



INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

From a Christian Perspective

‘Christianity stands on its own and its historical records of the life of Jesus as found in the Gospels. It does not need to disprove a religion which only came six hundred years later. Islam, on the other hand, because it acknowledges Jesus but has no alternative historical records of his life, has to disprove Christianity to establish itself. This is why the Qur’an itself constantly argues against Christian beliefs and practices and is also why Muslims try so hard to discredit the Bible.’ This point really helps to be more understanding and not to be so antagonistic toward Muslims. It is true that Christianity stands on its own; it does not have to prove anything. We only have to tell people about the amazing story of Jesus.

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I. Introduction to Islam

This material comes from my 12 years of living in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. I have read and studied extensively about Islam and discussed Islam with many of my Muslim friends in the Middle East. I have also studied Arabic for a number of years, along with some Persian and Urdu. I have also referenced a number of articles from different people on Islam in this introduction. One such article includes: 'The Matter of the Muslim and Islam' and the second article is, 'The Matter of Islam and Christianity' both written by Geoffrey Bingham. They provide a brief introduction to Islam starting out with Muhammad, The Traditions, The Five Pillars, and Jihad. This introduction also deals with more general subjects such as understanding Muslims, speaking to Muslims, the mind of Islam and how to approach a Muslim as a Christian.

These days many in the Western World equate Muslims with terrorism. Yet, only a small percentage, 5 to 10 %, thinks in these terms. Elements within Islam can be grouped into radical, moderate, conservative, extremist, traditional and fanatical. Many, by far the largest percentage are good people trying to live what they consider a godly life. I have some great friends who are Muslims and appreciate them very much. Muslims fought against Christian nations in the beginning during the spread of Islam and during the Crusades. The young knowledgeable person on the street wants nothing to do with terrorists or killing people. Most of North Africa was Christian but became Islamic at the point of the sword. Now Islam is represented throughout the world. There is a unit and solidarity within Islam through its creed and pilgrimages. This has even grown over the last sixty years with events such as the State of Israel, independence from foreign powers, the Arab League, and the Israeli Palestinian conflict and oil money. This has caused Islamic identity and pride to increase tremendously.

Generally a Muslim believes that he or she is justified in life because they are a Muslim and will be justified in the judgment to come. No-one ever thinks or mentions Islam without considering Muhammad, its founder. Muhammad is the focal point of any discussion. He was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 570 AD. He was raised by his uncle, Abu Talib and then at twenty five years of age, he married a rich widow by the name of Khadija who died in 619 AD. He later remarried and eventually accumulated nine wives altogether. He and his friends, Ali and Abu Bakr, along with other followers moved to Medina in 622 AD where he successfully raised up armies. He took Mecca in 630 AD and destroyed all of their idols. He died in the arms of his youngest wife, Ayesha in 632 AD. In Islam, the church and state are one. There is no separation. Look at this brief history list:

Islamic Dates and Dynasties	
A.D.	
570-632	Prophet Muhammad
632-661	'Rightly Guided' Caliphs of Sunni Islam: Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī
661-750	Umayyad Caliphs (Damascus: Syria, Arabia, Iraq, Persia, India, North Africa, Spain, France)
	756-1031 Spanish Umayyads
750-1258	'Abbāsids (Baghdad: Iraq and beyond)
	Hārūn al-Rashīd
	868-905 Tūlūnids (Egypt and Syria)
	909-1171 Fātimids (North Africa, Egypt, Syria)
	1169-1462 Ayyūbids (Egypt, Syria, Yemen)
	Saladin
	800-909 Aghlabids (Africa and Sicily)
	1058-1147 Almoravids (Africa and Spain)
	1130-1269 Almohads (Africa and Spain)
	1250-1517 Mamlūks (Egypt and Syria)
	1038-1307 Seljuq Turks (Persia and Iraq)
1281-1924	Ottoman Turks (Turkey, Balkans, Arab lands)
	1206-1634 Mongol Khans (Mongolia and North China)
	1526-1858 Mughals (India)
	Bābur
	Akbar
	Aurangzeb
	Bahādur Shāh
1924	Istanbul Caliphate ended by Mustafā Kemāl

Earlier, Muhammad had contact with Monophysite and Nestorian churches and learned some things from the Jewish Talmud and apocryphal books. A driving force in his life was the dislike of his own people's superstitions and worship of idols. He experienced dreams and would often go off alone to meditate, pray and fast. Around the age of 40 he started to have what he felt was a series of revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. Later these revelations were written down and the collection became known as the Qur'an. Each revelation was classed as a 'Sura' which means picture. We would say a chapter. These revelations were not about God which presents God as being somebody remote and unknowable and utterly inaccessible. The 622 AD date above has been given the name, 'Hijra', the time when he arrived in Medina where he was warmly accepted. After his death, certain leaders replaced him and became known as Caliphs such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. Ali was Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. He was assassinated in 661 AD.

Mohammed's accomplishments cannot be denied. He saw Islam as a restorer of the religion of Abraham and his faith. Mohammed's message was far greater than Christ. He was surprised when the Christian and Jew turned their faces away from what he offered. It is obvious that Mohammed never truly understood the salvation that Jesus offered and the depth and quality of Scriptures as Christians understand them. This is obvious from what Mohammed preached. He had no understanding of God as the father and Jesus Christ and His

deity. Since Mohammed never accepted the crucifixion either, he never understood what Jesus did on the cross. He didn't understand the need for a risen saviour and lastly, he could accept the Holy Spirit for he actually thought that the angel Gabriel was the Holy Spirit. He was no need for atonement for sins was a matter of God's mercy. Yet, the Qur'anic name for Jesus was Isa. He was the Messiah, was born of a virgin and is called God's 'word' and 'a spirit from God'. But these words do not have the same meaning emphasis as we put to them. He never died on the cross nor was he God. For him the Christian Trinity was nothing more than a falsehood made up of the Father, the virgin and their Child. This falsehood is so ingrained into their thinking that it is virtually impossible to convince them otherwise. Jesus was only a prophet. He thought that Christ foretold the coming of Muhammad. For Muslim eschatology, Christ will come again but this is intermingled with the coming of the Mahdi (the 'Guided One'). The Muslim today thinks they know what Christians believe, yet when a few read the Bible for themselves they are amazed because they have been so wrong in their thinking.

Many considered Ali as the first genuine Caliph or Imam. This recognition of Ali divided Islam into two groups, 'Shi'a, who accepted Ali and the rest who had become known as Sunna. The Sunna are said to hold to traditional ways. There is a deep division between the two groups and in fact neither recognizes either as being true Muslims. But there are many more sects in Islam with Sufism being the most famous. One such group, the Kharijīs seceded from the Shi'ites. One from the Kharijīs was responsible for the death of Ali. Besides the Qur'an, Islam also has a book known as the Hadith (traditions). This is simply a course of daily practical behaviour in Islam. There were six such collections which were accepted by the Sunna to be authoritative. The Shi'a Muslims had their own collection of five works based on the authority of Ali. Even though there is an authoritative nature to the Hadith, it is not considered to be on the level of the Qur'an, a book never criticised.

Part of the Muslim's thinking process relates to certain rules within Islam. These are called the Five Pillars which are the recital of the Muslim Creed, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and finally a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba at Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The creed is a simple statement, 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God'. They also believe in angels, the holy books and messengers of God in the Last Day, and good and evil. Muslims are required to pray five times a day at specific hours. The prayers follow a certain ritual with Friday prayers being the most important. And then there's the ninth month of the Muslim year (Lunar), Ramadan. Ramadan for Muslims is the highlight of the year. It's like the Christian Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter all in one. Fasting is one of the most

important aspects of the time which carries on between sunup and sundown. Every night becomes a time of feasting with five days of more feasting at the end; daily work decreases to about four hours a day with the rest of the day sleeping. Muslims' food intake during Ramadan increases significantly! Giving in terms of zakat and Sadaqa is emphasized. One is legal giving (alms) while the other is free-will offerings. By praying, fasting, giving, going to Mecca and martyrdom, an individual gains merit before God.

Another face of Islam surrounds what is called the Shari'a or Law which is also referred to as the path. Shari'a is the Canon of Islam and can be compared to the laws of the Old Testament. In many Muslim countries that there are double standards of laws; one established by the state as a secular law with Shari'a being enforced in more radical areas. You have this in Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and other places. So, Shari'a takes in marriage, divorce, paternity, guardianship, maintenance, wills and inheritance. Islamic fundamentalists push the use of Shari'a law whenever they are politically in control of a country, otherwise most Islamic countries follow a mixture of secular and Shari'a. Another not so used duty involves Holy War or Jihad. This is war against those who don't follow Islam. There are questions as to when such a call or war is considered legally valid. The idea of Jihad extends further as it divides the world up into two parts: Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, the rule of Islam and those places where Islam should be extended into. For non-believers, it's either conversion or death but for Jews or Christians, it's conversion or submission and tribute. Thus, many Islamic fundamentalists see their goal as the ultimate conquest of the non-Muslim world for the honour of God and the sake of all mankind. And so what is terrorism to us, are Muslim freedom fighters liberating the world from the tyranny of governments such as America and others. As already shown, a small percentage believes this should be done by force with larger percentage of Muslims believing missionary action can accomplish the same thing.

These dominating rules and regulations are considered very restrictive to the western mind set and even for many living in Muslim countries. Many immigrate to western countries for this reason. Most Muslim countries do not permit Muslims to convert to other religions and those who do usually are killed unless they immigrate. For Islam is a religion of the sword. People were pressed into being converts. This Islamic enforcement is often carried on in other more free democratic country behind the lines. Yet to those within Islam, they see this as freedom from the sins of the Christian West for example, alcohol is forbidden, pornography is strictly forbidden on the point of death, prostitution exists only in a very limited and unofficial way. Homosexuality is rampant among the younger people in most

Muslim countries. Many, what Christians consider, such blatant sinfulness is just not allowed in Islam. (Yet, to be sure, some of these things happen underground) For those Muslim countries with minority groups of Christians, Hindus or Buddhists, large incentives are made to get them to convert to Islam. One such Christian Orthodox village in Upper Egypt was promised electricity if they converted to Islam; many did. Islam has made way for the development of Sufism, sometimes call Islamic mysticism which allows a personal, intimate devotion to God. They have also had their arts, crafts, sciences, theology and philosophy. The halt of the Muslim armies in 732 AD turned everything around. This began the decline of Muslim power and the rise of the European nations. The Muslim Ottoman Empire colonized most of the Middle East and North Africa but this was also brought to an end by the power western movement and even Christian missionary movement. Islam was humiliated by the eventual takeover and rule of Western Nations. The rise of terrorism now is only a re-enactment of the days of Mohammad with their spread of Islam through Jihad but many if not most see that the world can be taken by peaceful means.

One of the things we should see is that all Muslims consider themselves to be Muslims regardless of the many groups within Islam. For the Muslim, there is no salvation as we know it. For a person to become a Muslim, all they have to do is say the Creed. Then it is taken for granted that all Muslims will follow the example of Muhammad in living their lives. For many 'nominal' Christians, they don't see the problem, for in many ways they are already living a Muslim life style. For the Christian to have any effect on the Muslim there must be a love for the individual, regardless of what religion they are of. We must have a hope in Christ and pray that Christ will over rule their antagonism. We need to remember what Christ said to Peter when Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword'. As saints, we are called to endure.

To sum things up, every Christian should be familiar with Islam and Christianity. We should know on one hand that the God of Islam cannot be incarnate and is contrary to that of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Yet, the Sword of Islam or any retaliation on our part will never bring peace of victory to the world. Out of all the strictures and Islamic thinking, there is openness to share the Gospel.

One finds it a bit difficult to negatively to critique such presentations. These articles are information that provide an unbiased view of information on Islam even though limited. The author has proved his knowledge and ability to present such information communicatively. For anyone who wants a brief and factual history on the religion, this

would do. The benefits of these articles provide enough information without a lot of superficial unneeded dogma that is often associated with the topic of Islam.

II. Islam

Again, I have tried to put my experience and knowledge to use in this Introduction of Information, but I have also used other articles: ‘Muhammad and the Religion of Islam’ written by John Gilchrist. It approaches and evaluates Islam in the light of the Christian faith. This article assesses Islam both objectively and sincerely; many western scholars are faulted because they will not make any concessions to popular Muslim sentiments. The main points take the shape of specific information about Muhammad’s life, the Qur’an and the Hadith, and finally a description of its religion.

1. Muhammad’s Life: It’s difficult to mention anything about Muhammad without related it to the city of Mecca. Trade with the local nomadic tribes was the lifeblood of the city. It was a commercial and religious centre of Arabia with a central shrine called the Ka’aba. The shrine contained over three hundred idols with Hubal being the highest of them. In addition, there was a black stone which was considered important and almost holy by the pagan Arabs. They also believed in the god, Allah, along with the other gods within the shrine. The various tribes came to Mecca to worship their gods and take part in the various poetical contests that were arranged at the fairs. Mecca was controlled by just one tribe, the Ouraysh. Muhammad was born into a sub-tribe of this Ouraysh. His father, Abdallah, died before he was born. His mother’s name was Amina who also died six years after his birth. He was raised initially by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. This was in the year 570 AD. After the death of his grandfather, he was protected by his uncle, Abu Talib. Muhammad ventured to Syria at the age of twelve, where he perhaps gained some of his first impressions of Judaism and Christianity. At twenty-five he married a forty year old wealthy widow named Khadija. They had two boys who both died at infancy and four girls. This marriage lasted for twenty five years and after her death he married many more times with one Ayishah becoming his youngest and most favourite.

At the age of forty, Muhammad started to spend time meditating in a cave on Mt Hira. It was during one of these times, that he saw an angel of whom he thought was a Jinn that appeared to him. In the Hadith, it says that the angel told him to, ‘Recite (Iq’ra!) in the Name of Your Lord.’ The passage can be found in the 96th Surah (picture; used for chapter) of the

Qur'an. Telling his wife, she persuaded Muhammad that he had been commissioned by Allah as a prophet, even though he was doubtful at the time. The next revelation was presented by Gabriel (Jibri) and it was called the Sura of the Morning. The last sentence of this forms Surah 93:1-3 in the Qur'an. He was told to call the people of Mecca to worship the one God Allah, to forsake idol worship and to prepare for the Day of Reckoning, to choose between heaven and hell, and to acknowledge him as a prophet. One of Muhammad's earlier followers was Abu Balr from the Quraysh tribe. Abu Balr eventually became the first caliph, after Muhammad's death. The Quraysh took exception to Muhammad's preaching because they felt that it threatened Mecca's livelihood with its pagan worship and commercial trade. The problem was over Allah being call the Supreme Being but the denunciation of their idols, of which Lat, Uzza and Manat were regarded as intercessors by the Quraysh. The Ka'aba had always reconized that the great god Allah was Lord of the Ka'aba. The God of the Jews was called ar-Rahman at the time which was different than Allah. Later both were recognized as one name for both. Persecution increased for Muhammad and his group. He decided to venture out to the town of at-Ta'if, southeast of Mecca, home of the goddess, al-Lat. They were rejected and stoned. Yet there were conversions happening at different places with different people. The city of Yathrib was inhabited by two tribes, the Aus and Khazraj who fought each other constantly. There were many Jews in the city which undoubtedly had some kind of monotheistic influence there. The city accepted Muhammad and his teachings which infuriated the Quraysh in Mecca. In the year 622 AD, Muhammad and about a hundred of his band had to flee to Medina. From this point on, they were call Muslims and adherents of al-Islam. Eventually, Medina accepted Muhammad as their leader. He stated that Allah would punish those who harmed its inhabitants that it has its own way of driving out evil people and that Dajjal (Islam's equivalent of the Antichrist) would not be able to enter it. Muhammad married his second wife Sauda in Mecca, shortly after Khadija's death and now took Ayishah, the daughter of Abu Bakr, as another wife at the age of twelve. Of all his wives, Ayishad had never been married before. Muhammad built his first mosque at Quba just south of Medina. At first the Muslims faced Jerusalem to pray but afterwards Muhammad changed this direction to the Ka'aba in Mecca. This had something to do by the rejection of the Jews at Medina. We then read in the Qur'an that Abraham first built the Ka'aba with his son Ishmael as a house of worship dedicated to Allah alone.

However, from Medina, Muhammad takes on a different character with sanctioned robbery, murder toward anyone who is against Islam. The flight from Mecca became known as the Hijrah and was seen as preparation for the jihad against non-believers. Muhammad's

objectives now were to create a theocratic Muslim state and community by fighting those who stood in his way. As for the Jews, Muhammad initially established a peace agreement with the three Jewish tribes in Medina, the Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nadhir and Banu Quraydhah. In surah 45:16, it states, 'we did a foretime grant to the Children of Israel the Book, the Power of Command, and Prophet hood; we gave them, for sustenance, things good and pure; and we favoured them above the nations.' He went against the Meccans under the leadership of Abu Jahl, an enemy and won the fight. The Quran calls this battle the Day of Deliverance. Muhammad even thought of it as a miracle. Islam was now firmly establish and was gaining ground. There were later battles of Uhud and another called the Ditch where the odds were against the Muslims yet it proved to be the turning point for Mecca. Some battles he lost and some he won. Eventually, Muhammad turned on the Jews in Medina for not accepting his new religion. The Jewish fortress of Khaibar, north of Media, was taken and brought into subjection. Two of the tribes were later allowed to leave but the Banu Quaydhah tribe was massacred for colluding with the Quraysh at Mecca. A thousand men were killed with the women and children given over to slavery. Because of the Jews' stand, they are constantly slandered in the Hadith. In the Muslim mind, the Jews rejected God's apostle from the Arabs.. There were stories of different Jews who were murdered such as Abu Rafi, one of the chiefs of the Banu Nadhir tribe. This marked the darkest depth of Muslim policy. It has been stated (Gairdner, *The Reproach of Islam*, p. 63) that Mohammed as the leader of Islam was in fact precisely the type of 'Messiah' which the Jews of Christ's day wanted. Of course, Christ rejected this openly.

After this, in an attempt to do away with Muhammad, the Quraysh with 10,000 men came against Muhammad but they were turned back by a ditch which the Medians dug prohibiting them from entering Medina. Through the Treaty of Hdaybiyah, Muhammad returned to Mecca. Later, he marched on Mecca with ten thousand men but no fighting took place as an agreement was reached. He called for the Quraysh to turn away from their idols and worship Allah. In Surah 33:40 Muhammad was confirmed not only as the Apostle of God and seal of the prophets. By now, Islam had become an autonomous religion, separate from Judaism and Christianity and professed by Muslims to be superior. Afterwards, the Hawazin tribe came against him but the Muslim army won. From Arabia, Muhammad sent an army against Muta, a Byzantine town on the borders of Syria. Even though they lost, it prepared the way for further battles. Soon, all of Arabia adopted Islam. In 632, Muhammad died and was buried in a chamber with Ayishad, his favourite wife and Abu Bakr was elected caliph. There were revolts but all of them were put down. Anyone who opposed Islam was called

aggressors with Muslims being the defenders. People were only spared if they repented and became Muslims. Within a hundred years Islam had taken much of the territory from Spain to India.

2. Muhammad's Personality: In dealing with Muhammad's personality, the article first looks at the number of wives, then it looks at Muhammad's treatment of personal enemies and the also circumstances of his marriages. Before the Hijrah, Muhammad married Sauda and then three years later, he married Ayishah, who featured prominently in the Hadith in Medina. He then married the daughter of Umar, Hafsa, whose husband was killed at Badr. After that he married Umm Salamah and then Zaynab bint Khuzaymah but Zaynab died shortly afterwards. One of his last wives Raihana was a Jew who is said to have not accepted Islam because of what Muhammad did to her tribe. The Muslims had killed her husband just before he was brought into camp. The marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh, his cousin, who was her husband and Muhammad's own adopted son divorced her. Muhammad gave her the largest wedding-feast he had given to any of his wives. This marriage shocked the Arabs as it was against standard custom. Muhammad decreed that it was okay in one of his writings and Zaid remained faithful to Muhammad. The wife later boasted to the other wives that her marriage was ratified in heaven. The story is told that Ayishah, among all the wives was jealous toward some of the others. Muhammad selected to spend one night with each of them. This reminds us of Mark 10:9, Jesus told the Pharisees that God had made one woman for the one man, adding 'What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder'. Thus the Qur'an allows Muslims to have up to four wives at a time. This is regarded in non-Muslim circles as one of the weaknesses of Islamic morality. Despite many of his 'seeming' qualities, how could such a person to be considered as any kind of man of God? That honour belongs to Jesus Christ alone.

3. Muhammad's Prophetic Experiences: One wonders whether or not Muhammad's experience at the Ka'aba years earlier had any kind of influence on his drive to become the prophet of his god. Of course, the Qur'an says that his vision was from Allah. The Hadith and the Qur'an indicate that Muhammad was surprised at these and at first thought they were demonic until his wife and cousin convinced him otherwise. Generally, Christians think that it was indeed of Satan. The angel is said to have appeared to Muhammad in human form. Muslims are convinced that these were divine revelations but non-Muslims think that he suffered from fits of epilepsy which was the cause of his prophetic phenomena. In fact,

epilepsy does this to an individual. There are also other types of seizures which cause similar things. Whatever Muhammad experienced, this was not naturally and obviously demonic. Satan disguises himself as an 'angel of light' and this Muhammad's visions had to be induced by occult forces. It is true because the religion of Islam and the Qur'an has been a remarkable stumbling-block to the acceptance of Gospel of Jesus Christ. Muhammad's personality within the Hadith is basically unreliable. To understand Muhammad more, one needs to read and follow the writings of the Qur'an. It conveys much of his growing prophetic consciousness as his religion grew. The final form of the Qur'an shows the present of his own personal temperament. Yet in saying this, it is also obvious that he genuinely believed that he was the messenger of God. He could not have been so persistent in spreading Islam if he had not had such a conviction. Many such verses in the Qur'an seem to indicate such strong conviction even though deluded. Of course, Muslim dogma does not question any of this. Muhammad is the author and chief contriver of the Qur'an is beyond dispute and Muhammad did not fraudulently compose the Qur'an, but even if he was sincere this does not mean that God was the author of the Qur'an. Interestingly, Muhammad's experiences and the concept of his own prophet hood parallel that of Mani, a celebrated and influential false prophet in Persia. Mani also believed that someone else was crucified in Jesus' place. He also claimed to be the Comforter promised by Jesus. Another aspect of the development of the Qur'an was the deliberate guidance of events of Muhammad's life and comments. But these are accepted by Muslim as being normal. The Qur'an was simply an obvious expression of his own experienced and thoughts. The connection is obvious to others.

One such negative event in Muhammad's life surrounds a time when he supposedly performed a prostration when he finished reciting Surat-an-Najm, and all the Muslim and pagans and Jinns and human beings prostrated along with him. This was done because Muhammad was prompted to yield to his own kinsmen in a measure to reconcile himself to them. He quoted the words used by the Meccans to exalt their goddesses. The story includes a rebuttal by Gabriel to Muhammad, saying that this was not from God. The story has affected greatly the Muslim psyche that they deny it wholeheartedly. Yet the story coincides with the suggestion that Satan interjected during Muhammad's recitation of Surah 53. It is quite conceivable that in his early days he underwent a prolonged tension in his mind as he sought to reconcile himself to his people.

The Dome of the Rock is the third most famous Islamic monument in the world. It stands on the site of the original Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Traditions basically say that while Muhammad was asleep one night, God brought him the Jerusalem on an al-Burg. Some

traditions hold that it had a horse's body and an angel's head and a peacock's tail. This journey has been characterized as the al-Isra or 'the night journey'. Then there was the al-Mi'raj or the ascent' where Gabriel took him to the heavenly lote-tree on the boundary of heaven before the throne of Allah. Here he had a conversation between Allah and Moses about the number of prayers a Muslim should perform in a day. Surah 17:1 says the Journey by night was to the farthest Mosque which is interpreted to be the Temple at Jerusalem or the Dome of the Rock, known today as the 'al-Aqsa' mosque. The whole story of the Mi'raj is found in the hadith and is thought to be pure fiction by some but not necessarily by Muslims. It was an obvious dream that was transformed into an actual physical event. So Orthodox Muslims hold this to be a literal bodily ascent to heaven.

4. The Composition, Character and Teachings of the Qur'an: The Qur'an is almost the same length as the New Testament and there have been many English translations made of it with various degrees of excellence. They have all been done by individuals. Muslims believe that the original Qur'an is preserved on a tablet in heaven and that the text in use today is a copy of it. The Qur'an emphasises that God is its author and preserver and the language of the Qur'an is only Arabic as this is God's language. It has 114 Surah's or chapters with varying lengths in no chronological order. Every chapter but one begins with 'Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim' or 'In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful'. This is simply known as 'The Bismillah'. The Shahadah is the first testimony and creed of Islam. Each surah of the Qur'an is broken up into brief sections known as ruku'ah. The book is also broken up into thirty sections of roughly equal length, each of which is known as a juz. There are twenty-nine Surah's of the Qur'an which begin with certain letters of the alphabet. The very word al-Qur'an means 'the Recitation'. This recitation is called the 'tilawah' and is highly regarded and is thought of in terms of the 'knowledge of pronunciation.' Before the recitation a Muslim will recite the words a'uuthu billahi minash-shaytaanir rajiim or 'I take refuge in Allah from Satan the stoned.' A Muslim who learns the Qur'an by heart is called a hafiz or guardian of the text.

There are passages in the Qur'an that defend its own inspiration. This contrasts with the Bible which simply says, 'Thus says the Lord.' Some of the book's names are Qur'aanum-Majiid, Qur'aanun-Kariim, Al-Qur'aanil-Hakiim, al-Qur'anul-Majid, al-Qur'anul-Hakim. These names represent adjectives like: glorious, honourable, full of wisdom, exalted, wise and the glorious Qur'an, the Exalted Criterion. But there is no place in the Qur'an that says it is holy. The Qur'an doesn't have the character or attitude in regards to

holiness or righteousness which are the foundation of the doctrine of God in the Bible. However, there are certain Surah's within the Qur'an that is looked upon as being more important. One such Surah is the first one, the Surat-ul-Fatihah. It is the only place where the words are solely those of worshippers addressing God or rather where the Qur'an prays. This is recited as part of the worship ritual called the Fatiha. This is usually concluded by, 'amen'. It contains the first three names of the ninety-nine names of God: ar-Rahman, the compassionate, ar-Rahim, the merciful and al-malik, the sovereign. This surah also contains the name for Islam as being the straight path, as-Siratal-Mustaqim. Another important surah is entitled the Surat-ul-Ikhla, 'Chapter of Purity' which emphasizes monotheistic with two further titles of Allah, as-Samad or the Eternal and al-Ahad or the One. Surah 112:1-4, 'Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.' This chapter is often quoted against Christians as a defiant summary of Mohammed's revelation. Another such equally important surah is the 36th named Suratu-Ya-Sin. The Hadith says that Muhammad said that 'there is certainly a heart for everything and the heart of the Qur'an is Ya Sin.'

No Muslim will place or read a Qur'an on the ground. Stands are usually set up in mosques and at homes for this purpose. It should be placed on the high above all the other features in the home. Every Muslim should perform an ablution before touching the Qur'an and should kiss it once it is opened. Surah 56:79 says that none shall touch but those who are clean.' It also considered the great outstanding miracle of Islam. Some of its passages compare to that used by some of the Old Testament prophets. Muslims and Muhammad himself challenged anyone to present anything like it; but in reality the Qur'an is no more noble or elegant if one understands the knowledge of books written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, English, French and all other languages of note. We can just as easily say that about the Biblical writings or the Psalms.

As mentioned before, the Qur'an represents a general lack of chronology. They are simply mixed up between those Muhammad wrote when in Medina and those he wrote in Mecca. The early Meccan surah concentrates on the waywardness of his people, the judgment to come and the destiny of all people. For example, 'But you reject right and judgment! But verily over you are appointed angels to protect you, kind and honourable, writing down your deeds: They know and understand all that you do. As for the righteous, they will be in bliss; and the wicked, they will be in the Fire, which they will enter on the Day of Judgment, and they will not be able to keep away there from.' Throughout early passages Muhammad stands forth purely as one sent to call his people to the good and to admonish them against the

punishments awaiting evildoers. In the later Meccan surah's, Allah's name begins to appear with more regularity. Generally, there's a legalistic form to most of the Medianan surah's whereas the Meccan surah's have a general prophetic character to them. This is one of the more moving Surah's, 'By the Glorious Morning light, and by the Night when it is still, Thy Guardian-Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor is He displeased. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present. And soon will thy Guardian- Lord give thee (that wherewith) thou shalt be well-pleased. Did He not find thee an orphan and give you shelter (and care)? And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made you independent. Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness, nor repulse the petitioner (unheard); but the Bounty of thy Lord - Rehearse and proclaim! (*Surah 93.1-11.*)' In addition, the Meccan passages usually speak to Muhammad himself or to men generally compared to the Medianan passages where Muhammad's followers are addressed and show concern with campaigns, confiscation, customs, and behaviour. The Shari'ah laws are also seen in passages dating from Muhammad's migration to Medina. It was in the Medianan period that Muhammad began to see himself as God's supreme apostle and final messenger to all mankind. It should be said that most Muslims don't distinguish between these two periods nor do Muslims analyse its teaching, sources or development in a critical way. They simply claim dogmatically that it is the true and final revelation of God.

5. *Sources of the Qur'an*: Here, the origins, sources and influences that relates to the Qur'an will be discussed. The collection of the Qur'an, itself, took place after the death of Muhammad. It is certain that at his death, there was no collected, arranged, collated body of revelations. The first attempt in collecting such took place with Abu Bakr. Yet, the Hadith contradicts this by saying that four of companions (Ubai bin Ka'b, Mu'adh bin Jabal, Zaid bin Thabit and Abu Zaid) of Ziad bin Thabit collected them during the life time of Muhammad. However, other parts of the Hadith indicate that the collection happened after his death. Interestingly, Abu Bakr only preserved the text of the Qur'an without making copies of it. Today, the Qur'an is a terribly disjointed book of fragmentary texts and passages compiled un-harmonious with respect to sequence or theme and is not the kind of book that can testify to its own textual accuracy.

But Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the very Qur'an that Muhammad gave to them 1400 years ago. This is their proof that the book is the Word of God as shown in Surah 15:9, '*Innaa nahnu nazzalnaath-thikraa wa innaa lahuu lahaafidhuun* - Indeed We sent down the Admonition, and will verily guard it.' We hear claims such as the purity of the Qur'an text

which is and will forever remain the greatest miracle of all history. (Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, p. xcvi). Yet, such things as the vowel marks were added about 200 years afterwards. And the Qur'an has never been subjected to the form of textual criticism so intensively applied to the Bible in recent times. Islamic fundamentalists are a dangerous lot and would most likely suppress any such textual criticism if it took place. In the days of the first caliph there were different collections of the Qur'an available in various districts, but these were burned. This indicates that there wasn't a standard text at first. To plainly state, there were actual varying written collections with textual variants during this time period. One such Codex was used in Syria. Another such Codex made up from Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, an early convert to Islam, was ordered also to be destroyed. He was considered to be a great authority on the text of the Qur'an. He thus argued over this decision and at first refused to destroy his copy.

It was under the later Uthman who decided what was to be included and excluded in the Qur'an. This came from the collections of Zaid's text already mentioned above and was to provide a standard for the Islamic world. But there were arguments over the choice of texts and some say this was a ploy by Uthman to establish control over the Muslim empire and to neutralise the potential of revolution. Today, Muslims excuse this by saying that this was only to remove dialectal peculiarities within the pronunciation of the Qur'an. To say that the Qur'an was preserved totally free of textual error is nothing more than an expedient fallacy of Muslims. As the text of the Bible covers a period of nearly two thousand years and a host of different authors, and dates centuries before the Qur'an, it is quite remarkable to find that the variant readings in it are no more prevalent or extensive than similar readings and passages that affected the earlier Qur'anic texts. With the discovery of the Red Sea Scrolls, Biblical manuscripts are dated to a hundred or so years before Christ, making them over two thousand years old. These compare with the same as we have today. What a conformation of originality!

This same Bible and the Jews also had an influence on the Qur'an. Muhammad heavily relied on his Jewish contacts for many passages and teachings. The Biblical narrative of Jonah is an example. Other Biblical truths are confounded by folklore and fables taken from the Talmud. One such example comes from the narrative of Abraham and the idols. These are reproduced in the Qur'an using a true Aggadic cloak. Virtually all references can be traced either to the Bible or to the Midras and Mishnah. The story of Abraham's son was from historical sources unknown to the Bible. He could not read the scriptures of the Jews or their folklore in the Midrash and other Talmudic records. Yet, this is not problematic as there

were many Jewish communities in Medina and other parts of the Hijaz. The errors represented in the Qur'an indicate that he received his information orally and also piecemeal. The Qur'an gives an obvious impression that such materials were from hearsay and scraps of information gathered from conversation with different people. The Surah 21:62-68 narrates that Abraham destroyed all the idols in his parents' house and they threw him in the fire but God rescued him from it. There was another one of Cain and Abel where the Qur'anic passages were easily traced to Jewish folklore. Interestingly, Muhammad could not understand the significance of Abel's sacrifice of a lamb as a symbol of atonement and self-abasement. The story continues in the Qur'an as a raven is sent by God to show Cain where to hide the body of his brother in Surah 5:34. Surah 5:35 provides us with another example of a direct quote from the Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5. Muslim writers generally avoid the issue of the sources of the Qur'an in their writing leaving them totally uncontested. These points prove conclusively that much of the Qur'an is derived from Jewish fables.

The Qur'an tells of an event in Surah 18:9-26 where some youths fell asleep in a cave and woke up years later. They became known as the 'Companions of the Cave.' This story has a direct parallel to the Syriac writer Jacob of Sarug before 521 AD. The original story was named, 'Seven Sleepers' and the cave was allegedly in Ephesus while the story in these works states that they were Christians who were fleeing from persecution. The story supposedly took place in 251 AD. The cave was sealed and then re-opened 200 years later. The seven told the new Emperor what God had done for them. This could also relate to Matthew 27:52-53. It seems like that Muhammad is caught out. However sincere he was, he was just so much sincerely wrong.

6. *The Hadith:* Even though the Qur'an has always been regarded as the main source for Islam, they do have something called the 'Traditions' which show Muslims how to live their lives within the parameters of Islam. These are highly regarded within Islam. Using the Qur'an and the Hadith, Muslims decide what action is to be taken on any particular subject. After the Qur'an was compiled, there were other sayings of Muhammad that didn't qualify to be entered into the Qur'an. These sayings were collected and put into a book. This happened during the reign of the Abbasids more than a century after Muhammad's death. Within this Hadith, these collections have been classified on six different levels: The Mutawatir is the traditions of the first three generations. The next level is the Mashur. This includes traditions which in every age has been considered genuine by some learned Doctor. Then, there are those known as the ahad or isolated. This level is divided up into other divisions all relying

on a number of authorities such as traditions traced back to Muhammad or those only going back to his companions or those derived from his Successors. Other ways of considering their authority is examining the chain of supporters each tradition has. These are listed as Sahih or Genuine, Hasan or the Fair and the Da'if or the weak. The sahih and hasan are graded yet again as acceptable or rejected.

The early records begin with the Sirat literature which are biographical works in which the material is set out in a chronological form. Major works from these include the Life of the Messenger of Allah, Book of the Campaigns and the Book of the Major Classes. These are considered inferior to the Hadith. Yet, by Christian considerations these have perhaps more truth than lies. Other traditions have been developed by various people and some are considered important. Many traditions were fabricated to favour important caliphs and dynasties. There is also the Sunnah which is the actual form of behaviour or code of conduct of the prophet which is prescribed as norm for the Muslim community. To be sure, Muslim tradition is expressed by the hadith and sunna. The hadith is the external while the sunna in the internal side. The hadith is the form where sunna is the matter or obligation. Interestingly, some modern Muslim scholars would like to do away with the Hadith as an unreliable, out dated and inflexible rule of conduct in favour of the Qur'an alone. However, this would fracture the foundation of Islam because the Hadith has become the real foundation of ethics, laws and practices of Islam. The test of authenticity of each tradition depended on the chain of supporting points as already mentioned. The question posed to determine this is, who said that he said this? An example of this is, 'Affan ibn Muslim informed us that Hammad ibn Urwah related on the authority of Urwah that he received from Ayishah that the Apostle of Allah said...' There are another group of traditions dealing mainly with legal import written by Muwatta of Imam Malik, founder of one of the four major schools of law in Islam. But of all the works of the Hadith, the Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim are regarded as the most authentic and authoritative. These are so highly prized that they stand closest to the Qur'an. These have been published in an interlinear Arabic-English form in nine volumes. The remaining works of the Hadith are called the sunan or path because they focus on Muhammad's actions and decrees. These provide the ultimate foundation of all Islamic law. The best of these collections comes from Sunan of Abu Dawud. This work has also been published in English. Two other similar collections belong to Sunan works of at-Tirmithi and an-Nasai. The last work, the Sunan of Ibn Maja is considered the weakest of the six major works. One last person needs to be mentioned being the first Traditionalist. Abu Hurairah became a Muslim a few years before Muhammad's death. His

traditions changed Mohammed to that of a saint and philanthropist in the minds of his followers.

Interestingly, the authenticity of the Traditions has been heavily criticized to the point that none of them can be accepted as genuine. For some the fabrication of the whole tradition literature has become a *fait accompli*. Muslim scholars say that the fabricated traditions have been largely eliminated. These traditions have shaped Islam into what it is today, not what it was in its earlier life. The doctrine and life of the community are primarily based on these traditions and not the Qur'an. However, the orthodox accept the unquestioned authenticity of the two Sahihs, the general reliability of the four Sunan works, and the value of the *Sirat* literature and other Hadith works. To them, it remains unchallenged to this day.

7. The Principal Duties of Islam: In this section, the article deals with Muslim Faith, the Islamic Concept of God, God's love, Islamic theology, Sin and Forgiveness, The Doctrine of Predestination, Sins of the Prophets, Jesus Christ, The Confession of Faith, Prayer, Alms and Fasting, and the Hajj.

Faith and practice is divided into 'Iman and Din.' The five pillars of Islam belong principally to the practice of the religion. Iman generally means faith or belief. It comes from the word 'amana' and can be rendered, 'he came into peace or security.' The words 'Islam' and 'Muslim' come from the same root letters and means submission or the 'one who submits.' Therefore, whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he has indeed laid hold on the firmest handle. *Surah 2.256 (Ali)*. Iman does not carry quite the same meaning as 'faith' in Christianity. The doctrine of the unity of Allah is called 'tawhid' in Islam. The power of God expresses itself from *Surah 14:27* where God does what he wants. God has power to direct the affairs of people, their future and act as he chooses. This emphasis causes Muslims to think of God more in negative terms, thus in describing God, Muslims describe what he is not rather than what he is. They have no such thing as the complexity of God's divine love and holiness as revealed in the Triune God of the Bible. For the Christian the love of God means the love that God has for us and our love for him. Both ideas are strange to Islam. Even though Allah has many of the attributes of Jehovah, the Muslim concept of God is inadequate, incomplete, barren and grievously distorted. The theology of God for the Muslim comes out of naturalism not from the knowledge of the Incarnation. Yet *Surah 58:7* says that wherever men gather together in conversation, Allah is one among them and that he is nearer to man than his jugular vein. However, there is no suggestion that men can enter into a relationship with God such as is found in the Bible. The

Muslim cannot know God personally; he can only walk in the 'Way of Allah.' Islam doesn't understand the Christian confidence in God's personal grace and love towards wayward sinners. The love of God in the Qur'an is confined to devotion to duty on the part of man and approval by God. Muslims do not think in terms of sentiment, sympathy or heartfelt affection. There is nothing in the Qur'an that comes near the idea of, 'We love, because he first loved us' in 1 John 4:19. The only motive for this is gratitude. Love in the Quran relates to a natural disposition towards that which is found appealing. It does not refer to the Greek word, agape. However, just so that you understand, the Muslim is promised that God is full of kindness to those who serve him (Surah 3:30). Love does not express an attribute of God Himself, but a relation which He assumes towards men conditioned by their attitude to Him. The God of Mohammed is in the wind, the earthquake and in the fire, but not in the still small voice of love. Muslims boldly claim that the religion of Islam has the simplest and purest monotheism. This is contrary to the Christian Trinitarian monotheism of God that reveals an outstanding grace, love and glory.

Angels and demons have many similarities to Christianity. Demons are known as jinn and some of them represent both believing spirits and well as evil spirits. There are four archangels, Jibril, the angel of revelation from the Biblical Gabriel, Mikal and Israfil, who will sound the trumpet at the last day and Azra'il, the angel of death. Another angel, Ridwan, guards Paradise and the dead are visited by two further angels of hideous appearance, Munkar and Nakir. The Bible teaches that Satan was once the highest of angels but fell through his pride in seeking to exalt himself and make himself like the Most High. Islam rejects this concept. The Islamic name for the devil is Shatan from the Hebrew Shaitan. In regards to miracles, Muhammad replied in Surah 17:93, 'Am I anything except a man, an apostle?' There are, however, many traditions ascribing miracles to Muhammad. These are plainly forgeries. These were obviously entered to equate Muhammad to Jesus.

Islam teaches that God will exercise forgiveness and remit the sins of the faithful as in Surah 5:77, 'Allah is the forgiving, the Merciful.' Yet Islam knows nothing of the atonement of sin and therefore has no instrument by which a Muslim can be totally assured of the forgiveness of all his sins. But they do believe that all the prophets are exempt from sins, both light and grave, from unbelief and sordid deeds. But yet at the same time, Muhammad remains a fallible and sinful creature in the Qur'an. The Qur'an does teach that the prophets prayed for the forgiveness of their sins and clearly states that Muhammad needed forgiveness for his transgressions. The idea of him becoming an ideal person and prototype comes as a later development. The Qur'an and the Bible clearly teach that Jesus Christ alone was sinless.

In Islam, there are great sins and lesser sins. The lesser sins can easily be forgiven if believers repent. The greatest of all sin is 'shirk' or associating people with Allah. This sin is unforgivable and will send the sinner to hell. Other major sins are usury, adultery, cowardice before infidels in battle, disobedience to parents and false notions about God's forgiveness. The intercession of Muhammad for his people on the Last Day is one of the greatest of all the hopes of the individual Muslim, but Surah 2:254 says that no bargaining, friendship or intercession will avail on that Day. Islam does not agree with the Christian teaching that sin is a state of mind and heart, a disposition of rebellion against God which estranges the creature from the Creator and sets him at enmity with God. So sins, according to Islam, are evil deeds committed in defiance. These can be cancelled out by good deeds done in submission to God. Evil deeds are what God declares them to be which shows that there is no true conviction of sin in Islam. Thus, Muhammad himself had no deep conviction of sin as God for the Muslim does not redeem a person but simply forgives him when he repents. There is no heart cry by the Muslim as indicated in Romans 7:24, Paul cries out, 'Wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death?'

Like the Christian, the Muslim believes in a Day of Judgment using terms such as, 'Day of Resurrection', 'Last Day', or the 'Day of Reckoning.' Yet within Christian circles, the idea of hell is not touched on with the church mainly teaching that everyone are destined for heaven. For the Qur'an the judgement is either everlasting bliss or everlasting torment. Some Muslims writers regard hell as some kind of spiritual hospital. And that Hell is intended to raise man by way of purifying process. One Surah says (75:3-4) 'Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay, we are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers. But a tradition (Zafrulla Khan, op. cit., p.185) has it that life after death cannot and does not mean that the dead will be re-assembled and reconstituted upon the earth. The Qur'anic title for heaven is Jannat and for hell is Jahannam apparently derived from the Greek form of Gehenna. Heaven for the Muslim is an image of bliss where the believer's comfort is derived from his circumstances rather than the peace and joy of his soul. They are promised gardens under which rivers flow, young servants attending them who never grow old. They will serve un-intoxicating wine, a selection of beautiful, dark-eyed virgin consorts, and an abundance of carpets, cushions and other forms of wealth and comfort. These are further debased by sensualities of earth. This contrasts with the purity and spiritual blessedness of the heaven promised by Jesus. Biblical paradise is chiefly one of righteousness. Along the same lines, The Qur'an declares that God has control over all things and thus everything is predetermined according to the foreknowledge and express will of God. Thus,

no matter what happens in a person's life is God's will. This has created a degree of fatalism to the point that it has become theology. At the same time, the Qur'an allows that man has a degree of freedom to choose his own path and will accordingly be held responsible for his actions. In Christianity, this is balanced with a freedom on the part of man to do good or evil as he chooses, holding him responsible for his actions.

Part of the Muslim's thinking process relates to certain rules within Islam. These are called the Five Pillars which are the recital of the Muslim Creed, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and finally a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba at Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The creed is a simple statement, 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God'. They also believe in angels, the holy books and messengers of God in the Last Day, and good and evil. Muslims are required to pray five times a day at specific hours. The prayers follow a certain ritual with Friday prayers being the most important. Ritualistic Islam in some ways is based on the Salaah. The times are fajar, zuhr, asr, maghrib and isha. This is compulsory according to some theologians. And only the Hadith states that it is to be five times a day. And then there's the ninth month of the Muslim year (Lunar), Ramadan. Ramadan for Muslims is the highlight of the year. It's like the Christian Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter all in one. Fasting is one of the most important aspects of the time which carries on between sunup and sundown. Every night becomes a time of feasting with five days of more feasting at the end; daily work decreases to about four hours a day with the rest of the day sleeping. Muslims' food intake during Ramadan increases significantly! Giving in terms of zakat and Sadaqa is emphasized. One is legal giving (alms) while the other is free-will offerings. The fixed tithe in Islam is 2.5 per cent. This is a surcharge of a person's wealth and possessions. By praying, fasting, giving, going to Mecca and martyrdom, an individual gains merit before God. The Hajj is obligatory for those who can afford it. It can only be performed on the 8th, 9th and 10th day of the last month of the Muslim year. It begins outside Mecca where people must change into two strips of white cloth called the ihram for men. Women need only to be modestly and appropriately attired. The people state that they are now going on the Hajj and say, 'Here I come, O Allah, here I come.' They then enter Mecca and perform the sevenfold circling of the Ka'aba going anticlockwise. Next comes the search for water for Ishmael by running between two small hills inside the Great Mosque. After this pilgrims perform the tawaf again and then next they stand in prayer and listen to the pilgrimage sermon near the Mountain of Mercy where Muhammad preached to his companions during his farewell pilgrimage. The next day, they perform the stoning ceremony. At the village of Mina each pilgrim must cast seven small pebbles at a stone pillar known as Jamratul-Aqabah as sign of his rejection of the

ways and influence of the devil. This is done on the third day of the Hajj. Like many of the rites of Islam, this rite has long been separated from its initial pagan rite. This closes the pilgrimage officially. The faithful Muslim will then made a respectful visit to Midina where Muhammad is buried in the Prophet's Mosque beside Abu Bakr and Umar. Within the Ka'ba, there's a black stone which all Muslims try to kiss it in emulation of his prophet's practice. This stone was sent down from heaven and that it was originally crystal-clear. According to Islam, the Ka'aba was originally built by Abraham and Ishmael and the stone became black as it took the sins of those who kissed it. Originally, the Black Stone was some sort of idols as before Muhammad, the Ka'aba contained a number of stone idols. Before Islam, the Ka'aba was the holy of holies of paganism and the pagan rites still in place are done with a spiritual significance. These practices were said to be performed by Abraham but historically, this is illogical. Interestingly and ironically the whole Hajj surrounds the idea of stones. The circumambulation of the ka'aba, an empty shrine of stones, kissing the black stone and pray in front of a stone and at Mina the pilgrims throw small stones at a large stone pillar are used. It's not hard to see how this relates to the former pagan idol stones.

8. Muslim Festivals and Celebrations: There are two great festivals in Islam, Idul-Fitr on the first day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic year and Idul-Adha on the 10th day of Thul-Jijjah and coincides with the Yauman-Nahr, 'The Day of the Sacrifices' in the Hajj Pilgrimage. Eid-ul-Fitr occurs as soon as the new moon is sighted at the end of RTamadan. It is intended to be a festive and joyous occasion with special foods and delicacies distributed to neighbours and friends. Islam also has three special nights each year. The first is the night of power which comes on the 27th night of Ramadan. It was the night on which the Qur'an was allegedly brought down to the first heaven before being revealed to Muhammad. The next night is the night of record which comes on the fifteenth night of the Shabaan, the month before Ramadan. This is the night that God lists the actions of all people. The people are encouraged to stay awake all night and recite a hundred prayers. The mercy of Allah is said to descend and sinners who repent are likely to obtain forgiveness. The third holy night is the night of Ascension, commemorating Muhammad's ascent to heaven. This is traditionally celebrated on the night preceding the 27th of Rajab, when the mosques and minarets are lit and there are devotional readings of popular accounts of the Mi'raj. The tenth of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic years is a time of mourning for both Shi'ites and Sunnis to remember the tragedy at Karbala, a massacre of Muhammad's grandson Husain and his band died. The next day is the birthday of Muhammad, which falls on the 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal.

This paragraph looks at certain social and family laws in Islam. Drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam, however some Muslims do drink alcohol, but never openly. And marriage is considered a civil contract between a man and his wife. A local judge officiates over this and often the wife is not even present. There must be two relevant witnesses. The woman has the right to refuse (supposedly – in practice this is not always the case). Sometimes the man and the woman haven't even met before. Muslims are to marry other Muslims but not people from idolatrous communities unless they embrace Islam. They are allowed to marry Christians or Jews. What happens here is the husband usually forces the non-Muslim wife to convert to Islam. A friend of mine in Yemen, a Muslim guy from Eretria married a Christian orthodox girl and then forced her to accept Islam or he would divorce her and take the children. However, Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslims unless they have disavowed Islam which does happen. The head of the family is the husband and the wife is to submit to the husband. Divorce, though allowed is to be avoided. It is not primarily sinful was once considered in Christianity. When divorce is decreed, there's a waiting period of three months. Supposedly, the men are to be very considerate to the wives. The husband doesn't need a reason for divorce. This privilege does not extend to the wife. The laws of Islam are usually referred to as shari'ah. Shari'ah law is only practiced in a few places in the Islamic world because of its harshness, but many consider it better than no law. There is protection within Islamic Law, especially for women. Such law required flogging for adultery and amputation for theft. This happens in the Sudan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Fanatical Muslims do all they can to enforce such laws. The Qur'an says that adulterers are to be lashed a hundred times in Surah 24:2. In Saudi Arabia the penalty for adultery is usually beheading. In Yemen, hands that are cut off are often nailed up in high places around the city. I have seen this myself. This really scares Muslims.

Where Islam has forced itself into various countries, many local pagan ceremonies have slightly been changed and attached themselves to Islamic practices. Throughout the Muslim world there is a fear of the occult world and of the power of sorcerers. The existence of demons is recognized by Muslims. Demon-possession is a common experience where superstitions and cultic practices abound. They have their exorcists and rites to deal with this. One such practice is the veneration of Saints and Pirs in Islam. These rites, superstitions and practices are found in popular Islam and have continued alongside Orthodox Islam. Popular Islam is also called Folk Islam; but Muslims never talk about these differences. Another example are those teaching of Zoroastrianism and also Hinduism. They were mystical in essence and this very mysticism was added to Islam. From this mystical arm of Islam, came

Sufism which turned Islam into a cult worship of the saints of Islam. These were sought out for miracles, powers and various blessings of them. Such powers are called Baraka. By kissing the saint's hand or tomb, this power passes to the worshipper. A person usually attaches themselves to a spiritual guide of one of the darwesh ordered called a pir or murshid. Genuine Sufis try to bring themselves closer to God spiritually. Yet those who attach themselves to pir and tomb-worship to obtain blessings, do so through superstitions, cultic influences and animistic practices. This has caused faith in amulets and talismans, occultism experiences even contrary to Sufism itself. One now finds domed shrines and other elaborate structures all over the Muslim world. Muslims flock to these shrines and ask for blessings from the spirits that frequent them. The effect of superstitions, miracle-mongering, tomb-worship, mass-hysteria and charlatanism has shown us the real face of Islam. This worship of saints is animistic. People believe there is great power in a saint that is close to Muhammad. Other superstitions include the use of the Qur'an as a talismanic power. Talismans, amulets and charms of every description are used throughout the Muslim world. There is also what everybody knows as the evil eye where a searching, penetrating glance from a jinn or human is capable of enslaving a person. A verse from the Qur'an will be written in ink or sandalwood paste on a plate or on the inside of a basin. In regards to Muhammad, it doesn't seem that he was enslaved to such cultic forms and had very little to do with them. Yet, he didn't entirely reject such practices as a means of resisting evil forces. Many devices are used by those who suffer from demon related experiences. They use magic circles, incantations, flowers, beatings, getting the demon to speak and give their names. It's interesting to see the relation between these and what was performed by Christ when he cast out demons.

This last paragraph of section eight discusses the consequences of apostasy from Islam. Anyone who converts to Christianity will be disowned if not killed as a martyr. The hadith openly states that Muhammad demanded the death sentence for those who turn their backs on Islam. This penalty has often been enforced even by public authority. It is usually done by relatives or others taking the laws into their own hands. Jurists argue that they should be given three chances to return to Islam before they are killed. Early Muslims suffered casualties for reverting to their pagan ways. This was why Muhammad made it the death sentence later on in his time. Yet, one such Muslim (Former Chief Justice of Pakistan) said that Islam must stand on the excellence of its own teachings and needs no protective shield against exchange of views. It is more undignified for the true Faith to retain adherents by coercion. This is the stand of many but not the majority.

9. *Muslim Movements and Schisms*: The Sunni sect is by far the largest within Islam and covers most of the Muslim World. The Shi'a sect situated mostly in Iran and differs with the lineage that followed after the death of Muhammad. Outside of those two, Sufism is the most known and talked about sect there is. In some ways, it is a real break away from main stream Islam. It exists as a quest for a living knowledge of the Supreme Being. God to them is one Real Being which underlies all phenomena. He is everything and there is nothing but Him. Their desire is to be absorbed into God's knowledge becoming one with God. The worshipper becomes the perfect man after going through a number of stages: Nasut, Malakut, Jabarut, and Fana. The point of Sufism; it desires are to fill a spiritual vacuum created by Islam. Once their mind has reached a state of dissolution, they become one with God. Sufis do not allow anyone to associate with them, unless they show that they are collected to them lineally. The Sufi experience is not a rebirth as in Christianity. It only seeks to become aware of what one has always been from eternity. Sufism is divided into orders. Just a few are: Suhrawardiyya, Oadiriyya, Chishtiyya (India), Shadhiliyya, Mawlawiyya (Turkish) and the Naqshabandiyya (Iran). One of the things associate with the Sufi is the state of reaching ecstasy. Gathered together, they begin a series of chanting, saying the ninety-nine names of Allah or just saying Allah until they collapse in a state of trance. Sufism says that the Qur'an and Hadith contain deeper information of which supports their ideas.

The first major sect that appeared in Islam was made up of the Kharijites or those who go out. They taught that the Qur'an was the sole authority over every Muslim and thus believed that they could revolt against any form of secular Muslim rule and kill all unbelievers. Anyone guilty of a grave sin was an infidel and would automatically be excluded from Paradise. This group eventually fell apart.

Another such movement within Islam was the Ahmadiyya Movement. This was a group into north of Pakistan in the state of the Punjab. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian wrote a work entitled Barahin-i-Ahmadiya which defended Islam from the onslaughts of Christian missionaries and the Arya Samaj, a militant Hindu organisation. At first this was well accepted until he proclaimed himself the promised Messiah, or one raised in the Spirit of Jesus whom Muslims believed would return to earth. He also claimed to be the Mahdi as well as a prophet of Allah and even a re-incarnation of Krishna, one of the leading Hindu idols! In doing so, he committed himself to a renewal of Islam which others considered to be heresy. He challenged Muslims to debate with him. He even said that God had revealed to him that those who didn't believe in him were not Muslim. They also denied the Muslim concept of jihad as meaning holy war. He also felt that Islam gave too much credit to Jesus Christ and he

set about correcting this. In addition, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad produced a number of prophecies. They were declared a non-Muslim minority by the Government of Pakistan. They have also been barred at times from performing the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Mu'tazilah or Free-Thinkers came on the scene within a hundred years of Muhammad's death. They were sort of influenced by Greek Christian thinking. They believed in an intermediate state and that God had no place, form, body, movement or features. And that his speech must be considered from his being, thus the Qur'an was created. This created the doctrine that the Qur'an was eternal. They believed in the absolute oneness of God and opposed any sort of dualism and rejected anthropomorphism. Abu'l Hasan help see to the demise of Mu'tazilism.

During the middle of the 18th century a resurgence of the Kharijite thinking surfaced in the Arabian Peninsula known as the Wahhabi movement. It layed waste shrines, tombs, minarets and other edifices considered incompatible with orthodox Islam. They conquered Mecca in 1806 and terrorised all the Muslim peoples. They also replaced the silken veils covering the Ka'ba and at Median they plundered the treasured of the tomb of Muhammad. Even though they were later subdued by the Turks, the Wahhabis' influence still reigned over Arabia, even today. They basically believed that the Qur'an and Hadith were the sole sources of theology and doctrine. They also said that no prayer could be offered to any prophet or saint for these are abominable heresies. They weren't really a sect as such but a puritanical reformist-movement, determined to rid the faith of quasi-Islamic practices.

We see that Islam is not a simple religion. In fact, it is still a changing religion within a religion. The Qur'an relates well to Old Testament thinking in some ways, it is extremely heretical in most places. We see that perhaps Muhammad was genuinely seeking to help his fellow tribes out trying to turn them away from idols; he created a completely new religion in doing so. He felt some connections to the God of the Jews and the Christian but the god he created was not the same. Muslims do not understand the God of love of a father nor the need for atonement for sins. It is a religion of works. Muhammad was a very confused person in terms of spirituality and often inserted stories and things he had heard from the Jews and incorporated them into the Qur'an. The Qur'an is Muhammad and the Muhammad is the Qur'an. It has become a charm for many in Islam. This server religion has brought on a number of sects within it; people seeking a truth which Islam doesn't offer.

III. Codification of the Qur'an

For the Western mind, the Qur'an just doesn't make sense when ever translated into another language. Even for the Muslim, reading the Qur'an in another language other than Arabic is confusing. The Qur'an is only the Qur'an when written in Arabic. I have used the 'Codification of the Qur'an' written by John Gilchrist around 1989 in this section. Topics covered include the initial collection of the Qur'an, the codex of Abu Bakr, Variant Readings in Ibn Mas'ud's Codex, the missing passage of the Qur'an, the Hadith literature and Early Qur'anic manuscripts. It is hard to understand what some Muslim think when they hold a Qur'an in their hands. The book itself seems to be referred in great holiness and awe. The Arabic words are more than just written words; they are alive being the words of God even in their written form.

The Qur'an once contained a number of verses and whole passages that are no longer found in it. In addition all but one of the manuscripts that existed was burned. When anything is said of this, it is whole hearted denied accompanied by nasty threats and comments. Muslims demonstrate such colossal ignorance and bigoted thinking. Their assumptions go beyond reason, but we do see that this attitude betrays their great fear of being wrong. They openly though ignorantly simply gloss over all aspects of errancy and authenticity. They must resort to terror and death when anyone stands up against them denouncing their religion. This only proves that the Qur'an cannot stand on its own two feet when challenged in the least way.

1. The Initial Collection of the Qur'an Text: The Qur'an was not revealed as one book. It came in bits over the twenty-three years of Muhammad's life in Mecca and Medina. Even Surah 25:32 supports this point. There was no chronological record kept as to the sequence of these sayings. Some of the statements made by Muhammad were taken down in writing by his companions. Memorisation played perhaps the largest part in the initial recording of its contents. This is stated by the word 'Qur'an', which means 'recited.' Some devoted themselves to learning it off by heart as it is often done today. There is no evidence that the Qur'an was written into a single book during the lifetime of Muhammad. Before his death, there seemed to be an increase of revelations as history showed later. After his death in 632 AD, the Qur'an was complete as there could be no further revelations. The Qur'an, itself, doesn't declare its completeness. Yet, the contents were widely distributed in the memories of men which were written down piecemeal on various materials. The initial compilation took

place by Zaid ibn Thabit, one of the four companions of Muhammad. This fact is a widely accepted account. Others that were close to Muhammad began to compile their own codices independently of Zaid as it was done under the authority of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam. It was after the battle of Yamam where outlining tribes reverted to their old ways did Abu Bakr set out to collect the Qur'an into a single text as well. This request to collect the pieces can be seen in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 6, p.477. This also stated that Muhammad hadn't done this. The search was wide spread but later claims were put forth that it was all found in the household of Muhammad. The earliest records show that there was no distinction between portions of the Qur'an written directly under Muhammad's supervision and those that weren't. There is no evidence that support Muhammad supervising the recording of the text.

Official tradition focuses on the collection of the Qur'an by Abu Bakr as the first compilation of the text made upon Muhammad's death. The compilation by Zaid became the model which Uthman initially standardised. For Zaid who relied on people memory, we must recognize that human memory is a fallible source. So this would have called a number of variant readings. This would be more so as many of Muhammad's companions who had memorised the text were killed in Yamama battle. Abu Bakr mentioned that Abu Khuzaimah al-Ansari had two verses which no one else had. Obviously these were not available for the general public because he had gotten them directly from Muhammad. These verses were missed being written down at first. We also should understand that other codices were being compiled besides that which Zaid worked on. Aishah admitted to herself that one such person read the Qur'an by raising his voice which reminded her of a number of other verses she was about to forget. Zaid's collection was supposedly given to Abu Bakr. Thus all of this shows that the Qur'an can't be an exact replica of the original. Yet, Muslim writers deny this as they are out to present the Qur'an in unquestionable perfection.

2. *The Uthmanic Recension of the Qur'an*: Did the codex which Zaid ibn Thabit present to Abu Bakr have any official status? This remained with Abu Bakr, and then it was passed on to Umar and in return passed on to Hafsa, the daughter of Umar. The two men above represented the first and second clifhs of the Muslim world. This has to be deemed official but we are not sure this was eventually the accepted codex for the whole of the Muslim world. Zaid ibn Thabit was wdely regarded as one of the foremost authorities on the Qur'an text. Yet, Abu Bakr and Umar realized that other masters existed, one belonging to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Mu'adh ibn Jabal alongside that of Zaid ibn Thabit. Thus Zaid

ibn Thabit's manuscript was only accepted as equal to the others. But Zaid knew that his text was missing some passages. Uthman succeeded Abu Bakr and Umar as the third Caliph of Islam, general Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman led an army into northern Syria with troops from Syria and Iraq. In this, the codex of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud became the stand text for the Muslims at Kufa in Iraq while the codex of Ubayy ibn Ka'b became the codex in Syria. Hudhayfah was disturbed by this and reported it to Uthman. Uthman ask for the manuscripts to be sent to him. Uthman then had it re-written with the main text coming from Zaid's codex and sent to every Muslim province and ordered all other Qur'anic materials be burnt. This is revealed in the hadith literature. This was done to bring consensus among the muslims on the basis of a single Qur'an text. It's interesting that the Zaid codex which was hidden for nearly 19 years became the main codex over that which was being used in Syria and Iraq. The differences were so great that he had to have the others destroyed. Zaid's text was simply one of a number of codices available at the time. This codex was done by one man and never seen by more than four people, whereas six other codices were being used and fully accepted. It was Abdullah ibn Mas'ud who had reacted strongly against such an action who felt that Uthman was actually destroyed God's word. But Muslims reject this; it wasn't the text that was being changed but just the intonation points. But such faults would never have shown up in any text, linguists say today.

Uthman wanted to present a standard Qur'an in the Meccan Quraysh dialect of which Muhammad was a member. However, Zaid was from medina so Uthman has three other people to come in and help Zaid in the amendments. Altogether, there were four redactors rewriting the Qur'an. Everything was to relate to the Meccan dialect. Zaid admitted that he had missed a verse but found it with Khuzaimah ibn Thabit al-Ansari and they inserted it in the relevant surah. There was another omission mentioned in relation to Surah 33:23. In the end, Uthman succeeded in producing a single Qur'anic text. It can't be said that it is exactly as Muhammad delivered it, and it was not Allah who arranged the text exactly in the form in which it came down nor was it Muhammad who codified it. And there were still disputes during Uthman's reign in regard to variants as in *Muwatta Imam Malik*, p.64. This was different than what was written by Ibn Abi dawud.

3. The Codices of Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b: He was the first to speak the Qur'an loudly in Mecca after the apostle. He applied himself in learning the words which Muhammad would voice as being the Qur'an. Muhammad regarded Ibn Mas'ud and ubayy ibn Ka'b far better read in the Qur'an than him. Additional information states that he had

recited more than seventy surahs in Muhammad's presence, alleging that all Muhammad's companions were aware that no one knew the Qur'an better than he did. When Uthman ordered the burning of the codices, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud refused to hand over his copy. Ibn al-Athir said that the majority of Muslims at Kufa still adhered to Ibn Mas'ud's text. Mas'ud obviously regarded his Qur'an to be as accurate and reliable as that of Zaid. Could it be that Mas'ud's Qur'an was actually better organized, set out and even more accurate than Zaid's? In fact, this is what he thought. Mas'ud had become a Muslim at Mecca before Zaid was even born. Look at what he said in the *Kitab al-Masahif*, p. 15, 'I acquired directly from the messenger of Allah (saw) seventy surahs when Zaid was still a childish youth - must I now forsake what I acquired directly from the messenger of Allah?' He even said that he liked it better reading the Qur'an according to the recitation of the Prophet. Mas'ud's text did not include the *Suratul-Fatihah*, the opening of the surah nor did it contain the two short surahs with which the Qur'an ends, Surahs 113 and 114.

One such writer, Desai, lacks documentation in respect of the factual allegations he makes toward the Mas'ud's codex. Even today, Muslim writers resort to such strange reasoning solely because they are determined to maintain the declared textual perfection of the Qur'an as it stands today. But we do find that there were numerous differences of reading between the texts of Zaid and Ibn Mas'ud. There were no less than 101 variants in the *suratul-Baqarah* alone. These variants have been clearly recorded and established. They include more than just words and phrases. Some record pages and pages of differences. There simply wasn't a single text without any variants as Muslim hierarchy says. Quite the opposite, the records show there were a number of different codices in vogue during the first generation after Muhammad's demise.

Second to Mas'ud was Ubayy ibn Ka'b highly prominent in being an expert on the Qur'anic text. He actually became known as *Sayyidul-Qurra*, 'the Master of the Readers'. His codex also contained a vast number of readings which varied from Zaid's text and they often agreed with Ibn Mas'ud's text instead. In fact there was a whole verse found in Ka'b's Qur'an that wasn't in Zaid's. He had the Opening Surah and the Charm Surah and also the opening words of *Suratul-Khal* meaning 'O Allah, we seek your help'. The *Fatihah* has seven verses while the other two have been set out in three and six verses.

4. *The Missing Passages of the Qur'an*: There is an opinion among the early historians that the Qur'an as it stands is incomplete. as-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fii Ulum al-Qur'an*, p.524 quoted,

‘let none of you say I have acquired the whole of the Qur’an, rather I have acquired what has survived.’ There is evidence that an extensive collection that is in the hadith was in the Qur’an before. The hadith mentions many surah’s that are not in the Qur’an by early Muslims who used to recite them. But those who disagree with this, simple say that these sayings have been fabricated while other do say that such passages have been abrogated and that such was decreed by Allah during Muhammad’s lifetime. This idea of abrogation is not accepted by all. Yet in surah 2:106, abrogation is described as substitution of something better. This could happen because fresh revelations were sent down to replace the text. In Surah 3:7, it is said that some of the ayat (signs) of the Scripture were basic with obvious meanings while others are allegorical. Some Muslims even say that abrogation only applies to the revelations of Allah to the Jews and Christian beforehand. This is just made up as there is no evidence of such. Surah 3:3 actually states that the Qur’an does not abrogate the Tawraat and the Injil but rather the opposite, the Qur’an ‘establishes’ them. Thus abrogation only refers to the Qur’an. This is an example: We used to read a verse of the Qur'an revealed in their connection, but later the verse was cancelled. It was: "convey to our people on our behalf the information that we have met our Lord, and He is pleased with us, and has made us pleased". (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 5, p.288). In addition, we see that in both Surahs 2.106 and 16.101, that Allah *substitutes* such a "better or similar" verse for the original text. Thus we are told in one place of the Qur'an that intoxicating wine has both good and bad effects (Surah 2.219) and that Muslims should not come to their prayers in a state of intoxication (Surah 4.43). Later, however, the consumption of wine was forbidden altogether (Surah 5.93-94) As stated there have been portions of the Qur’an replaced, was it replaced on the original copy in heaven? Another question, how can it be said that the Qur’an has been preserved perfectly to the last dot and letter by Allah himself. But actually refers to certain texts which Muslims doesn’t consider as previous revelations. But in fact it is more reasonable to conclude that they have been either overlooked, or not known to all the companions, or quite simply forgotten. There are verses about greed, stoning for adultery and other verses that are said to have been in the Qur’an but yet are only in the Hadith. We see that there is a wealth of evidence presented not only from the Hadith but also from the Qur’an itself that supports missing texts, verses and even Surah’s. Instead of denying this, other writers will say that they have been abrogated by Allah during Muhammad’s lifetime. Desai does this.

5. *The Seven Different Readings*: In the Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol 6, p.510, it says that the Qur’an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways. This seems to apply to

dialects according to Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, P.391. Yet, outside this suggestion, it's really not known what this means or if it refers to dialectal variants. This has been a discussion of confusion for hundreds and hundreds of years. Desai does talk about 'all the authorized variant readings' which were revealed as part of the Qur'an. Yet the difficulty Desai overlooks the records that show the differences between Zaid's codex and Mas'ud's codex and Ka'b's codex. They not only are dialectal variants but also real variations of the text itself. We've seen that these differences were related to the basic content of the Qur'an. If they hadn't been different, Uthman would never have ordered their destruction. Uthman first had the texts transcribed into a single codex by arranging the suras and restricted the dialect to lugatt vernacular of the Quraysh because he thought the Qur'an had been sent down in that tongue. Note that it was only written in consonantal form alone and because of this there were dialectal variants in the vowelings of the Qur'an. Thus, the dialectal variations were accepted because of the Hadith's mention of the seven readings. After Uthman's death, during the caliphate of Abd al-Malik in the first century of Islam, the governor of Iraq, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, corrected Uthman's text. He made eleven direct changes to the Qur'an text.

It was in the fourth century of Islam the seven different readings was attempted to be defined. Ibn Mujahid of Baghdad decided to try to resolve this issue. The hadith states that there were seven divinely authorised ahurf of the Qur'an. Thus far the seven readings include those of Mдина, Mecca, Damascus, Basra, Asim, Hamzah and Kufa. Yet a scholar named Ibn Miqdam thought that any reading of the basic consonantal outline that was in accordance with Arabic grammar was acceptable. He was publicly forced to recant for this later. The fully vocalised printed editions of the Qur'an that are in the possession of millions of Muslims reflect the reading of Hafs and is likely to become the sole reading in use in the whole world of Islam.

6. The Compilation of the Qur'an in Perspective: We see that there were actions to limit the variations in the written text and in the verbal recitation of the Qur'an. A mushaf wahid was the goal of the redactors and the Hadith records testify to the imperfection of the Qur'an text. Muslim apologist like Desai and Siddique reject the Hadith records and maintain that the Qur'an testifies to its own compilation and that this is enough to prove the Qur'an is absolutely authentic. But Muslims are using the language of presupposition; it is the spirit of hypothesis or in other words the decision has been made before the action.

Another verse that supports its own compilations, 'that this is indeed a Noble Qur'an, in a Book preserved. *Surah 56.77-78.*' Preserved come from the word maknuun which in turn

come from *kanna* meaning ‘to hide’. The Qur’an seems to say here that it is a concealed scripture, but the meaning of this isn’t explained. A statement seems to be taken out of context to support a hypothesis. The quoted texts by Abdul Kader don’t even remotely testify to the supposedly textual perfection and completion of the Qur’an, but he says that a master copy of the collection of the portions of the Quran was kept under special care in a safe in the Masjid-e-Nabawee (Mosque of the Prophet) in Madeenah. He alleges that the copies made from this master copy were transcribed under the personal supervision of the Prophet. It has also been said that Muhammad’s house at Medina contained materials from which the Qur’an was being written. This goes against other records that plainly state that the Qur’an had not been brought together into a single location during Muhammad’s life. The only codification is found in the early Sirat, hadith and Tafsir literature is the only historical source in Islam to consult. Reality testifies to a far more mundane and predictable history of the text with much evidence as to passages that are now missing from the Qur’an. In addition, there’s enough plain evidence that simply ruins the claim for the Qur’an textual perfection even though Muslim sentiment doesn’t accept. And furthermore, we that the Qur’an today is only *zaid*’s version of it, duly corrected where necessary and later amended by al-Hajjaj, and read according to one of seven approved different readings.

7. Early Qur’an Manuscripts: The initial use of only consonants created variant readings in the Qur’an. This practice is still used today as those who are familiar with Arabic, vowels are not necessary. It was after about 200 years, vowels were introduced to the Qur’an. One such text which was intended to be presented to the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’mun for the tomb of his faith, harun ar-Rashid, at Mashad in what is now Iran was written without vowel points and the diacritical in and around 300 years after Muhammad. But the manuscript never left Tunisia and is now situated in the main library. This was written in gold script upon blue vellum. It was not written to be read as such but to impress someone with the language of God, as it were.

Before the advent of Islam, the only accepted script to exist was the *Mazm*. The script, itself, was very formal and angular in character. It used an equal proportion in the writing of letters. No Qur’an texts or fragments are said to exist in this script. The script of the Qur’an was first developed in the *al-Ma’il* script which was written in a slant. The Qur’anic script in *al-Ma’il* survives today. The second script, the *Mashq*, was used in Medina and continued to be used for many centuries. It was horizontal in form and could be distinguished by its somewhat cursive and leisurely style. It gradually changed to resemble the *Kufic* script. The

original script retained a balanced dispersal of its words and letters in varying degrees of density. It was also supplemented by coloured diacritical points and vowel marks. Another script, the Naskh was known as the inscriptional script. It displaced the Dufic script and was used by Ibn al-Bawwab at Baghdad in 1001 AD which is now in the Chester Beatty Library at Dublin in Ireland. In regards to the already mentioned Kufic script, it came from Iraq where Ibn Mas'ud codex had been highly prized until Uthman had it destroyed. This became widely used throughout the Muslim world. No Kufic Qur'an was ever written in Mecca or Medina. Another codex, the Samarqand codex, is now located in the St Petersburg library, was Uthmanic in origin and written in Kufa. This manuscript is considerably incomplete. This, along with the Topkapi codex is two of the oldest sizeable manuscripts of the Qur'an surviving. Their origin can't be more that around 200 years after Muhammad.

IV. Textual History of the Qur'an

We continue our study in Islam referencing another article by John Gilchrist, 'The Textual History of the Qur'an and the Bible.' Gilchrist deals with several points: Allah in the Bible, parallel passages in the Bible, the Apocrypha, alleged contradictions in the bible, and genealogy of Jesus Christ.

1. Three Levels: Muslim publications often publish articles against Christianity. One such article, 'Is the Bible God's Word?' by Ahmed Deedat of the Islamic Propagation Centre in Durban, SA. The article tries to disprove the Bible as being the Word of God. It contains very weak arguments that may influence people who don't are not widely knowledged in terms of the Bible. Yet, even though weak, such articles do sway people, i.e. those mentioned above. But Deedat is not different than any other non-Christian who is ant-Christian. He will state half trues as being factual such as, 'the Bible is the handiwork of man', instead of telling what the church really believes, 'the Christian Chruch as always held that the Word of God was written by men under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that these authors.' And any Muslim will gladly say that the Qur'an is free of any human element. Yet we know that God has chosen to reveal himself through the writings of his prophets and apostles. The purpose of this was to convey God's own meaning so that we could understand. The prophets wrote under the power of God in their lives which is very evident from the words they wrote. Deedat divides the Bible into three different kinds of witnessing 1) Word of God, 2) Words of a Prophet of God and 3) Words of an Historian. He relates this to the Qur'an, the Hadith

and writings of historians. But in reading the Qur'an you see that even this isn't true. In Surah 19:64 we easily see that the verse implies that angels are talking to Muhammad. The same in the Hadith, there are many passages which indicate that Allah is speaking himself. And there are many of these passages. In Surah 19:22-23, 'As she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of a palm tree,' represent narrative speech.

2. Multiple Bible Versions: Deedat argues that the Holy Bible of today is not the Bible honoured by the Qur'an as the Taurat and Injil. The only evidence that Muslims create are presuppositions from the Qur'an. The Qur'an and the Bible don't agree in many areas; such as who Jesus is and how he died and the story of Abraham sacrifice of his son. But for real evidence, there is none. Interestingly, the word Injil is not Arabic but a borrowed Christian Syriac Word. In fact, the Bible we have today is the same Bible that was around at the time Muhammad and it goes back to around 150 BC. We have authentic Biblical copies from than time period. And the Qur'an says that those books of the Jews and Christians are the Word of God. This is pure subjectivism and further demonstrates the Muslim mind set and their mulish mentality. Stating that there are multiple Bible versions today is an artful misrepresentation of the truth. He should have been honest and explained that these are different English translations of which all three are based on the original Hebrew and Greek texts which we have today dating back to 150 BC. There are also different versions of the Qur'an in English.

3. The Apocrypha: The next point in Deedat article represents another false charge involved those book of the Apocrypha. Here he claims that Protestants expunged these books from the Bible. Of course, these are recognized as historical ancient texts where the authors never intended them to be scripture.

4. The Grave Defects: This mentioned the differences between the RSV and KJV. The RSV has omitted some verses which were not found in the oldest texts of the New Testament in the Original Greek. The point that must be remembered, that the original Greek text hasn't been changed. The English translations are the only thing that been changed. There are about 4000 Greek texts dating back to not less than two hundred years before Muhammad and Islam. And what the RSV left out does not represent any form in the structure, teaching or doctrine of the Bible. Thus the essence and substance is totally unchanged. We have only one

Bible and yes, there are variant readings in the Bible but these are so slight and negligible that Christians assert with confidence that the Bible is whole and intact and has never been changed in any way. In fact, all evidence regards that the textual history of the Qur'an and the Bible suggest that both books are remarkably intact in the form in which they were originally written but neither has escaped some variant readings in the text. Muslims should stop telling the untruths. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud codex was regarded by the local community at Kufa as their official recension and when Uthman ordered it burned, Ibn Mas'ud refused because it was better than the one Uthman had. According to the Hadith, this same Ibn Mas'ud was present when Muhammad allegedly reviewed the Qur'an with Gabriel each year. In a similar tradition Muhammad said to learn the recitation of the Qur'an from four: from Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Mu'adh bin Jabal, and Ubai bin Ka'b (Sahih alBuhari, Vol 5 pp 96-97). Even though Uthman standardized the Qur'an, there has been no standardization of the Biblical text. There were around fifteen other codices available at the time. Uthman destroyed all copies of Qur'an held by various people and took Zaid copy and had it corrected using several of the other collected Qur'ans. The resulting copy was sent to various tribes and centres. There is evidence of this in the Qur'an itself.

Deedat goes on to use a 23 year old JW article stating the errors in the Bible. Deedat, like many people, takes any fabricated statements as facts without any verification. Much of what Deedat says, along with other Muslim is the result of excessive prejudice against the Bible and all that it teaches. Yet, this is swallowed by anyone who is against the Bible, no matter how far-fetched or absurd it may be. The examples that were given include:

a. Isaiah 7:14 - Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. The RSV reads young woman instead of virgin. The word in Hebrew is 'almah'. The common Hebrew word for virgin is 'bethulah' whereas 'almah' refers to a young woman and always an unmarried young woman. However, the word 'bethulah' has a double meaning also. It not only means young woman but it also refers to a chaste widow. Young woman is thus a literal rendering whereas virgin gives us a contextual meaning. This is why most English translations have virgin instead of young woman. This issue is purely one of translation and interpretation from the original Hebrew into English.

b. John 3:16 – For god so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The RSV says 'Son instead of 'begotten Son'. Deedat uses this as proof that the Bible has been changed. But like the example above, it is only a matter of interpretation and translation. 'Only Son' and 'Only

begotten Son' are fair translation of the original Greek and make the same point that Jesus is the unique Son of God. There is no change in the original Greek. This does not go against the integrity of the Bible. Actually a similar situation is found in the Qur'an. In surah 19:88 where we read that Christian say that God Most Gracious has begotten a Son. In other translations we see the word 'taken' instead.

c. 1 John 5:7 describes the unity of the Father, Word and Holy Ghost which is omitted in the RSV. This was found in later text but we have older texts of greater authority where it is not found and thus it is omitted in all modern translations. The Doctrine of the Trinity is not based on one text it is the only doctrine of God that can be obtained from the teaching of the bible as a whole. Most expositors of Biblical theology along with all Catholics, Protestants and other Christians accept this doctrine. But as far as verses are concerned: Matthew 2:19 says go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

d. Deedat's forth point is that the Bible makes no reference of the Ascension of Jesus because Mark 16:9-20 and John 8:1-11 are found in some text but not in others. Yet, John 20:17 says, 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.' Again in Acts 1:9, 'And when Jesus had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.' The Book of John has no less than eleven references to this point also. Mark 16:9-20 and John 8:1-11 are included now because scholars are persuaded that they are indeed part of the original text.

5. *Allah in the Bible?* The Scofield Bible has a footnote saying that the Hebrew word for God, 'Elohim' is derived from two words 'El' which is strength and 'Alah' which is to swear. Muslim scholars say this is proof that Allah is in the Bible. But 'alah' by itself is simply 'to swear', nothing else. This is more of a unpalatable illogic! There is nothing unique about the word 'Allah' as it is derived from the Syhriac word Alaha meaning 'God' which was a common use among Christian in pre-Islamic times. It was also in common use among the Arabs before Islam as appears from the name of Muhammad's own father Abdullah (servant of God – 'abd' meaning servant and 'Allah' meaning God).

6. *Parallel Passages in the Bible:* He also claims that the church has only accepted four manuscripts of the 4,000 that are available. This statement just shows his ignorance and that fact that his article is not even a scholarly critique of the Bible. Another such prejudice comes thru when he says that Moses didn't write the first five book of the Bible because it says,

‘The Lord said unto Moses.’ But this appears frequently as Moses obviously chose to describe himself in the third person. This same thing is used in the Qur’an in Surah 5:110 where it says, ‘When Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour unto the.’ This happens again in Matthew where Matthew refers to himself in the third person. And furthermore, early Christian tradition unanimously ascribes this Gospel to Matthew. The subjective beliefs of some ‘modern scholars’ cannot seriously be weighed against the objective testimony of the church fathers. So parallels as described by Deedat are lacking in Biblical cases. There are, however, many stories in the Qur’an set forth as true to history have awkward parallels in pre-Islamic Jewish books of fables and fairy-tales. One example includes the murder of Abel by his brother Cain in Surah 5:27-32. This is also found in the Book of Genesis then we find an unusual statement, ‘Then Allah sent a raven scratching up the ground, to show him how to hide his brother’s naked corpse.’ In a Jewish book of fables and folklore, Adam wept for Abel and did not know what to do with his body until he saw a raven scratch in the ground and bury its dead companion from Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 21. In the Qur’an, Cain sees the raven and in the Jewish book Adam sees that raven. Obviously, Muhammad plagiarized the story and adjusted it in the Qur’an as part of divine revelation. There are many of these found in the Qur’an.

7. Contradictions in the Bible: Deedat, again, exposes his hopelessly inadequate understanding of both the Bible and the Qur’an. In 2 Samuel 24:2 the Lord moved David to number Israel and in 1 Chronicles 21:1 it was Satan who provoked him to do so. Surah 19:83 says, ‘Seest thou not that we have set the devils on the disbelievers to confound them with confusion?’ In the Bible, it was God who used Satan to provoke David to number Israel. We have a similar point in the Book of Job, chapter 1:12 God later spoke as if it was he who was moved against him in Job 2:3. Deedat shows his lack of his own Qur’anic theology. There was a copyist error in 1 Kings 7:26 and in 2 Chronicles 4:5 where 2000 is shown as 3000. This is not a contradiction in the normal sense of the word and has no effect on the contents of the Bible as a whole.

8. Pornography in the Bible: Deedat uses the story of Judah’s incest with Tamar in Genesis 38 and Lot’s incest with his daughters to prove that God would not allow such in the Bible. Why reject the Word of God just because it shows the wickedness of men and women. Interestingly, Deedat overlooked the story of David and Bathsheba. This is no less different than the two examples Deedat used. Of course, we know that the prophet Nathan came to

David to show his sinfulness which brought about repentance and forgiveness. Deedat probably knew that The Qur'an had a sequel to this story and that the Qur'an upholds the biblical narrative shows that there can be no genuine objection to similar stories where the misdemeanours of other prophets are set out in the Christian bible. All the prophets were men of flesh and blood and were as likely to fall into gross wickedness as anyone else. We know that Jesus was the only person who was not subject to the desires and failings of others.

9. The Genealogy of Jesus Christ: Deedat argues about the differences in genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. Again, Deedat either shows his stupidity or his groping to say against Christianity. Matthew records the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph's line which points out Joseph's role as his natural guardian and as the husband of Mary, Jesus' mother. Luke concentrates on Mary's role in the birth of Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, four women are named in the genealogy of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. These four women all had moral or ethnic defects and this was done deliberately. There is no stigma attached to such an ancestry. It was for these people that Jesus came into the world. He came to save such people from their sins and to make his salvation available to all men, both Jew and Gentile. Jesus confirmed that all the books of the Old Testament as received by the Jews were the inspired and authoritative Word of God by constantly quoting them.

The overall article has extremely good and provided an in creditable window into the thinking of bias Muslim thinking. This is an extremely worthwhile article to read for Muslims and Christians alike. I believe the author's objectives have been met in a very concise manner.

I personally struggle with understanding the attitudes of some Muslims toward the Bible without ever having read it. Their blatant denial of things which they don't understand or ever considered before shows how their minds have been conditioned not to consider anything objectively.

Look at the following: He will state half trues as being factual such as, 'the Bible is the handiwork of man', instead of telling what the church really believes, 'the Christian Church as always held that the Word of God was written by men under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that these authors.' Nothing is new in the above paragraph, anti-Christian people all over the world and especially liberals say this all the time these days either in publications or on radio, the internet and television. The question is how we respond as a Christian. We explain, we give our testimony and relate our own experience with Jesus Christ.

V. Christian Muslim Apologetics

This section deals with Christian apologetic. It is another article by John Gilchrist written in 2002. It's a step by step manual on how the defend Christianity and the Bible in a loving atmosphere. (However, the Christian will have to rely on the Holy Spirit at every turn.) John Gilchrist worked for an organisation known as 'Life Challenge Africa' which was located in Claremont, Cape Town, South Africa. The article deals with such topics as textual authenticity of the Qur'an and the Bible, Biblical Teaching, the Qur'an, The Christian Doctrine of God, The Deity of Jesus Christ in the Bible, Muslim Arguments from the Bible and the Gospel of Barnabas.

Few Muslims have any sort of real understanding of Christianity. For discussion to take place, it is the Christian who must show patience when reasoning with the Muslim. The cutting edge between Christian-Muslim apologetics focuses on who Jesus is and who Muhammad is. For the Christian, Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and for the Muslim; Muhammad is the universal Prophet to the nations. Muslims rigorously argue against the authenticity of the Bible and its' fundamental doctrines. They equip themselves with a basket full of objections which they use to place the Christian firmly on the defensive. This animosity demonstrated by Muhammad in the Qur'an was in difference to those who called the credentials of Muhammad prophet hood into question along with that of the Qur'an. Some of the main arguments include: Christians argue the case of women in Islam while Muslims argue the immorality in traditional Christian societies in the Western World. Muslims will teach Islam to be a religion of perfect peace ignoring the conflicts in the Middle East along with its bombings of embassies, aircraft, trade centres in the name of Islam. They will argue the unity of Islam contrasting it to the divisions of Christian churches and again ignoring the conflicting sects in Islam and that unit is only a uniformity of worship.

In any discussion, the Muslims come with certain calculated attitudes that hinder any willful profitable discussion. The Muslim only seeks to frustrate the Christian witness, not to present any healthy interaction. And generally, they are not interested in listening to any reply, let alone an effective refutation! They also become highly offended with arguments that are presented against the Qur'an and Islam. The author says that Christians need to be tolerant and remain focused not resorting to similar approaches in return. As Christians we should be willing to answer the Muslim's objections and counter their arguments. If you don't the Muslim concludes that you cannot justify your beliefs and your religion is actually

indefensible. If you say why you believe what you believe the Muslim will be more inclined to listen to you. They want to see the evidence by which we stand. To be effective we should be sound and convincing and it is important to present our argument in the correct spirit. You must remember that you have the power of the Holy Spirit to speak for you.

Here are some things we should perhaps avoid. Triumphalism is one thing. Even though triumphalism is used in Christian worship, it certainly goes against Islamic thinking. As Christians we are called to be a humble people speaking in the spirit of love to all we meet. At the time we need to resist the temptation of trying to prove a point simply to win a debate. What we say must be geared to win the confidence, hearing and goodwill of our opposite number. In Colossians 4:6 we read, 'Let your speech always be gracious, and seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.' We should come to understand that Islam really means that 'I shall love all Muslims!' We should try to understand Islam, not necessarily hate it.

Often, Christians will demonise and misrepresent Islam along with others. This attitude comes from the fourteen Crusades which Christians sent against Islam over a period of three centuries. We ignore the actual history and basic teachings of Islam, for example some Christians in South Africa made a campaign to avoid anything that had the halaal symbol on it. Some Christian publications have claimed that Allah was the 'mood-god' of the pagan Arabs prior to Islam and it is really a cult god. But we must be aware in promoting error we will only drive Muslims further from the truth. We must be sure in the Word of God and avoid trying to gain an advantage over Islam by pursuing false charges against it. Muslims still think of the days of the Christian jihad and even today, Christians are declaring that we are at war with Islam. It will be through individual love for the Muslim that will draw him to the grace and salvation of Jesus Christ. In our Christian approach, we should act in fairness, patience and gentleness. In any discussion, the Muslim deliberately harasses and challenges the Christian so that they will lose their temper and become angry. If the Muslims can do this, they have won the day and proves to them that the Christian cannot answer their objections. But we should never let it go that far. We should have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies which breed quarrels. As a Christian if we witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ, it is one of the most important and serious things we can ever do in our lives. We are to avoid flippancy and irreverence. We are to take our faith very serious and discuss any points he may raise in that spirit. The more we know the Word of God, the more effective we will become in our discussions with Muslims. We must remember that there is power in

the word alone and its give those who quote it power. Try to get Muslims to read the Bible. Do what you can to use the Muslim's arguments to strengthen your witness to them.

1. Authenticity of the Qur'an and the Bible: The only evidence Muslims have that the Bible has changed is through presuppositions. They have no choice but to do this if they are to continue with their faith in the Qur'an. Christianity stands on its own and its historical records of the life of Jesus are found in the Gospels. It does not need to disprove any religion, especially Islam which came six hundred years later. Islam, on the other hand, because it acknowledges Jesus but has no alternative historical records of his life, has to disprove Christianity to establish itself. But the Christian, we have certain manuscripts that we depend on. The first is the Codex Alexandrinus which was written in the 5th century. This contains the whole Bible except for a few leaves lost from the New Testament. This manuscript is located in the British Museum in London. There is also the Codex Sinaiticus which dates back to the fourth century. It contains the whole of the New Testament and much of the Old. It was kept in the Imperial Library at St Petersburg in Russia and later sold to the British Government. It is also kept in the British Museum. The third manuscript is the Codex Vaticanus. This is the oldest surviving manuscript of the whole Bible. It was written in the fourth century and is preserved in the Vatican Library in Rome. There are yet earlier manuscripts, for example the Hebrew Massoretic Text. The discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls contain a number of original Hebrew dating back to the second century before Christ. The Septuagint was the first translation of the Old Testament into Greek. It was likewise transcribed in the second century before Christ. The Roman Catholic Church translated the whole Bible into Latin in the fourth century after Christ using the Septuagint and ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. It dates from the 4th century after Christ. There are no other sources or evidence that suggests that the life and teachings of Jesus Christ were but anything else. What material evidence to Muslims has that they can think of to suggest that the Bible has changed? Questions like who made these changes, when were they made, what was it originally and when did those changes take place? They can't do this. Their only argument is a presupposition.

During Muhammad's lifetime the Qur'an was never fully written down or collected into a single text. There was no reason for this since Muhammad was still alive. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's immediate successor and 1st Caliph, encouraged a well-known reciter of the Qur'an, Zaid ib-Thabit, to collect it. Taken together, the collected pieces hardly represented the ideal source for a perfect, inerrant compilation. The copy was kept by Hafsa, one of the

widows of Muhammad. Other codices were soon put together by close companions of Muhammad. The most reliable codex was said to belong to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud who was one of the earlier converts to Islam. Muhammad mentioned his name first as being one of the four greatest authorities of the Qur'an. He compiled his own manuscript at Kufa and it became the official text. The second person to Muhammad also mentioned in the list of four authorities was killed at the Battle of Yamama. It was reported that he was the first to collect the Qur'an into a mushaf or manuscript or written codex. There was also Ubayy ibn Ka'b; he compiled his own text of the Qur'an which became the preferred text in Syria. Numerous other codices were transcribed at the same and of these those by Ali, Ibn Abbas, Abu Musa, Anas ibn Malik and Ibn az-Zubair are well-documented. The third Caliph or successor to Muhammad was Uthman who decide to provide a single text for all. He took the Zaid codex which was in Medina where he lived ordered seven exact replica copies to be send to each province with the order that all other manuscripts of the Qur'an was to be burnt. The codices of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b were specially named and both destroyed. Mas'ud as first resisted the order because Zaid's copy had never been standardised as an official text.

Mark 16:9-20: This passage describes a number of post-resurrection appearances of Jesus and his ascension to heaven. This passage does not appear in the very oldest manuscripts but concludes the book in many of the Greek texts dating shortly after those manuscripts. Muslims will use this to question the integrity of the Bible. However, it is considered authentic and seemed to have been omitted from the earliest texts. Verses 9-11 record Jesus first appeared on the day of his resurrection to Mary Magdalene. This is shown clearer in John 20:11-18 and Luke 24:13-35. He spoke of the great commission to his eleven disciples following this which again parallels in Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:36-43. After that he ascends to heaven. There is nothing in this passage which is not repeated elsewhere in the New Testament. Nothing here conflicts with the overall contents of the New Testament. In John 8:1-11 we have the story of the woman caught in adultery. Some ancient manuscripts include it right here while others omit it completely or added it as an appendix. Everyone else had sinned and left the woman alone where she experiences the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The question and use of woman in the sentence, 'Woman, where are they?' appears again in John's Gospel on a number of occasions. The Pharisees, who are not mentioned until now in this Gospel, suddenly appear along with a heated debate later on. Jesus had convicted all of them of sin. There is nothing in the incident which conflicts with anything else taught in the New Testament. But for the Muslim, the Qur'an is a complete book, just as it was originally

revealed to our holy Prophet. Nothing has ever been added nor is anything missing from it. This also proves that it is the infallible Word of Allah. Contrary to this, Abdullah ibn Umar said in the early days of Islam, ‘Let none of you say that I have acquired the whole of the Qur’an. How does he know what all of it is when much of the Qur’an has disappeared? Rather let him say that I have acquired what has survived.’ There are many records of verses, passages and even whole sections that are said to have originally been part of the Qur’an which is no longer there. Abu Musa al-Ashari, one of the earliest authorities of the Qur’an said that there was a forgotten Surah in Sahih Muslim, Vol 2, p. 501. Another such Surah was also forgotten that began, ‘O people who believe, why do you say that which you do not practise and that is recorded in your necks as a witness (against you) and you would be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection.’ There is evidence that the following verse once formed part of Surah 98: The religion with Allah is al-Hanifiyyah (the Upright Way) rather than that of the Jews or the Christians, and those who are good, will not go unrewarded. Another such verse includes the stoning of adulterers to death, Muwatta Imam Malik, p. 352. Various other sources confirm that this verse was originally part of the Qur’an. Yet, there is another verse from Sahih al-Barkhari, Vol. 5, p. 288 that was part of the Qur’an but now abrogated and deleted: ‘convey to our people on our behalf the information that we have met our Lord, and he is pleased with us, and has made us pleased. The list actually goes on and on. We see that the Qur’an has suffers from far more variant readings, lost passages and the like than the Bible. The few variants in the New Testament don’t affect the teaching of the book. Mark 15:28 quotes from Isaiah 53:12, ‘And the scripture was fulfilled which says, He was reckoned with the transgressors.’ This is also repeated in Luke 22:37 as ‘For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, and he was reckoned with the transgressors; for what is written about me has its fulfilment.’ This doesn’t disturb the overall text. Another passage in Matthew 21:44 is found in a few of the most ancient manuscripts but not in the rest: ‘And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one, it will crush him’. This is repeated word-for-word in Luke 20:18. Another is found in Matthew 23:14 but neither has any effect on the text as a whole. Another includes the piercing of Jesus’ side. This is paralleled in John 19:34 and appears in every manuscript of the Gospel. 1 John 5:7, the Father, Word and Holy Ghost can be traced back to the Vulgate. This does not appear in any of the oldest texts of John’s Gospel it may have become a marginal note of a scribe. Muslim use this verse a lot while overlooking the verse in Matthew 28:19, ‘Baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.’ There are similar statements in 2 Corinthians

13:14 and Ephesians 2:18. There are slight variant readings affecting single words that don't affect the teaching of the book as a whole.

A. Qur'anic Variant Readings: The Muslim says that there are no variant readings affecting the actual text of the Qur'an. In the early days the Qur'an was recited in different dialects which only affected the pronunciation of its verses. That is why the early manuscripts were burnt – to eliminate these differences of pronunciation alone. This statement is illogical as one cannot burn differences of dialect in common speech! Why would they burn a Qur'an for that? There had to be real textual differences in the manuscripts. According to at-Tabari's records, there were hundreds of variant readings (about 362 of them) between the early manuscripts. Biblical variants are nowhere in number to these; the Bible was compiled by over forty authors over thousands of years and is five times the length of the Qur'an. Look at these examples: Surah 2:275 reads, 'Those who devour usury will not stand,' but Ibn Mas'ud had the additional words, 'on the Day of Resurrection.' Surah 5:91 contains the exhortation, 'Fast for three days,' but Ibn Mas'ud's text read, 'fast for three successive days.' Both At-Tabari and Abu Ubaid recorded the variant along with Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Ibn Abbas and Ar-Rabi ibn Khuthaim. Surah 6:153 begins 'verily this is my path' but Mas'ud text read, 'This is the path of your Lord.' Again At-Tabari and Ubayy ibn Ka'b had similar text. Surah 33:6 says of Muhammad and all believing Muslims, 'his wives are their mothers.' At-Tabari includes, 'and he is their father.' Ibn Abbas, Ikrima and Nujahid ibn Jabir also recorded it. Zaid's text overlooked its inclusion. These are only a few which makes it remarkable to understand the confidence with which Muslims attack the integrity of the Bible. And of course we have the 'reconized' changes made by Al-Hajjaj. The eleven changes were made to individual words by the scribe al-Hajjaj on the orders of Abd al-Malik. Surah 5:48 changed shariy'ah to shir'ah, in Surah 10:22, Yuthasharukum was altered to yusayyirukum and in Surah 43:32, Ma'a'ishahum was changed to read ma'ishatahum and again in Surah 47:15 Yasin was changed to Aasin. But these changes were not just for pronunciation but the consonants were changed also. One must also remember that there were no vowel points in the earliest Qur'an manuscripts. There are no manuscripts left written during the time of Uthman. The oldest manuscript is in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul and the Samarqand Codex of Tashkent were both written in kufic script at least a century after Uthman's time.

B. Numeric Variants in the Bible: Muslims say that the Bible has contradictions between parallel passages where figures are not the same. To them, these discrepancies and factual errors prove the Bible is unreliable and cannot be the Word of God. Indeed, there is what we would call copyist errors which were made during transmission of the text. One such

passage in 2nd Kings 24:8 where it states that Jehoiachin was eighteen years of age when he began to reign while in 2 Chronicles 36:9, it says that he was eight years old. Here, the Jewish letter for 'ten' was omitted during the copy process. This was during the reigns of Jehoiachin and Ahaziah, Kings of Judah. Another example in 2nd Kings 8:26 shows that Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign but in 2nd Chronicles 22:2, it says that he was forty-two years of age. Apart from this, the texts agree that he reigned only one year and that his mother was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. This is another copyist error. Let's turn to 2nd Samuel 10:18 where David slew of the Syrians the men of seven hundred chariots while in 1st Chronicles 19:18 it was seven thousand chariots. Again, the text affects only one letter. Another case in 1 Kings 4:26 states that Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses but in 2nd Chronicles 9:25 states that it was four thousand. These only represent fractional difference in the transcription of a single letter in the original Hebrew text. There are no issues of the integrity of the Bible as a whole, especially its Christian contents and emphasis.

C. Contradictions in Qur'anic Numeral's: Surah 32:5 shows that the Great Day of God will be a thousand years, but in Surah 70:4, the measure of the same Day will be fifty thousand years. The difference here is a whole word. Muslims explain the contradiction as an example of mystical, cosmic or allegorical language. Another has to do with the original creation of heavens and the earth. In surah 50:38, the heavens, earth and all that is between were created in six days. However, in Surah 41:9-12 says the earth was made in two days, the heavens were made in two days but the earth's sustenance was four days which makes eight altogether. Muslims set great stands for the authenticity of the Bible which they don't apply to the Qur'an. They are blind when they look at the defects that are in the Qur'an. The aim is not to win an argument or discredit the Qur'an but simply to counter false and unjustifiable attacks on the Bible. Muslim point out that Matthew was not the author of the Gospel. This originates from the verse in Matthew 9:9 where it says that Jesus passed on from there and saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, 'follow me' and he rose and followed him. Muslims argue that he cannot have written it because he describes his own conversion in the 3rd person in this verse. It is interesting here how Muslims set themselves up as judges of the Biblical text and prescribe what should have been done. In response, Surah 59:22 says, 'He is Allah and there is no god besides who He is.' This is written in the 3rd person. So by the same reasoning, Allah cannot be the author of the Qur'an.

Muslims will often use arguments written by liberal writers as an offense. These liberal writers, like Muslims, work on assumptions. One such example is the 'Q' Gospel, a

supposedly manuscript that was the work behind the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. (There is no evidence anywhere in early Christian history that such a body was ever collected into a written collection.) While the earliest Christian sources attribute this Gospel to Matthew, the subjective reasoning of modern scholars who use speculation over factual, contemporary evidences, cannot be preferred to the testimonies of those who lived at the time when this Gospel was first copied and distributed. These same authors challenge or even deny biblical creation, the flood story, Jonah and the whale, the virgin birth. But Muslim scholars, who know that the Qur'an confirms all these events, cannot honestly rely on sources that also discredit Islam for the same reasons. As far as Matthew is concerned, frankly there is no reasonable alternative to his authorship. The early Church has never suggested another possible author.

2. The Qur'an in Relation to the Bible: Muslims say that the Bible we have today is not the original Scriptures because the Bible doesn't agree with the Qur'an. However, in contrast to this, the Qur'an speaks very highly of the Scriptures and positively confirms their authenticity. The Law of Moses is said to be specifically the 'Kitab' and this is confirmed in Surah 5:46, 'How will they make you their judge seeing they have the Tawraat, wherein is Allah's judgment, then afterwards turn their backs. This states that the Jews had the Tawraat at the time of Muhammad. It is a book of guidance and light according to Surah 5:47. The Jews have only known one scripture, the books of the Old Testament as we know them today. In the describing the New Testament, the Qur'an uses the word, 'Al-Injil'. Surah 3:3 regards the Tawraat and Injil as the sum total of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Surah 5:50, Let the people of the Injil judge by what Allah has revealed therein. The Qur'an calls Christians, the 'People of the Gospel'. And the Christians have only known one scripture throughout their history, the books of the New Testament. It seems that Muhammad never doubted the integrity of the books which the Jews and Christians had. Surah 5:71 says, Say, O People of the Scripture. You have no ground to stand on unless you stand fast by the Tawraat and the Injil and what has been sent down to you from your Lord. So the Qur'an testifies quite unequivocally to its authority as the revealed Word of God whether Muslims like it or not.

The Muslims argue that there are a number of passages in the Qur'an which clearly teach that the former scriptures have been changed and corrupted. And they keep saying that the original Tawraat and Injil are missing. Christians are accused of misinterpreting the teachings of their holy books. The Qur'an does not suggest that the texts of the Tawraat or the Injil themselves ever became corrupted. Surah 4:46 says from among the Jews there are those

who displace words from their places, and say: ‘We hear and we disobey’; and ‘Hear what is not heard’ and ra’ina; with a twist of their tongues and an insult to religion. The charge in this verse only has to do with the verbally changing the true meaning of the words, ‘They twist with their tongues.’ This word ‘ra’ina’ means ‘please attend to us’, which can be turned into an insult. It involves the conversations which they had with the Jews of Muhammad’s time. In Surah 2:75, do you hope that they will believe you while a party of them heard the word of God and consciously perverted it after they had understood it? Again, this deals with the verbal misrepresentation. Both Razi and Baidawi both taught that this meant that this was the corruption of the meaning of the word of God, not an alteration of the actual scripture itself. Nowhere does the Qur’an teach that either the Jews or the Christians engaged in corrupting the holy books. It was only the ‘Kalam of Allah’ that was being perverted. Surah 3:78 says, there is a party of them who twist the Book with their tongues to make you think it is part of the Book, while it is not from the Book, and they say it is from Allah when it is not from Allah, and they consciously lie against Allah. Surah 2:79, then woe to those who write the scripture with their own hand and then say: This is from Allah, to sell it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands write! And woe for what they gain thereby! There is no charge here that says the bible itself was being changed. Another verse, Surah 3:71 says, O People of the Book! Why do you clothe the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth when you know otherwise? This is only a general charge of misrepresentation of the truth and in no way can it be said that the Bible itself was changed. There is no historical evidence whatsoever those books revealed to Moses and Jesus, in the form of the Qur’an, ever existed. This is also strange from the viewpoint that Muslim belief says that the Qur’an has been perfectly preserved. If Allah could preserve one book why could he not preserve even so much as a small piece of evidence of those books. This teaching of the Qur’an has no support at all in the factual records of human history. Surah 3:3 says, he has sent down to you the Scripture (al-Kitab) with truth, confirming what came before it, and he sent down the Law (at-Tawraat) and the Gospel (al-Injil) before it, a guidance to mankind. So the Qur’an here states that these two books were actually sent down to Moses and Jesus also teaches that they were very similar to the Qur’an. The problem for the Muslims that the Tawraat and Injil are the only books the Jews and Christians have ever known. They are very similar to each other but neither of them are remotely like the Qur’an. They only presume such books existed. What about the silence of history on what would have been the most important books ever to have been handed down militates against the supposed divine origin of the Qur’an. Muhammad did not doubt the authenticity of the Tawraat and Injil but wrongly assumed that

they were in the form of the Qur'an. If Muslims challenges us to produce their idea of the books, challenge them to produce them for it is the Qur'an that alleges their existence, not ours. The obligation rests on you to present them to us so that we may examine them.

John 1:17 says, for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Muslim understands that sin is not acceptable to God. They know that they are sinful and no matter how much Islam teaches them, there only choice is to do a wrong deed as opposed to an equal choice to do right instead. John 3:16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. This is the good news of the Gospel, God is our Saviour.

The Muslim will not be convinced that we have not changed the Tawaat and the Injil but we can share where the Old Testament tells of the **Deity of Jesus Christ**. This is foretold in 1 Chronicles 17:13, Psalm 2:7, Psalm 89:26-27, Isaiah 9:6 and other places. The Jews would never have allowed such teaching to be put into the Old Testament. The **Crucifixion and Atonement** is clearly foretold in Psalm 22:1-21, 69:1-29 and in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and other places. This is a strong testimony to the integrity of the Tawaat. Ali Tabari testifies as to the authenticity of the Old and New Testament. Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali accepted the Bible's authenticity. He argued only that the Christians had misinterpreted their scriptures. Fakhruddin Razi was also quite emphatic about the biblical text – that it had not been changed and that the teaching and narratives of the Qur'an were perfectly consistent with those of the Bible.

3. The Christian Doctrine of God: The Muslim states that the Bible doesn't teach that God is a Trinity. It doesn't appear in the book. Jews believed in one God while Greeks and Romans believed in many gods. They say that the Church invented the three goods in one theory to placate them both. This doctrine is one of the great barriers between Islam and Christianity. It insults the Muslim to even think that God is three. God doesn't have partners of any kind which is strictly taught in the Qur'an. This is also one of the greatest sins one can do. 'Surah 4:48 truly Allah will not forgive any associating with him but will forgive anything else to whomever he pleases. For whoever associated (shirk) with Allah verily commits a great sin.' This is among the greatest Surah's in the Qur'an. Yet the Christian doctrine is exactly that, an association of Jesus and the Holy Spirit with God the father. Surah 112:1-4, say, He is Allah, the One, Allah the Eternal One. He does not beget, nor is he begotten, and like unto him there is not one. And in Surah 4:171, 'and do not say: Three, Desist – it is better for you! Allah is

only one, glorified be he above taking a son to himself.’ There are other passages in the Qur’an that refer to the Christian triad. Most of these came later with Muhammad obviously not understanding precisely what the Trinity represented. Their distinction is between the numbers one and three with no specific reference to the Trinity or any awareness that the Christian God is a Triune being. For Jesus to them was on the Messiah son of Mary and he was only a messenger; messengers before him had passed away. And his mother was upright. They both had to eat food (Surah 5:75).

Allah has ninety-nine names which are his attributes. The first thirteen occur in order in surah 59:22-24. They begin with: El-Rahman, el-Rahim, al-Malik, Al-Quddus. One such name could have been ‘El-Abunna’. The Qur’an doesn’t call God father nor does it allow people to be his children but 1 John 3:1 says, see what love the father has given us, that we should be called children of god; and so we are. In Luke 12:32, fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 1 John 4:10 also reads, in this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation of our sins. In Jesus we can know that our sins are forgiveness.

From this point, we need to emphasize the nature of the Triune God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of God as Father in Matthew 18:11, Luke 12:32, and John 14:12. He is spoken of in relational terms. The second person of the Triune God is Jesus Christ who always referred to himself as the Son of the Father in absolute and exclusive terms. In verses like Matthew 11:27, John 4:23 and John 16:28 reveal a divine relationship. Throughout the New Testament the third personality is the Holy Spirit who has an intimate relationship with both the Father and the Son at their divine level. Additional statements are found in Matthew 28:19 where Jesus commands his disciples to make further disciples baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is Jesus telling them to baptize them into one essence. In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul concludes the letter by commending the Corinthians to the grace of the Son, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Here they are cited in union with the other two. Paul mentions them again in Ephesians 2:18 where he says that in Jesus Christ, the Son believers have access through the same Holy Spirit to the Father. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, shows a common divine accessibility. Genesis 1:2 and Psalms 51:11 speak of the Spirit of God. It is essential to show that the Church did not invent the Trinity or adapt its belief about God to prevailing monotheistic or polytheistic beliefs. It was the coming of Jesus Christ into the world that opened up the revelation of God as a triune being. In this Tri-Unity, God is Light and Jesus declares himself the light of the world (1 John 1:5). God is also the Truth (John 14:6) and the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of

Truth (John 15:26). God is Love (1John 4:8) and the New Testament often speaks of the love of the father. This shows an absolute unity of essence and purpose between the three with no differences in personality and character.

The complexity of the triune God is its strongest point in its favour. This deals with the very nature of the eternal God of the Universe. Job 11:7-8, can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven – what can you do? Deeper than Sheol – what can you know? When speaking of God, we are not dealing with simplicity. Afif Tabbarah, the Muslim writer said when writes that the Almighty God is dissimilar to his creatures and more sublime than minds can imagine. The doctrine of the Trinity is not contrary to reason but it is above the realms of finite human reasoning. Muslims will acknowledge the resurrection of the dead to life. God who rules this universe is incomprehensible in his infinite and eternal nature. The New Testament is more concerned about our relationship with God than our understanding of his nature. We pursue his holiness, the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of eternal life. We should be right with God, approved of him, loved and forgiven. God wants to be loved and obeyed, not studied or analysed. There is one thing very clear; the church has never argued over the doctrine of the Trinity because they discerned it from a study of the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. This speaks of a divine unity, a oneness.

Muslims argue that God had always been a unitarian until the Church turned him into a Trinity. To challenge this, we have only recently understood the Solar System and the way it works, but God's nature cannot be proved scientifically. He may turn out to be very opposite to what people think. God revealed his true nature to us in the scriptures. God was a Trinity from all eternity. God cannot be understood in finite terms. We can relate God to the symbol for infinity which cannot multiplied, divided, added or subtracted by ordinary numerals. Christianity's aim is to present a knowable God, the Father who loves his own, the Son who died to redeem them and the Holy Spirit to renews and sanctifies them. Muslims will argue that the Bible teaches that God is one. The Old Testament declares that 'the Lord is God of heaven above and of earth beneath – there is no other. (Deut 4:39) Yet Muslims insist that our doctrine is inconsistent with our own scripture; they say that you cannot put three personalities into one God. They get confused often by thinking that we believe the triad is made up of Jesus, Mary and Allah. Mark 12:29, Romans 3:30 and Galatians 3:20 says simply that God is one. However, in 1 John 1:5 we see that God is Light. Jesus also says that, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12). He will never change (Hebrews 13:8) God shines into our hearts to give 'the

light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2nd Corinthians 4:6). Sadly, the Muslim cannot be guaranteed favour; his forgiveness cannot be assured in this life nor can a Muslim know God or enter into a personal relationship with him. Surah 19:93 says, ‘there is no one in the heavens and the earth that can come to the Compassionate except as a servant. In an earlier Surah (19:30), Jesus is recorded as declaring ‘I am a servant of Allah.’

The Muslims also argues that this doctrine has its roots in pagan religions of Egypt, India, Rome and Greece. All these had their trinities of gods long before Christianity came into being. Some of these triads mentioned in Muslim literature include the Egyptian gods, Osiris, Isis and Horus. This mythological family constituted a family of father, mother and son but they were only three of a multiplicity of deities which also included Nun, Atum, Ra, Khefri, Shu, Tefnut, Anhur, Geb, Nut and Set. There was also Horus the elder, Horus of edfu, Horus son of Isis and others. The Egyptians were not Trinitarians believing in one Supreme Being who is triune in personality and nature. Nor the Egyptians believed that Osiris, Isis and Horus shared an absolute unity. The Hindus have a belief in a triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. But Brahma is an impersonal deity representing everything that exists in a state of perfect nirvana or absorption in a universal state. Vishnu was married to a female deity and Siva is the great god of the Hindu Savites. There is no particular relationship with them. And like the Egypt, there are other deities such as Krishna, Rama, Sita, Ganesh, Hanuman, Kali and others. The Vedas recognize thirty three different deities who are separate gods. The Trimurti concept is written in late Sanskrit of the 5th century after Christ. Again, the Doctrine of the Trinity is unique and has no parallels in any other religion or philosophy. The Bible makes no effort to define this doctrine, it simply proclaimed it!

4. The Deity of Jesus Christ in the Bible: Muslims have great respect for Jesus as a prophet, born of the Virgin Mary and lived a sinless life but to them there is not deity about his life. This is the foundations of our belief; Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Surah 6:101 says, Creator of the heavens and the earth! How can he have a son when he has no consort? And glorious is the majesty of our Lord – he has taken neither a consort nor a son (Surah 72:3). But the Father and Son are both divine, the son took human form at a point in history and became the man Jesus Christ. The Son only could do what he saw his father doing. In John 5:20, the Father has a special love for the Son and reveals all his purposes to him. The Son of God is relational in an eternal, spiritual context. This is not carnal or earthly as the Qur’an supposes. But for God to have a Son is the great unpardonable sin in Islam. They have no parallel to the example of God’s sacrificial love. But Jesus Christ is the Son of God; we have

no apology to make to the Muslim world for this belief. Sometimes Muslims will say that Jesus is the son of God like we are all sons of God in Psalm 82:6. But when they argue this, they are going against the Qur'an in Surah 6:100 which say that Allah has neither sons nor daughters. Yet in Mark 14:61-62, Jesus says that he was the Son of God and then in Matthew 11:27 it states that no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. And in John 5:22, Jesus said that the Father has given all judgment to the Son so that all may honour the son even as they honour the Father. But many statements seem to suggest that Christ was limited in his power and Muslims use this as a counter point against Christ being God. In most cases, he limited himself. For example, in regards to God's omniscient, Matthew 24:36 states, 'But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.' This does not undermine but shows a special definition of it. Another such verse is John 5:19 and 30, 'the Son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the Father doing ... I can do nothing on my own authority.' This seems to challenge his omnipotence as well but here it is only dealing with an explanation of his relationship to the Father, not of a denial of his deity. But Jesus says also, 'For whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.' We have another in John 14:28, 'If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the father; for the Father is greater than I.' Muslim used this statement as a proof of Jesus' humility in acknowledging God's superior greatness to man. But Jesus is the Son of God which places a limitation on him. The heart of what the Bible teaches about Jesus even though He is a divine personality within a Triune Being, he is subject to the Father's authority and so, when on earth, could easily assume in human form a servant-master relationship.

John 8:53 asks, 'Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you claim to be? Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day, he saw it and was glad ... Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am (John 8:56, 58). John 4:14 the Samaritan woman was talking with Jesus, she asked him: Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his son, and his cattle? Jesus told her that he could give her living water to eternal life. John 5:46-47 Jesus said that if you believed Moses you would believe me, for he wrote of me, But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asked pointedly, 'Who do men say that the son of man is?' You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' God had revealed this to Peter. But faith in Jesus only comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). In Surah 19:17, then we sent to her our spirit which appeared to her as a man in all

respects. If they believe that then, why then can't the Son of God, who is also spirit in form, not take on actual human form?

5. The Crucifixion and the Atonement: 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 says, for as by a man there came death, by a man also come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall live. All Muslims believe that Adam and Eve sinned and had to leave the Garden of Eden and they were never let back in. They would not have died if they had stayed in the Garden. Surah 2:36 describe this, 'But the Devil made them slip from it and caused them to depart from the state in which they were. And We said: Fall down from here, some enemies to the others. And on the earth there will be a dwelling and provision for a time. Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree lest you become like the angels or those who live forever (Surah 7:20). There are three tombs of Jesus, two in Jerusalem and one in Madina, but all three are empty and will remain empty.

Romans 6:2 asks, 'How can we who died to sin still live in it? And 10-11 says that the death he died he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Many Muslims struggle with the compelling force of the tendency to want to sin. But Romans 6:17-18 says thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from all iniquity.' When Jesus was on the cross, the soldiers pierced his side and blood and water came out. John saw this himself. He saw that the blood symbolised the forgiveness of sins just as the shedding of blood of lambs and goats in past time. The water symbolised the outpouring the Holy Spirit and the rivers of new life which believers have in Jesus. Some Muslims have the idea that we can sin as we like but by doing so, they have an ignorance of what salvation is actually all about. They also think that salvation simply comes from keeping God's commandments. They are familiar with Matthew 19:17. Mark 10:17-18 asks, 'why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.' He never denied that he wasn't good. He even called himself the good Shepherd who lay down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). The response was a challenge the man to think about whom Jesus really was, just another teacher or a divine authority to show the secret of eternal life. He challenged him further to sell his possessions and follow Jesus (Matthew 19:21). In Matthew 20:28, 'The son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' The most obvious incident that points to the atonement is the Last Supper.

Surah 4:157 deals with Jesus' death on the cross, 'They said, we killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, messenger of Allah; but they did not kill him, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. Those who dispute about are full of doubts; they have no certain knowledge but follow only conjecture. Assuredly they kill him not, but Allah raised him to himself. And Allah is the Might, the Wise. This created the substitution theory where Muslims say, but so it was made to appear to them. If it was God's intention to save Jesus alive by raising him to heaven, why should anyone have been crucified at all? This doesn't make any sense. In addition, why would have God made those around him think that the man was Jesus having them to agonize over it. In John 19:26-27, When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' This was one of seven sayings from Jesus speaking directly to those he knew around him. And if Christ wasn't crucified how could his disciples found the whole of Christianity on a hoax? The idea of Jesus not dying on the cross is a delusion. Further in Matthew 28:5-7, I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here for he has risen, as he said. Come see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he is raised from the dead. The Ahmadiyya sect quotes Luke 22:43 where Jesus asks that the cup pass from him. Thus, God sent an angel down to comfort him and saved him from death. In addition from Mark 15:44-45 Muslim say that the Roman soldiers only presumed that Jesus was dead. The Jewish leaders tried to act on this point. But Luke 9:22 confirms that after he was killed, he would rise on the third day. And this is what happened. It is universally agreed among Christians (with a few exceptions) that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and that he rose from the dead early on the following Sunday morning. In those days, the Jews counted any part of a day as a whole day. The three days and three nights is a general period of time that was used.

6. Muslim Arguments from the Bible: Muslims use Deuteronomy 18:18 to say that the Bible predicted the coming of Muhammad. Surah 7:157 mentions this also, 'Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, will find him mentioned in the (books) with them, in the Tawraat and the Injil.' In regards to 'their brethren' was in reference to the other tribes of Israel, not the Levites. Thus, 'I will raise up for them (the Levites) a prophet like you from among their brethren (the other eleven tribes of Israel)'. Of course, without a doubt, for Christians, this refers to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But Muslims state that Muhammad was like unto Moses. Both prophets had parents, died a normal death, and both were married. Both were political and religious leaders of their nations. Palestine was conquered by Moses

and he settled the Jews there. Muhammad led armies into the land of Palestine and conquered it and settled Muslim Arabs in it. Muslims say that the phrase ‘their brethren’ refers to the Ishmaelite’s. But Deuteronomy 17:5 says, ‘one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.’ The Ishmaelite’s were not considered the same as the Israelites as far as a brethren is concerned.

But beyond the surface featured, Moses was unique because he introduced a covenant between God and the people of Israel. Christians can also argue the likenesses of Moses with Christ. Again, Moses was a mediator between God’s people and God and mediated a covenant. Moses had a unique relationship with God for he knew him face-to-face. Exodus 33:11 tells us, ‘Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.’ The Qur’an also confirms this in Surah 4:164, ‘And to Moses Allah spoke directly.’ Moses was unique and like Jesus in performing many miracles. This is even questioned by the pagan Arabs in Surah 28:48, ‘Why are not (signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses?’ This does present a problem to the Muslims, if Muhammad was indeed the great prophet he claimed to be, why was he not like Moses? Deuteronomy 34:10-11 strengthens his uniqueness by saying, ‘And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, who the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land. The Prophet to come would be identified by his direct relationship with and my many signs and wonders attending his ministry. That person could only be Jesus. We have further proof in Acts 3:22 and Acts 7:37. The New Testament records that Jesus was descended from Judah through the line of David (Luke 3:33) and in Hebrews 7:14, ‘Now it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah.’ God put the words into the mouth of Moses in the tawraat, David in the Zabur and Injil to Jesus and in Jeremiah 1:9, ‘To Jeremiah God said, behold I have put my words in your mouth.’ Further, Jesus said in John 12:49, ‘For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak.’ Thus Muslims cannot raise any unique evidences to prove, from the context of the prophecy, that Muhammad was the prophet foretold. The Jews first said that Jesus was ‘the prophet’ (John 4:40) and ‘one of the prophets’ (Matthew 16:14) and then in Mark 6:15, ‘a prophet’ and then they thought of him as both Elijah and John the Baptist. This was guesswork on their part.

The Muslims also claim that Jesus foretold the coming of Muhammad as the Comforter. We see this in Surah 61:6, ‘And remember Jesus, son of Mary, said ‘O children of Israel! I am a messenger of Allah to you, confirming what is before me from the Tawraat, and

announcing tidings of a messenger to follow me whose name shall be Ahmad.’ For the Muslims, Muhammad led them into all truth. But Acts 2:1-21 clearly show that it was the Holy Spirit, Jesus was talking about. Again in 2nd Timothy 3:16, all teaching is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. The Bible uses the ‘masculine gender’ to show this as the Qur’an used it in Surah 59:22-24, ‘He is Allah and there is no god besides whom he is.’ John 16:7 Jesus says, ‘I will send him to you.’ John 14:16-17, ‘And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. Jesus sent the comforter to his disciples. The Muslims say the Bible should have read perklutos or praised one instead of comforter but we Christians changed it. But they don’t understand that Jesus was our comforter, counsellor and adviser. But yet the Qur’an agrees that there were only two spirits whom God has ever sent from himself into the world, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, each one a ‘paracletos’, a guide and mentor. Jesus promised that the comforter would be with us always, thus Muhammad could not be the comforter.

7. *The Gospel of Barnabas*: This book is 273 pages long and has become very popular in the Muslim World with over 100,000 copies published in Pakistan. The real Barnabas only appears after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Acts 4:36-37 shows that Joseph was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles. He was a Levite and native of Cyprus. He is mentioned in the records of the Church and in Galatians 2:9. He was not one of the 12 disciples. Some think that an Arragonian Muslim Mostafa de Aranda did the Italian version of it. The author was very conversant with the land of Spain and its environment. It could have been a Spanish Muslim forced to convert to Christianity.

Muslims believe that the book supports Islam and Muhammad and represents the only reliable history of Jesus Christ. They wonder why we don’t accept it and why did the church hide it. But the evidence around the book shows conclusively that it was compiled only a few centuries ago as a deliberate forgery. It has conveniently Islamized by integrating Muslim dogma and traditions on the life of Jesus as shown in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD rejected a number of apocryphal Gospels, Epistles and other forgeries similar in style. Among these was one book called the Gospel of Barnabas. No one knows what sort of book it was and what it taught. Because of the contents of Islamized Gospel of Barnabas, it’s obvious that the two cannot possibly be the same works. There are many proofs that the latter is a 16th century forgery. For example, in Luke 17:16

we are told that the Samaritan feel at Jesus' feet; the Gospel of Barnabas changes it to an Ishmaelite. The book consists of legendary and fanciful stories and forged teachings of Jesus of no historical value at all. Numerous Islamic influences can be found throughout the book. The following points show some of the Islamic teachings that have been entered into the book. Matthew 16:13-20 Peter declared that Jesus was the Son of God but in para 70, Jesus responded 'begone and depart from me, because thou art the devil and sleekest to cause me offence!'

- ✓ Para 216 teaches that when Judas arrived with the soldiers to arrest Jesus, four angels took Jesus away into heaven and Judas was changed to look like Jesus.
- ✓ Para 112 Jesus declares the coming of Muhammad, 'But when Muhammad shall come, the sacred messenger of God, that infamy shall be taken away.'
- ✓ Para 82, the author in saying that the year of jubilee comes every hundred years had to know about Pope Boniface the Eighth decreed in AD 1300 that this year was changed to every one hundred years but later Pope Clemens the Sixth changed it back to fifty years.
- ✓ Para 23 Readily and with gladness they went to their death, so as not to offend against the law of God given by Moses his servant, and go and serve 'false and lying gods'. This cliché is a direct quote from Dante's *Inferno*, a well-known classic titled 'Divina Comedia' or 'Divine Comedy'. This is a fantasy about hell, purgatory and heaven according to the beliefs of his time. Many passages in the Gospel of Barnabas show a dependence on his work.
- ✓ Para 169 describes the climate and season of southern Europe than the land of Palestine.
- ✓ Para 152 talks about storing wine in wooden wine-casks, a common practice in medieval Europe but not in first-century Palestine where wine was stored in skins (Matthew 9:17).
- ✓ Para 20 says that Nazareth was on the Sea of Galilee while it is actually a town up in the hills.

The list of differences goes on and on. In Para 42 and 82, Jesus says that he isn't the Messiah but even Surah 3:45 says, 'O Mary! Lo! Allah gives you glad tidings of a Word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the hereafter.' Acts 15 shows us the only point of disagreement between Barnabas and Paul was whether John Mark was go with them. Barnabas took Mark while Paul took Silas. Barnabas consistently stood by Paul and backed his teaching. In Acts 9:27 we see, 'But Barnabas took

him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

I am amazed to see how the devil have gone to such lengths to arrange and perfect the Qur'an to deny all the major doctrines in the New Testament that relate to Salvation and proclaiming Jesus as God. Satan went to a lot of trouble to delude the minds of Muhammad and so many people for a long range and frontal attack against Christianity. We see this by the difficulty of witnessing to Muslims about Jesus Christ. Their minds have been so programmed against Christianity that it's hard to understand. It's also very interesting to see how Muslims go out of their way to go against Christianity also. They openly deny what seems to be common sense. They say things that are so obviously incorrect and swear by what they say. They go through the Bible taking verses and topics which they try to twist and prove Islam to be the absolute religion and Mohammad the final prophet. But none of it really makes sense. They present no evidence whatsoever to back up their claims, yet they don't give up and continue with the same arguments, even repeating them over and over again which shows they have obviously nothing. The patterns which we see here are indicative that deep down inside, they don't believe it themselves!

Christians need to be tolerant and remain focused, not resorting to similar approaches in return. God has called us to be people of love and charity to look and consider our neighbours as we do ourselves. As Christians we are called to be a humble people speaking in the spirit of love to all we meet. Deep inside, I want to say, why should we be tolerant? They insult us with their statements and should we not state our arguments in return because it will insult them. I know that we should be forever kind and loving but my hard hearted sometimes disagrees with my own understanding. However, I do feel that this attitude sometimes makes the Muslim wonder why we don't get angry in defending our own religion like they do. This is the way to be they think.

On the other hand people often have an inclination to demonise and misrepresent Islam. We ignore their actually history and basic teachings. This is true but where is the balance? Do we just let Islam take us over without any kind of fight? Do we just stand and smile while we are being conquered? I know deep down, in regards to the love of God, that's what we are called to do.

'Christianity stands on its own and its historical records of the life of Jesus as found in the Gospels. It does not need to disprove a religion which only came six hundred years later. Islam, on the other hand, because it acknowledges Jesus but has no alternative historical records of his life, has to disprove Christianity to establish itself. This is why the Qur'an itself

constantly argues against Christian beliefs and practices and is also why Muslims try so hard to discredit the Bible.’ This point really helps to be more understanding and not to be so antagonistic toward Muslims. It is true that Christianity stands on its own; it does not have to prove anything. We only have to tell people about the amazing story of Jesus.

So I have tried to use so much knowledge as possible from my experiences of living and relating to Muslims in the Middle East along with other knowledgeable people who have published well-prepared articles. I have tried to give as much acknowledgement to these resources as possible, not wanting to take any credit for their hard work. Amen.

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