Abu Simbel Temples)

1309 (Kitchen K. A., 1982), p. 177.

As we are discussing Ramesses II, we can add another piece of information. The Prophetic tradition names Pharaoh's wife as Āsiyah¹³¹⁰, the one responsible for intercepting Moses ﷺ from the river. Given that now its doors have been opened up for us, we are informed by the history of Ancient Egypt that the name of the second wife of Ramesses II—the first of the Great Royal Wives after the death of Nefertari—was Isetnofret. It is a name that can be pronounced in different ways, including Āsiyah Naftrat, which means 'Beautiful Āsiyah'.¹³¹¹

It is worth adding here that the Prophetic tradition mentions her full name as being Āsiyah bint Muzāḥim.¹³¹² History states that the name of Āsiyah's daughter was Bintanath. It is interesting to note, as scholars point out, that her name is Semitic and not Ancient Egyptian, which is why the term '*bint*' (daughter) appears in it. Anath is a Canaanite goddess. This is why a number of scholars have given credence to the notion that her mother was Syrian¹³¹³, which is what makes the Semitic title 'bint Muzāḥim' plausible from a historical perspective.

Likewise, the Qur'an alone affirms the Islam of this woman, and her abandonment of worshipping the Pharaoh. This is apparent in the statement of God ﷻ: 'And Allah sets forth an example for the believers: the wife of Pharaoh, who prayed, "My Lord, build me a house in Paradise near You, deliver me from Pharaoh and his evil doing, and save me from the wrongdoing people."' (Qur'an, 66:11) This is complemented by historical reports on the sudden disappearance of the name of this woman from the royal records of her husband Ramesses II, including from the mortuary

1310 The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Many among men reached perfection, but none among women have reached this level except Āsiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, and Mary, daughter of 'Imrān. And indeed, the superiority of 'Ā'ishah over other women is like the superiority of tharid over all other meals' (Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of the Narrations on the Prophets, Chapter of the statement of God Most High 'And Allah sets forth an example for the believers: the wife of Pharaoh' (hadith no. 3411).

1311 The name can be said in a number of ways, including Āyisah, Īsā, and even Ist. See (Mahrān, *Banū Isrā'īl—Al-Ḥaḍārah: Al-Nubuwwah wa al-Anbiyā'*, 1999/1419 AH), 1/393.

Translator's note: Other ways it has been pronounced include Isisnofret and Isitnofret.

1312 Ibn 'Abbās said, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ drew four lines in the Earth. He then said, "Do you know what this is?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know better." He said, "The best of the women of Paradise is Khadijah daughter of Khuwaylid, Fātimah daughter of Muhammad, Mary daughter of 'Imrān, and Āsiyah daughter of Muzāḥim and the wife of Pharaoh"' (Narrated by Aḥmad and Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*; authenticated by Albānī).

1313 (Sayce, 1899), p. 1.

temples, especially the Ramesseum. At the Abu Simbel Temple, the names of her children appear in more than one image, but there is no mention of her. Furthermore, no royal tomb of hers has ever been uncovered. This is why the French Egyptologist Christiane Desroches Noblecourt said, 'Some scholars are of the position that Ramesses II had her removed'¹³¹⁴, which explains the above.



Ramesses II placing himself between the god Amun and the goddess Mut as part of a divine triad

¹³¹⁴ (Noblecourt, 1996), p. 237.



Merneptah with the god Ra



Merneptah placing his offering in front of the god Ptah



Statue of Āsiyah, wife of Ramesses II

Some Missionaries have attempted to make light of this ‘miracle of the unseen’ that mentions how Pharaoh considered himself divine, stating that it is not far-fetched for a tyrannical human like him to have considered himself a god. The fact is these people have not conducted a fair analysis, for a number of reasons:

- a. Is it logical that the Bible (the Torah in this case) mentions the story of a man who considered himself divine, and that a great Prophet comes to him and says ‘Worship the one God, Who is the True God’ without even making a single mention of this tyrant—who had assumed divinity—object to him by saying, ‘How can you invite me to worship your god? I am the true god’? Any book that forgoes the mention of this key fact in the narrative cannot be truthful in its reporting of details, as it would be mentioning merely the peripheries of the problem and disregarding its core.
- b. Had the Qur’an been a human book, it should have copied from the Torah. The crimes of Pharaoh were sufficient to demonstrate his deviance and corruption on the one hand, and the steadfastness of Moses ﷺ—the Prophet of God—on the other hand. There was no need—from what it seems—to discuss the divinity assumed by Pharaoh in the story of the Torah, the prime objective of which was exposing the injustice of Pharaoh against the Israelites and their escape from him.

- c. What would have been the case had the Egyptian relics proven that the Pharaohs did not claim divinity? Would this not have been injurious to the divinity of the Qur'an? Given that such a negation would be evidence against the Qur'an, the fact that these facts have been established is evidence in favour of it.

Pharaoh's claim of divinity is a deep and stern historical test of the divinity of the Qur'an. The Qur'anic verses passed this test with flying colours. The Torah of the Jews has clearly failed in the same.

II. KING, NOT PHARAOH

Dr Muhammad Bayyūmī Mahrān, Professor of Egyptian History and the Ancient Near East at Alexandria University, said, “The story of the Torah continuously discusses the King of Egypt on the basis that he is the Pharaoh of Egypt as well¹³¹⁵, whereas the Qur’anic discussion assumes that he is king, but not the Pharaoh. It is known today that, historically, the term “Pharaoh” as per Ancient Egyptian linguistic construct, “par aa” or “par oo”, initially meant “high house” or “great house”, denoting the royal palace and not its resident. Soon after, from the 18th Dynasty of Egypt, it changed to an honorific to denote the monarch himself. As for when exactly this idiomatic change occurred, Sir Alan Gardiner¹³¹⁶—the leading authority and scholar in the Ancient Egyptian language—pinpoints it to the reign of the Pharaoh Thutmose III (BC 1490-1436), when the “Pharaoh” parlance was used for the king himself, after which it was used in the reign of the religious reformer Akhenaten (BC 1367-1350), based on a speech delivered during his rule. Thereafter, in the 19th Dynasty (BC 1292-1189) and onwards, it was on occasions considered a synonym of the honorific similar to “His Excellency”. It is from this moment onwards that we start to read phrases like “Pharaoh came out” and “Pharaoh said this”, etc.

What the Qur’an wanted to do is to differentiate between the non-native Governor of Egypt during the period of Joseph, which was—according to most Biblical scholars and theologians—in the reign of Hyksos (where the title “king” is used for him), and the native Governor of Egypt during the period of Moses, for whom the title “Pharaoh” was used. The latter was also the title used for the monarchs of Egypt ever since the time of Akhenaten.

This is on top of the miracle of the Qur’an—after which there is no miracle—that has already been mentioned. However, when we refer back to the Torah, we find that historical realities are stacked up against what the Torah brings in relation to the usage of the Pharaoh title. It uses it when “king” should have been used, which would have been before the 18th

1315 Genesis 40:7, 41:15, 46:31, and 50:7.

1316 Translator’s note: Alan Henderson Gardiner (1879-1963). English Egyptologist, linguist, philologist, and scholar. Although he never took up any formal academic post, he is considered one of the leading Egyptologists of the early and mid-20th century.

Dynasty. On the other hand, it chooses “king” when it should have used “Pharaoh”, and that would be for the 18th Dynasty (BC 1575-1308) onwards.¹³¹⁷

In his critical historical work *Moïse et Pharaon—Les Hébreux en Egypte* (*Moses and Pharaoh—The Hebrews in Egypt*), Maurice Bucaille¹³¹⁸ said, ‘Another expression noticed in sura “Joseph” must be emphasized for it is in close conformity with a historical detail which only became known in modern times. I am greatly indebted to Professor J. Berque [the famous French Orientalist] for having drawn my attention to the fact that, in sura 12, the sovereign of Egypt is exclusively designated by the word “*malik*” (meaning king): the word appears 5 times, in verses 43, 50, 54, 72 and 76. The word “Pharaoh” is exclusively reserved to the time of Moses by the Qur’an, where it appears 74 times, whereas in the Bible, “Pharaoh” appears in the narration of Joseph and, in addition much before, concerning events which had occurred at the time of Abraham (related in chapter XII of the book of Genesis).

Today, we know that the word “Pharaoh” began to designate the sovereign of Egypt only during the reign of Amenhotep IV, i.e., during the second quarter of the 14th century B.C. The use of the word before that time, as the Bible uses it, is an anachronism, for the time of Joseph dates back to the 17th century B.C. The biblical writers who composed their texts under the influences of the knowledge of their time (when the king of Egypt was usually designated as “Pharaoh”) made this error, which is easily understandable when one takes into account the history of the texts.

The conditions were totally different as far as the Quran is concerned, as was previously developed. At the time of the Qur’anic Revelation, the only source of knowledge of religious past history was what the Bible might teach. Moreover, knowledge of the Old Egyptian language had totally vanished two centuries before and remained completely forgotten until the 19th century. Is all that not valuable enough to suggest a special reflection?’¹³¹⁹

If someone objects and claims that the issue is a coincidence, as ‘Pharaoh’ and ‘king’ are synonyms intended to denote ‘ruler’, the answer is that—historically speaking—there is no synonymy between the two. Though every Pharaoh is a king in its generic sense (i.e., ruler), not every king is a Pharaoh. The absence of the word ‘Pharaoh’ in the Qur’anic story of Joseph ﷺ and the usage of the term ‘king’ instead befuddled some Orientalists.

1317 (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/121-122 with slight alterations; (Khan, 2001), pp. 206-208.

1318 Translator’s note: Maurice Bucaille (1920-1998). French medical doctor and author. He was the senior surgeon in the French study on the mummy of Pharaoh. Bucaille was appointed by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia as his family physician.

1319 (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible. Qur’an and History*, 2008), p. 176.

The Orientalist known as Sprenger¹³²⁰, who lived in the 19th century before the explosion of information relating to the Ancient Egyptian civilisation, mentioned that this was an unexpected occurrence. He struggled to explain away this distinction by suggesting that ‘the name was not known to Muhammad at the time that the story was composed, or may be was not used in the sources from which he got the material for the story.’¹³²¹

In his article ‘The use of the ‘term “Pharaoh” in the Bible’ in the *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Joel Forman admitted to this Biblical inaccuracy, but he said as a rejoinder, ‘Although the patriarchs lived many centuries before the title was used in this way, the Bible makes use of the term familiar to its audience at the time it was written.’¹³²² This is a misleading wordplay, as it simply represents a different way to acknowledging anachronisms in the Bible. Per the *Webster’s Dictionary*, an anachronism is ‘an error in chronology; especially: a chronological misplacing of persons, events, objects, or customs in regard to each other’.

1320 Aloys Sprenger (1813-1893). Austrian Orientalist. His most important works include *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed Nach Bisher Größtenteils Unbenutzten Quellen*.

1321 (Jeffery, 1933), p. 225.

1322 (Forman, 2015) p. 48.

III. THE PRESERVATION OF PHARAOH'S CORPSE

God ﷻ said, 'We brought the Children of Israel across the sea. Then Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them unjustly and oppressively. But as Pharaoh was drowning, he said, "I believe that there is no god except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am now one of those who submit." He was told, "Now? You always disobeyed and were one of the corruptors. Today, We will preserve your corpse so that you may become an example for those who come after you. And surely most people are heedless of Our examples."' (Qur'an, 10:90-92)

These verses elaborately mention Pharaoh's drowning, which is also brought up in the Torah¹³²³. The Qur'an adds two other points that the Torah is seemingly unaware of:

1. God preserved the corpse of Pharaoh by having it maintained in the sea.
2. God preserved this corpse on the day it drowned so that it would remain a lesson for people.

The mummified corpses of the Pharaohs remained a concealed issue for centuries and were only revealed towards the end of the 19th century, where some pharaonic mummies were stumbled on when the grave of Amenhotep II was excavated.

Many researchers like Maurice Bucaille—a physician and Member of the French Society of Egyptology—were of the position that the 'Pharaoh of the Exodus'¹³²⁴ was Merneptah, son of Ramesses II.¹³²⁵ Dr Bucaille pre-

1323 See: Exodus 14:28; Psalms 78:53 and 106:11.

1324 'Pharaoh of the Exodus' means the Pharaoh who pursued Moses ﷺ and those with him as they left Egypt. 'Pharaoh of the Enslavement' is the Pharaoh who had enslaved the Israelites prior to that. A number of Egyptologists are of the view that the two are the same person. Others are of the view that they are two separate Pharaohs, and that the Exodus Pharaoh assumed power after the Enslavement Pharaoh. Bucaille inclines towards the latter view and argued in favour of it, using some pretty strong evidence. This is also the position of many prominent Egyptologists.

1325 Scholars have proposed that the Pharaoh of the Exodus is Ramesses II. Bucaille rejected this for a number of reasons, the most important of which is that 'the medical examination of these mummies do not offer us any ground to

sented important scientific data in this regard, which unfortunately has not gained its fair share of consideration among specialists. He mentioned that the medical examination of Merneptah's mummy was done in 1974 and 1975 by Egyptian doctors, in which he too was a participant as well. He was brought in as a specialist in Islamic medicine to investigate the assumption of whether the death of this Pharaoh was due to drowning in the sea. The summary of his investigation is as follows:

‘The mummy was damaged in an after-death fracture by multiple fragments after a bursting of the mummified tissues.

No organ could be examined, all of them having been lost. I have often been questioned about the lungs (were there signs of drowning?). The lungs had been taken out—a quite normal procedure—by the embalmers, and put in canopic jars that were never found. Very likely, their examination—even with a microscope—would not have been useful.

Besides that, the microscopic research allowed Professor Durigon¹³²⁶ a very important finding: he was able to rehydrate a tiny sample of a muscle of the mummy, and could discover anatomical details perfectly preserved by the mummification process—the conservation of the transversal striations of muscular fibrillae gave evidence of the impossibility for the body to have remained more than a short time in the water, for, otherwise, these striations would not have appeared in the microscopic examination.

Along with my two collaborators, specialists in forensic medicine, I was much impressed by the existence of three important losses of matter in the thorax, the abdomen and the cranium; these lacunae seemed to be due to blows received during life, a feature confirmed by the X-rays.

A segment of the thorax was missing a part of the right clavicle and two first ribs were lacking in 1974, whereas the corresponding detached fragment had been photographed by E. Smith¹³²⁷ in 1907. The lesion was the result of a blow from outside.

The same explanation was given about a lacuna of the right lumbar region, seen and measured by E. Smith (approximately 10 x 15 centimetres). Unfortunately, the mummy lying on its back could not be moved and we

think about that. In reality, it is very clear that Ramesses II was completely unable to assume that military responsibility before his death’ (Bucaille, *Mummies of the Pharaohs: Modern Medical Investigations*, 1990), p. 107.

1326 Translator’s note: Michel Louis Durigon (b. 1942). French pathologist and forensic medicine lecturer.

1327 Translator’s note: Grafton Elliot Smith (1871-1937). Australian-British anatomist and Egyptologist. As an expert on brain anatomy, he was one of the first to study Egyptian mummies using radiological techniques. He was the centre of various controversies, given that he was a proponent of certain forms of pseudo-archaeology.

could not see the lacuna from the outside; but we were in a position to observe it from inside using an endoscope introduced into the trunk through the thoracic lacuna, and to take a photograph of it (the endoscope is an instrument allowing viewing inside an organ, like the stomach, when it is introduced through the mouth).

There was no doubt that the lacuna of the head (approximately 37 by 23 millimetres, according to E. Smith), more exactly in the right parietal bone, was the result of a very severe blow.¹³²⁸ The anatomical features of this loss of matter, detailed in diverse medical reports, led the specialists of forensic medicine to state that its origin was traumatic, and that, in all likelihood, the fragment of bone pushed inside the cranial cavity had severely injured the underlying brain, thus provoking death very rapidly or maybe even without delay. The X-rays have shown that there was no bursting of the bone around the lacuna—as we could observe in the photographs of E. Smith; these findings imply that the loss of matter had resulted from a blow received during life.¹³²⁹

Bucaille adds, ‘These conclusions were reported, with the documents, in April 1976, before the French Society of Forensic Medicine; no objection was made to our deductions.’¹³³⁰

He ended his discussion by emphasising that the death of this Pharaoh was because the sea engulfed him, which is what is mentioned in the Bible.¹³³¹

1328 After multiple x-rays and conducting a study on Pharaoh’s skull, Bucaille deemed Elliot Smith’s opinion in the beginning of the 20th century to be incorrect, in which he stated that the gap was a result of thievery by actors who harmed the mummies as they stole the adornments from them. Bucaille pointed out that the supposedly lost bone was actually present when the mummy was pictured in the early part of the 20th century. It appears that it was placed on gap left on the face after it had detached from the body. See (Bucaille, *Mummies of the Pharaohs: Modern Medical Investigations*, 1990), p. 123.

1329 (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur’an and History*, 2008), pp. 127-128.

Some ridicule the notion that Merneptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. They claim that the advocates of this view have only one piece of evidence: salt remains on the mummified body, which denotes drowning. This is not evidence at all, as the mummification process itself used salt (see (Futūhī & Darkazli, *Al-Tārikhu Yashhadu bi-‘Iṣmati al-Qur’ān al-Karīm: Tārikh Banī Isrā’īl al-Mubakkir*, 2002/1422 AH), p. 124). You can see here that all the evidence offered in this summary piece have no connection whatsoever with salt and whether it can remain on mummified bodies. For details on Merneptah being the Pharaoh of the Exodus and the refutation of other views, see (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārikhiyyah fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/308-329.

1330 (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur’an and History*, 2008), p. 128.

1331 (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur’an and History*, 2008), p. 129.

While the Qur'an also mentioned this fact, it also added another: the preservation of Pharaoh's bodily corpse. With this, the miraculous element of the Qur'an and its inimitability in the mention of information never seen before were achieved.

Bucaille pointed out that, had the corpse remained in the water for a longer period, its mummification would have been useless. He points out an interesting factoid here, which is that the Qur'an indicated the preservation of this Pharaoh's corpse from decay in the water right from the same day he died in it.¹³³² This further underscores the miraculous element of the Qur'an.

Regarding the recent uncovering of the corpses of various Pharaohs, Bucaille mentioned in his book *La Bible, le Coran et la Science* (*The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science*), 'When the Qur'an was transmitted to man through the Prophet, the bodies of all Pharaohs, who are today considered (rightly or wrongly) to have something to do with the Exodus, were in their tombs of the Necropolis of Thebes, on the opposite side of the Nile from Luxor. At the time however, absolutely nothing was known of this fact. It was not until the end of the 19th century that they were discovered there. As the Qur'an states, the body of the Pharaoh of the Exodus was in fact rescued. So, whichever of the Pharaohs it was, visitors may see him in the Royal Mummies Room of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.'¹³³³

One piece of evidence used in favour of establishing that Merneptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus is what is found on the famous Merneptah Stele. For it comprises the sole reference of the existence of Israel in the Ancient Egyptian writings. The text of the stele deals with the word 'Israel', linguistically, from the viewpoint that it denotes a people without a state, as opposed to other people mentioned in that text. This text carries the mention of the victories of the Pharaoh:

1332 (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur'an and History*, 2008), p. 128.

1333 (Bucaille, *Al-Tawrah wa al-Injil wa al-Qur'an wa al-'Ilm*, 1978), p. 204.

'In the era of the 21st Dynasty when Pinedjem II, the High Priest of Amun, died, his fellow priests decided to stop disturbing the corpses of the pharaohs. They gathered their corpses, made a veil for the High Priest's burial, and buried all bodies in the tomb of Queen Inhapy at Deir el-Bahari, which was expanded to accommodate for all the pharaoh corpses since the 18th Dynasty, after which they completely sealed off the tomb with iron and destroyed the signs around it so that thieves could not locate it. Historians record that this occurred in 969 BC, during the 10th year of King Siamun's rule. The tomb remained safe from thieves for over 2800 years and was forgotten about. It is known as the Deir el-Bahari Complex and comprises of many mummies including that of Ramesses II' (Badrāwī, 1998). Translator's note: Reference in the bibliography has been changed from the electronic source used by the author to the actual book.

‘The princes are prostrate, saying, “Peace!”
 Not one is raising his head among the Nine Bows.
 Now that Tehenu (Libya) has come to ruin,
 Hatti is pacified;
 The Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe:
 Ashkelon has been overcome;
 Gezer has been captured;
 Yano’am is made non-existent.
 Israel is laid waste and his seed is not;
 Hurru is become a widow because of Egypt.’¹³³⁴

‘Israel is laid waste’ is uncharacteristic of the other phrases used in this stele, as the sign attached to the word ‘Israel’ is not that of a state or city, but rather it is a sign denoting a group of people.

It is possible to link this text to the murder of the Israelite children at the hands of the Pharaoh, which is mentioned in the Qur’an¹³³⁵:

- ‘Indeed, Pharaoh arrogantly elevated himself in the land and divided its people into subservient groups, one of which he persecuted, slaughtering their sons and keeping their women. He was truly one of the corruptors.’ (Qur’an, 28:4)
- ‘The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people said, “Are you going to leave Mūsā and his people free to spread corruption in the land and abandon you and your gods?” He responded, “We will kill their sons and keep their women. We will completely dominate them.”’ (Qur’an, 7:127)

The Pharaonic order to kill the children of the Jews is also present in the Torah.¹³³⁶

¹³³⁴ (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/311-312.

Translator’s note: English translation taken from (Mariottini, 2019).

¹³³⁵ (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur’an and History*, 2008), p. 177.

¹³³⁶ See Exodus 1:15-22.

IV. INSTRUMENTS OF TORTURE IN PHARAOH'S ERA

The Qur'an vividly describes the showdown between Pharaoh's magicians and Moses ﷺ, how the magicians ended up believing in God, and how they disbelieved in the Pharaoh when they were astonished by the miracle of the staff transforming into a real serpent, the result of which was the Pharaoh deciding to exact revenge on them. In this regard, God ﷻ said, "They said, 'O Mūsā, either you cast, or let us be the first to cast.' Mūsā responded, 'No, you go first.' And suddenly their ropes and staffs appeared to him—by their magic—to be slithering. So Mūsā concealed fear within himself. We reassured him, 'Do not fear—it is certainly you who will prevail. Cast what is in your right hand, and it will swallow up what they have made, for what they have made is no more than a magic trick. And magicians can never succeed wherever they go.' So the magicians fell down in prostration, declaring, 'We believe in the Lord of Hārūn and Mūsā.' Pharaoh said, 'How dare you believe in him before I give you permission? He must be your master who taught you magic. I will certainly cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and crucify you on the trunks of palm trees. You will really see whose punishment is more severe and more lasting.'" (Qur'an, 20:65-71)

Here, the Qur'an mentions the instruments of torture used in the era of the Pharaoh. Dr Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Yūsuf published a passage of text that is in the Temple of Amada in Nubia, Egypt, depicting these instruments. They go back to the 4th year of Merneptah's¹³³⁷ reign (circa. 1220 BC). This gives credence to the notion that Merneptah tortured people by amputating their hands and feet on opposite sides and crucifying them.¹³³⁸

It should be pointed out here that it is only the Qur'an that mentions how the magicians declared their faith in God. This is a logical reaction from a people who had mastered magic: When someone who defeated them in the field of mastery came, and they knew that what he did was far greater than what they had concocted, and that it was the truth and not fantasy, they submitted themselves to God, the Lord of the Worlds.

The question we pose to the Missionaries is: Why would the Qur'an bring up this event and follow it up by mentioning a historical fact that

¹³³⁷ Numerous scholars have preferred the view that Merneptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

¹³³⁸ See (Yūsuf, 1999/1420 AH), p. 110, and (Youssef, 1964), p. 237, as quoted by (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/200.

people in the 7th century did not know, nor does it have any mention in the Torah? How would this be—unless of course it is Revelation from God?

V. PHARAOH'S DESIRE OF ASCENDING TO THE SKY

God ﷻ said, 'Pharaoh ordered, "O Hāmān, build me a high tower so I may reach the pathways leading up to the heavens and look for the God of Mūsā, although I am sure he is a liar." This is how Pharaoh's evil deeds were made so appealing to him that he was hindered from the right way. The plotting of Pharaoh was only in vain.' (Qur'an, 40:36-37)

Egyptologists nowadays discuss a well-established belief of the Pharaohs. They thought it was possible for them to climb to the heavens from a ladder, or a tower, so that they could see the gods there. Alan F. Segal¹³³⁹ underscored this fact by stating, 'Many of the spells in the *Pyramid Texts* suggest that the pharaoh rises to heaven by means of a ladder:

"N. ascends on the ladder which his father Ra made for him."

or

"Atum brought to N. the gods belonging to heaven, he assembled to him the gods belonging to Earth. They put their arms under him. They made a ladder for N. that he might ascend to heaven on it."¹³⁴⁰

The desire to ascend to the sky was widespread among the Pharaohs. Petrie¹³⁴¹ pointed out the following: 'From the earliest days there was a craving for association with the gods. This was the natural equivalent of the worldly advantage of belonging to the followers of a great noble... So it doubtless was in prehistoric Egypt, and thus the association with the good gods was the way of protection against the evils of the future life... The desire to ascend to the gods in the sky was expressed by wanting the ladder to go up... [These are all] manifestations of this craving for sharing the divine nature.'¹³⁴²

1339 Alan F. Segal (1945-2011). Professor in Jewish Studies at Barnard College, New York. He also taught at Princeton and Toronto. He is a specialist in first-era Jewish and Christian studies.

1340 (Segal, 2004), p. 38.

1341 Translator's note: William Matthew Petrie, commonly known as Flinders Petrie (1853-1942). English Egyptologist and pioneer of systematic methodology in archaeology and preservation of artefacts. He held the first chair of Egyptology in the UK. He excavated many important archaeological sites in Egypt. His most famous discovery is that of the Merneptah Stele.

1342 (Futūḥī & Darkazlı, *Al-Tārikhu Yashhadu bi-ʿIṣmati al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*:

Many Egyptologists are of the position that the Ancient Egyptians believed the pyramids were, in and of themselves, the medium for the Pharaoh to reach the heavens.¹³⁴³

The two verses of Sūrah Ghāfir reveal the Pharaoh's belief of ascending to the heavens in order to see the gods.

Tārīkh Banī Isrāʼīl al-Mubakkir, 2002/1422 AH), p. 133.

1343 (White J. M., 2003), p. 47; (Fagan, 2006), p. 10; (Sweeney, 2008), 1/32.

VI. USING BAKED CLAY BRICKS FOR CONSTRUCTION

God ﷻ said, ‘Pharaoh declared, “O chiefs, I know of no other god for you but myself. So bake bricks out of clay for me, O Hāmān, and build a high tower so I may look at the God of Mūsā, although I am sure he is a liar.”’ (Qur’an, 28:38)

An abundance of Egyptian relics, as represented in the buildings that stand to this day, reveal that Ramesses II, in all the attributes of the Qur’an describing him as the ‘Pharaoh of the Enslavement’, used baked bricks to construct some of his buildings.¹³⁴⁴

It appears that Pharaoh’s request to Hāmān to build a tower reaching the heavens was out of arrogance and to demonstrate power in front of Moses ﷺ, whose people were weak. Baked clay is expensive and burdensome as it requires a lot of fuel to prepare. The task was made even tougher when considering the fact that the pharaonic construct was huge. It would have required many more years in comparative terms if dry bricks were to be used. This is attested by reality: The buildings in which Ramesses II used baked bricks were few, and there was no reason for that other than it was extremely expensive in an era when building work would have never ceased.

The Orientalist Adam J. Silverstein¹³⁴⁵ was surprised by the keenness of Muslims wanting to prove that the Egyptians, during the reign of Ramesses II, used baked clay for construction, as this was—in his view—mentioned in the Torah in Genesis.¹³⁴⁶ This is strange on his part, because the text of the Torah is clear in the description of these bricks, stating that they were made of straw, mixed in with clay: ‘You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw.’¹³⁴⁷ The mixing of straw with clay in order to gain dry clay is certainly not

1344 (Petrie & Griffith, 1888), 2/18-19.

1345 Adam J. Silverstein. Orientalist. He studied at Cambridge and did a 3-year British Academy post-doctoral fellowship there. He then moved to Oxford, where he was first a lecturer in Islamic History and then a lecturer in Jewish-Muslim Relations. He joined King’s College London as Senior Lecturer in Jewish Studies and the Abrahamic Religions. He is currently part of the faculty of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department at Shalem College, Jerusalem (with additions from translator).

1346 Genesis 5:6-8, 5:14, 5:16, and 5:18.
(Silverstein, 2011), pp. 471-472.

1347 Exodus 5:7.

clay that has been baked in fire. This conflation is an errant position of this Orientalist.

Regarding the manufacture of bricks and the role of straw therein—as is known by later scholars of the period of Ramesses II—Johann Peter Lange¹³⁴⁸ said in his notes on Exodus 5:7, “The bricks in the old monuments of Egypt, also in many pyramids, are not baked, but only dried in the Sun, as Herodotus (II. 136) mentions of a pyramid” (Keil). The bricks were made firm by means of the chopped straw, generally gathered from the stubble of the harvested fields, which was mixed with the clay. This too is confirmed by ancient monuments. Hengstenberg, *Egypt, etc.*¹³⁴⁹

Therefore, what the Qur’an mentioned reveals something that was not known to those who lived during the period of Muhammad ﷺ.

It is possible for us to speak on the precision of the Qur’an here by posing the following question: ‘The Qur’an speaks of the usage of baked clay for construction. It is an extremely expensive material, as it requires fire to be burned for a long period until it is baked, as opposed to sundried clay. We know today the Ancient Egyptian civilisation left behind many preserved buildings. So, what would happen if we were not to find any building made of baked clay? Or—in more precise terms—what if we did not find buildings of Ramesses II (the Pharaoh of the Enslavement) made from baked clay? Certainly, that would be evidence against the Qur’an. So, what should our stance be on the Qur’an given that we know that some buildings of Ramesses II are from baked clay? Surely, that should be testimony in favour of the Qur’an.’

1348 Translator’s note: Johann Peter Lange (1802-1884). German Calvinist theologian.

1349 (Lange, 1876), p. 17.

VII. PRESERVATION OF GRAIN IN EAR

God ﷻ said, 'He said, "Yūsuf, man of truth, interpret for us the dream of seven fat cows eaten up by seven skinny ones, and seven green ears of grain and seven others dry, so that I may return to the people and let them know." Yūsuf said, "You will plant grain for seven consecutive years, leaving in the ear whatever you will harvest, except for the little you will eat. Then after that will come seven years of great hardship which will consume whatever you have saved, except the little you will store for seed. Then after that will come a year in which people will receive abundant rain and they will press oil and fruits.'" (Qur'an, 12:46-49)

The Qur'an alone mentions a piece of detail within the story of Joseph that is not in the Torah: the request by Joseph to have wheat preserved in ear. One analysing this addition would perhaps not appreciate the significance of this. However, God ﷻ, the Omniscient and the All-Wise, cannot but thrust the light of miraculousness in any verse of the Qur'an at any time. Today, we are able to understand one of the wisdoms in this addition, as represented as a piece of detail within the story of Joseph that the Torah is seemingly unaware of.

Joseph advised the King of Egypt to preserve the wheat in ear, despite the Egyptians customarily not storing it in that manner. It is clear that the purpose of storage is to preserve the grain's nutritious and health value during the period of preservation so that it can be benefited from during the drought that would hit the land.

At the Commission on Scientific Signs in the Quran and Sunnah in Kuwait¹³⁵⁰, one researcher¹³⁵¹ presented a paper on the miraculous angle that came in the Qur'an from the mouth of Joseph ﷺ. He said,

'In this holy verse, two scientific observations cause us to pause:

1. The limit of harvested grain remaining edible is 15 years: seven years for people to consecutively harvest (these are the years of greenery and yield), followed by seven years of great hardship (these are the years of dryness), followed by one year—the 15th year—in

1350 Held on 25 November 2006.

1351 Dr 'Abd al-Majīd Bal'ābid (Mohamed I University, Morocco).

This scientific breakthrough was also uncovered some several decades ago by Dr Muhammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Fandī on p. 82 of his book *al-Islam wa-Qawānīn al-Wujūd* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Āmmah li-l-Kutub, 1982).

which people will receive abundant rain and press fruits. Scientific investigation has revealed that 15 years is the upper limit of grain to maintain the potential to grow and develop.

2. The storage method—as per God’s statement “...leaving in the ear”—is the most significant scientific method in our paper vis-à-vis leaving seeds or grain in ear:

We ran a careful experiment on wheat grain left in ear for two years. We then compared that to debranned wheat. Preliminary results showed that the ears were not affected and remained as they were. It should be noted that the storage area was in normal conditions—conditions of heat or humidity and so on were not taken into consideration. In this process, it became clear that the grain we had kept in ear lost a significant portion of moisture and became dry as time went by, compared to the debranned grain. This meant that 20.3% of the weight of debranned wheat was moisture, which would negatively impact the ability of the grain to grow and develop, as well as its edibility. This is because the presence of moisture makes it easy for it to go off, and for its edibility to deteriorate.

Then, looking at the length of roots and the culm, we conducted a comparison between the wheat in ear and debranned grain for two years. The result was that the grain still in ear grew 20% in its roots and 32% more in its culm. In conjunction with these results, we conducted a measure of the proteins and general sugars that remained unaltered: the debranned wheat lost 32% of proteins by the end of the two-year period, and 20% after one year.

This research makes it clear that the best form of preserving wheat is the way that Joseph  pointed out. This could have only been by the Revelation of God.

It is known that this method would not have been followed in ancient times, especially for the ancient Egyptians who used to store grain after removing them from ear. This is one angle of the scientific miraculousness of the Qur’an, which is in relation of seed and grain storage, so that it does not go to waste, underscoring the greatness of Revelation and the precise scientific knowledge therein.¹³⁵²

1352 (Bal‘ābid).

VIII. PAGAN ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

God ﷻ said, ‘...and the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of Allah.” Such are their baseless assertions, only parroting the words of earlier disbelievers. May Allah condemn them. How can they be deluded from the truth?’ (Qur’an, 9:30)

In his encyclopaedia *al-Diyānāt wa al-‘Aqā’id fī Mukhtalif al-‘Uṣūr* (*Religions and Faiths in Different Historical Phases*), Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ‘Aṭṭār said, ‘This verse offers information about an unknown event from the past. Neither the Prophet nor the Arabs of the Hejaz would have known that nations preceding the nation of Jesus said what they said. This gives us confidence that the Qur’an is the Word of God, the Knowledgeable of all the unseen, and not the speech of Muhammad, His servant and Messenger. This is because discoveries and investigations of the ancient past revealed the resemblance of Christians to those pagans only very recently, hundreds of years after the passing of Muhammad. The trinitarian concept of divinity in India and other places like China, Mexico, and Egypt, and the pagan religions—all of which Christianity imbibed—were discovered only recently. This is one of the secrets of the Qur’an that came to the fore with the passing of time.’¹³⁵³

Western scholars have written a number of books on the subject of Christianity being influenced by Eastern religions and pagan beliefs, including:

- John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, Oxford: New Blackfriars, 1977.
- Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, Illinois: Barna Books, 2008, 2002.
- Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Robert J. Miller, *Born Divine: The Birth of Jesus and Other Sons of God*, Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2003.
- Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ*, Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2004.

1353 (‘Aṭṭār, 1981/1401 AH), 2/561.

- Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the 'Original Jesus' a Pagan God?*, New York: Harmony Books, 2000.

IX. THE INNOVATION OF MONASTICISM

God ﷻ said, ‘As for monasticism, they made it up—We never ordained it for them—only seeking to please Allah, yet they did not observe it as it should be observed.’ (Qur’an, 57:27)

Monasticism was a fundamental feature of Christianity in the 7th century. It had a public presence in Christian communities that were close to Makkah. It is mentioned in pre-Islamic poetry, which denotes that it had a strong connection to the Christian faith and Church practices in Arabian social culture. However, the Qur’an explicitly mentions something that no Arab in that time frame or region would have expected. It sets out that monasticism is a foreign concept to Christianity, innovated by people who believed that righteousness and the refinement of the soul lied therein. Yet, this very method of monasticism ended up becoming a corrupted institution.¹³⁵⁴

The facts from history that we know of today confirm that monasticism was not known in the first 2nd centuries. Rather, it appeared towards the end of the 3rd century in Egypt at the hands of St Anthony the Great¹³⁵⁵, known as the Father of Monasticism.¹³⁵⁶ Even if we assume monasticism existed before this, there is no doubt that it came about some considerable time after Jesus. Additionally, it was practised on an individual level before it became systemised in the beginning of the 3rd century.

1354 Ibn Kathīr said, ‘The statement of God Most High “yet they did not observe it as it should be observed”, means that they did not carry out what they mandated upon themselves as they should have. This is a two-fold critique of them: the first is innovating in the religion of God that which He did not command them to do; and the second is them not carrying out that which they committed themselves to under the pretence that it would bring them closer to God ﷻ.’ (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 1999/1420 AH), 4/2290.

1355 Translator’s note: Anthony the Great (251-356). Christian monk from Egypt and saint of the Church.

1356 (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1914), 1/555.

2. The Qur'an correcting historical errors of the Bible

It was only since Baruch Spinoza in the 17th century that the Western world became aware of critical historical investigations of the Bible. Critically analysing the Holy Scriptures was a crime that would have landed any such person in torture and death under the pretence of combatting heresy and heretics. Furthermore, historical information about extinct nations was stagnant as the methodologies of research and history were unable to bypass the barrier of the passage of time in deciphering ancient languages (such as hieroglyphics), as well as the absence of an intellectual foundation that would enable going back to that part of ancient history via its preserved relics. Despite all of this, the Islamic world has covered a lot of ground in critiquing the Torah and the Gospel, via the Revelation of the Qur'an, its assertions, and its contents. In its critique, it pointed out facts that a) scientific discovery only uncovered in later centuries, or b) critical research during the period of Islamic authorship revealed to be correct after Muslim scholars sought the benefit of the Qur'anic assertions in those issues. Here are some examples.

NUMBERS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL IN EGYPT

One of the topics that has preoccupied contemporary scholars the most in the historical reports of the Torah is the large number of Israelites who lived in Egypt, who then left with Moses after Pharaoh and his armies pursued them.

The Torah mentions that ‘the members of Jacob’s family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.’¹³⁵⁷ After 215 years (as per the Greek Septuagint), or 430 years (as per the Hebrew Torah)¹³⁵⁸, that number was cast aside and the description became ‘a nation stronger and more numerous’¹³⁵⁹, who ultimately became the strongest and greatest nation in the world at that time. When they were chased out of Egypt, ‘The total number of firstborn males a month old or more, listed by name, was 22,273.’¹³⁶⁰ Another relevant passage states: ‘And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.’¹³⁶¹

One researcher commented on this by saying, ‘Were we to split the number of this group by the number of virgins, we would conclude that the Israelite woman within the fleeing Jews would have had given birth to around 65 children on average. This is not possible. Also, the Israelites were subjected to humiliation and murder in Egypt. Furthermore, the narration states they passed through the sea in just a few hours, denoting that their numbers were relatively small. This is why those studying the Torah and historians do not give any credence to these numbers that are mentioned in the Torah anymore, and consider them to be Israelite exaggerations.’¹³⁶²

As I explained in detail in my book *The Historical Existence of Prophets and the Argument of Archaeological Investigation* (Arabic), the exaggeration of the Torah with regard to the number of the Israelites—who lived in Egypt and then were part of the Exodus—has led to the rejection of the historicity of Moses, as well as the entire story of the Exodus. It has also led to the belief that the Israelites were a group who lived in Canaan after Moses, and that they did not come from elsewhere. This is why re-examining the historicity of the story would invariably be accompanied by the denial of

1357 Genesis 46:27.

1358 Exodus 12:40-41.

1359 Deuteronomy 9:14.

1360 Numbers 3:43.

1361 Exodus 12:37.

1362 (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/142.

this huge number of Israelites. In his robust defence on the historicity of the Exodus, Friedman—the famous Jewish scholar of the Torah—wrote:

“The principal points that people generally bring up in doubting the Exodus are mostly about numbers: We have found no remnant of the two million people in the Sinai region. We have found no widespread material culture of Egypt in early Israel: no Egyptian style pottery or architecture. We have found no records in Egypt of a huge mass of Israelite slaves or of a huge exodus.

True. But none of this is evidence about whether the Exodus happened or not. It is evidence only of whether it was big or not. For heaven’s sake, did we need archaeological work to confirm that an exodus of two million people was, shall we say, problematic? It had already been calculated long ago that if the people were marching, say, eight across, then when the first ones got to Mount Sinai, half of the people were still in Egypt. And I think it was Bishop Colenso who calculated around 150 years ago the amount of, let us say delicately, residue that many people would have deposited in the Sinai over a period of forty years, and he figured that the Sinai wilderness should be fertile! Did we really need archaeologists combing the Sinai and not finding anything to prove what we knew anyway? The absence of exodus and wilderness artefacts questions only whether there was a massive exodus.”¹³⁶³

He concluded that believing in the historicity of the Exodus is tied to the notion that the numbers of those who are part of the Exodus from Egypt with Moses were a few: under 10,000.

Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064 CE) refuted this fallacious view over a millennium ago and explained the Qur’anic miracle on this topic. This was after his critical method revealed the confusion of the Torah and the false exaggerations therein. He adds: ‘How can this cold lie compare to the clear truth in the statement of God ﷻ quoting the Pharaoh that he said as he pursued the children of Israel, “These are an outcast of just a handful of people.” (Qur’an, 26:54) Only this is plausible—nothing else is at all possible.’¹³⁶⁴

If an objection is raised that what the Pharaoh said in the Qur’an is nothing more than an attempt to downplay the ordeal of the Israelites, the answer to this would be given in two ways:

1. The Qur’anic text, when discussing the story of Moses, does not give the impression that the Israelites reached the huge number that is assumed in the Torah.

¹³⁶³ (Friedman R. E., 2018), p. 27.

¹³⁶⁴ (Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Mīl wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥāl*), 1/194.

2. The number mentioned in the Torah, like Bucaille said, was greater than the number of people in the entire state at that time.¹³⁶⁵ It is not logical that the entire nation, as seen by the eyes of the people, could be described as being an 'outcast of just a handful of people'.

If an objection is raised that the Qur'an did not provide scientifically new information but merely corrected an obvious error, the answer to that is this correction that Ibn Ḥazm mentioned is not discussed in Western critiques of the Torah narrative until 1862 by J. W. Colenso¹³⁶⁶, one of the contemporary pioneers in the critique of the Old Testament. It should still be noted that the German Hermann Samuel Reimarus¹³⁶⁷ had ridiculed the figure offered by the Torah a century earlier.¹³⁶⁸

1365 (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur'an and History*, 2008), pp. 7 and 197.

1366 John William Colenso (1814-1883). British Missionary, theologian, and biblical scholar. His works include *Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Polygamy*.

1367 Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768). German philosopher and Deist. He was one of the figureheads during the European Enlightenment and a pioneer of modern critical studies of the Historical Jesus.

1368 (Futūḥī & Darkazlī, *Al-Tārīkh al-Yashhadu bi-ʿIṣmati al-Qurʾān al-Karīm: Tārīkh Banī Isrāʾīl al-Mubakkir*, 2002/1422 AH), p. 133.

DIVINITY OF JESUS

The Qur'an repeatedly negates the divinity of Jesus:

- 'And on Judgement Day, Allah will say, "O 'Īsā, son of Maryam, did you ever ask the people to worship you and your mother as gods besides Allah?" He will answer, "Glory be to You. How could I ever say what I had no right to say? If I had said such a thing, You would have certainly known it. You know what is hidden within me, but I do not know what is within You. Indeed, You alone are the Knower of all unseen.' (Qur'an, 5:116)
- 'It is not for Allah to take a son. Glory be to Him. When He decrees a matter, He simply says, "Be"—and it is.' (Qur'an, 19:35)
- 'Indeed, the example of 'Īsā in the sight of Allah is like that of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be"—and he was.' (Qur'an, 3:59)
- "'Īsā declared, "I am a servant of Allah. He has destined me to be given the Scripture and to be a Prophet..." (Qur'an, 19:30)¹³⁶⁹
- 'Say, O believers, "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, what was revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Ishāq, Ya'qūb, and his descendants, and what was given to Mūsā, 'Īsā, and other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them. And to Allah we all submit.'" (Qur'an, 2:136)

Any fair-minded person would ask himself the following question here: The Christians are of the view that Jesus proclaimed he is a God, and that he is truthful in his claim; Jews accused Jesus of having falsely claimed divinity; why would the Qur'an of Muhammad mention that Jesus did not claim divinity at all? Is this not denying a historical fact that the People of the Book agreed upon? Is this not a historical error in the Qur'an?

¹³⁶⁹ Translator's note: There is a difference of opinion among Muslim scholars in what exactly Jesus said here as a newborn child and what he said later on in life. The quotation marks would be placed in accordance with those respective views.

The objection here is not about the correctness of Jesus's divinity, as this is an issue that can be attained just by using one's intellect. Rather, the objection here is the correctness of the claim that Jesus had claimed divinity for himself with his own tongue.

The answer is provided to us by one of the leading Christian theologians of our era, John Hick¹³⁷⁰. In his book *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, quoting what the scholars today have agreed to, he says, 'A further point of broad agreement among New Testament scholars is even more important for understanding the development of christology. This is that the historical Jesus did not make the claim to deity that later Christian thought was to make for him: he did not understand himself to be God, or God the Son, incarnate. Divine incarnation, in the sense in which Christian theology has used the idea, requires that an eternally pre-existent element of the God-head, God the Son or the divine Logos, became incarnate as a human being. But it is extremely unlikely that the historical Jesus thought of himself in any such way. Indeed he would probably have rejected the idea as blasphemous; one of the sayings attributed to him is, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10.18).

Of course no statements about what Jesus did or did not say or think can be made with certainty. But such evidence as there is has led the historians of the period to conclude, with an impressive degree of unanimity¹³⁷¹, that Jesus did not claim to be God incarnate. This is so generally agreed today that a few representative quotations, drawn from writers who themselves affirm an orthodox christology, will suffice for our present purpose. Thus the late Archbishop Michael Ramsey¹³⁷², who was himself a New Testament scholar, wrote that "Jesus did not claim deity for himself" (Ramsey 1980, 39). His contemporary, the New Testament scholar C.F.D. Moule¹³⁷³, said that "Any case for a 'high' Christology that depended on the authenticity of the alleged claims of Jesus about himself, especially in the Fourth Gospel, would

1370 John Hick (1922-2012). Theologian who taught at a number of universities. He served as Vice President at both the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion and the World Congress of Faiths. Robert Smid mentioned that Hick is often pointed out as 'one of the most—if not simply the most—significant philosopher of religion in the twentieth century.'

1371 Consensus does not mean the agreement of all scholars, but rather the majority of specialists. Anyone who opposes it would be considered as someone who adopts an isolated view.

1372 Michael Ramsey (1904-1988). Archbishop of Canterbury between 1961 and 1974.

1373 C. F. D. Moule (1908-2007). Anglican priest, theologian, and one of the greatest scholars of New Testament studies. He taught at Cambridge. He participated in the New English Bible translation.

indeed be precarious” (Moule 1977, 136). In a major study of the origins of the doctrine of the incarnation James Dunn concludes that “there was no real evidence in the earliest Jesus tradition of what could fairly be called a consciousness of divinity” (Dunn 1980, 60). Again, Brian Hebblethwaite¹³⁷⁴, a staunch upholder of the traditional Nicene¹³⁷⁵-Chalcedonian¹³⁷⁶ christology, acknowledges that “it is no longer possible to defend the divinity of Jesus by reference to the claims of Jesus” (Hebblethwaite 1987, 74). Yet again, David Brown¹³⁷⁷, another staunch upholder of Chalcedon, says that “there is good evidence to suggest that (Jesus) never saw himself as a suitable object of worship” and that it is “impossible to base any claim for Christ’s divinity on his consciousness once we abandon the traditional portrait as reflected in a literal understanding of St. John’s Gospel” (David Brown 1985, 108).¹³⁷⁸

This precisely is the miracle, whereby the Qur’an disagrees with what is considered settled by Jews and Christians who lived during the era of Muhammad’s Prophethood. This is despite the fact that the fastest method of gaining an attachment to Jews would have been for Muhammad to simply agree with their stance on Jesus, and the quickest method of debating Christians was to reject the truthfulness of Jesus by explaining how his claim conflicts with reason and the scriptures.

Today, Western academic and scholarly critical research has settled on the position of the Qur’an, to the exclusion of the position of two sets of people whose forefathers lived with Jesus himself.

Denying the divinity of Jesus has not remained confined to academics. Today, a large number of Christians deny the assigning of any divine status to Jesus. They believe he was a great man and brought guidance and a good message. This is reflected in a survey carried out by a Missionary organisation in America in 2020. The proposition put forward was: ‘Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.’ 52% agreed; only 36% disagreed.¹³⁷⁹

1374 Brian Hebblethwaite (b. 1939). English priest, theologian, and philosopher. He taught at Cambridge. His works include *The Essence of Christianity: A Fresh Look at the Nicene Creed*.

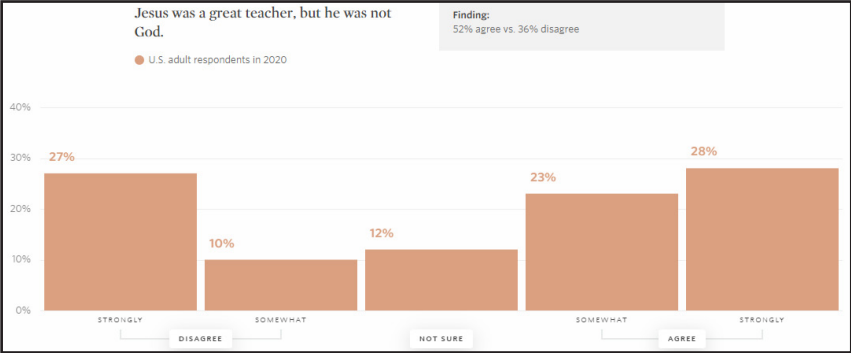
1375 i.e., the doctrine that the Christians decreed at the Council of Nicaea in 325, which described Jesus as ‘God from God’ θεον εκ θεού (theon ek theou).

1376 i.e., the doctrine that the Christians manufactured at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which decreed that Jesus has two natures and two wills—divine and human, or ‘truly God and truly man’ θεὸν ἀληθῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς (theon alēthōs kai anthrōpon alēthōs).

1377 David Brown (1948-2021). Anglican priest and theologian. He taught at Cambridge. His works include *The Divine Trinity*.

1378 (Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, 2006), pp. 27-28.

1379 (The State of Theology, 2020).



JESUS'S MESSAGE

The message of Jesus that Christians living in the era of the Muhammadan Prophethood had inherited was a bundle of major beliefs and detailed theological viewpoints that rejected any conciliation with Muslim theology. It was easily within the power of the Prophet of Islam to simply ascribe Jesus to exactly the same things that Christians ascribed him to: divinity. Doing this would have brought him closer to the Jews, for they considered Jesus a liar who distorted the message of Moses. From another angle, this would have removed the burden of establishing that the Qur'an's assertions copied the proclamations of the New Testament. In doing so, he would have discredited Christianity instead of offering a revised image of it, landing him in a needless dispute with the Jews.

The Qur'an instead adopted the tougher approach: upholding the message of Jesus before it was distorted, which is in agreement with Islamic beliefs. This is the conclusion that is arrived at by the most ancient Christian document harking back to the period before the Four Gospels. In the words of the great critic John S. Kloppenborg¹³⁸⁰, it is the 'earliest Gospel'¹³⁸¹, and in the words of the famous critic Marcus Borg¹³⁸² in his introduction to Mark Powelson¹³⁸³ and Ray Riegert's¹³⁸⁴ book *The Lost Gospel*, 'In the judgment of most scholars, it is the first Christian Gospel'¹³⁸⁵.

The two-source hypothesis is considered the most significant contemporaneous analysis in explaining the sources of the gospels. It has the

1380 John S. Kloppenborg (b. 1951). Chair at the Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto until 2020. Along with James M. Robinson and Paul Hoffmann, he released a critical edition of Q in 2000. His works include *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel*.

1381 (Kloppenborg, 2009).

1382 Marcus Borg (1942-2015). Theologian and one of the most prominent scholars of higher textual criticism of the New Testament in the 20th century. He served as President of the Anglican Association of Biblical Scholars. His works include *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously But Not Literally*.

1383 Mark Powelson. American writer on spirituality and New Testament interpretation. He is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature.

1384 Translator's note: Ray Riegert (b. 1947). American author of several books. He is a member of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature.

1385 (Powelson & Riegert, 1999), p. 13.

support of most contemporary Western scholars. People of this position state that Matthew and Luke both relied on the Gospel of Mark and another document which reads more like a ‘Gospel of Sayings’ of Jesus. It is known by the letter Q, which is an abbreviation for the German term *quelle* (source).¹³⁸⁶ The two-source hypothesis appeared after important pieces of research conducted by J. J. Griesbach¹³⁸⁷, after whom the Griesbach hypothesis (which deals with revealing the interrelationship between the first three Gospels) is named, and the investigations by Gottlob Christian Storr¹³⁸⁸, who proved that Mark—not Matthew—is the oldest of the Four Gospels. Christian Hermann Weisse¹³⁸⁹ is considered the father of the two source hypothesis. He set out in detail the position relating to Matthew and Luke’s reliance on Mark and Sayings.

Marcus Borg believes that Q was written in the first half of the 1st century, two decades after the (alleged) murder of Jesus. As such, it was present before the Four Gospels of the New Testament. According to Borg, the Gospel of Mark was written around the year 70. As for Matthew and Luke, they were written one or two decades after, whereas John was written in the final decade of the 1st century. In his book *History and Theology of the New Testament Writings*, Udo Schnelle¹³⁹⁰ concurs with Marcus Borg, stating, ‘The Sayings Source (Q) was composed before the destruction of the temple, since the sayings against Jerusalem and the temple in Luke 13.34-35Q do not presuppose any military events. A more precise determination of the

1386 The position affirming the historical existence of Q as source material for these Gospels is not confined to those who adopt the two-source hypothesis. Rather, Q has been relied upon to also explain the three-source and four-source hypotheses. However, Q remains more connected to the two-source hypothesis as it was first proposed for it, and also because of its status as the most widely accepted hypothesis according to Western scholars.

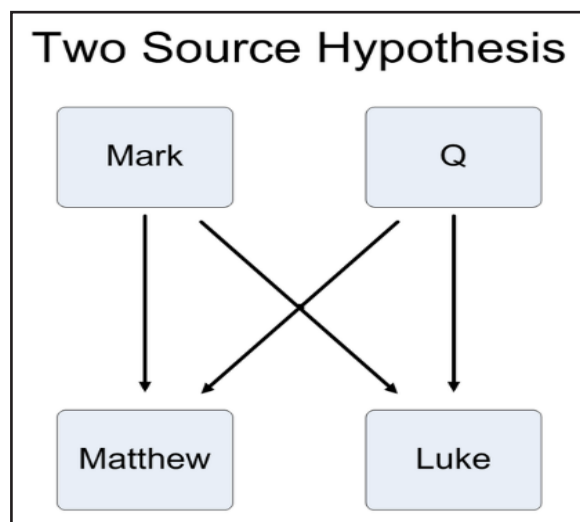
1387 Johann Jakob Greisbach (1745-1812). German scholar and one of the most prominent figures of textual criticism of the New Testament. He released his critical edition of the New Testament in three volumes in 1774 and 1775.

1388 Gottlob Christian Storr (1746-1805). Conservative German theologian and philosopher. He taught at Tübingen. His works include *Dissertatio de evangeliiis arabicis* (*Dissertation on the Arabic Gospels*).

1389 Christian Hermann Weisse (1801-1866). German biblical scholar, theologian, and Protestant religious philosopher. His works include *Die Evangelienfrage in ihrem gegenwärtigen Stadium* (*The Gospel Question in its Present Stage*).

1390 Udo Schnelle (b. 1952). Professor of the New Testament at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. He was the 2014 annual President of the New Testament scholars’ research association, Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas.

time of composition (of Q) must remain hypothetical, but a few indications point to the period between 40 and 50 CE.¹³⁹¹



The two-source hypothesis

In relation to identifying the exact place where Q emerged from, Helmut Koester¹³⁹² stated in his book *Ancient Christian Gospels* that the places mentioned in Q make us believe that this source was first made in Galilee in Palestine, and as a result 'reflects the experience of a Galilean community of followers of Jesus'¹³⁹³, though he equivocated on this.

Scholars mention that the contents of Q span more than 200 topics shared across Matthew and Luke; these pieces of content have no existence in Mark. Most researchers believe that the author of Matthew was not aware of Luke, and the author of Luke was unaware of Matthew. This means that these topics were neither taken from Matthew to be placed in Luke nor were they taken from Luke to be placed in Matthew. Rather, the point of origin is from outside these two gospels, i.e., an external document, which scholars today refer to as Q.

Q occupies an eminent status within the studies of Western researchers, for the historical value it represents in allowing the understanding of

¹³⁹¹ (Schnelle, 1998), p. 186.

¹³⁹² Helmut Koester (1926-2016). German scholar who was a student of Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). He specialised in the early text of the New Testament and early Christianity studies. He was the 1991 President at the Society of Biblical Literature and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

¹³⁹³ (Koester, 1990), p. 164.

the sources of the Gospels, the stages in which they were formulated and evolved, and the nature of the intellectual, ethnic, social, and political status quo in the 1st century.¹³⁹⁴

One of the most important features of this source, which Burton L. Mack¹³⁹⁵ and others referred to as the Lost Gospel, is that it is not a narration of the life of Jesus, nor does it deal with the historical events in 1st century Palestine like the Gospels of the New Testament do. Rather, it collates the actual statements of Jesus.

Q is not a historical discussion on the man known as Jesus, who lived in the 1st century. Rather, it is a discussion on his religious school and his heavenly message. Mark Powelson and Ray Riegert said, 'Q is, after all, both a doorway into the world of ancient Christianity and a window onto the soul and spirit of Jesus.'¹³⁹⁶

After a detailed study of the content in Q, it has become clear to a number of researchers that it is possible to split this source into three parts, or three 'stages'. This underscores that the teachings ascribed to Jesus ☩ were also subject to distortion in the form of new elements being introduced to them, as is the case with the Church Gospels.

Researchers who are of the position that the content of Q evolved assert that the period of this evolution lasted for almost 35 years. The first stage, or the first part, is known as Q1; the second Q2; and the third Q3.

Burton L. Mack says that the message of Jesus was orally transmitted between the Palestinians until it was compiled into Q, around the year 50. The size of this material is around seven written pages. It contains the text that is closest to the original message of Jesus. It seems that a large amount of Jesus' sayings were lost during oral transmission period, whether by way of distortion, forgetfulness, or because they were not distinct enough for what was known in that era, which led to their neglect.

Q1 comprises of the following elements:

- Who will belong to the Kingdom of God.
- Treating others (or the Golden Rule).
- Not judging others.

1394 A group of researchers founded two scientific institutions for the deep and broad study of Q: International Q Project, and Q Project (which is part of the Society of Biblical Literature).

1395 Burton L. Mack (b. 1931). Prominent American scholar specialising in New Testament studies and the Historical Jesus. His works include *Who Wrote the New Testament?*

1396 (Powelson & Riegert, 1999), p. 30.

- Working for the Kingdom.
- Asking for God's help.
- Do not fear speaking out.
- Do not worry about food, clothing, and possessions.
- The Kingdom shall soon arrive.
- The cost of following Jesus.
- The cost of rejecting the message.

The most important aspect that differentiates the content of Q₁ is that it reveals the pivot of the message, which is revealing the relationship of man with the law and his relationship with people, i.e., monotheism of God in His Lordship, Divinity¹³⁹⁷, Names, and Attributes, and the best method of dealing with man. Q₁ comprises purely of beliefs and a suitable law. This is in addition to its message of preparing for the Kingdom of God that is to come on Earth. A number of Muslim researchers have stated that the Kingdom of God is the Islamic state that would be established by the Final Prophet ﷺ.¹³⁹⁸

During the analysis of Q, it became clear to many researchers that the nature of the message called to in this Gospel is different from what the current canonical Church Gospels are upon. As Burton L. Mack suggests, we now have an entirely new Christian world. One of the features of this world is that its affiliates no longer believe that Jesus ﷺ was a god who descended from Heaven or an ideologue who was detached from universal norms and human nature, but rather as a Prophet who rebelled against the status quo and who was pragmatic in his drive for reform. In Q, Jesus spoke of hospitality, neighbours, spouses, children, and other issues connected to the day-to-day lives of people.

In this document, you will not find any mention of Jesus's divinity, the Holy Trinity, baptism, church, the Holy Supper, original sin, salvation just by virtue of faith, that the Son of God was crucified, or any of the other fundamentals of the church of today. The Jesus of the 1st century—as represented in Q₁—is completely different from the Jesus of the New Testament and his message there.

1397 This includes His Sovereignty.

1398 See for example (Keldani, 1987), pp. 113-127.

As for Q2, it features the introduction of prophecies in the decade between 60 and 70. These additions came at a time of upheaval. It was when the First Jewish-Roman War occurred. Those who attempted to cling onto the religious call of Jesus were rejected, prevented from practising their faith, and were driven away from their Israelite families and relatives. This is why, in Q2, we find a condemnation of those who rejected Jesus's message and a warning of an upcoming punishment.

Studies on Q3 reveal more additions that were introduced around the year 75, by which time the First Jewish-Roman War had ended, resulting in the Jews being forced into exile from Palestine. In this period, the followers of Jesus are portrayed as a group that is socially detached, starting to wait patiently for glory towards the end of times. The Gospels of the New Testament emerged when Q3 was written up.

Therefore, the message of Jesus—in its earliest form and in its closest proximity to the Apostles—invited to faith, monotheism, and uprightness. These are the features of Jesus's call in the Qur'an. There is no mention of the Trinity or the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which unfortunately happens to be the heart and soul of church belief, especially in the West.

We close this part of the discussion with Burton L. Mack's assessment: 'Q challenges the New Testament account of Christian origins by offering another, more plausible account of the first forty years.'¹³⁹⁹

If one objects that the scholars disagree on the historicity of Q, our answer is that we never assumed that there was an episode of consensus on Q's authenticity. Rather, what we are saying is that a number of scholars believe in its historicity. Furthermore, this issue is not only connected to the existence of a first document, but rather to the existence of a source that predates Matthew and Luke (and predates all Four Gospels for that matter) regardless of whether it is shared across the two or not. It offers a depiction of the call of Jesus, which is in agreement with Qur'anic theology, even though this depiction was unbearable to the common Christian psyche by the 7th century during the Muhammadan Prophethood.

Testimonies to the truthfulness of the historical story of Jesus that is in the Qur'an are growing. Robert Shedinger¹⁴⁰⁰, a Biblical scholar, published *Was Jesus a Muslim?* a few years ago.¹⁴⁰¹ It explains a Messiah that is far removed from the depiction that the Church sketched for him—as someone who called people to run away from the world and to only seek

1399 (Mack, 1994), p. 238.

1400 Robert Shedinger (b. 1959). American Professor of Religion at Luther College, Iowa. He received his Doctorate in Religious Studies at Temple University, Pennsylvania.

1401 (Shedinger, 2009).

salvation for the Afterlife. Rather, according to him, Jesus was a reformer and promoter of society. With this, he is a *Muslim* in his call, because the Islamic call encourages both righteousness in this world and in the Afterlife—it does not invite people to run away from this world to focus solely on the Afterlife.

3. The Qur'an avoiding historical errors from the Bible

The Bible and those scriptures that are in its orbit, like the Talmud and the Midrashim, were the sole sources for the stories of the past Prophets. A person reading the Qur'an with a critical eye can clearly see how the Qur'anic text purposefully avoids following the historical claims of the Bible in places where it should have copied details from the Torah and the Gospel. For those who believe that the Qur'an's stories should be aligned to the stories in the Bible, the Qur'an's avoidance of those details should be somewhat unexpected.

That the Qur'an disagrees with the Torah and the Gospel in notable places has aroused befuddlement among Orientalist scholars, leading them to concoct fantastical assumptions. Had they analysed this matter with a critical eye, they would have understood that the unexpected Qur'anic choice to not copy the Bible has actual reasons, revealing the Qur'anic text's brilliance in underscoring that it is free from ever being conflated with the Torah and the Gospel. This is a new opening within the topic of the Qur'an's historical inevitability.

EASTERLY WIND IN EGYPT

The Torah describes the dream of Egypt’s ruler: ‘After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind.’¹⁴⁰²

Scholars have mentioned that the wind that blows in Egypt and dries out fruits is a southerly desert wind.¹⁴⁰³ As for easterly winds, they are in Palestine. This error reveals ignorance of the Egyptian climate on the part of the one who added this text. George Spurrell said, ‘The narrator here mentions the wind that was most destructive in Palestine; cf. Hos. 13, 15. Jon. 4, 8. Ez. 17, 10.’¹⁴⁰⁴ In his book *Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erläutert* (*A Historical and Critical Explanation of Genesis*), Peter von Bohlen said the following concerning the author of Genesis, ‘[He] is so grossly ignorant of the climate of the country, that he transfers to it without a scruple the parching east wind of Palestine.’¹⁴⁰⁵

We present here the text of Genesis 41:2-7 compared to the Qur’anic text from Sūrah Yūsuf, verse 43:

The narrative of the Torah	The Qur’anic narrative
2. when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds.	I dreamt of seven fat cows...

1402 Genesis 41:6.

1403 (Wenham, 1998).

1404 (Spurrell, 1896), p. 291.

1405 (Bohlen, 1862), p. 64.

Under the section entitled “Ignorance of Egyptian customs”, Bohlen wrote, ‘Our present inquiry has, however, less reference to the knowledge of Egypt which the Pentateuch is thus found to display, than to the blunders and inaccuracies, with reference to this country, of which it has been guilty. These latter, we shall find, not only compel us to assign a later date to its origin, but also to infer that its author was an absolute stranger to Egypt, and must have been indebted for his information to hearsay instead of observation.’

3-4. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the river-bank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.	...eaten up by seven skinny ones...
5. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: seven ears of corn, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk.	...and seven green ears of grain...
6. After them, seven other ears of corn sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind.	...and seven others dry.
7. The thin ears of corn swallowed up the seven healthy, full ears.	

The real difference between the two narratives cannot be explained away by suggesting mere coincidence. The two narrations differ in the content of the dream (or couple of dreams) over a number of issues. The Torah's dream offers a very granular breakdown of detail; the Qur'anic version does not. Note that the addition of the cows coming out of the river is not interpreted later on.

The differences in the granular details of the shared macro-level information are:

- The cows are described as ugly and beautiful. This denotes their weakness and fatness, and nothing more.
- The seven thin ears swallow the seven fat ears.

The substantive difference in the dreams consists of the following:

- The thin ears are described as scorched by the easterly wind.

Here, the Qur'an did not follow the Torah in its scientific error, even though it cited the same dream that Egypt's ruler had seen. Why would the Qur'an exclude this error and cite the rest?

USAGE OF CAMELS IN THE TIME OF JACOB ❧

The Old Testament mentions camels as a means for travel and transportation of goods. For example: 'As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.'¹⁴⁰⁶

The mention of camels as a medium of transport is a sign that they were domesticated by humans by the time of Jacob, Joseph, and Moses ❧. This claim is believed to be a historical error, and it reveals that the authorship of the Torah in its current status was done centuries after these events occurred.

It is said in the Catholic study within the marginalia of *The New American Bible*, under Genesis 12:16, which mentioned camels as a means of transportation during the time of Abraham ❧: 'Camels: domesticated camels did not come into common use in the ancient Near East until the end of the second millennium B.C. Thus the mention of camels here (24:11–64; 30:43; 31:17, 34; 32:8, 16; 37:25) is seemingly an anachronism.'¹⁴⁰⁷

This is acknowledged by the leading conservative figure in contemporary biblical archaeological studies, William Foxwell Albright¹⁴⁰⁸, who spoke on camels not being used during the era of Joseph ❧.¹⁴⁰⁹ This is despite the fact that he was known for his zeal in establishing the historicity of the events mentioned in the Old Testament.

Some researchers pinpoint the beginning of the domestication of camels to the beginning of the 3rd century, or perhaps slightly after that. According to research, camels were actually unknown to the Egyptians. In fact, they were unfamiliar to the Semites who had come to Egypt, as the Tribe of Abicha of the 12th Dynasty travelled on donkeys, not camels.¹⁴¹⁰

1406 Genesis 37:25.

1407 (Bible Gateway, 2021).

1408 William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971). Archaeologist, linguist, and Orientalist. His most important works include *The Archaeology of Palestine: From the Stone Age to Christianity*.

1409 See (Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 1953), pp. 96–102; and (Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine: From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 1940), pp. 120–196.

1410 (Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, 1998/1408 AH), 2/206.

The Qur'an does not mention camels as a means of transportation during the period of Abraham, Joseph, or Moses ﷺ. The Qur'an uses the expression *ʿir* (caravan) in its discussion on Joseph's brothers travelling to Egypt:

- 'When Yūsuf had provided them with supplies, he slipped the royal cup into his brother's bag. Then a herald cried, "O people of the caravan, you must be thieves." (Qur'an, 12:70)
- 'When the caravan departed from Egypt, their father said to those around him, "You may think I am senile, but I certainly sense the smell of Yūsuf." (Qur'an, 12:94)

In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, the definition of *ʿayr* is mentioned: 'Donkey, whether domesticated or wild.'¹⁴¹¹ For the definition of *ʿir*, it states, 'Explaining God's statement "When the caravan departed from Egypt", Abū al-Haytham said, "They were donkeys." He said, "The position of those who said *ʿir* means camels is baseless."¹⁴¹²

In *Mukhtār al-Sihāh*, it states for the definition of *ʿayr*: 'A wild donkey and the domesticated one as well.'¹⁴¹³ Ālūsī said, 'It has been said that *ʿir* is a caravan of donkeys, then it was expanded until it was used for any caravan. It appears that it is the plural of *ʿayr*... which means "donkey"...'¹⁴¹⁴

In Hebrew, the term רִיעַ (*ʿir*) means donkey: רִיעַ (√ of following; cf. Ar. عَارَ *go away, go hither and thither, escape through sprightliness*,¹⁴¹⁵ whence عَاسٍ *ass*, esp. *wild ass* De^{1b} (2), 149 Hom^{NS 121-123})¹⁴¹⁶

The word רִיעַ (*ʿir*) has been used in Isaiah to denote donkeys used to transport goods: 'yīš'u 'al ktef *ʿirīm* heilhem (...the envoys carry their riches on donkeys' backs...)'¹⁴¹⁷ The lexicographer Gesenius¹⁴¹⁸ used this passage as precedence for the Hebrew term רִיעַ to mean 'donkeys used to transport goods.'¹⁴¹⁹

1411 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH), 4/620

1412 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH), 4/620

1413 (Rāzī Z. a.-D., 1995/1415 AH), p. 194

1414 (Ālūsī, 2010/1431 AH), 13/33

1415 Translator's note: The lexicons I have come across spell this as 'sprightliness'—i.e., animation and energy in action or expression.

1416 (Brown, Driver, & Briggs, 1907), p. 746.

1417 Isaiah 30:6.

1418 Translator's note: Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius (1786-1842). German Orientalist, lexicographer, Christian Hebraist, Lutheran theologian, and Biblical scholar.

1419 (Gesenius, 1888), p. 774.

In addition, in *Sūrah Yūsuf*, the Qur'an used the word *ba'ir*. One of its meanings is donkey as per *Lisān al-ʿArab*: Ibn Barrī said, "There was a question about *ba'ir* that was raised in the sitting of Sayf al-Dawlah (Sword of the State (epithet)) Ibn Ḥamdān. The questioner was Ibn Khālawayh; the questionee was Mutanabbī. Ibn Khālawayh said, '*Ba'ir* can also mean donkey. It is a rare dialect, which I put to Mutanabbī in front of Sayf al-Dawlah. He was a megalomaniac and loved to flaunt, but confusion overcame him. I said: "*Ba'ir* in God's ﷻ statement 'And whoever brings it will be awarded an animal-load. I guarantee it' (Qur'an, 12:72) means donkey. I thus broke his sense of pride by proving that *ba'ir* in the Qur'an means donkey. This is because Jacob and the brothers of Joseph ﷻ were in the land of Canaan, where there were no camels. They would only travel on donkeys. God ﷻ said, 'And whoever brings it will be awarded an animal-load. I guarantee it', i.e., the load of a donkey.'"¹⁴²⁰

In his *Tafsīr*, Ṭabarī quotes from Mujāhid, the student of Ibn ʿAbbās ﷺ, that *ba'ir* means donkeys: 'Ibn Jurayj said, "Mujāhid said, '*Kayla ba'irin* means a donkey-load... It is a dialect...' *Himār* (donkey) in some dialects is referred to as *ba'ir*."¹⁴²¹ Muqātil ibn Sulaymān¹⁴²² said the same in his *Tafsīr*.¹⁴²³

The Hebrew counterpart to the Arabic term *ba'ir* is בעיר (*ba'ir*), which can be used for any terrestrial quadruped (*dābbah*).¹⁴²⁴ The Syriac word ܕܒܒܐ is a term for quadrupeds if used in its generic meaning¹⁴²⁵, and those animals on which goods are transported if used in its specific connotation.¹⁴²⁶ The word *ba'ir* appears to be linked to the Hebrew three-lettered word "*ba'ar* בער", which means *ra'ā* (to tend), which includes all animals without restriction. This is why the Jewish lexicographer Dāwūd ibn Abrāhām al-Fāsi¹⁴²⁷ explained the passage (*oba'ar bəšādē 'acher*) in his Hebrew-Arabic lexicon of the Torah entitled *Jāmi' al-Alfāz* (*The Collector of Words*) by saying, "*Oba'ar bəšādē 'acher*"¹⁴²⁸, i.e., he released his animals in somebody else's field...'¹⁴²⁹

1420 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH), 4/71.

1421 (Ṭabarī), 13/12.

1422 Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150 AH). From Khurasan and a resident of Merv. He took hadith from Mujāhid ibn Jabr, ʿAṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ, and others.

1423 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH), 4/71.

1424 (Gesenius, 1888), p. 149.

1425 (Ḥaddād, 2002), p. 64.

1426 (Brockelmann, 1895), p. 43.

1427 Dāwūd ibn Abrāhām al-Fāsi (or David ben Abraham al-Fasi). Grammarian and lexicographer. He was a Karaite Jew.

1428 Exodus 22:4.

1429 (Fāsi, 1936), 1/254.

What is also interesting here is that, in relation to the animals that Joseph's brothers rode on, the Torah used the Hebrew phrase *ba'ir*¹⁴³⁰ that the Qur'an uses in the story of Joseph. In other places, the Torah explicitly says that Joseph's brothers used donkeys in their travel to Egypt.¹⁴³¹

In his book *Moses and Pharaoh*, Maurice Bucaille researched the usage of *ba'ir* in Sūrah Yūsuf. He pointed out that the Orientalist Jacques Berque, in his footnotes of his French translation of the Qur'an (*Le Coran—Essai de traduction*), mentioned that *ba'ir* is a term used to denote 'any animal that carries good, but not camels'. Under the title 'Two details unnoticed by the Muslim commentators', Bucaille adds to the above by saying the following:

'These details were not noticed by the translators either until a recent period.

The first one¹⁴³² concerns the translations of the word "*baeiyr*" that appears in Sura "Joseph," verses 65 and 72: this word designates the animals bearing the burdens of corn transported by the brothers of Joseph from Egypt to Canaan. It is translated as "camel" in all the editions of the Quran that I know in French or in English. Comments in Arabic of these verses mention the same meaning. *An Essay on Translation of the Qur'an* by Professor J. Berque (op.cit. published in French in 1990) seems to me to be the first work which took note of the problem: in a footnote on page 253, the author states that "camel" would be "anachronistic," and he refers to the *Lisan* that had explained the real meaning of the word. There is here a problem for the following reasons.

When one is acquainted with the means of transport in ancient Egypt, and especially for all the long period before the Christian Era, it is quite clear—through bas-reliefs and written documents—that camels or dromedaries were never utilized at this time. Nonetheless, as is mentioned in the first part of the present work, in the narration of the story of Joseph, camels are said to have been used, as this clearly appears in the Hebrew text and the Greek text of the New Testament. Would it be possible that the Qur'an had expressed the same?

1430 Genesis 45:17: 'Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, is Pharaoh saying to Joseph..."' 'Animals' in the Hebrew source text is "*ba'ir*", as is written there: "*emor 'el 'achechā zot 'ešo, ta'ano 'et bā'irchem olecho bo'o 'aretsā kənā'an*".

(אמר אל אחיך זאת עשו טענו את בעירכם ולכו באו ארצה כנען)

1431 Genesis 42:26 and 43:18.

1432 Translator's note: The second one was mentioned under the 'King, not Pharaoh' subheading in this book.

An accurate awareness of the time when men had been able to domesticate camels was a means of dispelling any doubt, in connection with precise linguistic considerations.

Several years ago, I seized an excellent opportunity to question a specialist on the domestication of camels and dromedaries through the ages. During a visit to an encampment of Touaregs in the Hoggar (Algerian Sahara), a renowned explorer of these countries, Henri Lhote¹⁴³³, told me about his absolute certainty that they became beasts of burden only at the time of the Roman occupation of North Africa. Henri Lhote has written a book about the domestication of camels and dromedaries quoted in Part One of the present work.

What would be the exact meaning of “*baeiyr*” that appears in the Quran and is translated as “camel,” like Sheikh Hamza¹⁴³⁴ did in his work (op.cit. p. 481). Is it not strange that, referring to the beasts of burden used by the brothers of Joseph, the Qur’an used a word other than “*jamal*” that means quite usually “camel,” without any doubt? “*Jamal*” appears in two suras: in the singular in sura 7, verse 40, in the plural in sura 77, verse 33, whereas all camels are designated by the word “*ibil*” in sura 6, verse 144 and sura 88, verse 17. What might be the real meaning of “*baeiyr*” in the Qur’an? I submitted this matter before Professor J. Berque. He referred to the *Lisan* whose authority cannot be debated: the initial meaning of the word was “all that is able to bear, beast of burden, beast carrying a load” and not specifically “camel.” Therefore, “camel” is not the right translation.

The commentary about the word “camel” in the Scriptures has been completed in Part One of the present work, for “camel” is also mentioned in the Bible at the time of Isaac (the grandfather of Joseph).

Undoubtedly, in the Bible it is an anachronism for which, very likely, a copyist of the Bible was responsible after the beginning of the Christian Era, when camels had become domesticated.¹⁴³⁵ On the contrary, at the time of the Qur’anic Revelation, camels were beasts of burden having the best qualities for transport in the arid countries. Nonetheless, the beasts of burden which had been used at the time of Joseph, more than two millenniums before, were not said by the Qur’an to have been camels, as

1433 Translator’s note: Henri Lhote (1903-1991). French explorer, ethnographer, and discoverer of prehistoric cave art. He is credited with the discovery of an assembly of around 800 works of primitive art, in a remote region of Algeria, on the edge of the Sahara desert.

1434 Ḥamzah Būbakr or Hamza Boubakeur (1912-1995). Imam at the Grand Mosque of Paris. He has a French translation of the Qur’an.

1435 Κάμελος (kamelos) ‘camel’.

mentioned in the Bible. The Qur'an expressed the difference, a difference which was only enlightened by secular knowledge in modern times.¹⁴³⁶

In summary, it is correct that the Qur'an agreed with the Torah when the latter stated that Joseph's brothers used donkeys to travel. However, in spite of that, the Qur'an did not follow the Torah in its assumption that camels had been domesticated by the time of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph ﷺ, even though the Arabian environment by then had settled upon the notion that the camel is the 'ship of the desert', as during that era, deserts could never be negotiated without it.

¹⁴³⁶ (Bucaille, *Moses and Pharaoh in the Bible, Qur'an and History*, 2008), pp. 174-176.

Historical errors in the Bible

In recent centuries, many Christian apologists have understood that historical discoveries threaten the authenticity of their book. These discoveries denote a fair amount of fabrication in the narrative details within their scriptures. Christians first attempted to accuse those objecting to the Bible with heresy by way of adopting liberal ideologies that transgress against the Word of God. However, the acceptance of these studies in mainstream European universities forced them to enter the battlefield of historical narratives. By the 20th century, biblical archaeology¹⁴³⁷ appeared, though its roots are found in the 19th century. It is a science that deals with the archaeological investigation of ‘all Biblical lands, from India to Spain, and from southern Russia to southern South Arabia and to the whole history of those lands, from about 10,000 BC or even earlier, to the present time.’¹⁴³⁸ Another definition given is as follows: ‘Biblical archaeology is a special “arm-chair” variety of general archaeology which studies the discoveries of the excavators and gleans from them every fact which throws a direct, indirect, or even diffused light upon the Bible. Its central and absorbing interest is the understanding and exposition of the Scriptures. It is interested in floors, foundations, and city walls; but it is also interested in epigraphic discoveries and in every indication of what people did with their minds as well as with what they did with their hands.’¹⁴³⁹ This work meant digging and unearthing cities and civilisations mentioned in the Bible. The efforts of conservative Christians and Jews is spent therein to establish the truthfulness of the historical narratives of the Bible.

1437 Other terms for biblical archaeology have also been proposed, including ‘Syro-Palestinian archaeology’ and ‘Archaeology of the Holy Land’.

1438 This is the definition of William Albright.

Translator’s note: See (Cross, 1973), pp. 2-3.

1439 Translator’s note: (Wright, 1947), p. 7.

George Ernest Wright (1909-1974). Old Testament scholar and biblical archaeologist. He studied under William Albright at John Hopkins. He taught at Harvard.

William Foxwell Albright was at the forefront of biblical archaeology. He was the most important person defending the historicity of stories in the Bible, even though his efforts were mainly spent in the pursuit of establishing the honesty of the general depiction of the narrative, not its finer details. He was from those who acknowledged that there are historical errors in the narrative of the Torah. His impact in this field was massive. However, with the development of studies of the Bible and archaeological excavations becoming more widespread, the school of Albright collapsed and other schools became more prominent in this field.

Scriptural archaeology today has resulted in researchers being divided into two camps. The first camp is that of biblical minimalism¹⁴⁴⁰, which sees the Bible as a justification of religious visions in a historical template. This is why most of its stories—it argues—occur outside the scope of establishing historical veracity, as they are a religious construct and folklore. Its theological disposition is expressed by Thomas L. Thompson¹⁴⁴¹: ‘It is hoped that the foregoing survey of literature, while neither complete nor wholly adequate, has helped to demonstrate what I believe to be the potential which exists in the research of contemporary scholarship to understand the complex historical process by which the Israel we know from the bible acquired a dominant presence in the history of Palestine. Scholarship of the past twenty-five years has not only grown exponentially; it has also created a basis from which a critical history of Israel can develop independently of biblical scholarship. Recent publications show clearly that a history of Israel’s origins can now be written, in a relatively objective, descriptive manner, once issues relating to the historicity and relevance of later biblical tradition are bracketed. Of the three models for Israel’s origins that have traditionally been put forward: conquest, revolt, or peaceful settlement, both the conquest and revolt models seem completely out of place in any descriptive analysis of settlements and settlement patterns of Bronze and Iron Age *Palestine*, and Alt’s settlement model needs profound revision. Our growing ability to reconstruct a detailed history of Israelite origins makes it increasingly necessary to abandon the use of biblical historiography as a viable source of our own history writing. Such reconstructions are without legitimate historical foundation. We must be ready to radically

1440 Translator’s note: Also known as the Copenhagen School.

1441 Thomas L. Thompson (b. 1939). Biblical scholar and theologian. He was raised as a Catholic. His doctoral thesis, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, angered the approving supervisor Joseph Fitzmyer, resulting in his ongoing dispute with the non-liberal movement. His other works include *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*.

alter and consciously distance ourselves from all presuppositions that have been imposed on us by the biblical account.¹⁴⁴²

The other camp—which represents a minority in academic archaeology, and whose methodology is known as biblical maximalism—believes in the accuracy of the historicity of stories in the Bible. Between both camps is a middle movement, which itself is a spectrum. One of its most important figures is William J. Dever¹⁴⁴³, who is one of the most important adversaries to the movement that believes that the stories of the Old Testament are myths. In spite of that, he admits that the historicity of many details in the Bible remains an open question.¹⁴⁴⁴ What almost all academics from the three movements agree on is that the Bible is not historically inerrant.

The first camp went to extremes in making firm determinations, for it does so before having completed excavations and analyses of the unearthed material. It exaggerates by considering the silence of the vestiges of the old civilisations as evidence for the stories of the Torah being myths.¹⁴⁴⁵ The second camp, on the other hand, exaggerates in its attempt to rescue the historicity of Bible stories. The truth is between the two: The Old Testament gathers both the stories of ancients and false stories made up by earlier people. This is something acknowledged by the *New American Bible Revised Edition*. For its discussion on the forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it states, ‘Scholars usually assume that these tales had an oral prehistory, but their written form dates from 900 BC to 400 BC (the date depends on how they understand the composition of Genesis, and there is wide disagreement on this issue). Unfortunately, there is little conclusive evidence determining the date and nature of the book’s composition. Nevertheless, many anachronisms in the story indicate that it was written many centuries after the time it purports to describe.’¹⁴⁴⁶

A fair-minded person today cannot deny the impact of the mythical stories of ancient nations on the Torah. This appears in, for example, the acknowledgement by *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible* (*Ecumenical Translation of the Bible*) in its discussion on the sources of Genesis: ‘The authors of the Bible—who were narrating the beginning of the world and mankind—did not hesitate to take their information from the practices

1442 (Thompson, 2000), pp. 168-169.

1443 William G. Dever (b. 1933). American archaeologist and specialist in the biblical history of the Israelites and the Middle East. He was Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona.

1444 (Dever, 2001), p. 98.

1445 For the accumulative historical testimonies in favour of the truthfulness of the narrative details mentioned in the Old Testament, see (Kitchen K. A., 2006).

1446 (Simkins, 2016), p. 35.

of the Ancient Near East, whether directly or indirectly, and especially the practices of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Phoenician/Canaanite region. Archaeological finds from around a century ago reveal that there are many issues in which the first pages of the Book of Genesis shares with the songs, wisdoms, and liturgies specific to Sumer, Babylon, Thebes, and Ugarit. This should not come as a surprise to those who know that the lands in which Israel resided was open to external influences.¹⁴⁴⁷

As for the New Testament, the ‘Quest for the Historical Jesus’ topic and the problem in uncovering the real Jesus have previously been discussed. One of the odd features of Christian apologists is their attempt to seek assistance from archaeological discoveries to establish the veracity of the New Testament. For example, the famous apologist Craig L. Blomberg¹⁴⁴⁸ notes how ‘archaeology can demonstrate that the places mentioned in the Gospels really existed and that customs, living conditions, topography, household and workplace furniture and tools, roads, coins, buildings and numerous other “stage props” correspond to how the Gospels describe them. It can show that the names of certain characters in the Gospels are accurate, when we find inscriptional references to them elsewhere. Events and teachings ascribed to Jesus become intelligible and therefore plausible when read against everything we know about life in Palestine in the first third of the first century.’¹⁴⁴⁹

What the Christians attempt to utilise here as evidence in order to prove the historicity of the actions of Jesus and his words in the Gospels is not of any benefit to them. This is because the dispute is not about whether the Gospels were written after the 1st century, or that its authors were completely unknown in Palestine, as that accusation is not subscribed to by anyone apart from a small number of extremists who deny the historical existence of Jesus ☩.

Establishing the historicity of Jesus’s biblical story means proving the veracity of the events and statements contained therein. This is something Christian apologists have not been successful at proving. The most that archaeological investigations have proven is that the biblical story of Jesus offers a general acceptable historical framework. This is not a significant achievement, as many of the Apocryphal Gospels are equally substantiated when compared to the Canonical Gospels in this regard. Furthermore, the Gospels themselves err when depicting some of the *fundamentals* of the

1447 Quoted by (Jesuit Arabic Bible, 1986), p. 66.

1448 Craig L. Blomberg (b. 1955). Scholar in New Testament studies. He has many works in defence of Christianity, including *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*.

1449 (Blomberg, 2007), p. 327.

story of Jesus, let alone the *details*. In his discussion on the author of the Gospel of Mark found in his famous work *Introduction to the New Testament*, Kümmel¹⁴⁵⁰ states, ‘The author obviously has no personal knowledge of Palestinian geography, as the numerous geographical errors show.’¹⁴⁵¹

The Gospel authors did not go beyond collecting ancient stories. They most certainly did not engage in serious research and assessment. This is why after mentioning the difference between Matthew and Luke in relation to the story of Jesus’s childhood, W. D. Davies and E. P. Sanders¹⁴⁵² state, ‘We learn two things from these contradictions between Matthew and Luke. One is that on many points, especially about Jesus’ early life, the evangelists were ignorant. There was no possible motive for either evangelist to have altered the date of Jesus’ birth; they simply did not know, and, guided by rumour, hope or supposition, did the best they could. We shall later see other examples of ignorance, though few are as obvious.’¹⁴⁵³

Historical investigations have uncovered dozens of errors in both the Old and New Testaments. We shall suffice with mentioning just a few of them.

1450 Werner Georg Kümmel (1905-1995). German theologian.

1451 (Kümmel, 1975), p. 96.

1452 E. P. Sanders (b. 1937). Scholar specialising in studies of the New Testament and the scholarship of the historical Jesus. He is a Fellow at the British Academy.

1453 (Davies & Sanders, *Jesus: From the Jewish Point of View*, 2008), 3/622.

1. CITY OF DAN

‘When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan.’¹⁴⁵⁴

The city of Dan was founded a number of generations after Abraham . It appears only in the period of Biblical Judges.¹⁴⁵⁵ Dan himself, after whom the region was named, was born after Abraham .¹⁴⁵⁶

1454 Genesis 14:14.

1455 See Judges 18:29.

1456 See Genesis 30:6.

2. KINGS OF ISRAEL

‘These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned...’¹⁴⁵⁷

It is inferred from this passage that Genesis was written when the Israelites were ruled by their own kings. However, whereas Genesis is ascribed to Moses ⲙⲟⲩⲥ, the earliest in which it is possible to find a reference to the Kings of Israel is the time of Saul (Ṭālūt), i.e., after the era of Moses ⲙⲟⲩⲥ.¹⁴⁵⁸

1457 Genesis 36:31.

1458 (Worcester, 1901), p. 30.

3. THE ARAMEAN

‘Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away.’¹⁴⁵⁹

The footnotes of *The New American Bible* state, ‘Aramean: the earliest extra-biblical references to the Arameans date later than the time of Jacob, if Jacob is dated to the mid-second millennium; to call Laban an Aramean and to have him speak Aramaic (Jegar-sahadutha, v. 47) is an apparent anachronism.’¹⁴⁶⁰

1459 Genesis 31:20.

1460 Translator’s note: (Bible Gateway, 2021).

4. LAND OF THE HEBREWS

Joseph א said to his fellow inmate, 'I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.'¹⁴⁶¹

The intended place here is the Land of the Canaanites. This land was named the Land of the Hebrews only after Moses א.

¹⁴⁶¹ Genesis 40:15.

5. UR OF THE CHALDEANS

‘While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth.’¹⁴⁶²

‘Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.’¹⁴⁶³

On the first verse, the footnotes from *The New American Bible* state, ‘Ur of the Chaldeans: Ur was an extremely ancient city of the Sumerians (later, of the Babylonians) in southern Mesopotamia. The Greek text has “the land of the Chaldeans.” In either case, the term Chaldeans is an anachronism, because the Chaldeans were not known to history until approximately a thousand years after Abraham’s time.’¹⁴⁶⁴

1462 Genesis 11:28.

1463 Genesis 11:31.

1464 Translator’s note: (Bible Gateway, 2021).

Author’s note: I came across a copy of the same translation placing the same footnote, but with the removal of the word ‘historical error’. This footnote implicitly acknowledges the error and then attributes the passage to a writer in BC 6th century.

6. SENNACHERIB TAKES CONTROL OVER THE CITIES OF JUDAH

2 Kings reads: ‘In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.’¹⁴⁶⁵

Shortly after, it reads: ‘In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah’s reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.’¹⁴⁶⁶

The problem with these two passages is that the 3rd year of Hosea’s rule could not have been prior to 728 BC, meaning that the 14th year of Ezekiel’s rule would be around 714 BC. However, Sennacherib took control of the cities of Judah in 701 BC, i.e., 13 years after the date the Bible claimed.

The footnote on *The New American Bible* has acknowledged the historical problem of 2 Kings 18. It points out that the Christian scholars have offered a number of suggestions to solve the problem, one of which is that there was a scribal error (distortion). The footnotes of the translation conclude by stating, ‘None of the solutions has won a consensus among historians.’¹⁴⁶⁷

1465 2 Kings 18:1.

1466 2 Kings 18:13.

1467 Translator’s note: (Bible Gateway, 2021).

7. THE ERA OF JEHOIAKIM AND NEBUCHADNEZZAR

‘In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.’¹⁴⁶⁸

The 3rd year of Jehoiakim’s rule coincides with 606 BC. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar was not the King of Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 597 BC, by which time Jehoiakim had died.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Daniel 1:1.

8. THE FOUNDER OF PALMYRA

1 Kings asserts that Solomon  built Palmyra.¹⁴⁶⁹ This is an invalid assertion. Assyrian documents mention Palmyra since the days of the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser I (reigned BC 1116-1090), which is before the era of Solomon .¹⁴⁷⁰

¹⁴⁶⁹ 1 Kings 9:18.

¹⁴⁷⁰ (Mahrān, *Banū Isrāʾīl—Al-Ḥaḍārah: Al-Tawrāh wa al-Talmūd*, 1999), pp. 237-238.

9. BELSHAZZAR AND NEBUCHADNEZZAR

‘King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.’¹⁴⁷¹

The statement by the author of the Book of Daniel—that Belshazzar was king and he was the son of Nebuchadnezzar—is an obvious mistake. Neither was Belshazzar king nor was Nebuchadnezzar his father. The father of Belshazzar was King Nabonidus.

1471 Daniel 5:1-2.

10. DESTRUCTION OF THE AMALEKITES

1 Samuel states that Saul waged war on the Amalekites and killed all their people with the sword.¹⁴⁷² Unexpectedly, however, we find that the Amalekites soon became a strong people who gained many spoils of war 'from the land of the Philistines and from Judah'.¹⁴⁷³ In turn, David  waged war on them and he 'fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled'.¹⁴⁷⁴

1472 See 1 Samuel 15:7-8.

1473 1 Samuel 30:16.

1474 1 Samuel 30:17.

11. NONSENSICAL NUMBERS FOR THE DEAD

‘The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. Abijah and his troops inflicted heavy losses on them, so that there were five hundred thousand casualties among Israel’s able men.’¹⁴⁷⁵

The opinion stating that half a million Israelites—not including the women and children who were killed—in a single battle is something that no serious historian would believe, especially given that the Israelites remained thereafter.

¹⁴⁷⁵ 2 Chronicles 13:16-17.

12. AN ARMY'S OVERHYPED NUMBERS

‘Abijah went into battle with an army of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops.’¹⁴⁷⁶

This passage tells us that, centuries before Jesus, there was an army totalling 2.21 million Jews in Palestine. This is extremely problematic from a historical viewpoint, considering that we know the great army of Napoleon that waged war on Russia was made up of 500,000 soldiers. Furthermore, this number of soldiers alone would mean that the number of residents in Palestine at that time was around 10 million Jews.

¹⁴⁷⁶ 2 Chronicles 13:3.

13. THREE

‘In addition, they distributed to the males three years old or more whose names were in the genealogical records—all who would enter the temple of the Lord to perform the daily duties of their various tasks, according to their responsibilities and their divisions.’¹⁴⁷⁷

The footnotes accompanying the Catholic study of the Bible, namely *The New American* translation, read: ‘Three years of age: this may be a textual error for “thirty years.” According to Nm 4:3, 23, 30, men of the priestly clans served from the ages of thirty to fifty.’¹⁴⁷⁸

The fact is that this number is an error from the original scribe; the manuscripts do not attest to any error on the part of any copyist.

1477 2 Chronicles 31:16.

1478 (Bible Gateway, 2021).

14. WHEN JESUS WAS BORN

Matthew tells us that Jesus was born in the reign of King Herod.¹⁴⁷⁹ Yet, his reign had come to an end 4 B.C. On the other hand, Luke says that Jesus was born during the era of Quirinius, Governor of Syria, at the time when he undertook the census.¹⁴⁸⁰ It is known that this census, as the historians state, was conducted in the year 7 A.D.

The Catholic scholar Raymond Brown comments on this by saying, ‘There are formidable historical difficulties about every facet of Luke’s description and dating of the Quirinius census, and most critical scholars acknowledge a confusion and misdating on Luke’s part.’¹⁴⁸¹ Even though Robert H. Stein¹⁴⁸² insisted that Luke was a trustworthy historian, he concluded that there is still no solution to this problem.¹⁴⁸³

1479 See Matthew 2:1.

1480 See Luke 2:2.

1481 (Brown R. E., *An Adult Christ at Christmas*, 1988), p. 17.

1482 Robert H. Stein (b. 1935). Professor of Interpretation of the New Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is one of the foremost specialists in the Synoptic Gospels.

1483 (Stein, 1996), p. 52-55.

15. AN IMAGINARY MASSACRE

‘When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.’¹⁴⁸⁴

There is no documentation for this horrific massacre that is ascribed to Herod.¹⁴⁸⁵ This is despite the fact that the famous 1st century historian, Josephus¹⁴⁸⁶, spoke about the crimes of Herod in his book *Antiquities of the Jews*. It is clear that the author of the Gospel of Matthew wanted to make the childhood story of Jesus ☩ similar to the childhood story of Moses ☩ by including the story of Pharaoh’s murder of the Israelite children.¹⁴⁸⁷

¹⁴⁸⁴ Matthew 2:16.

¹⁴⁸⁵ (Harpur, 2005), p. 126.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Translator’s note: Titus Flavius Josephus (37-c. 100). Romano-Jewish historian, best known for writing *The Jewish War*. He initially fought the Romans but then defected and gained Roman citizenship. He is considered an authority for events in the 1st century.

¹⁴⁸⁷ See Exodus 1:22.

16. A REBELLION DATED BEFORE IT OCCURRED

The author of Acts mentions that in his lecture to warn the Jewish masses, Gamaliel said, ‘Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.’¹⁴⁸⁸

Gamaliel stood to discuss the failed Messianic rebellions. The first example he mentioned was the rebellion of Theudas, which had occurred a while back and was suppressed. Yet, there is no known Jewish rebellion led by a man called Theudas other than what the 1st century historian Josephus mentioned in his book *Antiquities of the Jews*.¹⁴⁸⁹ This alleged uprising was organised by a man named Theudas, who claimed Prophethood and called people to come to him with all their belongings to the Jordan River. The Romans arrested his followers and he was beheaded. However, the lecture of Gamaliel—as is assumed—was before the year 37, whereas Josephus mentioned that the rebellion of Theudas occurred around the year 45.¹⁴⁹⁰

1488 Acts 5:36.

1489 (Josephus), 20/97-99.

1490 (Feldman, 1996), p. 335.

17. THE DARKNESS THAT DID NOT APPEAR TO ANYBODY

The author of the Gospel of Matthew mentioned that when Jesus was on the crucifix, 'From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land.'¹⁴⁹¹

The text reads 'all the land' *πασαν την γην* (*pasan tēn gēn*). However, lands neighbouring Palestine did not mention this darkness that had remained for three hours. If it is said that 'all the land' means only Palestine or Jerusalem, this story would still be problematic as this odd darkness was not reported by any Palestinian historian from the 1st century.

¹⁴⁹¹ Matthew 27:45.

18. AN UNFAMILIAR ROMAN CUSTOM

Regarding the custom of releasing prisoners—‘Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested’¹⁴⁹²—Bishop John Shelby Spong¹⁴⁹³ said, ‘The details of this execution may well lack literal historicity. Surely the story about Pilate releasing a notable prisoner named Barabbas, which means the son of God (Bar = son, Abba = God as Father), was legendary.’¹⁴⁹⁴

This is a claim by the author of the Gospel of Mark, which has no support from the history of the 1st century Roman Empire. That is why most of the scholars reject its historicity, as related by the New Testament scholar Marcus Borg.¹⁴⁹⁵

1492 Mark 15:6.

1493 John Shelby Spong (1931–2021). Theologian and retired bishop in the American Episcopal Church. His works include *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile*.

1494 (Spong, 2004), p. 240.

1495 (Borg, 2009), p. 104.

19. DETAILS OF JESUS'S TRIAL

On the details of Jesus's trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin court¹⁴⁹⁶, Nineham made these comments: 'If the significance in the Gospel of 14:53-72 is thus clear, the question of its *historicity* has been, and still is, the subject of lively debate. The main reasons for doubting its historicity must be briefly set out and discussed.

1. St Mark describes the trial as taking place before "the council" (synēdriōn, v. 55), i.e. the *Sanhedrin*, an official body of seventy-one members, under the presidency of the high priest, which was the supreme judicial authority in Israel. The Tract Sanhedrin in the Mishnah sets out fully the procedure adopted in trials before this body, and a comparison of what it says with St Mark's account of the trial of Jesus reveals numerous discrepancies, many of them very considerable...
2. But would members of the Sanhedrin have met, even for such informal proceedings, in the middle of Passover night or, for that matter, if St Mark's chronology of the Passion week is inaccurate, in the middle of a night just before the Passover? Certainly...a formal trial at such a time seems unthinkable...and most scholars are very doubtful about the holding of even an informal investigation at such a time...¹⁴⁹⁷

1496 See Mark 14:53-65.

1497 (Nineham, *The Gospel of St Mark*, 1977), pp. 400-401.

20. STORY OF THE ZOMBIES

Concerning the moment when Jesus died on the cross, the Bible reads: 'At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The Earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.'¹⁴⁹⁸

This story is baseless. No historian has attested to the authenticity of this odd story, which suggests that many dead corpses broke out of their graves in Palestine. In 2011, the historicity of this story caused a major rift between the greatest Christian apologists in America. This was on the backdrop of Michael Licona's¹⁴⁹⁹ large book in defence of the Resurrection of Jesus¹⁵⁰⁰, which states that the story of the Resurrection of the Saints¹⁵⁰¹ can only be accepted allegorically, not literally.¹⁵⁰² He was severely attacked by Norman Geisler¹⁵⁰³ and Albert Mohler¹⁵⁰⁴, with the two accusing him of casting doubts on the inerrancy of the Bible. This is because what Licona said was a tacit acknowledgement of the nonsensical nature of this story, even though the author of the Gospel of Matthew clearly assumed its historicity. As a result,

1498 Matthew 27:51-53.

1499 Michael R. Licona (b. 1961). Christian apologist and specialist in New Testament studies and the resurrection of Jesus. He has participated in a number of debates with atheists and Muslims on Jesus's divinity and resurrection.

1500 Translator's note: *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*.

1501 Translator's note: The story is in Matthew 27:51-53: 'At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The Earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.'

1502 (Licona, 2011).

1503 Translator's note: Norman Leo Geisler (1932-2019). American Christian theologian and philosopher. He contributed to Christian apologetics, systematic theology, history of philosophy, philosophy of religion, Calvinism, Roman Catholicism, Biblical inerrancy, Bible difficulties, and ethics. His students include William Lane Craig, Ravi Zacharias, and Phil Fernandez. His writings include a number of encyclopaedic and lexical works in defence of Christianity and the Bible.

1504 Albert Mohler (b. 1959). Famous American theologian, Professor in Christian Theology, and President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Licona tendered his resignation to the Southern Evangelical Seminary in North Carolina, where he used to teach. The echoes of this dispute continue to reverberate among Christian apologists.

Summary

- Historical investigation gives credence to the notion that the Qur'an is Revelation from God. The is the case for a number of reasons.
 - ♦ It mentions information that was never offered before.
 - ♦ It rectified the historical errors in the Bible.
 - ♦ The Qur'an avoids mentioning the historical errors in the Bible, though it concurred with it in other details of the same stories.
- The historical errors in the Bible are many, revealing the weakness of its historical credibility.

Further reading

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SECTION 11

Scientific Inimitability in the Qur'an

﴿We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this Qur'an is the truth.﴾

(Qur'an, 41:53)

The Qur'an deals with many subjects of interest to science, far more in fact than the Bible. There is no comparison between the limited number of Biblical statements which lead to a confrontation with science, and the profusion of subjects mentioned in the Qur'an that are of a scientific nature. None of the latter can be contested from a scientific point of view.

(Maurice Bucaille, French researcher and surgeon)



The Qur'an: An original document? Or a case of borrowing from the People of the Book?

During the era of the Muhammadan Prophethood, Arabia was not part of the evolving scientific developments that the Roman and Persian Empires were known for. This was the result of the absence of any information exchange—in the form of teaching and education—between the Arabs and the world powers. This is in addition to the primitiveness of desert life that relied upon local business, herding camels, harvesting and growing date palm trees, and the pagan belief that the idol gods were the ones who brought about greenery, health, and prosperity, without any fundamental role played by the laws of the universe. They interpreted universal phenomena in both man and nature by suggesting these events occurred through the direct intervention of these idol gods in the form of their anger or pleasure.

In addition to their primitive ways of thinking, the intellectual environment that was predominant in urban areas neighbouring Makkah relied upon two fundamental sources:

- i. The Greek intellectual tradition, as represented in the Aristotelian intellectual tradition of medicine, anatomy, and meteorology.
- ii. The intellectual tradition of the Torah, which was represented by Christians. This was principally in astronomy, which conflicted with the tradition of the Greeks and gained dominance in the Christian scientific environment, thanks to the clarity of the Holy Scriptures denoting that. This led to many Hellenistic beliefs that were predominant in the Roman Empire—prior to its adoption of Christianity—dying out in Arabia. Likewise, the influence of the Torah's metanarrative on the Jewish oral tradition is apparent in the scientific details of the Talmud. This is a vast area and comprises of astronomical, biological, medicinal, anatomical, and botanical lines of research. However, in Arabian lands, the Jews were a detached

minority that did not have much influence over the surrounding pagan environment.

In such circumstances, if the assumption is that the Qur'an took from the scriptures of Jews and Christians, then logic would dictate that the book of Muhammad ﷺ would not have any issue in copying their beliefs, so long as they did not disagree with what the pagan Arabs in the desert environment believed in. However, when analysing what is in the Qur'an, it becomes clear that the Qur'an clearly or implicitly disagrees with many of the incorrect scientific assumptions in the Bible.

Is there scientific inimitability in the Qur'an?

The majority of Muslim scholars today are of the opinion that the Qur'an comprises of scientific information that someone like the Prophet of Islam would not have known without Revelation. This is because these scientific pieces of information were not known in his era; or, at the very least, their scientific plausibility had not been considered possible during his time. Some scholars are of the view that it is not proper to attribute any scientific miracle to the Qur'an, for the reasons we outline in the points below, each of which we will follow up with a counter-response.

- 'The Qur'an is not a book of science; it is a book of guidance.'
 - ♦ No intelligent person would deny that the Qur'an is a book of guidance, and that it is not a book on geology, astronomy, or anatomy. Yet, this does not prevent the existence of scientific points in the Qur'an that would denote its divinity. These points are very few in number and do not cast the Qur'an outside its core message that is represented in explaining the reality of this world and the Hereafter, and that man is obligated to pursue the path of the righteous.
- 'The position of scientific inimitability in the Qur'an would mean that the way in which the Companions understood the Book of God was incorrect, as they were not guided to mentioning those things that the advocates of scientific inimitability currently claim.'
 - ♦ Scholars are in agreement that the Qur'an is a book whose wonders are never-ending.¹⁵⁰⁵ They continue to write books of exegesis

¹⁵⁰⁵ In his *Sunan*, Tirmidhi narrated the following (hadith no. 2906): 'In Allah's Book is news for what happened before you, information about what will come after you, and judgement for affairs between you. It is the criterion without jest. Any oppressor who abandons it will be crushed by Allah. Anyone who seeks guidance

as well as all other forms of writings pertaining to the Qur'anic sciences in order to uncover its treasures. The position that the understanding of the Companions is evidence does not render the information discovered by following generations redundant, especially given the fact that these later exegeses simply broaden the known meanings of the Qur'an, not that the understanding of the predecessors was incorrect. From the statements of the predecessors in this regard is that of Bishr ibn al-Sirri: 'A verse is like a date—whenever you chew it, you derive its sweetness.' The Qur'an itself states, 'We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this Qur'an is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a Witness over all things?' (Qur'an, 41:53) Thus, observing the self and the horizons of the world is the gateway to acquiring the belief that the Qur'an is the truth.

- 'The Qur'an spoke to the Companions according to the standards of knowledge they were familiar with. Any other position is harmful to the wisdom of the Qur'anic text.'
- ◆ The Qur'an addresses the entire *Ummah*, not just the Companions. It is not a book that was written in accordance with the norms of the time—it is a book that simply guides to the truth. The Qur'an carries reports that cannot be merely explained away by the culture of the time, like its discussion on the gaseous origins of the universe. This would have been something that neither the Companions nor the people around them would have been fully appreciative of—from a scientific angle—when the Qur'an was revealed.
- 'Books and writings in the field of the scientific inimitability of the Qur'an are either affectacious in their understanding of the Qur'anic texts, or carry scientific claims that scholars of the natural sciences would deny.'

from other than it will be led astray by Allah. It is the firm rope of Allah. It is the wise remembrance. It is the straight path. It is that which neither predilections can distort, nor can tongues twist, nor can the scholars have enough of it, nor does it become dull by excessive recitation, nor do its wonders end.'

Tirmidhī said, 'This is a *gharīb* hadith—we do not know it except from this route. Its chain is unknown, and there is some discussion about Ḥārith (al-A'war).'

However, by consensus of the scholars, the meaning of the narration is correct.

- ◆ No fair-minded researcher would deny that studies of the Qur'an's scientific inimitability have been somewhat subjected to affectations attitudes. But this is also observed in some linguistic, legal, and pastoral forms of Qur'anic exegesis. What the obligation of scholars should be is to correct the narrative when it strays away from the path of knowledge, not to deny these forms of exegesis altogether just because of cases of improper hermeneutical application therein.

The most judicious way of dealing with the issue of scientific inimitability is to let the Qur'an speak for itself, and to not make ourselves custodians over what it means. Thus, when the Qur'an mentions something about science, and it is not in line with the information that was prevalent in centuries gone by and only later on had its assertions confirmed by scientific modes of inquiry, we must then admit that it is a miracle.

A necessary adjustment to the meaning of the term 'scientific inimitability'

The classical definition of scientific inimitability is that 'this sacred book precedes everything else in pointing out a number of facts and phenomena within the universe, which the acquired sciences gained the understanding of only centuries after the Qur'an was revealed.'¹⁵⁰⁶

This definition is grossly restrictive, for it does not take into consideration the nature of Qur'anic reports in the first environment it was placed in. Being of the position that the Qur'an has scientific miracles does not necessitate that the information contained therein is unprecedented. Rather, there are three ways through which scientific inimitability for the Qur'an can be established. Here they are in order of strength:

- i. The Qur'an preceded everything else in mentioning that piece of scientific information. There is no objection to this.
- ii. The scientific information in the Qur'an was an aberrance for its first environment, in which the typical person hearing it would automatically believe it to be odd even if a few people believed in it. Or it was not familiar or well known within the Arabian Peninsula, even if it was well known outside of it.

The angle of inimitability here is that the Qur'an sided with what was rejected and disregarded. The default in someone falsely claiming Prophethood is that he agrees with the scientific information of his time and does not go against it. This is especially considering the fact that the Prophet's religious call has no connection or reason for setting out a new conceptualisation for universal laws.

- iii. The scientific information was well known; however, it was a source of great dispute among the cultures—Jewish, Christian, and Greek—

¹⁵⁰⁶ (Naggar, 2006), p. 86.

that exerted influence in the Arabian environment. The angle of inimitability here is that the Qur'an agrees with the truth in all scientific issues that were subject to differences of opinion during that period.

The way to assess the scientific inimitability of the Qur'an is by analysing the scientific narratives it laid out that went against the Christian, Jewish, and Greek scientific cultures of the day. This was in the form of a) completely opposing what was well known back then, b) agreeing with positions that were considered isolated and rejected, or c) attesting to the truth that had not yet been settled as fact.

In the following discussion, we shall present scientific information from the Qur'an that is clear in wording and meaning. The angle of inimitability should become clear when reading the verses in the context of the 7th century, and especially in comparison with the scientific claims made by the People of the Book during that time.

1. Correcting scientific errors

The Qur'an comprises of scientific passages that went against the scientific information that was agreed upon during the Prophethood era. Some of that scientific material was taken from the texts of the Torah and the Gospel. Selected pieces of scientific information that were prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula can be summarised as follows.

THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

In ancient civilisations, discussions on the origin of the universe were replete with myths and superstitions, such that the first events in cosmogony¹⁵⁰⁷ are full of apocalyptic events associated with the attacks and crimes perpetrated by gods against each other. Such narratives reflect a primitive understanding of the creation of bodies. In spite of the pitfalls involved, the Qur'an still entered the discussion on cosmogony. It thus opened up the scope for people to assess the truthfulness of its assertions.¹⁵⁰⁸ It put itself up to a difficult test for a number of reasons:

- We know what the dominant scientific culture vis-à-vis the universe in the 7th century was.
- There was a clearly incorrect and corrupt understanding of science in this field, which would have otherwise stopped the conflation of truth with falsehood.
- There are huge successes today associated with cosmology, thus allowing us the opportunity to discern truth from falsehood.

A person assessing cosmogony would be made to observe the miracle of the Qur'an in the following issues.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Ancient civilisations and their holy scriptures used to be of the view that the universe is pre-eternal. Cosmogony here means the first events in the universe that shaped existence, not matter coming into existence.

¹⁵⁰⁸ After knowing of the Qur'an's divineness, it could be evidence for assertions made in science, given that it is the word of the Originator of the universe and its laws.

Is the origin of the universe water or fire?

In most ancient civilisations, the predominant belief was that the origin of the universe was water. This is the Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian conceptualisation on the origins of the universe. It is also the position of some great Hellenistic philosophers like Thales¹⁵⁰⁹ and Anaximander^{1510, 1511}. This is also the belief adopted by Christians as per the Bible: ‘But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the Earth was formed out of water and by water ὕδατος ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι’ (hydatos ex hydatos kai di).’¹⁵¹²

The aquatic basis of the universe is clearly articulated in the Bible. A number of conservative Christians today have attempted to support this understanding, which has been discredited by science. Among those figures is the physicist Russell Humphreys¹⁵¹³ in his book *Starlight and Time: Solving the Puzzle of Distant Starlight in a Young Universe* (1996).

What is surprising is that the Qur’an selected a position that went against the ancient myth, for it stated that the heaven was ‘smoke’. God ﷻ said, ‘Then He turned towards the heaven when it was still like smoke, saying to it and to the Earth, “Submit, willingly or unwillingly.” They both responded, “We submit willingly.”’ (Qur’an, 41:11)

The smoke referred to here is the same as the one that emanates from fire as we know it today, which is what Arabs before Prophethood also understood it to be.

1509 Thales (BC circa 624-546). Mathematician and astronomer. He is considered one of the greatest Ancient Greek intellectuals. Socrates considered him the first Greek philosopher. Thales’s theorem is named after him.

1510 Anaximander (BC circa 610-546). Philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician. He was a student of Thales. He is the first person—whom we are aware of—who applied scientific reasoning to natural phenomena. His works include *On Nature* (Περὶ φύσεως).

1511 (Tsumura, 1989), p. 143.

1512 2 Peter 3:5.

1513 Russell Humphreys (b. 1942). American physicist. He is an advocate for a literal interpretation of the Torah, a young Earth creationist (i.e., that the Earth and the universe are only 6000 years old), and an active member of Creation Ministries International, an American society for Young Earth creationism.

The least that can be said of the Qur'an here is that it is wondrous. It goes directly against what was known for that era. It asserts that the origin of the universe is fire, not water.

Why would the Qur'an, allegedly attributed to Muhammad ﷺ (and not God ﷻ), not follow the scientific culture of its time? This is particularly considering the fact that the Prophet ﷺ wanted to attract the People of the Book to his religious call and had already concurred with them in many of their historical and religious stories without any issue.

You will not find an answer to that except in the testimony of contemporary science, which states that our universe came into existence after a superheated explosion, known in scientific parlance as the Big Bang. In the words of the physicist Francis P. Xavier¹⁵¹⁴: 'Today most of the physicists and cosmologists agree that the universe might have evolved from a fiery ball of matter with an initial explosion (Big Bang) and ever since the universe has been expanding outward.'¹⁵¹⁵ The origin of the universe is therefore an explosion, followed by smoke.

Professor Yoshihide Kozai¹⁵¹⁶ said, 'I am very much impressed by finding true astronomical facts in the Qur'an. Modern astronomers have been studying very small pieces of the universe. We have concentrated our efforts in understanding a very small part. By using telescopes, we can see only very few parts of the sky without considering the whole universe. So, by reading the Qur'an and by answering the questions, I think I can find my future way for investigating the universe.'¹⁵¹⁷

1514 Francis P. Xavier (b. 1952). Physicist at Loyola College, Chennai.

1515 (Xavier, 2006), p. 94.

1516 Translator's note: Yoshihide Kozai (1928-2018). Japanese astronomer.

1517 (Dr. Yoshihide Kozai's comments about the Holy Koran).

THE ILLUMINATING MOON

God ﷻ said, ‘We made the day and night as two signs. So We made the sign of the night devoid of light, and We made the sign of the day bright, so that you may seek the bounty of your Lord and know the number of years and calculation of time. And We have explained everything in detail.’ (Qur’an, 17:12)

Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ said, ‘The Moon used to illuminate like the Sun does. The Moon is the sign of the night; the Sun is the sign of the day, “So We made the sign of the night devoid of light” i.e., the darkness that is in the Moon.’¹⁵¹⁸

Scientists today agree that the age of the Moon is the same as the age of the Earth—4.5 billion years. Most scholars are of the position that, in the beginning, the Moon had a heated surface. The geoscientist Doug MacDougall¹⁵¹⁹ said, ‘One of the earliest and most important findings from the study of rocks brought back by the Apollo astronauts was that the Moon was molten, quite literally an ocean of magma. Rocks from the Moon’s ancient highland areas, which are the remnants of the crust formed as the magma ocean cooled and crystallized, have been extensively probed for any light they might shed on the Moon’s earliest history.’¹⁵²⁰

‘Alī ؓ, the fourth Caliph, was asked about the dark areas on the Moon. He said, ‘That is the sign of the night that was removed.’¹⁵²¹ Scientists today state that the dark spots of the Moon are the remnants of those regions that were heated with lava, and that they are made from basalt rock that cooled as molten lava on the Moon cooled. This scientific discovery attests to the interpretation of ‘Alī ؓ being correct, which he adopted from Qur’an, 17:12¹⁵²², as is apparent. When Galileo saw these dark spots through the

¹⁵¹⁸ (Tabārī), 14/517.

¹⁵¹⁹ Doug MacDougall. Professor Emeritus at the University of California. He led a number of research investigations in geochemistry. His works include *Why Geology Matters: Decoding the Past, Anticipating the Future*.

¹⁵²⁰ (MacDougall, 2011), pp. 66-67.

¹⁵²¹ (Tabārī), 14/516.

¹⁵²² Translator’s note: ‘We made the day and night as two signs. So We made the sign of the night devoid of light, and We made the sign of the day perfectly bright, so that you may seek the bounty of your Lord and know the number of years and calculation of time. And We have explained everything in detail.’

telescope, he believed that they were lakes of water.¹⁵²³ Nowadays, these dark spots are still referred to as 'maria', which is from the Latin for 'seas'.¹⁵²⁴



*Moon formation around 4.5 billion years ago*¹⁵²⁵

1523 (Moché, 2009), p. 264.

1524 (Bely, Christian, & Roy, 2010), p. 97.

1525 (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 'Evolution of the Moon', 2012).

The video in the link (see bibliography) has been widely circulated in the West for being a public relations (PR) and a scientific feat. For example, see (Waugh, 2012).

THE END OF THE SUN

The Qur'an contains a number of verses informing us about the end of the celestial bodies, especially the Sun. These verses are in agreement with what science has concluded with regard to how they will perish. Even though this Qur'anic passage is about eschatology, it is at the same time related to the end of the lives of these celestial bodies. What can be observed here is that modern science is in agreement with the Qur'an in two issues: a) the accuracy of the Qur'anic description of celestial matters, and b) the disagreement of the Qur'an with the Bible in most aspects of this theme, for the Qur'an offers a groundbreaking piece of scientific data while at the same time not following the Bible in its incorrect assertions.

THE SHAPE OF THE SUN IN THE FIRST STAGES OF ITS DEATH

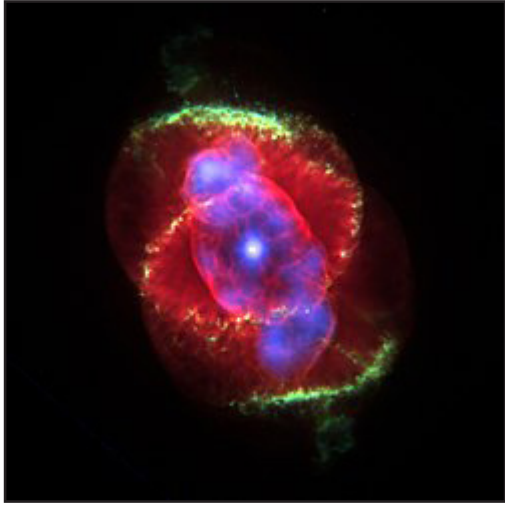
Scientists took a picture of what is now known as the Cat's Eye Nebula. It is a nebula made of a dying star, and offers a picture of how our Sun will be in its final stages. Scientists say that the end of this star offers a glimpse into how our Sun will end.¹⁵²⁶ The picture suggests an image with a complexion of rose red. In the interpretation of the verse 'How horrible will it be when the heavens will split apart, becoming rose-red like burnt oil' (Qur'an, 55:37), the ancients said that it is a red rose. Qatādah (d. 736 CE) said, 'It is green today; its colour on that day will be red.' Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) said, 'He Whose speech is Most High says, "When the heaven split asunder", that is the Day of Resurrection. Its colour will be that of a horse of reddish complexion like a rose. Hermeneuts have said similar to what we have stated.'¹⁵²⁷

The ancients differed over the term *dihān*. Ṭabarī said, 'Hermeneuts differed over the meaning of *ka al-dihān*. Some said it means "like bright red oil". Others said it means "it will become a rose-like colour, like tanned leather". They said, "*Dihān* is plural, the singular form of which is *duhn*."¹⁵²⁸ Both descriptions are present in the Cat's Eye Nebula. When stars explode in the sky, the sky's complexion becomes like roses of an oily red colour.

1526 (Clements, 2015), p. 101.

1527 (Ṭabarī), 22/226-227.

1528 (Ṭabarī), 22/228.



Cat's Eye Nebula

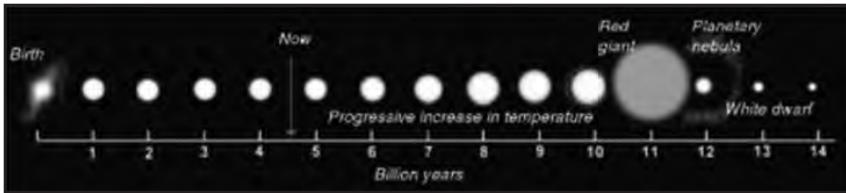
THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE SUN AND THE MOON

Scientists state that the Sun will expand to become a red giant, just as hydrogen becomes helium by way of nuclear fusion. At that point, the Sun will have swallowed up Mercury and Venus. Scientists believe that there is a possibility that the Sun will also engulf the Moon and Earth.¹⁵²⁹ If this is correct, it would be the interpretation of God's explicit statement: 'When the sight is stunned, and the Moon is dimmed, and the Sun and the Moon are brought together...' (Qur'an, 75:7-9)

¹⁵²⁹ (Weiner, 1986).

SHRINKAGE OF THE SUN

The Sun will end up becoming what is known as a white dwarf, collapsing into itself.¹⁵³⁰ This is aligned to the discussion of the Qur'an on the rolling up of the Sun: 'When the Sun is rolled up...' (Qur'an, 81:1) Ṭabarī said, '*Takwīr* in the language of the Arabs is to gather parts of a thing together, like *takwīr* of a turban, which is to wrap it around the head...likewise His statement "When the Sun is rolled up (*kuwwirat*)..." (Qur'an, 81:1) means for it to be "gathered up, rolled up, and thrown away", so when He does that to it, its light would be extinguished.'¹⁵³¹



*Timeline of the Sun*¹⁵³²

¹⁵³⁰ (Clements, 2015), p. 101.

¹⁵³¹ (Ṭabarī), 24/131.

¹⁵³² (Bely, Christian, & Roy, 2010), p. 41.

THE SUN FALLING DARK

The Qur'an states that the Sun will lose its self-illuminating capability and its light will be extinguished:

- 'When the Sun is put out...' (Qur'an, 81:1)
- '...and when the stars fall down...' (Qur'an, 81:2)

This corresponds to what science states about the Sun turning into a black dwarf without any energy after the coolness it will experience as a white dwarf.¹⁵³³

The Bible agrees with the Qur'an in that the Sun will lose its light by turning black. However, it adds that the Moon's colour will change to a dark red shade like blood, as opposed to the darkness of the Sun. This is scientifically incorrect:

- 'The Sun will be turned to darkness and the Moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'¹⁵³⁴
- 'I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The Sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole Moon turned blood red...'¹⁵³⁵

1533 (Coles, 1999), p. 31.

1534 Joel 2:31.

1535 Revelation 6:12.

SPHERICITY OF THE EARTH

The Bible contains many passages that, *in toto*, denote the belief of the Earth being flat, and that it has four corners, edges, and end points.

- The following are passages in the Bible which indicate that the Earth is flat:
 - ♦ ‘Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.’¹⁵³⁶ The devil took Jesus to a high mountain¹⁵³⁷ whose summit overlooks the entire Earth. Scientifically, this is impossible unless the Earth is flat. Moreover, note how the phrase ‘very high’ ὑψηλὸν λίαν (hypselon lian) indicates that the highness here is physical and literal.
 - ♦ “These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the Earth.”¹⁵³⁸ In this vision, there is mention of a tree in the centre of the Earth, and that it overlooks the entire Earth—up to its edges—due to its tall nature. This is not a vision or a dream—it is in fact a reflection of how the author of the Book of Daniel believed the Earth to be.

¹⁵³⁶ Matthew 4:8.

¹⁵³⁷ It seems that the author of Luke picked up on the odd nature of what the author of Matthew placed in his Gospel, i.e., a mountain overseeing the whole world. This is why the former removed any mention of a mountain and sufficed by saying that Jesus was ‘led up’ ἀναγαγὼν (anagagōn). However, he could not escape the scientific error that is found in conceptualising a place overseeing the entire inhabited world.

Translator’s note: The author then says, ‘Even though Luke restricted it from “kingdoms of the world” τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου (tas basileias tou kosmou), Matthew 4:8; to “the kingdoms inhabited by man” τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης (tas basileias tēs oikoumenēs), Luke 4:5; he could still not avoid falling into the scientific error.’ However, looking at the major English translations, both verses read the same: ‘kingdoms of the world.’ So, this is a further discrepancy between the translations.

¹⁵³⁸ Daniel 4:10-11.

In his notes on Hebrews 8:1¹⁵³⁹, St Chrysostom condemned those who were of the view that the Earth is spherical: ‘Where are they who say that the heaven whirls around? Where are they who declare that it is spherical? For both of these notions are overthrown here.’¹⁵⁴⁰



*A map of the universe as is mentioned in the Bible in the Revised Standard Version translation*¹⁵⁴¹

On the other hand, there is explicit mention of the sphericity of the Earth in the Qur'an. The Prophetic tradition also denotes the same conclusion. Since the earliest centuries of Islam, Muslims have articulated a consensus on this fact. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328 CE) said, 'It is established from the Qur'an, Prophetic tradition, and the consensus of the scholars of the Ummah that the celestial bodies are round. God ﷻ said:

- "Among His signs are the day and the night, the Sun, and the Moon. Do not prostrate to the Sun or the Moon..." (Qur'an, 41:37)

¹⁵³⁹ Translator's note: 'Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven...'

¹⁵⁴⁰ (Chrysostom J., 1890), 14/433.

¹⁵⁴¹ ('Abd al-Wahhāb, *Al-Islām wa al-Adyān al-Ukhrā*), p. 213.

- “And He is the One Who created the day and the night, the Sun and the Moon—each travelling in an orbit.” (Qur’an, 21:33)
- “It is not for the Sun to catch up with the Moon, nor does the night outrun the day. Each is travelling in an orbit of their own.” (Qur’an, 36:40)

Ibn ‘Abbās said, “In orbit like a wharve...” This is how it is in the Arabic language: *falak* is anything that is round. “*Tafallaka thadyu al-jāriyati*” is said when a young lady’s bosom becomes round.

- “He wraps the night around the day, and wraps the day around the night...” (Qur’an, 39:5)

...When the Bedouin said, “We shall seek your intercession over Allah, and Allah’s intercession over you”, the Prophet ﷺ replied, “Woe to you. Allah’s intercession is not sought over anyone from His creation. Allah is greater than that, and His Throne is above the heavens like this”—making a dome out of his hands—“and it groans on account of Him like a new saddle does with its rider”. This was reported by Abū Dāwūd and others in the authority of Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im from the Prophet ﷺ. In the two *Ṣaḥīḥ* books, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah ؓ, the Prophet ﷺ said, “When you ask Allah for Paradise, ask Him for *Firdaws*, as it is the highest station in Paradise and the centre of Paradise. Its ceiling is the Throne of the Lord of Mercy.” He therefore states that *Firdaws* is the highest and central point of Paradise, and this can only happen in a circular delineation. As for a square and other figures similar to it, its middlemost part cannot be its highest, but instead it would be equal with other parts in terms of length.¹⁵⁴²

Ibn Taymiyyah ؒ was also asked about two men disputing about the nature of Heaven and Earth, and whether they are spherical bodies. One said they are spherical; the other denied this and said this was baseless. The question was which one is correct. He replied, “The heavens are round according to Muslim scholars. The consensus of Muslims has been reported by more than one of Islam’s leading scholars, like Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Ja‘far ibn al-Munādī, one of the greatest figures from the second class of the disciples of Imam Aḥmad, with around 400 works to his name. Consensus on this was also reported by Abū Muhammad Ibn Ḥazm and Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī. Scholars reported this view with familiar chains of transmission back to the Companions and the Ṭābi‘ūn. They mentioned this based on the Book of God and the tradition of His Messenger. They

1542 (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 1995), 25/193-194.

explained this in detail through proofs from Revelation, on top of the mathematical indicators that have also been brought forth to prove the same.¹⁵⁴³

Someone may object: ‘We know that there were pre-Jesus Greek scholars who adopted the position of the Earth’s sphericity, and therefore what is in the Qur’an is not a miraculous breakthrough.’ The answer to that is Aristotle and a number of leading Greek figures before him did indeed believe in the sphericity of the Earth. However, Christians and Jews did not take this position from the Greeks, but rather mocked it endlessly. There is no prominent Christian figure before the Prophethood of Muhammad who decisively stated that the Earth is spherical.¹⁵⁴⁴ The most famous position among the elders of Christianity is that the Earth is flat. It is the position of Tertullian¹⁵⁴⁵, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius¹⁵⁴⁶, St Athanasius, Bishop Diodorus of Tarsus¹⁵⁴⁷, and Severian of Gabala¹⁵⁴⁸. It is also the position of all the Syriac Fathers who had an authoritative voice within Christianity in the Arabian Peninsula. The strongest voice against the sphericity of the Earth was the Christian scholar Cosmas Indicopleustes¹⁵⁴⁹, who was from the same century in which the Prophet of Islam was born. He articulated this view in his book *Christian Topography*, where he doubled down on the notion that the Earth is flat according to the Bible.

1543 (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, 1995), 6/586.

1544 Some Church Fathers suspended judgement on this matter and refused to adopt any position.

1545 Tertullian (c. 155-220). Early Christian theologian. He was known for his defence of Christianity and his polemics against those whom he deemed as heretics. He is considered one of the major theological authorities within the traditional churches. Most figures within the Egyptian (Coptic) Orthodox Church refer to him as ‘The Knowledgeable’.

1546 Lactantius (circa 250-325). First Christian advisor appointed at the court of the Roman Emperor. In his book *Institutiones Divinae* (*The Divine Institutes*), he ridiculed the position stating that the Earth is spherical.

1547 Diodorus of Tarsus (d. circa 390). Theologian. One of the most important players at the Council of Constantinople (381). He had a great intellectual impact in his era.

1548 Severian of Gabala (380-408). Bishop of Gabala, Syria. He was from the Antiochene school of exegesis, whose interpretations were very literal.

1549 Cosmas Indicopleustes (6th century). Explorer who travelled to India on a number of occasions. He is one of the most important cartographers.



An image of the Earth according to Cosmas

The rationale for their position is that it is clearly mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments that the Earth is flat.¹⁵⁵⁰ It is therefore submitted that the Qur'an, which appeared in the 7th century, came in an environment that was either completely unaware of the Earth's sphericity or was extremely dismissive of it, as the Jews were not of this view and the Christians were totally opposed to it.

Someone may object that the Qur'an states the Earth is flat, as it has been levelled out: 'Do they not ever reflect on camels—how they were masterfully created? And the sky—how it was raised high? And the mountains—how they were firmly set up? And the Earth—how it was levelled out?' (Qur'an, 88:17-20) The reply to this objection is the following: The Earth we walk on is indeed levelled out, and were it not for that, then living on Earth would not have been pleasant. Its flatness is how it appears to us and how we walk on it. As for its sphericity, it is the description of the Earth in its entirety. Therefore, there is no contradiction. In fact, the levelling out of the Earth mentioned here is evidence in favour of sphericity. Rāzī, who died 8 centuries ago, said of this verse, 'It was levelled out for planning and preparation. It is thus a surface for one going round on it. Indeed, some people have used this verse to prove that the Earth is not round, but this is a weak position, as any sphere appears to be flat when it is massive in size.'¹⁵⁵¹

¹⁵⁵⁰ (Presutta, 2007), pp. 98-126.

¹⁵⁵¹ (Rāzī F. a.-D., *Mafātih al-Ghayb*, 1420 AH), 31/158-159.

PILLARS OF THE SKY

In the Bible, mountains are considered pillars that hold the weight of the sky dome so that it does not fall on us. This is clear as per the image that is found in the *Revised Standard Version* translation. This is the same belief that was widespread in Ancient Egyptian, Akkadian, and Greek literature.¹⁵⁵² The most important passage from the Bible that denotes this is the following: ‘The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke.’¹⁵⁵³ *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* makes a note on this passage by stating, ‘The pillars of heaven in v. 11 are the mountains supporting heaven.’¹⁵⁵⁴

In the Qur’an, we do not find any discussion on the role of mountains in holding the sky at all, even though there are plenty of verses that describe the mountains and their tasks. What we do see in the Qur’an is the negation of any material pillar holding the sky: ‘He created the heavens without pillars—as you can see—and placed firm mountains upon the Earth so it does not shake with you.’ (Qur’an, 31:10)

1552 For details, see: (Genesis 1:5-8 DAY 2, n.d.).

1553 Job 26:11.

1554 (Dunn & Rogerson, 2003), p. 348.

MOUNTAINS

The Bible sets out that the Earth is placed on mountains that carry it from beneath: ‘He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and makes them inherit a throne of honour. “For the foundations of the Earth are the Lord’s; on them he has set the world.”’¹⁵⁵⁵

When the Prophet Jonah described his drowning, he said, ‘The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the Earth beneath barred me in for ever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit.’¹⁵⁵⁶ Jonah found himself at the root¹⁵⁵⁷ of the mountain “*kətzāvīm*” (קְצָבִים) plural of “*ketzev*” (קֶצֶב). Mountains therefore are merely bumps that sit on the surface of the Earth, and it is possible for a person to see the base of the mountain from the sea, because mountains are built on water:

- ‘...who spread out the Earth upon the waters, His love endures for ever.’¹⁵⁵⁸
- ‘The Earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.’¹⁵⁵⁹

Commenting on Jonah 2:6, Julius A. Bewer¹⁵⁶⁰ said, ‘The Hebrews believed that the Earth was founded upon the subterranean ocean, Ps. 24:2, and that the ends of the mountains, the pillars of the Earth, went deep down to its foundations, cf. Ps. 18:16.’¹⁵⁶¹

The Qur’anic image of the mountains is provided in the following verses:

1555 1 Samuel 2:8.

1556 Jonah 2:5-6.

1557 The lexicographer William Gesenius defined ‘root’ in this context as ‘end.’ See (Gesenius, 1888), p. 891.

1558 Psalms 136:6.

1559 Psalms 24:1-2.

1560 Julius A. Bewer. Professor of Biblical Philology at the Union Theological Seminary, New York.

1561 (Bewer, 1912), p. 46.

- ‘Have We not made the Earth smooth like a bed? And the mountains its pegs?’ (Qur’an, 78:6-7)
- ‘Do you feel secure that the One in heaven will not cause the Earth to swallow you up as it quakes violently?’ (Qur’an, 67:16)

The following points can be made here:

1. The Qur’an describes mountains like pegs (*watid*). In Arabic, *watid* means a piece of wood that is planted in the ground so it remains stable—most of it remains underground. Therefore, *watid*—as per the lexicon *Lisān al-‘Arab*—is ‘wood that is inserted into the wall; its plural is *awtād*.’

Modern science today attests to the accuracy of this wondrous description of mountains, which came into knowledge only in later times after judicious study by specialist scientists. The geologist Simon Lamb¹⁵⁶² said, ‘One of the great geological discoveries of the 19th and early 20th centuries was that mountain ranges have deep roots, where Earth’s crust is much thicker than normal.’¹⁵⁶³

2. The default action for a peg is that it keeps itself stable; it may stabilise something else as well as a secondary action.¹⁵⁶⁴ This is why

1562 Translator’s note: Simon Lamb (b. 1958). Lecturer in Earth sciences at Oxford and documentary maker.

1563 (Lamb, Dinwiddle, & Reynolds, 2011), p. 46.

1564 From the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abī Shaybah: ‘‘Amr ibn Maymūn had a pole planted for him into the wall of the mosque. When he got tired of standing in prayer or it became hard for him, he would hold onto the pole (*watid*) for support.’ *Watid* in this narration is something solid that was placed into the wall and it stayed fixed therein. It is not to fasten something else. Anything planted in a wall or the ground is *watid*.

From *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* by Bayhaqī on the authority of Abū Rāfi‘: ‘Pharaoh planted four *awtād* (plural of *watid*) on the ground, then placed a huge rock on her stomach until she died.’

In his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Bukhārī reported from al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib ؓ in the story of the killing of Abū Rāfi‘ the Jew: ‘...When the people entered, he closed the gate and hung the keys (*aghālīq*) on a fixed peg (*watid*).’ Ibn Ḥajar said, ‘The bolt was on the door, so how could it have been put on the peg? I say that keys (*aqālīd*) are meant from it (i.e., *aghālīq*). In the language of the Arabs, *aqālīd* means *mafātīḥ* (keys).’ In both these reports, *watid* means a piece of wood planted into the ground, door, or wall. It holds the same meaning as the Hebrew term ‘*yated*’—any *yodh* letter in a Hebrew word would be mirrored by a *wāw* in Arabic when the meaning and

tent pegs primarily fasten themselves, which is the first meaning that comes to mind from the word *watid*. Scientists have discovered this fact thanks to the astronomer George Airy¹⁵⁶⁵, who explained that mountains spring up from the Earth's upper crust and stabilise themselves by entrenching their roots into the mantle; those roots correspond to their height above the Earth's crust. Scientifically, this is known as isostasy.¹⁵⁶⁶

3. The Qur'an revealed that the Earth's core carries unstable matter. God ﷻ said, 'Do you feel secure that the One in heaven will not cause the Earth to swallow you up as it quakes violently (*tamūru*)?' (Qur'an, 67:16)

The matter underneath the Earth's crust is therefore soft and molten. Had something without stability (due to its light stature) been placed in it, it would have moved around, convulsed, and not settled. Science today is unequivocal in affirming this accurate scientific description. This is because the mantle which is directly beneath the Earth's crust is described as a viscous elastic fluid that does not flow well.

On the other hand, it is understood from the Torah that the Earth was built on water, and that subterranean pillars prevent it from submerging into it. This was rejected by science, as the mantle is not flowing matter nor is it water to begin with. The mantle is a layer within the Earth that is 2886 km deep¹⁵⁶⁷, representing 84% of the entire Earth structure. Above it, the crust's thickness is no more than a few dozens of kilometres. The temperature of the portion of the mantle next to the crust is around 1500 degrees, which is markedly less than the deeper parts of the mantle. It is made up of elastic matter comprising of olivine and other similar rocks. This makes the mantle anything but water.

the other root letters are the same.

1565 George Biddell Airy (1801-1892). British mathematician, astronomer, and physicist. He served as Astronomer Royal. He developed a number of scientific theories.

1566 (Dinwiddie, Lamb, & Reynolds, 2011).

1567 (Sorokhtin & Chilingarian, 2001), p. 137.

The development of the foetus from the blood of menses

We find the following passage in the Bible: "...and in the womb of my mother I was formed flesh. In the time of ten months I was curdled together in blood, of the seed of man, and by according delight of sleep."¹⁵⁶⁸

What is meant here is that when the sperm of the man comes into contact with a woman's menstrual blood, it becomes a thick and solid solution. This is attested to by the aforementioned passage from Wisdom, which represented the medical position that was widely accepted in the environment where this book was written. This is why *The Jerusalem Translation* has a footnote on this passage, which was also later adopted by the *Jesuit Arabic Bible*: 'Primitive medicine imagined the formation of the embryo as a congealing of the mother's blood under the influence of the male element.'¹⁵⁶⁹

Tertullian gave credence to this meaning in his book *De Carne Christi* (*On the Flesh of Christ*). He said that the embryo is in fact from the menstrual blood, coagulated by the sperm of the father.¹⁵⁷⁰ In the same century, Clement of Alexandria echoed this view in his book *Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς Ἕλληνας* (*Exhortation to the Greeks*, or *Protrepticus*) where he mentioned the Aristotelian example of milk coagulating.

We read the following in the Bible, more specifically in the book of Job: 'Remember that you moulded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?'¹⁵⁷¹

This is the preferred passage according to the Church Fathers in their explanation for the development of the foetus.¹⁵⁷² Norman Habel¹⁵⁷³ summarised it to mean: 'The embryo is fashioned out of clay, the semen being poured out like milk, solidifying like cheese, being clothed in skin and flesh and finally knitted together with bones and sinews.'¹⁵⁷⁴

¹⁵⁶⁸ Wisdom 7:2.

The Book of Wisdom is included in the deuterocanonical books by the Catholic Church and the *anagignoskomena* of the Eastern Orthodox Church, whereas most Protestants consider it to be from the Apocrypha.

¹⁵⁶⁹ (The Jerusalem Bible, 1966), p. 739; (Jesuit Arabic Bible, 1986), p. 1065.

¹⁵⁷⁰ (Tertullian), 19:3.

¹⁵⁷¹ Job 10:9-11.

¹⁵⁷² See marginalia of (Roberts, Donaldson, Coxe, & Menzies, 1887), 3/538.

¹⁵⁷³ Norman Habel (b. 1932). Former professor at the University of South Australia. His works include *The Earth Bible*.

¹⁵⁷⁴ (Habel, 1985), p. 119.

Commenting on Job 10:9-11¹⁵⁷⁵, the Leviticus Rabbah—which goes back close to the era of Prophethood¹⁵⁷⁶—states, ‘The womb of the woman is always full of blood and from there menstrual blood goes forth from its source. And by the will of the Holy Blessed One, a drop [*tipah*] of white falls into it [the womb] and immediately, the embryo is created. [This may be compared] to milk that was put in a bowl. If one puts a curdling agent in it, it coagulates and stands. And if not, it moves and shakes.’¹⁵⁷⁷

This belief dominated Jewish, Christian, Greek, and Hindu medicine. The agreement was on the notion that menstrual blood is the primary component to the development of the foetus, to the extent that Muslims who wrote commentaries on Aristotle also adopted this opinion.¹⁵⁷⁸ This consensus was perhaps based on the fact that menstrual blood stops during pregnancy, leading people in those times to opine that it is the key element in the development of the foetus. John states: ‘...Which were born, not of blood [*αἱμάτων haimatōn*, bloods], nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’¹⁵⁷⁹

On the other hand, God ﷻ said:

- ‘For indeed, We created man from a drop of mixed fluids, to test him, so We made him hear and see.’ (Qur’an, 76:2)
- ‘Then He made his descendants from an extract of a humble fluid.’ (Qur’an, 32:8)
- ‘Was he not once a sperm-drop emitted? Did he then not become a clinging clot? Did He then not develop and perfect his form, producing from it both sexes, male and female?’ (Qur’an, 75:37-39)
- ‘And indeed, We created humankind from an extract of clay. Then placed each human as a sperm-drop in a secure place. Then We developed the drop into a clinging clot, then developed the clot into a lump of flesh, then developed the lump into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, then We brought it into being as a new creation. So blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.’ (Qur’an, 23:12-14)

1575 Translator’s note: ‘Remember that you moulded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?’

1576 Translator’s note: This is a 5th century Palestinian midrashic compilation.

1577 Leviticus Rabbah 14:9.

Translator’s note: Translation taken from (Kessler, 2013), p. 130.

1578 (Kottke, 1981).

1579 John 1:13 (KJV).

- ‘O humanity, if you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then know that We did create you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then developed you into a clinging clot, then a lump of flesh—fully formed or unformed...’ (Qur’an, 22:5)

These passages go against the texts of the Bible and its understanding, as well as the consensus of the time which assumed that the foetus is made of the woman’s menstrual blood and the man’s semen, or the women’s menstrual blood and the fluids from both the man and the woman. In the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition, the foetus is said to be made from only the discharge of the man and the woman. The human is made from a ‘drop of mixed fluids’, i.e., as a result of the mixing of two discharges.

What is strange is that the Judeo-Christian-Aristotelian understanding remained dominant in the scientific field in Muslim lands for centuries after the Muhammadan Prophethood. Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852 AH) said, ‘Many pathologists believe that man’s semen has no influence in the child apart from coagulation, and that it is made up only of menstrual blood. The hadiths in this area invalidate this.’¹⁵⁸⁰

The exclusion of menstrual blood as the key component of the foetus is a Qur’anic assertion that completely flew in the face of the scientific vogue of the Revelation era (namely the Bible, the Talmud, and Greek embryology). Yet, surprisingly, it is in complete agreement with scientific fact.

¹⁵⁸⁰ (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*), 11/480.

CLOUDS AS CONTAINERS AND THE WATER THEREIN

‘He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight.’¹⁵⁸¹

Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible explains this passage by stating: ‘The clouds were regarded as waterskins holding in the rain; miraculously, they did not split.’¹⁵⁸²

According to the writer of this book, clouds amass water inside them, just like a waterskin made from the hide of animals stores water. These clouds then carry the water far away without—miraculously—dropping even one drop.

This meaning is emphasised by the Jewish rabbi and figurehead, Rashi¹⁵⁸³, in his footnotes on this passage: ‘It never [split] so that its water [i.e., rain] should fall together (דחיב וימימ ולפיש’ לועמ).’

The Talmud sets out that clouds are only carriers of water, which then descends from the sky. After citing the Talmudic conceptualisation of clouds (or at least one scientific explanation of it), Abraham Cohen¹⁵⁸⁴ states: ‘The cloud was therefore conceived as only a hollow vessel, the water being poured into it from heaven.’¹⁵⁸⁵

Compared to this primitive and simple understanding of clouds, the Qur’an asserts that clouds send down water after it is formed within them: ‘Do you not see that Allah gently drives the clouds, then joins them together, piling them up into masses, from which you see raindrops come forth? And He sends down from the sky mountains of clouds loaded with hail, pouring it on whoever He wills and averting it from whoever He wills. The flash of the clouds’ lightning nearly takes away eyesight.’ (Qur’an, 24:43)

1581 Job 26:8.

1582 (Dunn & Rogerson, 2003), p. 348.

1583 Translator’s note: Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), generally known by the name Rashi, a Hebrew acronym derived from ‘Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki’. French rabbi. He authored a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible).

1584 Abraham Cohen (1887-1957). British Jewish scholar. He partook in the translation of the Talmud and the midrashim.

1585 (Cohen, 1949), p. 36.

The usage of the letter *fā'* reveals a swift progression of events, i.e., water in the clouds assume the form of droplets, which then fall due to gravity. Therefore, the origin of rain is from the cloud, not from rain sitting above clouds.¹⁵⁸⁶

¹⁵⁸⁶ The exegete Ibn ʿĀshūr said, 'Most exegetes are of the view that *wadq* means rain. Lexicons have restricted its meaning to this' (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1984), 9/261.

DEW DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN

‘It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.’¹⁵⁸⁷

This passage in Psalms offers a scientific claim: Dew descends from mountains. The ancient understanding was that dew descends from above, like rain, because both are water. Yet, scientific facts on the other hand state that dew is not water from the sky, but rather it is the result of water in its gaseous form coming into contact with a cool surface, whose temperature is lower than 0°C. We sometimes see this on glass windows in homes, and on cars in the morning.¹⁵⁸⁸

Since ancient times, it was believed that dew descended from the sky. An example of this can be found in a book attributed to Aristotle, *On the Universe*, which was written in the 3rd century B.C.¹⁵⁸⁹

The original Hebrew term for dew in Psalms 133:3 is “*tal*” (טל). This same word has been used in the Qur’an: ‘And the example of those who donate their wealth, seeking Allah’s pleasure and believing the reward is certain, is that of a garden on a fertile hill: when heavy rain falls, it yields up twice its normal produce. If no heavy rain falls, dew (*ṭall*) is sufficient. And Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.’ (Qur’an, 2:265)

A number of exegetes like Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Jurayj, and Suddī interpreted *ṭall* in the verse here as dew.¹⁵⁹⁰ It is also the position of ‘Ikrimah.¹⁵⁹¹ It is observed from the verse that it does not mention ‘falling’; rather, it only discusses the ‘reaching’ of rain and dew to the surface of the Earth. By virtue of this expression, this passage is free from the scientific error found in Psalms.

1587 Psalms 133:3.

1588 Translator’s note: Obviously, this phenomenon is quite frequent in cooler climates.

1589 (Forster, 1914).

1590 (Ṭabarī), 4/686.

1591 Reported by Bukhārī, Book of Alms, Chapter on showing off when giving charity.

THE CREATION OF LANGUAGES

The Bible offers a mythical interpretation for the spread of human languages: ‘Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole Earth.” But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” So the Lord scattered them from there over all the Earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole Earth.’¹⁵⁹²

There are a few points to be made here:

- **An obnoxious depiction of the Attributes of the Creator:** This mythical story showcases the worshipped God as being someone who fears that His creation would reach His status in power and dominion if they come together, unite, and pool their strength. This is a highly odd conceptualisation of divinity, rendering it far closer to Greek and Eastern mythology, in which jealousy and wars between gods, or even between gods and men, is the norm.
- **An improper understanding of the meaning found in the name of the city of Babel:** The word “*Bāvel*” (בבל) is not from the Hebrew word “*Bālal*” (בלל), which is a shortened version of the Hebrew word “*Belbel*” (בלבל)¹⁵⁹³, which means to split and to mix. Rather, what it means is ‘the gateway to God’, i.e., ‘the door to the Lord’. Gerhard von Rad¹⁵⁹⁴ said, ‘This explanation of the word “Babel” (“medley,” from

1592 Genesis 11:1–9.

1593 (Spurrell, 1896), p. 118.

1594 Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971). German theologian. He taught the Old Testament in several German and American universities. His works include *Old*

bālal, “stir up, mix up”) is of course etymologically irrelevant; it was popularly invented, for Babel means “gate of God.”¹⁵⁹⁵ In Akkadian, this name carried the same meaning i.e., ‘door to God’, until the author of the Book of Genesis came and completely misunderstood it and distorted its meaning.¹⁵⁹⁶

Hasan Zāzā¹⁵⁹⁷ said, ‘All later researchers from Christian Europe and the Haskalah have agreed that this story is an urban legend that does not convey historical reality as much as it provides a technical reasoning for the variations between languages. Sir James George Frazer¹⁵⁹⁸ dedicates an entire section in his magnum opus *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law*, where he critically analyses the evolution of this myth from the times of ancient paganism. He states, “The scene of the legend was laid at Babylon, for Babel is only the Hebrew form of the name of the city. The popular derivation from a Hebrew verb *balal* (Aramaic: *balbel*) “to confuse” is erroneous; the true meaning, as shown by the form in which the name is written in inscriptions, seems to be “Gate of God” (*Bāb-il* or *Bāb-ilu*).”¹⁵⁹⁹ This is because Babel was a holy city. The inhabitants of Ancient Iraq used to perform pilgrimage to the Tower of Babel, as it always stood out as an imposing lofty structure called a ziggurat. The Ancient Aramaeans and Jews believed that this tower was erected by disbelievers out of rebellion against God or—as Frazer reports of them—that they believed they could shoot arrows and spears from this tower to the heaven and destroy the High Kingdom of God.¹⁶⁰⁰ In this regard, they reported many myths, which Frazer quoted from Louis Ginzberg and his book *The Legends of the Jews*, including: their belief that if they shot their arrows heavenward, some of them would be dabbled with blood; that these disbelieving residents of Babel wanted to scale the summit of the tower, so they could install their own idol instead of God; and that when the Tower

Testament Theology.

1595 (Von Rad, 1972), p. 150.

1596 (Cooper, 1876), p. 116.

1597 Ḥasan Zāzā (1919-1999/1337-1420 AH). Arab scholar specialising in Jewish Studies. He gained his master’s degree in Hebrew literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Palestine, and he then acquired a Doctorat d’État from Sorbonne. He has a number of books and articles on Judaism, languages, and evolutionary linguistics.

1598 Translator’s note: James George Frazer (1854-1941). Scottish social anthropologist and folklorist. He was a pioneer in the modern studies of mythology and comparative religion in the West.

1599 Translator’s note: (Frazer, 1918), p. 365.

1600 Translator’s note: (Frazer, 1918), p. 364.

of Babel was destroyed, a third of it fell into the Earth, another third was destroyed by fire, and the final third was left in ruin. In spite of that, its location—as they would believe—is miraculously preserved. Whoever passes by it loses his memory completely and forgets all that he ever knew.

There is no doubt that all these myths were justified by one thing: the strangeness of these built-up towers of Babel, considered religious in the eyes of those Aramean and Hebrew Bedouins. They therefore linked that to the attempt of explaining the variety of languages which appeared to them to be paradoxical with the entire human race going back to one father and one mother—Adam and Eve.¹⁶⁰¹

As for the Qur'an, it does not follow the Bible in any of this. Rather, it brings the issue of the multiplicity of human languages in the context of it being God's favour on mankind and the bestowing of a divine virtue on them. This completely nullifies the simplistic explanation given by the Torah. God ﷻ said, 'And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the Earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. Surely in this are signs for those of knowledge.' (Qur'an, 30:22) In other words, the multiplicity of languages is a sign among the signs of the greatness of the Creator, with that being a satisfactory and sufficient explanation. It is most certainly not a manifestation of the Lord fighting with mankind, or His fear from humans uniting against Him.

1601 (Zāzā, 1990/1410 AH), pp. 47-48.

LEAD ANT

God ﷻ said, ‘And when they came across a valley of ants, an ant warned, “O ants, go quickly into your homes so Sulaymān and his armies do not unknowingly crush you.”’ (Qur’an, 27:18)

The verse states that ants have a leader guiding them. This is a matter that is now agreed upon thanks to the informative documentaries that are seen on the small screen. However, it conflicts with what the Bible mentioned: ‘Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler.’¹⁶⁰²

¹⁶⁰² Proverbs 6:6-7.

2. Scientific breakthroughs in the Qur'an

In its scientific discussions, the Qur'an was not content with establishing itself as a scientifically upright book and correcting the errors of the People of the Book. Rather, it went above and beyond that. It offered scientific facts that people during the era of Prophethood were unaware of. Here are some examples.

SUNS, NOT SUN

God ﷻ said, ‘Blessed is the One Who has placed constellations in the sky, as well as a radiant lamp (*wa ja^ʿala fihā sirājan*) and a luminous Moon.’ (Qur’an, 25:61) In Qur’anic parlance, lamp means Sun:

- ‘And did we not place in the heavens a shining lamp?’ (Qur’an, 78:13)
- ‘Did He not place the Moon within them as a reflected light, and the Sun as a radiant lamp?’ (Qur’an, 71:16)

This is why scholars who read *wa ja^ʿala fihā sirājan* interpreted lamp as Sun in all verses of the Qur’an where the term appears as singular. The author of *Lisān al-^ʿArab* said, ‘*Sirāj*: the Sun.’¹⁶⁰³

People once believed that the universe only had one Sun, which is our Sun. Then when astronomical observatories spread, scientists discovered that the universe has billions of stars, and that most of the universe’s energy is sourced from these Suns.¹⁶⁰⁴ This fact is explicitly indicated in the Qur’an in the reading variant of Ḥamzah and Kisā’ī (see Qur’an, 25:61)—two of the seven established recitations that Sunni Muslims agree to. The recitation variant of *surujan* (plural of *sirājan*) was the most famous reading in Kufa in the first centuries.

The exegetes were surprised by this plural word, since the Sun was just a single celestial body in their knowledge at the time, not to mention that the verse also mentioned the Moon. Thus, the only way to explain this verse was to suggest that *suruj* here meant the stars, even though they knew that *sirāj* in Qur’anic parlance meant the Sun.

What is surprising is that the exegetes inadvertently hit the mark. Most stars are Suns in and of themselves. Stars of celestial bodies emit light as a result of burning nuclear energy at their core.¹⁶⁰⁵ The Qur’an was so precise that it compelled the exegetes to unintentionally be way ahead of their time.

1603 (Ibn Manẓūr, 1883/1300 AH) under the *s-r-j* entry.

1604 (Kippenhahn, 1983).

1605 (Oxford Dictionary of Physics, 2005), p. 501.

THE CORTEX OF LIGHT

He ﷺ said, ‘There is also a sign for them in the night. We strip (*naslakhu*) from it daylight and behold—they are in darkness.’ (Qur’an, 36:37)

Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH) said, ‘*Salakha jilda al-shāti* is said when one skins a sheep. From this is the expression of a snake shedding (*salkh*) its skin. It was then borrowed to denote the removal of brightness or its dissipation from the night and wherever the night shadow is cast.’¹⁶⁰⁶ The exegete Samīn al-Ḥalabī (d. 756 AH) said, ‘*Naslakhu* is an original rhetorical metaphor in which He compared the uncovering of the night darkness to the skinning of a sheep.’¹⁶⁰⁷ In a more accurate and precise manner, the exegete Abū al-Su‘ūd (d. 982 AH) said, ‘*Naslakhu minhu al-nahāra* is a sentence that is expressive of how it is a sign, i.e., “We remove it and cause it to dissipate from its place”. It is borrowed from the term *salkh*, which is the removal process of an animal from the skin affixed to it. Its most common usage is by applying the verb on the skin *per se*—it is said, “*Salakhtu al-ihāba min al-shāti*”, but it can be reversed, such as the expression *al-shāh al-maslūkhah. Fa idhā hum muzlimūna*, i.e., they suddenly enter into darkness...’¹⁶⁰⁸

If you look at the Torah, you will read that the universe was dark. Subsequently God created light, and then ‘He separated the light from the darkness.’¹⁶⁰⁹ Light according to this is part of the universal construct and not connected to the existence of a celestial body, whether that may be the Sun or anything else. Anything under the dome of the sky is lit up by day.

Why was *salkh* used as the Qur’anic expression to denote assimilation? You cannot find the answer without looking at modern science, which uncovered that daytime on half of Earth is nothing but a thin crust of light above it, and everything above that is darkness. This is why the disappearance of the light of day is like skinning a sheep—both are thin. A person observing artificial satellite images of the incoming night can see with his own eyes how thin the light of day is in this huge dark universe.¹⁶¹⁰

1606 (Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ‘an Ḥaqā’iq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl*, 1998/1418 AH), 4/16.

1607 Translator’s note: (Ḥalabī), 9/269.

1608 (Abū al-Su‘ūd), 7/167.

1609 Genesis 1:2-4.

1610 (*National Geographic*, 2019).



UNDERSEA WAVES

God ﷻ said, 'Or their deeds are like the darkness in a deep sea, covered by waves (*yaghshāhu mawjun*) upon waves (*min fawqihī mawjun*), topped by dark clouds. Darkness upon darkness. If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it. And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light.' (Qur'an, 24:40)

The exegete Qurṭubī said, '*Yaghshāhu mawjun*, i.e., waves come over that deep sea; *min fawqihī mawjun*, i.e., there is a wave above that wave, and above this second wave is a cloud.'¹⁶¹¹

This is a highly interesting depiction: The sea has waves under waves. Perhaps in the mind of the ancients, this was merely a descriptive image to depict a dark stormy sea, but science today has established with certainty that the seas have internal waves that move beneath the waves of the surface.

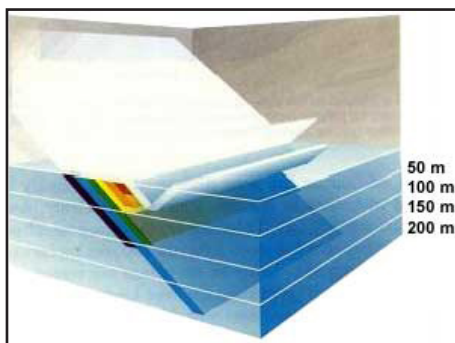
Zindānī said, 'Professor Durga Prasad Rao is a Professor of Marine Gerology and currently a lecturer in King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah. We met him and presented to him a number of verses related to the scientific inimitability in the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition. He was astounded by what he heard and saw. He read the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an in some books specialising in this regard. One verse he took upon himself to commentate on was the statement of God ﷻ: "Or their deeds are like the darkness in a deep sea, covered by waves upon waves, topped by dark clouds. Darkness upon darkness. If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it. And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light." (Qur'an, 24:40)

He said, "Yes, scientists now are aware of them, using submarines that are able to access the depths of the oceans. No person can dive more than 20 to 30 metres without an external device. Those who dive to hunt pearls in the Gulf region nearby do not exceed this depth. When a person dives to extreme depths, where there is only darkness at around the 200-metre range, it is impossible for him to remain alive. This verse speaks of a phenomenon that is found in deep oceans. This is why God ﷻ said, 'Or like the darkness in a deep sea.' Hence, the statement of God Almighty about the darkness in a vast deep sea does not refer to just any sea, because not every sea can be described as having accumulating layers of darkness, one over another. This sort of layered darkness in deep oceans has two causes,

1611 (Qurṭubī), 15/301.

which come about as a result of the progressive disappearance of colour, one layer after another.

As for the first reason, light rays are composed of seven colours. When a light ray hits water, it is scattered into these seven colours.



In this picture, we see a ray of light going through the depth of the ocean. The upper layer absorbs the red colour in the first 10 metres. If a diver dives to a depth of 30 metres and gets wounded there, he would not be able to see his blood, because the red colour does not reach this depth. In the same way, as we see in this picture, orange rays dissipate next. Then at the depth of 50 metres, yellow rays are absorbed. At the depth of 100 metres, green rays are absorbed. At depths beyond 200 metres, blue rays are absorbed, and so on. From this, we can see that the ocean becomes progressively darker, and that darkness takes place in layers of light.

As for the second reason, darkness originates as a result of barriers that conceal light. The light rays, which we see here, originate from the Sun and are absorbed by clouds, which in turn scatter some of the rays of light, thus resulting in a layer of darkness under the clouds. This is the first layer of darkness. Then when light rays reach the surface of the ocean, they are reflected by the wave surface, thus giving it a shiny appearance. It is for this reason that, when there are waves, the intensity of this reflection is contingent on the angle of the waves. Therefore, it is the waves that reflect light and cause darkness. The un-reflected light rays penetrate into the depth of the ocean, and thus we divide the ocean into two main layers: surface and depth. The surface of the ocean is characterised by light and warmth, whereas its depth is characterised by darkness. These two parts of the ocean differ with respect to their properties and characteristics, and the surface is further separated from the deep part by waves.

These internal waves were only discovered in 1900. Scientists have recently discovered that there are internal waves which occur on dense

‘Or their deeds are like the darkness in a deep sea, covered by waves upon waves, topped by dark clouds. Darkness upon darkness.’ (Qur’an, 24:40) This darkness is caused by the barriers explained above, in addition to the darkness caused by the absorption of colours at the different levels that are layered one over the other. ‘If one stretches out their hand, they can hardly see it. And whoever Allah does not bless with light will have no light.’ (Qur’an, 24:40) Here in total darkness, submarines must bring their own source of light with them.”

Professor Rao replied, “It is difficult to imagine that this type of knowledge existed at the time, around 1400 years back. Some of these are generic concepts, but it is hard to describe them in great detail. This is therefore definitely not a simple case of human knowledge. A normal human being cannot explain this phenomenon in that much detail. So I am thinking that this information must have come from a supernatural source.”¹⁶¹²

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Deep ocean waves discovered by scientists

Scientists have discovered a new type of wave in the deep ocean, which could help explain some of the most mysterious aspects of the ocean's circulation. The waves, which are found in the deep ocean, are thought to be responsible for the transport of heat and other materials between the surface and the deep.

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PEARLS AND CORALS IN FRESH (NON-SALINE) WATERS

God ﷻ said, ‘The two bodies of water are not alike: one is fresh, palatable, and pleasant to drink; the other is salty and bitter. Yet from them both you eat tender seafood and extract ornaments to wear. And you see the ships ploughing their way through both, so you may seek His bounty and give thanks to Him.’ (Qur’an, 35:12)

He ﷻ also said, ‘He merges the two bodies of fresh and salt water, yet between them is a barrier they never cross. Then which of your Lord’s favours will you both deny? Out of both waters come forth pearls and coral.’ (Qur’an, 55:19-22)

Can pearls come from freshwater sources? Rāzī reported the confusion of exegetes in both his era and those before him, stating, ‘Pearls only come from saline water, so how could He say “out of both” (*minhumā*)? We submit a twofold response to this: The apparent meaning of the statement by God ﷻ is worthier of consideration than the speech of people who cannot be trusted in what they say. Who knows that pearls do not come from freshwater? Let us assume that divers have only ever extracted them from saline water and that they are only found therein—this does not necessitate that they cannot be found elsewhere. But let us accept what you say. Why do you then believe that pearl oysters, by the command of God, move from fresh water to saline water? And how can one be so uncompromising about this view when even the most obvious phenomena of the Earth remain hidden from merchants who travel the Earth and get around. Given that is the case, how would something in the depths of fresh water not be hidden from them as well?’¹⁶¹³

Science has removed the confusion of the exegetes by establishing the truthfulness of the direct literal meaning of the Qur’an: ‘Some people might consider it farfetched that freshwater can be a source for jewellery. Science and reality have both proven otherwise. As for pearls, then just like they can be extracted from certain oceans, they may also be extracted from certain types of rivers. Pearls can be found in the fresh waters of England, Scotland, Wales, Czech Republic, and Japan, etc., in addition to the famous oceans where pearls can be found. This also encompasses freshwater that

¹⁶¹³ (Rāzī F. a.-D., *Mafātih al-Ghayb*, 1420 AH), 29/352.

Translator’s note: The second answer is not quoted in the author’s work here, but it can be found in Rāzī’s *Tafsīr*.

carries highly prized raw gemstones such as diamonds that are extracted from the sediment of dried up rivers, known as alluvium. Likewise, ruby is found in riverbed sedimentary deposits in the Mogok Valley in Upper Burma (Upper Myanmar). As for Siam (Thailand) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), ruby is found in these places in riverbed sedimentary deposits. From the semi-precious stones that are used in jewellery is topaz, which is found in many riverbeds and is widespread across Brazil and the Ural and Siberia regions of Russia. Topaz is a silicate mineral compound of aluminium and fluorine, and it is usually yellow or brown. Circon is another gemstone, the features of which resemble those of diamonds. Most precious stones of its type are extracted from riverbeds.¹⁶¹⁴

1614 (Quran & Sunnah Committee Cairo), p. 645.

NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

God ﷻ said, 'Allah calls back the souls upon their death as well as those of the living during their sleep. Then He keeps those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others until their appointed time. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect.' (Qur'an, 39:42)

The phenomenon known as near death experience is one of the most significant modern pieces of evidence that Christian and Jewish thinkers in the West utilise to refute atheists. They say that man has a key non-material component to him: the soul.¹⁶¹⁵ These Jews and Christians do not offer any evidence for this phenomenon from their Holy Book, as it has nothing to say on this.

Near death experience is about seeing visions and feeling specific emotions during clinical death or persistent vegetative state.

The Qur'an alone asserts that the soul of man exits when he loses his senses during sleep, then it returns after that. According to the People of the Book during the Prophethood era, the prevailing belief was that a man dies with the separation of the soul from the body, and he would be considered to be from the departed.

In the West, there have been many works written about near death experience. Some have been published by academic publishing houses; others are scientific papers published in peer researched journals. Materialists have attempted to explain this away in a number of ways, thus preventing it from being explained by non-material causes. However, they failed in explaining two fundamental phenomena: a) the human senses remain in someone who has had a near death experience, even though the medical tools would testify that he is brain dead; and b) those who have had a near death experience have testified that they have seen, heard, or met with persons they could not have met when they were lying unconscious in hospital. Examples of this include: a blind man seeing something engulfing him when he had lost all his senses during his near death experience¹⁶¹⁶; a woman describing the exiting of her soul and witnessing a blue shoe on the roof of the hospital, then finding that shoe when she went to the roof¹⁶¹⁷;

1615 See the detailed study by the famous philosopher J. P. Moreland (Moreland, 2014), a specialist in the origins and the philosophy of the mind. He sought the aid of the latest psychological and ethnic studies.

1616 (Habermas & Moreland, 1998), p. 158.

1617 (Long & Perry, 2009), pp. 72-73.

another woman who had an operation on her brain with her body unconscious and her eyes shut, yet she described the details of the operation and the operation instruments—which were covered—and the discussions of doctors during the procedure^{1618 1619}.

It is important to point out here that this strange phenomenon has resulted in a number of atheist academics coming round to believing in God and the Final Day, after they were convinced that man is more than just a material entity. Such academics include Pim van Lommel¹⁶²⁰. A. J. Ayer¹⁶²¹, the leader of one of the most important atheistic philosophical schools of the 20th century¹⁶²², had a near death experience himself when his heart stopped giving a pulse for four minutes. This experience led him to say, 'My recent experiences have slightly weakened my conviction that my genuine death, which is due fairly soon, will be the end of me, though I continue to hope that it will be. They have not weakened my conviction that there is no god.'¹⁶²³ So, in spite of his stubbornness, he could still admit to the impact his near death experience had on him.

1618 (Miller J. S., 2012), p. 54.

1619 We do not believe everything that is said about near-death experiences. In fact, we would believe that most personal testimonies purporting this are at best doubtful. We know that there are those who think they met with Christian, Jewish, or Muslim personalities when they were in a state of unconsciousness. All of this may be out of fantasy, or that the devils were messing around with those claiming such near-death experiences. Yet, material explanations are unable to explain how consciousness can remain after brain death, or how things that are usually impossible appear to occur to those who have a near-death experience, who are able to acquire information about these things.

1620 Pim van Lommel (b. 1943). Cardiologist and researcher in near-death experiences. His works include *Near-Death Experience in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest: A Prospective Study in the Netherlands*.

1621 A. J. Ayer (1910-1989). British philosopher. He taught philosophy and logic. He was the President of the Aristotelian Society for the Systematic Study of Philosophy.

1622 Neopositivism.

1623 (Ayer, 1988).

Scientific inimitability in the Prophetic tradition

Scientific information in the Prophetic tradition is widespread. There are various aspects to it including medicine, anatomy, prevention of disease, and celestial and universal phenomena. The information on science contained therein is far more than both the Old and New Testaments. Scientific information in the Prophetic tradition appeared in an environment that did not really have a tendency to empirically observe universal laws. The Prophetic tradition upended this. It contains information on both having faith in the dominion of God and the impact universal laws and material causes have. Although much of the scientific information contained in the Prophetic tradition cannot necessarily be categorised as scientific breakthroughs, this body of information *in toto* cannot be dismissed as the personal deduction of an unlettered man who lived among an ignorant and simple desert nation.¹⁶²⁴

Here are two examples of scientific inimitability:

1. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Truffles are a cure for the eye.’¹⁶²⁵

In the early years of Islam, this hadith was a source of major scepticism vis-à-vis the truthfulness of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. This is because truffles were not known to have any positive impact in curing eyes. This is attested to by the statement of Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār of the 4th century AH, corresponding to the 11th century, in his book *Tathbīt Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*. In it, he quoted from contemporary adversaries of Islam stating, ‘Among the medicines of the eye, truffle water is not identified as such by the people.’¹⁶²⁶ Empirical research today has proven that truffle water put a stop to granular conjunctivitis, which can lead to an unnatu-

1624 For example, see (‘Abd al-Ṣamad, 1990/1410 AH).

1625 Reported by Bukhārī, Book of the Interpretation of the Qur’an—Sūrah al-Baqarah (hadith no. 4208); and Muslim, Book of Beverages, Chapter on the virtue of truffles and medicating the eye with it (hadith no. 2049)

1626 (Hamadhānī, *Tathbīt Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, 2015/1436 AH), 2/540.

ral increase of blood cells in the cornea.¹⁶²⁷ Muslims, on the other hand, have relied on the Prophetic instruction to treat their eyes and have been cured—without any assistance from the scientific discoveries of the era.¹⁶²⁸

2. The Messenger ﷺ said, ‘The Hour will not come until the land of the Arabs returns to meadows and rivers.’¹⁶²⁹

The previous hadith informs us that Arabia was once lush and green, while also being replete with many rivers. In the *Geology Journal*, there is a scientific paper on the history of greenery in the ancient south-eastern region of Arab lands. A section of it reads: ‘The dispersal of human populations out of Africa into Arabia was most likely linked to episodes of climatic amelioration, when increased monsoon rainfall led to the activation of drainage systems, improved freshwater availability, and the development of regional vegetation. Here we present the first dated terrestrial record from southeast Arabia that provides evidence for increased rainfall and the expansion of vegetation during both glacial and interglacial periods.’¹⁶³⁰

1627 At the First International Conference on Islamic Medicine (held in Kuwait in 1981), Dr Mu‘tazz Billāh al-Marzūqī delivered a lecture on his results of administering truffle-infused eye drops to patients afflicted with various eye diseases. The truffle extract was taken at the laboratory, where it was dried so it could be preserved for a longer period. As and when required, the extract would be mixed with water again to reach the same level of natural concentration as before. It was a brownish solution with a pungent odour. He used this to treat advanced stages of trachoma. The results were positive:

86 children were diagnosed, who were then split up into two groups. One was treated with regular medicine; the other with the same but infused with truffle water. The water was administered as eye drops three times daily for a whole month. The difference between the two groups was clear. The first group saw conjunctivitis, whereas those who were treated with truffle water saw the sclera return to its normal state. See (Nu‘aymī, *Al-I‘jāz al-‘Ilmī fī Ḥadīthi “Al-Kam’atu min al-Manni wa-Mā’uhā Shifā’un li al-‘Ayni”*).

1628 For example, Nawawī said, ‘I and others have seen in our times a person who was blind and could not see at all. He applied truffle eye drops and nothing else to his eyes—he was cured, and his sight was restored. He is none other than Shaykh... Kamāl Ibn ‘Abd al-Dimashqī, a person of righteousness and hadith narration. His usage of truffle water was out of his belief in the hadith and his desire to seek blessing through it, so God made it of use to him.’ See (Nawawī, *Al-Minhāj*, 1392 AH), 14/15.

1629 Narrated by Muslim, Book of Alms, Chapter on encouraging charity (hadith no. 1687).

1630 (Parton, 2015).

We also read the following from an article in *Nature*, ‘Ash Parton of the University of Oxford, UK, and his colleagues discovered layers of sediments laid down by ancient rivers in southeast Arabia, which flowed for several long periods during the past 160,000 years. Those wet spells could have enabled humans to push into the Arabian interior much earlier than some theories have suggested.’¹⁶³¹

3. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘O assembly of Migrants, I seek the refuge of Allah from five traits ever befalling you:
 - ◆ Never does a shameless act appear, and people publicise it, except plague and pains—the likes of which their predecessors before them never saw—become widespread among them.
 - ◆ Never will they be unjust with volumetric and weight measurements except they will be overtaken by poverty, hardship, and the ruler’s injustice.
 - ◆ Never will they stop giving alms from their wealth except they would be denied rain from the sky; were it not for the animals, they would not be given any rain at all.
 - ◆ Never would they break the pact of Allah and the pact of His Messenger except Allah will set on them an enemy who is not from them and would take what is in their possessions.
 - ◆ Never would their leaders not rule with what Allah sent or start to be selective in what Allah sent down except Allah will cause them to fall into infighting.’¹⁶³²

The Messenger ﷺ informed us of the spread of new diseases that previous nations never heard of. This would be as a result of shameless sexual deeds outside of matrimony. This is something our world can attest to today. The sexual revolution began in the second half of the 20th century, which was a bellwether for many sexually transmitted diseases, the most significant of which was AIDS, that had never been heard of in the ancient ages.

¹⁶³¹ (*Nature*, 2015), p. 9. See also (Brand M., 2018) and (University of Oxford, 2012).

¹⁶³² Reported by Ibn Mājah (hadith no. 4019).

Scientific errors in the Bible

Ever since the 19th century, the tension between science and the Bible has been a huge test for Christianity. This is why Pope Leo XIII¹⁶³³ was compelled to issue a statement in *Providentissimus Deus* (*On the Study of Holy Scripture*) that natural and scientific issues in the Bible fall outside the scope of topics in which the Bible is inerrant. In other words, the Pope attempted to evade the problem by suggesting that the scientific errors in the Bible are a result of authors being influenced by the world they were in. In the expression of the Christian scholar Raymond Brown, this is a convoluted position that would be considered odd by any person, especially given that it presumes that the author had knowledge of the future (given that the Bible is supposedly divine) but still chose to use scientifically incorrect expressions in order to resonate with the scientific culture of the era.¹⁶³⁴

In the Catholic Church, the matter evolved to the extent that one of its major religious figures explicitly mentioned that the Bible is not free from errors and mistakes. At the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican between 1962 and 1965, Cardinal Franz König¹⁶³⁵ took the responsibility to list the scientific and historical errors in the Bible, emphasising that ‘the Biblical Books are deficient in accuracy as regards both historical and scientific matters.’¹⁶³⁶ The purpose of this exercise was to remove the burdensome weight off the shoulders of the Church, whose supporters had

1633 Leo XIII (1810-1903). Italian pope who assumed the papacy between 1878-1903. He had a keen interest in the intellectualism of the Church and its connection to modern knowledge.

1634 ‘In any case, Pope Leo’s approach undermined the very purpose for which most people want to stress inerrancy, namely, so that they can give unlimited confidence to biblical statements. The theory that these statements were made according to surface appearances and so are not necessarily correct from a scientific viewpoint is a backdoor way of admitting human conditioning on the part of the biblical authors’ (Brown R., 1982), p. 15.

1635 Franz König (1905-2004). Archbishop of Vienna. He was an advocate of reform inside the Catholic Church.

1636 (Brown R., 1982), p. 16.

previously invested great efforts in defending the inerrancy of the Bible. These people who expended their energies clearly failed in that endeavour, as per the statement of Paul Achtemeier^{1637 1638}.

Furthermore, Pope John Paul II declared himself free of the historicity of the creation story outlined in the Torah. He believed that the story is mentioned only for its spiritual value. In his letter to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, he wrote, 'Cosmogony and cosmology have always aroused great interest among peoples and religions. The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its make-up, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe. Sacred Scripture wishes simply to declare that the world was created by God, and in order to teach this truth it expresses itself in the terms of the cosmology in use at the time of the writer.'¹⁶³⁹

It is known that many leading theologians and scholars from the Christian religious elite declared themselves free from the literal interpretation of the creation narrative found in the Torah. One of these theologians is the Catholic physicist Stanley Jaki. He declared himself free from the posited scientificity of the story of creation, and in fact adopted the position that Genesis is postexilic^{1640 1641}.

In the following pages, rather than engaging in a lengthy discourse on the topic, I shall suffice with mentioning just some of these scientific errors. They should be enough for the reader.

1637 Paul John Achtemeier (1927-2013). Professor Emeritus of Biblical Interpretation at Union Theological Seminary, Virginia. He was an authority on the New Testament and wrote 18 books and more than 60 academic journal articles.

1638 (Achtemeier, 1980).

1639 (John Paul II, *Cosmology and Fundamental Physics*, 1981).

1640 Translator's note: This is in reference to the period in which many Jews were held in captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylonia, lasting from around 600 BC to 539 BC, when Jews were finally allowed by Cyrus II of Persia to return to Ancient Israel. The postexilic period starts at this point.

1641 (Jaki, *Genesis 1 Through the Ages*, 1998).

1. THE BLUENESS OF THE SKY IS BECAUSE OF WATER

‘And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.’¹⁶⁴²

Genesis reflects the old belief of many ancient civilisations that the blue colour of the sky reveals the existence of water above the sky dome, because the sky colour is blue just like the ocean is blue. This—according to the Bible—is proof that the area above the sky itself is oceanic and full of water. In explaining why the water is stable above Earth and does not all fall down, Genesis adopts the view that God had made a dome separating the Earth from water above the Earth—that separation is achieved through the sky dome. The marginalia on the *Jerusalem Bible* reads: ‘For the ancient Semites the seeming vault of the sky (the “firmament”) was a solid dome holding the upper waters in check; the waters of the Deluge poured down through apertures in it, 7:11.’¹⁶⁴³ Some rabbis have interpreted the Hebrew term “*shāmayim*” (heavens) as “*shām mayim*” (i.e., there is water).¹⁶⁴⁴

1642 Genesis 1:6-7.

1643 (*The Jerusalem Bible*, 1966), p. 15.

1644 (Hershon, 1883), p. 8.

2. THE SKY AS A SOLID CONSTRUCT

‘So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so.’¹⁶⁴⁵

The term *vault* in the original Hebrew is “*rākia*”, denoting that the sky is a dome in which the stars are hung. *The New American Bible* states in a footnote, ‘The dome: the Hebrew word suggests a gigantic metal dome. It was inserted into the middle of the single body of water to form dry space within which the Earth could emerge. The Latin Vulgate translation *firamentum*, “means of support (for the upper waters); firmament,” provided the traditional English rendering.’¹⁶⁴⁶

1645 Genesis 1:7.

1646 (Bible Gateway, 2021).

As opposed to *The New American Bible* translation which uses the word dome, the Hebrew term used here is “*rākia*”.

3. LIGHT AND DAY BEFORE THE SUN

‘And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the Earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.’¹⁶⁴⁷

Earlier on, Genesis said that God created light on the 1st day.¹⁶⁴⁸ However, we read that the Sun was created afterwards. This is a contradiction. How can light appear before its cause?

Nahum M. Sarna¹⁶⁴⁹ commented on this by saying, ‘The notion of light independent of the Sun appears again in Isaiah 30:26 and Job 18:19-20. Most likely it derives from the simple observation that the sky is illuminated even on cloudy days when the Sun is obscured and that brightness precedes the rising of the Sun.’¹⁶⁵⁰

‘God called the light “day”, and the darkness he called “night”. And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.’¹⁶⁵¹

The appearance of night and day before the Sun is scientifically incorrect as the light of both day and night are a result of the Earth rotating around the Sun.

1647 Genesis 1:14-16.

1648 See Genesis 1:1.

1649 Nahum M. Sarna (1923-2005). Jewish biblical scholar. He taught in various American universities. He wrote commentaries on a number of the Old Testament’s books.

1650 (Sarna, 1989), p. 7.

1651 Genesis 1:5.

4. HARVEST BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE SUN

‘The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.’¹⁶⁵²

It is inferred here that vegetation on Earth in all its types appeared on the 3rd day. This is scientifically incorrect as there cannot be any such growth without the Sun. Flora is in need of energy to remain alive, which comes from the energy of the Sun; yet, the Sun appeared on the 4th day.¹⁶⁵³

‘The text (of the story of Creation from Genesis) makes use of the primitive science found in its day. It would be a mistake to seek points of agreement between this schematic presentation and the data of modern science.’¹⁶⁵⁴

1652 Genesis 1:12.

1653 See Genesis 1:16.

1654 (*The Jerusalem Bible*, 1966), p. 15.

5. THE SNAKE EATING DUST

‘So the Lord God said to the snake, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.”’¹⁶⁵⁵

This passage states that the Lord cursed the snake because it caused Adam and Eve to go astray, which is why the Lord made it move on its stomach and eat dust. However, we know today that snakes do not eat dust; additionally, there is no sense in punishing snakes by making them move on their bellies.

Nahum M. Sarna explained the background to the primitive scientific understanding found in the above passage: “On your belly”: This reflects a popular notion, often represented in the art of the ancient Near East, that the serpent originally walked erect. Having arrogantly aggrandized itself in a challenge to God, it is now permanently doomed to a posture of abject humiliation. “Dirt shall you eat”: The transgression involved eating, and so does the punishment. As the serpent slithers on its way, its flickering tongue appears to lick the dust.’¹⁶⁵⁶

We thus see here that the Torah adopted an eastern myth, which is a scientific error.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Genesis 3:14.

¹⁶⁵⁶ (Sarna, 1989), p. 27.

6. THE RUMINANT RABBIT

‘Say to the Israelites: “Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: you may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. The hyrax, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you. The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean for you.”’¹⁶⁵⁷

This passage states that rabbits are ruminants. This is a huge error: Rabbits do not ruminate. The writer of this passage believed that the movement of a rabbit’s mouth, which resembles rumination, is actual rumination.

This error generated a massive problem for Torah exegetes after the advent of anatomical studies. At that time, a number of Christian scientists attempted to suggest the possibility that rabbits do indeed ruminate.¹⁶⁵⁸ However, scientists today have conclusively decided that this passage has an error. For example, the *Jesuit Arabic Bible* (the Arabic Catholic translation of the Bible) acknowledges that the description in the Torah is a scientific error, stating, ‘Classifying rabbits as ruminants is unscientific. They used to issue judgement based on the apparent.’ Likewise, the marginalia of *The New American Bible* acknowledged that rock hyraxes and rabbits do not ruminate. In his book *A Handbook of Scientific and Literary Bible Difficulties*, the Christian apologist Robert Tuck made this astonishing confession, ‘This presents a striking illustration of the unscientific character of the Scriptures. They record popular fallacies in matters of science. Moses repeats the common opinion of his day in all such things as natural history.’¹⁶⁵⁹

1657 Leviticus 11:2-6.

1658 (Bush, 1842), p. 100.

1659 (Tuck, 1891), p. 343.

7. EAGLE WINGS AS CARRIERS

‘...like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.’¹⁶⁶⁰ Eagles are not known to carry their young on their wings.

1660 Deuteronomy 32:11-12.

8. EWES IN HEAT

‘Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted.’¹⁶⁶¹

When the Prophet Jacob wanted the sheep to give birth to striped lambs, he made them stand in front of erected branches as they drank, so that they would be in the heat in front of a stripy setting. The sheep did end up giving birth to striped lambs. This is an extremely bizarre idea on how animals acquire their characteristics. The author thought that when an animal looks at a natural scene as it becomes pregnant, it would give birth to a young one similar to what it saw during the heat.

The priest and biblical scholar John Rogerson¹⁶⁶² was astounded by this superficiality, even going as far as mentioning that it would be ‘tough to envisage how there can be anybody who would believe in such an unscientific understanding.’¹⁶⁶³

1661 Genesis 30:37-39.

1662 John W. Rogerson (1935-2018). English priest and retired faculty head at Sheffield. He was a specialist in Old Testament studies in a variety of scholarly fields, including the theological, historical, linguistic, and philosophical branches. His works include *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*.

1663 (Rogerson, 2012), p. 74.

9. SNAKES KILL WITH THEIR TONGUE

‘He will suck the poison of serpents; the tongue of an adder will kill him.’¹⁶⁶⁴

The author of the Book of Job believes that serpents kill with their tongue. John Thompson¹⁶⁶⁵ commented on this passage by saying, ‘In olden times it was believed that the delicate forked tongue of a snake was its “sting”’.¹⁶⁶⁶

1664 Job 20:16.

1665 John Cloudsley-Thompson (1921-2013). British naturalist and fauna specialist. He headed up the British Naturalists’ Association. His works include *Land Invertebrates*.

1666 (Cloudsley-Thompson, 1999), p. 223.

10. THE HARMFUL INFLUENCE OF THE MOON

‘The Sun will not harm you by day, nor the Moon by night.’¹⁶⁶⁷

In previous nations, there was a widespread belief that people’s mental faculties are adversely affected by the stages of the Moon’s progression. This belief was based on the assertion that moonlight causes detrimental harm, thereby producing an imbalance in one’s mental faculties.

In his expansive commentary on the Psalms, Mitchell Dahood¹⁶⁶⁸ said, ‘But the ancients believed otherwise (i.e., that the Moon was harmful). The notion that the Moon beamed harmful influences was widespread in the ancient Near East; cf. Matt xvii 15, where Greek *selēniázetai* literally means “he is moonstruck” (cf. “lunatic”).’¹⁶⁶⁹

The authors of *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* said, ‘Anyone who has traveled in the Middle East knows the threat of dehydration and sunstroke. Many of the roads to Jerusalem exposed the traveler to oppressive heat. Just as too much exposure to the Sun could be dangerous, it was believed in the ancient world that too much exposure to the Moon could pose a health threat. Medical diagnostic texts from first-millennium Babylonia and Assyria identify several conditions as a result of the “hand of Sin” (Sin was the Moon god), including one in which the patient grinds his teeth and his hands and feet tremble, and another that has all the symptoms of epilepsy. English words like “moonstruck” and “lunatic” show that such belief persisted into relatively recent times.’¹⁶⁷⁰

We therefore have to contend with yet another ancient myth. This time, it is about the supposed harmful beams of the Moon—akin to the harmful rays of the Sun—which somehow manage to disturb the balance of a person’s mind.

1667 Psalms 121:6.

1668 Mitchell Dahood (1922-1982). An American Hebraist scholar. He taught Ancient Near East languages at the Pontifical Biblical Institute.

1669 (Dahood, 2008), p. 202.

1670 (Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas, 2000), p. 555.

11. THE DISSOLVING SLUG

‘May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along, like a stillborn child that never sees the Sun.’¹⁶⁷¹

Christians picked up on the scientific error in this passage, which is why they changed “*Shablol*” (שבִּלְלוֹל) (slug) in the Hebrew text to wax in the Greek Septuagint: κῆρος (kēros), the Syriac Peshitta: ܬܠܐܬܐܝܬܐ, and the Latin Vulgate: ‘cera’, with all meaning ‘bees-wax’.

Some of them tried to wriggle out of the apparent meaning understood from this passage. However, the famous Christian advocator Charles Spurgeon¹⁶⁷² admitted that ‘there is no doubt that the view taken by these commentators is the correct one, and that the psalmist, when he wrote the terrible series of denunciations in which the passage occurs, had in his mind the popular belief regarding the gradual wasting away of the snail as it “passeth on.”’¹⁶⁷³

1671 Psalms 58:8.

1672 Translator’s note: Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892). English Particular Baptist preacher. He was a leading figure in the Reformed Baptist Church and was opposed to the liberal and pragmatic theological tendencies in the Church of his day.

1673 (Spurgeon, 1882), 3/71.

12. THE LOCATION OF EDM/ARAM

‘Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar” (that is, En Gedi).’¹⁶⁷⁴

Many English translations of the Bible changed the term Aram “*arām*” (אֲרָם) in the original Hebrew text—which in the Septuagint is *συρίας* (*syr-ias*) ‘Syria’—to Edom. This is because Aram is not near any sea; it is in the north, far from the Dead Sea. This discrepancy is not found in Edom, which lies in the South and is located southeast of the Dead Sea.¹⁶⁷⁵ This error has been acknowledged by many scholars such as Adam Clarke¹⁶⁷⁶, yet it has been repeated. In the words of Professor Yohanan Aharoni¹⁶⁷⁷, ‘The interchange between these two names is a common mistake in the Masoretic text, since their spelling is graphically very similar both in ancient Hebrew and later Aramaic scripts.’¹⁶⁷⁸

1674 2 Chronicles 20:2.

1675 (Curtis & Madsen, 1994), p. 405.

1676 (Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: Joshua to Esther*, 1843), 2/670.

1677 Yohanan Aharoni (1919-1976). Head of the Archaeology Department and New East Studies, and Chairman of the Institute of Archaeology at Tel-Aviv University.

1678 (Aharoni, 1979), p. 294.

13. A CHILD OLDER THAN ITS FATHER

‘Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. He passed away, to no one’s regret, and was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.’¹⁶⁷⁹

‘The people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram’s youngest son, king in his place, since the raiders, who came with the Arabs into the camp, had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year. His mother’s name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri.’¹⁶⁸⁰

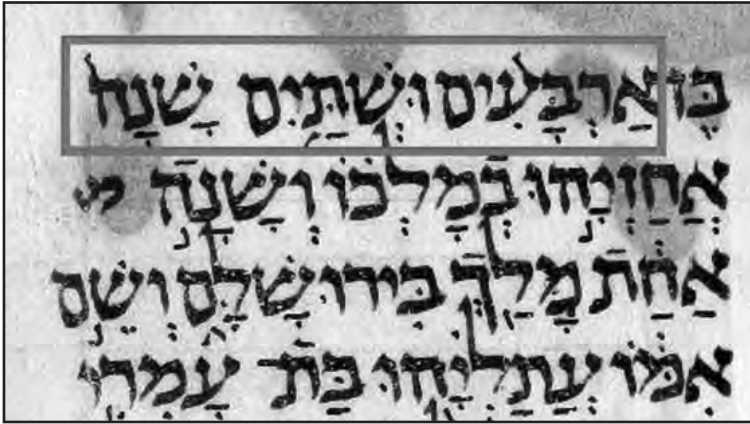
If Jehoram’s rule began when he was 32 years old, and he ruled for 8 years until his death, he would have died when he was 40 years old. Given that his son began to reign when he was 42 years old, the child would be three years older than his father. The table below clarifies this, starting from Jehoram’s date of birth:

	From date of birth to beginning of rule	Beginning of rule	Age at death
Jehoram	1-32	32	39 (years from his birth)
Ahaziah	?	42 (from Jehoram’s birth)	

To escape the problem, the *Common Arabic Translation* altered the latter passage so it would read: ‘Ahaziah was *twenty* years old when he became king.’ Yet, this translation landed itself into conflict with the original Hebrew text:

1679 2 Chronicles 21:20.

1680 2 Chronicles 22:1-2.



*42 years (highlighted) as per 2 Chronicles 22:22, from the 10th century
Aleppo Codex, the best manuscript of the Old Testament*

*‘Ben ‘arbā’im oshtayim shānā ‘ahazyāhu bəmālchu vāshānā
‘achat Melech būroshālem vāshēm ‘emo ‘atalyāhu bat ‘omri’*

(Ahaziah was 22 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year. His mother’s name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri.)

**14. THE NUMBER OF KITCHEN INVENTORY PIECES: 2499
OR 5400?**

‘This was the inventory: gold dishes—30; silver dishes—1000, silver pans—29; gold bowls—30; matching silver bowls—410; other articles—1000. In all, there were 5400 articles of gold and of silver.’¹⁶⁸¹

$30 + 1000 + 29 + 30 + 410 + 1000 = 2499 \neq 5400$.¹⁶⁸²

¹⁶⁸¹ Ezra 1:9-11.

¹⁶⁸² Ezra 1:11.

15. BILLIONS OF BIRDS

‘Tell the people: “Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The Lord heard you when you wailed, ‘If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!’ Now the Lord will give you meat, and you will eat it. You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the Lord, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’”’¹⁶⁸³

‘Now a wind went out from the Lord and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them up to two cubits deep all around the camp, as far as a day’s walk in any direction.’¹⁶⁸⁴

Scholars estimate that the walking distance of one day is approximately 20 miles. This means that the size of the region covered by the quails was 40 miles, implying that the area it covered is 1256 m², or over 2000 km². If we count the number of birds required to cover this region and assign a distance of two arm lengths from the Earth, each quail would be 0.7 ft². Therefore, around 150 billion quails would be needed.¹⁶⁸⁵

Looking at the context of the story and that the Lord did not create this imaginary number of birds to feed the children of Israel, it would appear that this huge number of just this one type of bird is incorrect. Furthermore, after dividing this figure by the number of Israelites (who were no more than a few hundreds of thousands), the portion of each person for one month would be in the thousands.

1683 Numbers 11:18-20.

1684 Numbers 11:31.

1685 The calculation presented here was made by previous authors.

16. STARS SETTING THE STATUS OF PEOPLE

‘Kings came, they fought, the kings of Canaan fought. At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo, they took no plunder of silver. From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.’¹⁶⁸⁶

The author of the Book of Judges believes in the superstition of astrology, i.e., that stars determine the value of the creation, and that they issue victory to people and inflict defeat on others. The *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* states, ‘The reference in Jdg. 5:20 no doubt refers to the influence of the stars in the lives of the people.’¹⁶⁸⁷

1686 Judges 5:19-20.

1687 (Douglas & Tenney, 2011), p. 137.

17. THE SMALLEST SEED

‘He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”’¹⁶⁸⁸

All Christian apologists admit that the mustard seed is not the smallest seed.¹⁶⁸⁹ Towards solving the problem, they devised a number of responses. However, they failed as the passage did not mention that the mustard seed is among the smallest of seeds, or that it is the smallest according to the Apostles. Rather, it passed a definitive judgement by stating that the mustard seed is a) the smallest of b) all seeds. In other words, it is the ‘smallest’ of ‘all’—not just ‘some’, and not just ‘small’ or ‘one of the smallest’.

The Fuller Theological Seminary, and a number of its figures like David Allan Hubbard¹⁶⁹⁰ and Daniel Fuller¹⁶⁹¹, have used this very passage to negate the inerrancy of the Bible.¹⁶⁹²

1688 Matthew 13:31-32.

1689 For example, see: (Boice, 2013); (Ankerberg & Weldon, 2008), p. 310; and (Ham, 2010), pp. 98-99.

1690 David Allan Hubbard (1928-1996). Scholar and specialist in studies of the Old Testament. He was the third President of the Fuller Theological Seminary.

1691 Daniel Fuller (b. 1925). Theologian and son of the founder of the eponymous seminary, where he taught and was the head of the School of Theology.

1692 (Montgomery, 2016), pp. 56-57.

18. PASSING THROUGH BETHPHAGE

‘As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples...’¹⁶⁹³ Jesus was in Jericho before he set out for Jerusalem. What would have been geographically proper was that he would first pass Bethany, then Bethphage, before arriving at Jerusalem. However, we see the author of the Gospel of Mark state that Jesus passed through Bethphage when going towards Bethany, i.e., he went farther away from Jerusalem, which was his destination.

In his footnotes on the Gospel of Mark, the New Testament specialist Dennis Eric Nineham pointed out the obvious problem here: ‘The geographical details make an impression of awkwardness, especially as Bethphage and Bethany are given in the reverse order to that in which travellers from Jericho would reach them...and we must therefore assume that St Mark did not know the relative positions of the two villages on the Jericho road.’¹⁶⁹⁴

1693 Mark 11:1.

1694 (Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, 1992), p. 295.

19. THE MOUNTAIN THAT OVERLOOKS THE ENTIRE EARTH

‘Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.’¹⁶⁹⁵

This passage is borne out of the belief that the Earth is flat and not spherical, and that there is a mountain so high it overlooks the entire Earth.

The Greek text leaves no room for any other interpretation, as it points out that it is an extremely high mountain such that a person on top can view the entire Earth: ὄρος ὑψηλὸν λίαν (horos hypsēlon lian) ‘very high mountain’...πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τοῦ κόσμου (pasas tas basileias tou kosmou) ‘all the kingdoms of the world’.

Thus, the mountain is extremely high to the point that it overlooks the entire world. If it is claimed that this means it *overlooks Palestine only*, this would be incorrect as the passage is clear that the summit of the mountain overlooks all nations of the world. Likewise, the term κοσμου (kosmou) ‘world’ was not used to denote Palestine at all, as the scholar John A. Broadus¹⁶⁹⁶ said.¹⁶⁹⁷ In addition, there is no mountain that overlooks Palestine completely.

The Christian tradition is now of the view that this mountain is present in the region of Jericho.¹⁶⁹⁸ This is no doubt a failed attempt at understanding this passage in light of the geography and topography of Palestine.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Matthew 4:8.

¹⁶⁹⁶ John A. Broadus (1827-1895). Pastor, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, and President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky. His works include *A Harmony of the Gospels*.

¹⁶⁹⁷ (Broadus), p. 67.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

20. THE IMPOSSIBLE SOLAR ECLIPSE

‘...for the Sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.’¹⁶⁹⁹

Scribes distorted this passage by changing ‘eclipsed’ ἐκλιπόντος (ekli-pontos) to ‘went dark’ or ‘stopped shining’ ἐσχολίσθη (escholisthē), as it is impossible for a solar eclipse to occur at times when there is a full Moon.¹⁷⁰⁰ The ‘ekli-pontos’ reading is adopted by NA²⁸ because it is supported by the best witnesses, that is, P⁷⁵ and Codex Sinaiticus.

We find the following in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, ‘No doubt the evangelist believed that a solar eclipse was the cause of this naively supposed phenomenon, though, according to his own narrative, Jesus died at the Passover season when, there being a full moon, a solar eclipse was impossible.’¹⁷⁰¹

Yet another scholarly testimony affirming that this is a scientific error is the statement of George Caird¹⁷⁰² in his commentary *The Gospel of St Luke*: ‘An eclipse of the Sun while the Moon is full is an astronomical impossibility...It was a widespread belief in antiquity that events of great and tragic moment were accompanied by portents, nature showing its sympathy with the distress of man.’¹⁷⁰³ A. R. C. Leaney wrote, ‘Strange, since the Greek would naturally mean “the sun being eclipsed,” impossible at the time of full moon.’¹⁷⁰⁴ A. B. Bruce said, ‘...ought to mean the sun being eclipsed, an impossibility when the moon is full. If all that was meant was the sun’s light totally failing, darkness, e.g., by a sand storm, the natural expression would be eskotisthē.’¹⁷⁰⁵ Lastly, Manson made the same comment, ‘A solar eclipse

1699 Luke 23:45-46.

1700 Translator’s note: The author says here, ‘The Arabic Van Dyck translation of the Bible copied the same, from which we are borrowing’, i.e., the Arabic translation also has ‘the Sun went dark’.

1701 (Cheyne, 1901), 2/1180.

1702 Translator’s note: George Bradford Caird, or G. B. Caird (1917-1984). English theologian, biblical scholar, and Congregational minister. He was Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture at the University of Oxford.

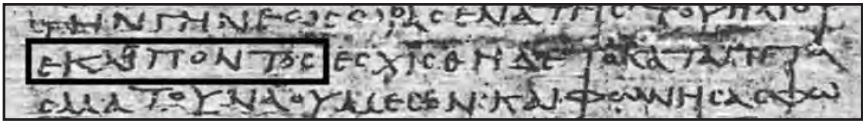
1703 (Caird, 1977), p. 253.

1704 (Leaney, 1966), p. 287.

1705 (Bruce, 1961), 1/461.

was of course impossible at the Passover time—which had to coincide with the full moon—but Luke might not have known this.¹⁷⁰⁶

It might surprise the modern reader to know that in the 3rd century, Origen accused the heretics of corrupting the text to make it look errant by changing ‘went dark’ to ‘eclipsed’. He said, ‘We say then that Matthew and Mark have not stated that an eclipse occurred at that time. Neither did Luke according to very many copies, which have, “And it was about the sixth hour, and a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened.” In some copies however the words, “And the sun was darkened,” do not occur, but, “There was darkness over all the land, the sun being eclipsed.” Possibly some one in the desire to make the statement more plain made bold to place, “The sun being eclipsed,” in the place of, “And the sun was darkened,” believing that the darkness could not have happened except by reason of an eclipse. Yet I rather believe that the secret enemies of the church of Christ have altered this phrase, making the darkness occur by reason of “The sun being eclipsed,” so that the Gospels might be attacked with some show of reason, through the devices of those who wished to attack them.’¹⁷⁰⁷



Papyrus 75, 3rd century, with the term ‘eclipsed’

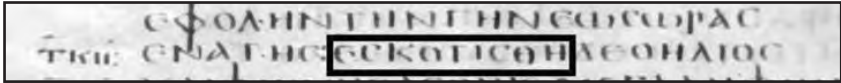
Τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλιπόντος ἐσχίσθη δὲ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ
μέσον

*Tou hēliou ekliPontos eschisthē de to katapetasma tou naou
meson*

‘The Sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was torn in
the middle.’

¹⁷⁰⁶ (Manson, 1930), p. 261.

¹⁷⁰⁷ (Origen, 1929), p. 117.



Codex Bezae, 5th century, with the term 'darkened'

Σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης ἐσχολίσθη
δε ὁ ἥλιος

*(Skotos egeneto eph' holēn tēn gēn heōs hōras enatēs escholisthē
de ho ēlios)*

‘Darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour. The
Sun was darkened.’

Summary

- The Qur'an, the 'recited' Book of God, is at harmony with the realities of the natural world, the 'observed' Book of God.
- That there are errors in some research papers purporting to promote scientific inimitability in the Qur'an does not prevent us from correcting the trajectory of the subject matter, or from adhering to stringent standards in laying out the facts and offering examples.
- We cannot understand the scientific value of the Qur'an's universal assertions without knowing the scientific conceptualisation of Jews and Christians during the era of Prophethood.
- The Qur'an rectified many of the scientific errors in the Bible, even though the primary point of its inimitability is that it concurs with the Bible, not that it conflicts with it.
- The Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition possess many scientific breakthroughs in a number of issues.
- The Bible contains many scientific errors in various fields. Many Christian scholars have acknowledged this.

Further reading

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Summary in Brief

This unique, beautiful, and fascinating universe spurs our hearts and minds to peer into what lies beyond it. The fact that every aspect of it is abundant with riches is proof that it is a purposeful and wise construct. Yet, such wisdom can only be considered perfect when it carries the information required to learn about the purpose of existence. The Creator's mercy is part of His perfection. His Mercy manifests in the creation being guided to the objectives for which it was fashioned. One of the greatest pathways to guidance was the selection of pious humans, who would become conveyors of theory and role models in practice.

The method of decisively identifying a true Prophet is to analyse the career of the one claiming Prophethood, his call, and his evidence. When positive testimonies rack up in favour of these favourable sentiments, they cause the mind to hone and sharpen its focus towards him and drape the heart with the coolness of conviction.

In this book, we have seen the *sīrah* of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, which has been preserved. By the attestations of both friend and foe, his career clearly demonstrates his Prophethood. There is no way to reject this without denying the truthfulness of all this preserved content. This is why we presented the system that substantiates the *sīrah*, comparing the method of the hadith scholars to that of its adversaries. It transpires that the methodology of Muslim ancients is an ingenious one. As for those in denial, we have not heard anything from them save for the incoherent babbling of Orientalists, which is full of baseless objections and doubts that have never been organised into a robust intellectual method.

We analysed his religious call. We found it to be one guiding to the monotheism of God, without either nullifying His Essence and Attributes nor associating rivals unto Him. With the most magnificent of expressions and the purest of meanings, his religious call makes people aware of their Lord, ultimately satisfying the mind and passing the hand of tranquillity over one's soul. In all its information, commands, and prohibitions, it at-

tests to its own truthfulness and its repulsion to dishonesty and fantasy. It neither passes on any information that is factually impossible, nor does it declare anything unlawful without it being inherently evil, nor does it issue a command without it being accompanied by some good.

We pondered over the miraculous signs of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ—they are many in number and emanate from a variety of points associated with him. They regenerate themselves afresh in every era. Anytime a person looks therein to seek guidance, he would find a number of doors opening up, all ready to help him attain guidance and spiritual beauty.

We placed Christianity and its scriptures on the same scales that we placed in the case of the Qur'an. On every occasion, it indicted itself for falsehood; at every examination, it unveiled a humanness and earthliness that could not be remotely connected to any semblance of heavenly Revelation.

In summary, the morals and the content of the message of Muhammad ﷺ are signs of Prophethood in their own right. The supernatural events that occurred at his hands, and especially the one that repeatedly manifests itself in the form of his book, only serve to increase one's belief that he is a Prophet.

A Final Word

*Say, 'I have been commanded to be the first to submit and
not be one of the polytheists.'*

(Qur'an, 6:14)

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