

# Jesus For Moslems

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*This study is available in English, Albanian, Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish.*

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Preface

These thoughts and researches have been necessitated by many live discussions amongst Muslim people in Guyana, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, Tatarstan, Serbia, Albania, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine...as well as correspondence with hundreds of contacts throughout the Islamic world and parts of Africa. In nearly all the above countries I know Christian converts who were once Muslims. Through all this, I can heartily agree with the finding of many others who have sought to take Christ to Islam: these discussions with Muslims have forced me to a radical and patient expression of my faith and understanding in Christ. By the very vigour and cruciality of its objections, Islam compels the Christian to delineate Christ more deeply and more finely. Their misunderstandings have to be made the theme of more patient exposition. Every difficulty has to be made an opportunity for witness to the Truth; and in this there is good discipline for every servant of Christ in whatever context. That said, this book is not intended to convince committed Muslims to leave their faith. It is to help those who in their hearts have already left Islam, and are looking to Jesus. And it seems there are many of them about, underneath the veneer of Islamic society and culture. I am grateful to brother John Thorpe for allowing me to quote from his own writings at some length, and for his comments on the text. I can thoroughly recommend his book "Islam and the Bible". I also must record my thanks to brother Ashraf Ali, a former Muslim originally from Guyana, for many hours of perceptive discussion, and for his zealous example of debating and discussing with Muslims; and to brethren Bassam, Mehmet, Mohammad, Ramazan, Said [and many others I cannot safely mention] in Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey for their zealous examples and brave breaking free from Islam.

It becomes apparent the more one studies and reflects, that Islam and true Christianity are incompatible. This raises the stakes. The outcome is either deeper entrenchment, or a deep and heart rending conversion. I have not written this book very sensitively, because I am appealing emotionally, from the heart...to those who already have major doubts about Islam, and are looking to Jesus. I have used 'Christian' ideas such as the Fatherhood of God very freely. And I have relegated to an Appendix the apparently crucial question of whether the Old and New Testaments which I quote are corrupted or not, as Islam claims. As I say, I write for those who will give me a hearing without having to be persuaded to. My appeal is, with David: "Taste and see, that the Lord is good". And this is the unashamed challenge of the final and longest chapter. There I have sought to draw out the practical implications of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God, who was crucified, bearing our sins, and rose again for our justification. These realities can and do transform human life in practice, both now and eternally. It really is a case of "believe or perish".

4.2

Is The Bible The Unaltered Word Of God?

Transcript Of A Debate With Katherine Kullman And The Submission Organization

2001 / 2002

Written Debate

Speakers:

For The Position Of The Bible Being The Unaltered Word Of God: Mr. Duncan Heaster  
(Christadelphian)

Against The Position Of The Bible Being The Unaltered Word Of God: Ms. Kathryn Kullman (A  
representative of the International Communittee Of Submitters)

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4-2-1 The Writers Of The Bible

### **Duncan Heaster's First Speech**

Is the Bible the Unaltered Word of God?

I submit without hesitation that the Bible is the unaltered word of God. I make no apology for quoting the Bible itself as proof of its authority. I want you to listen to the Bible speaking about itself, and then you can make your decision.

In the Bible we have God's written words, so that we might understand God's spirit or mind. David spoke of how God's word and "own heart" are parallel (2 Sam. 7:21); God achieved this miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of *INSPIRATION*. This term is based around the word "spirit":

#### **In-spirit-ation.**

"Spirit" means "breath" or breathing. "Inspiration" means "in-breathing". This means that the words which men wrote, whilst under "inspiration" from God, were the words of God's spirit. Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget that it is the words of God's spirit:

"From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished ('thoroughly equipped', N.I.V.) unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

If the inspired Scriptures can provide such totality of knowledge, then there is no need for another book to show us the truth about God. The Israelites were reasonably interested in what God's Word had to say, as are many "Christians" today. We all need to carefully reflect on Hebrews 4:2:

"Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel in the wilderness): but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" .

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God's word has led many Christians to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God and say that much of the Bible was just the personal opinions of the writers. I do not share their position. Peter effectively disposes of such reasoning.

"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it...above all, you must understand (this is vital!) that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21 N.I.V.).

We must "above all" believe that the Bible is inspired. The doctrine of inspiration is so often emphasized in the Bible (e.g. Mk. 12:36; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).

### The Writers Of The Bible

A solid belief in the total inspiration of the Scriptures is vital. The men who wrote the Bible were carried along by the spirit which inspired them, so that the words they wrote were not their own. The Word of God being the truth (John 17:17), it is not surprising that with many it is unpopular - for truth hurts. The prophet Jeremiah suffered much for speaking the words God inspired him with, and so he determined not to record or speak the words that he was given. But because the writing of God's Word is a result of God's will, he was "carried along by the Holy Spirit" so that he had no choice. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me...I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:7,9).

A surprising number of those that God inspired to speak His word went through periods of reluctance to do so:

- Moses (Ex. 4:10)
- Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6)
- Ezekiel (Ez. 3:14)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:2,3)
- Paul (Acts 18:9)
- Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-14)
- Balaam (Num. 22:24)

This all confirms what we learnt in 2 Peter 1:19-21 - that God's Word is not the personal opinion of men, but the result of men being inspired to write what was revealed to them. At times Moses lost

the sense of his own personality, so strong was God's inspiration: " All these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses.." (Num. 15:22,23); these words were actually said by Moses (v. 17). Their mouth was His mouth. There are many writings of the prophets where it is hard to determine whether the personal pronouns refer to God or the prophet (e.g. Jer. 17:13- 16) - so close was the relationship and manifestation of God through them.

Sometimes the writers of the Bible realized that they did not fully understand the things that they wrote. They " searched" for the correct interpretation - " ..unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things" which they wrote (1 Pet. 1:9-12). . The following provide obvious examples: Daniel (Dan. 12:8-10); Zechariah (Zech. 4:4-13); Peter (Acts 10:17). The child Samuel likewise didn't know Yahweh but still spoke His word (1 Sam. 3:7).

If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then they had to be completely taken over by God's spirit during the inspiration - otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in purity. An acceptance that God's Word is completely His provides us with more motivation to read and obey it. Thus the books of the Bible are the work of God through His spirit, rather than the literature of men. This is demonstrated by considering how the New Testament refers to the Old Testament writings.

- Matthew 2:5 (R.V. mg.) speaks of how it was " written through the prophets"
- Matthew 2:15 quotes from Micah, but says: " [that] which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet..." . Hebrews 2:6: " one [actually David] in a certain place testified..." . . There are other examples where the name of the prophet is omitted to show it is not so relevant (Mt. 1:22; 2:23; 21:4).

The human writers of the Bible were therefore relatively unimportant to the early Christians; it was more important that their words were inspired by the spirit of God:

- Jesus plainly stated, " The words that I speak...are spirit" (Jn. 6:63); He spoke under inspiration from God (Jn. 17:8; 14:10).
- We must be re-born by both water and the spirit (Jn. 3:3-5) and the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).
- " The words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the...prophets" (Zech. 7:12).
- " I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:23) associates a true understanding of God's word with the action of His spirit upon us.
- There are parallels between God's spirit and His word in many passages: " My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth..." (Is. 59:21). Also 2 Sam. 7:21,Ez. 36:27; Jer. 31:33.

God is His spirit (Jn. 4:24), and God is His Word (" the word was God" John 1:1). Our attitude to God's Word is our attitude to Him. When we break commandments, we are despising God's Word (Am. 2:4). This is where belief in inspiration has a powerful practical effect.

#### 4-2-2 The Quran Scriptures

### **The Islamic Alternative**

There are flat contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, especially relating to the records of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Muslim usually assumes that the Qur'an is right and the Bible wrong.

To say that the Bible was changed by the Jews hardly seems likely - both Old and New Testaments are full of criticisms of the Jews. The texts of both Testaments have been in the possession of both Jews and Christians, so they would have had to collaborate if the texts were indeed tampered with. For 200 years before Jesus, the Hebrew Old Testament existed in Greek translation as the Septuagint, and this would have had to be changed along with the Hebrew texts, if indeed the Old Testament was changed. Muslims can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. Their presupposition that the Bible *must* be wrong because it disproves the Qur'an drives them to make assumptions and claims without evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls, the manuscripts of the Old Testament, dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, reveal how the texts have lost virtually nothing throughout the generations of recopying - their correspondence with later manuscripts is exact! The Codex Alexandrinus contains the entire Septuagint and also New Testament, dating back to at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD; and the Codex Sinaiticus contains the New Testament written in at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The Codex Vaticanus dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Note this is all before the times of Muhammad. And yet these three different manuscripts are all in agreement! The first two are housed in the British Museum, London; and the third in the Vatican. So it cannot be said that the text of the New Testament has been changed over at least 17 centuries! It is no argument to say that over time, a manuscript must inevitably change. On this basis, we could expect the Qur'an to have changed too. There are at least 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts available for analysis - far more than for the Qur'an. The next most well supported book, Homer's *Iliad*, has only 643 manuscripts. There are original sections of John dating back to 120 AD, and of Matthew to 65 AD. The few variant words do not affect in any way the sense of the text; and none of the variant words contradict anything written elsewhere in the New or Old Testaments. There were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text - for Muhammad was illiterate and what he said was written down by various people - these variants were only ended when Caliph Uthman ordered all other copies of the Qur'an to be destroyed apart from that compiled by Zaid-ibn-Thabit (see John Gilchrist, *Muhammad And The Religion Of Islam* pp. 176-199). If this had been done to the Bible, one would be left wondering whether we have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Muslim. Where is the evidence that God inspired Caliph Uthman to choose Zaid-ibn-Thabit's version?

Muhammad was told: " He sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur'an]...and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel" (3.3) And Jesus was " sent the Gospel" (5.46). Islam assumes that the Torah and the Gospel were sent from God, but the Old and New Testaments that we now have are not the same thing. The books which they claim were revealed to Moses [Torah- *Tawraat*] and Jesus [the Gospel- *Injil*] just don't exist anywhere, nor is there any evidence for them ever having existed. The Qur'an deepens the difficulty by stating that these books were those in the hands of Jews and Christians at the time of Muhammad (5.44,50). Jews and Christians are told that the Law and Gospel have come to them as revelation from the Lord (5.71). The Qur'an is said to be a confirmation of what was in the Scriptures, which the Jews of Medina were reading at the time of Muhammad (2.91; 10.94). But the books they possessed at this time were the Old and New Testaments as we now know them. There is *no* evidence that any other books existed! If God, as Muslims claim, preserved the exact text of the Qur'an, why could He not preserve these other books as well? Why does the Qur'an tell Jews and Christians to follow the precepts of their respective Scriptures, speaking of them with great reverence - if they are so utterly corrupted? How can it be that the Qur'an calls down curses on " the people of the book" if they do not obey the Torah and Gospel (5.47)- if these documents are hopelessly corrupted? It is significant that it is later generations of Muslim apologists, not the Qur'an itself, who say that the Jews corrupted the Bible text. The passages in the

Qur'an (e.g. 5.14,44) which are quoted by them, speak of the Jews of Medina twisting words and distorting the verbal recitation of the Qur'an - not of scribes corrupting the Hebrew manuscripts.

There are a number of Muslim writers from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries who insist that the commonly accepted Old and New Testaments were in fact what was in the hands of " the people of the book" (as the Qur'an calls Jews and Gentiles) at that time. Al-Ghazzali, one of the greatest Muslim theologians ever, lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and quoted the Bible without ever doubting the trustworthiness of the text. " Al-Ghazali did not accuse the Christians of altering the texts, but rather of misinterpreting them" (Wisner, *The Islamic Jesus* p. 165). Fakhruddin Razi, who died in 1209 " ...confirming categorically that the Biblical text has not been changed..." (Ananikian, *The Alteration of The Bible According To the Moslems*, The Muslim World, Vol. 14 p. 77).

Muslim critics claim that because Matthew writes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, his Gospel couldn't have been written by him. But Allah, whom Muslims say wrote the Qur'an, writes in the same 3<sup>rd</sup> person: " He is Allah, there is no god except Him" (59.22)- and they don't similarly think that this disproves that Allah is the author. Likewise, Muslim claims about the Bible's errancy are so wildly exaggerated. Ahmed Deedat in *Is The Bible God's Word?* claims there are 50,000 errors in it- 40 / page! No published book would have 40 errors / page. Why such gross exaggeration? Has he ever actually listed them all...?

Summing Up:

The Qur'an says that the Old and New Testaments were given to men as inspired by God

The texts we now use clearly contradict the Qur'an

Muslims therefore say that the texts were corrupted.

Seeing the texts for the Old and New Testaments go back well before the birth of Islam, it follows that this would have to have happened before the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

Islam claims the original Old and New Testament Scriptures were lost long ago.

And yet the Qur'an says that they were in existence in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and at the time of Muhammad.

How can this be, if they were lost or corrupted? Where are the original, inspired texts?

If the true, inspired Old and New Testaments existed at the time of Muhammad and were read by " the people of the book" [i.e. Jews and Christians]...then this would mean that from the 1<sup>st</sup> up to at least the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries there were both false and true Old and New Testaments circulating. But there is no evidence of this. And yet there is evidence e.g. the Dead Sea Scrolls, that the early manuscripts were faithfully transcribed over the ages.

Islam considers Jesus to be a great prophet, but says he didn't die or rise from the dead. This raises at least two fundamental questions:

· Jesus' teachings were based around the Old Testament's predictions of His forthcoming death and resurrection. If these didn't happen, then how can He be a " great prophet" ? The whole of His



message was falsified if He neither died nor resurrected. He promised life to His followers conditional upon His own resurrection. " Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19).

· If we are to accept Jesus as a prophet, surely His words must be written down somewhere for this claim to be true? If the New Testament is so hopelessly corrupt, as Islam claims, then where is the true record of His words?

If Muslims accept that the words of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament are true, then they really have to accept the rest of the Testament. It would be very difficult to prove that the four Gospels are inspired but the rest of the New Testament isn't. The words of Jesus state in crystal clarity what happened: " I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; I have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). These words teach that His resurrection is the basis of the Hope He offers to mankind. And Paul was inspired to write in perfect harmony with this: " Now is Christ risen from the dead...For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

And perhaps most piercingly, Paul's inspired words: " If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins...if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:17-19). These words are so relevant to Islam. If Jesus Christ is merely a prophet whose words are helpful just for " this life" , then " we are of all men most miserable" . But the example of the disciples and early Christians shows that they were not in this state at all. They were willing to suffer the loss of all things because they felt impelled by the resurrection's reality to preach this, with no prospect of personal gain but only loss. They rejoiced at their sufferings (Acts 4:18-20; 5:41), and turned the world upside down by their witness (Acts 17:6). Extra-Biblical history confirms that the Roman world was indeed overrun by the Christian preaching of the resurrected Jesus. Why did they do this? Theories of stolen bodies and swooning would not have motivated hundreds of men like Paul to make the dramatic changes they did, or to motivate the world-changing evangelism which the resurrection of Jesus inspired. The Bible must be the unaltered word of God for these things to all be true.

#### 4-2-3 The Islamic Perspective On The Bible

##### **Katherine Kullman's First Speech**

##### **Is The Bible The Unaltered Word Of God? An Islamic Perspective**

I believe that the Torah and the Gospel of Jesus is from God. I also believe that there are righteous followers of both scriptures. The scripture I follow, the Qur'an, tells me so.

[Qur'an 5:46] ...we sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the previous scripture, the Torah. We gave him the Gospel, containing guidance and light....

The original versions of both scriptures however, given to us in Hebrew and Aramaic, are lost to the world. What we have are translations from translations, and no original towards which we can verify the words and passages. Thus, the versions in our hands today cannot be the absolute unaltered word of God. Simple logic tells us so.

Although reading the scripture in the original language is not a criterion to access the essence of God's message, it is important to keep the above fact in mind when facing issues in the scripture which are contradictory, not clear, or simply not logical to us.

In this article, you will find proof that the majority of the Bible is indeed the word of God. You will also find proof that will clear up issues that for so long has been debated and disputed among Christians and non-Christians alike.

### **General Issues Of Concern Regarding The Bible**

It is not the intent of this article to debate the well-known issues of contradictions and extreme violence attributed to God in the Bible. There is enough useful information available filling this function. Instead I wish to focus on new found facts which helps all of us determine what is true or not. For those who wish to study bothersome areas of the Bible in more detail, I do however recommend the following links.

- [The contradictions](#)
- [The extreme violence attributed to God and His messengers](#)
- [The different versions of words and passages in different translations](#)

(Listed at the end of this article)

### **Why Miracles?**

Throughout time God has sent down words to us, to help us redeem ourselves. Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets from God received words to pass onto the rest of us, and only by heeding the message they brought can we attain salvation. To help us recognize those sent by Him, God supported all His messengers and prophets with miracles.

John 10:25 ....The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me....

The nine miracles performed by Moses were witnessed by perhaps hundred thousand people, yet only a few people believed with him in the end. The miracles of Jesus were witnessed by perhaps a few thousand people, yet only a few people believed with him before he returned to his Creator. This tells us that even if people witness miracles and hear the message first hand, it will not convince many, only a few.

The reason for the extremely few followers during the lifetimes of God's prophets and messengers is not that people change after they leave, it is because *the message changes after they leave*. When the true teacher leaves, false teachers always appear, invariably accompanied by a message suggesting adjustments to the message "Worship God alone". Other 'components' are added and suggested as necessary for our salvation. This is the time thousands and millions join the wagon.

You might wonder why people who do not like God's unaltered message would prefer an altered version of it, instead of simply rejecting it entirely?

The problem is not that they do not believe in God, they do, just as Satan does. Thus, something inside them knows that the message they are hearing is from God. The problem lies in the fact that they do not know who God is, with all His attributes. Recognizing God with all His attributes leaves no room for anything or anybody else besides God to have power independent from Him.

What the altered, compromised version of God's message achieves, is the illusion of a void in which the ego finds room to 'rule' as he or she wishes. It feeds the false notion that somehow something besides God has, or should have some power and influence. This is why the altered message always, always, suggests that other entities are somehow needed besides God for us to achieve salvation. Thus, by strongly supporting others in that attributed power, such as Jesus or Muhammad, they are indirectly supporting their own claim for power independent from God. This false and blasphemous idea is what got us to this earth in the first place. To read more, visit <http://www.submission.org/suras/app7.html>

### **So How Big Of A Sign Do We Need To Take Heed?**

We accept something as a sign or miracle when it far exceeds human capabilities and probability. At the early times of human civilization, at the time of Saleh for example, the messenger sent to Thamoud, it was enough of a sign that God sent a camel that would only drink on a day assigned by God. So what kind of proof would God reveal in our day and age, that we may be convinced?

God sends miracles that match the time and the level of knowledge of people. If Jesus would revive a dead man, heal the leprosy, or restore the sight of the blind today, there might be room for doubt, considering the advanced medical science we have today. Almost all aspects of our lives today are associated with numbers and computers. We visit other planets and work with such advanced parts of the human body as its DNA structure. Global communication and information is instant, at the touch of a button. Powerful Computers helps us precisely calculate the probability of almost any given event.

In this world, what kind of proof will be powerful enough to eliminate all excuses? If such a miracle were revealed, would we take heed? At what point would a sign be too powerful for us to ignore? *At what point would you attribute something to God?*

4-2-4 Gematria And Quran

### **Coincidence Or Divine Sign?**

If for example you lived by the ocean, and one morning when you looked out you saw thousands of fish in the sea forming the words "leave your house now, you are in danger". Would you ignore this and go back inside to have your breakfast?

What if you left your house, and all the people taller than you wore green, and all the people shorter wore yellow, and all the people your height wore red, wouldn't you definitely concluded that someone is trying to get your attention?

I think you would agree that a person ignoring the fish and the people dressing in a certain way would also have ignored the miracles that accompanied Jesus.

## Good News To Our Generation

As it turns out, God has revealed a miracle in our time, which He calls “one of the greatest miracles.” It is a miracle in the form of a mathematically coded message based on the number 19, an altogether consistent mathematical structure embedded in the Final Testament to the world, the Qur’an. It is a physical, verifiable, and utterly irrefutable miracle, which can be verified any time, anywhere, by anyone in the universal language of mathematics.

The first signs of this gematria code were first discovered some 900 years ago by Rabbi Judah the Pious. He discovered a deliberate mathematical pattern in original fragments of the Torah, based on the prime number 19. The following quotation is taken from *Studies In Jewish Mysticism*:

*The people [Jews] in France made it a custom to add [in the morning prayer] the words: " `Ashrei temimei derekh [blessed are those who walk the righteous way], " and our Rabbi, the Pious, of blessed memory, wrote that they were completely and utterly wrong. It is all gross falsehood, because there are only nineteen times that the Holy Name is mentioned [in that portion of the morning prayer]... and similarly you find the word `Elohim nineteen times in the pericope of Ve-`elleh shemot.... Similarly, you find that Israel were called " sons" nineteen times, and there are many other examples. All these sets of nineteen are intricately intertwined, and they contain many secrets and esoteric meanings, which are contained in more than eight large volumes...*

This divine signature is also found in our bodies and in the universe. As Gallileo said, “Mathematics is the language by which God created the Universe.”

This divine signature is also found in our bodies and in the universe

Beyond this we know that the incubation period of the human embryo is 280 days (7 x 40). In Genesis we are told that man was formed from the dust of the ground. The " dust of the ground" contains 14 (7 x 2) elements, and so does the human body. Every cell in the human body is renewed every 7 years and every 7th day the pulse beats slower. In certain diseases the critical days are the 7th, 14th, 21st, etc. and the female cycle is 28 (7 x 4) days. Light is made up of 7 colours, the moon completes its orbit around the earth in 28 days (7 x 4) and the earth is 49 (7 x 7) times larger than the moon.

Both components, 1 and 9, are the only numerals that look the same in all languages.

### Why 19?

The universal coding of God's creations with the number 19 rests in the fact that it is the gematrical\* value of the word " ONE" in all the scriptural languages -Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic. The number 19, therefore proclaims the First Commandment in all the scriptures: There is no god except the one God.

\*The gematrical value of a letter is the numerical value assigned to that letter. At the time of the revelation of the Qur’an, people were using letters to communicate values and amounts.

Other significant facts about the number 19:

- It encompasses the first numeral (1) and the last numeral (9), as if to proclaim God's attribute in 57:3 as the "Alpha and the Omega," "The Outermost and the Innermost."
- It looks the same in all languages of the world. Both components, 1 and 9, are the only numerals that look the same in all languages.

## Gematria And Quran: The Facts

Although the Quranic miracle preserves the Quranic structure and Arabic text perfectly, the miracle is designed in a way that you do not need to understand Arabic to verify it. Here is a list of some of the facts of this miracle.

- The Qur'an consists of 114 chapters (or suras in Arabic), which is  $19 \times 6$ .
- The total number of verses in the Qur'an is 6346, or  $19 \times 334$ .
- The word "GOD" is mentioned 2698 times in the Qur'an, or  $19 \times 142$ . The numbers of the verses in which these occurrences are mentioned adds up to 118123, which is  $19 \times 6217$ .
- The Qur'an mentions 30 different numbers. The sum of these numbers is 162146, which equals  $19 \times 8534$ .
- In all suras with Quranic Initials\*, the initials occur in their respective sura in exact multiples of 19. Sura 2 for example has the initials A.L.M.
- These initials occur 4502, 3202, and 2195 times respectively in Sura 2. The sum of these numbers are 9899, or  $19 \times 521$ . This system producing multiples of 19 is consistent with all the suras containing Quranic initials. To verify, visit <http://www.submission.org/miracle/visual.html>
- \*29 of the Quranic chapters are prefixed with 14 different sets of "Quranic Initials," consisting of 1-5 letters per set. Fourteen letters, half the Arabic alphabet, participate in these initials. These 29 chapters constitute half of the Quranic text. The significance of the Quranic Initials remained a divinely guarded secret for 14 centuries.

- Write down the number of verses in a sura, followed by the number of each verse in that sura. Continue this process until every verse in the Qur'an is written down, thus forming one very long number encompassing the number in every verse in the Qur'an. The number representing the whole Qur'an is a multiple of 19 & consists of 12692 digits, which is also a multiple of 19. Visit the following website to verify <http://www.submission.org/math-ap1.html>

- Write down the number of each verse, followed by the total number of verses in each sura, at the end of every sura. The total number of numbered verses (6234) in the Qur'an is put at the very end. Visit the following website to verify: <http://user.tninet.se/~agx775x/>

- The number of every verse in a sura, followed by the number of the sura, followed by the number of verses in the sura. The number representing the whole Qur'an, is a multiple of 19. To verify, visit <http://user.tninet.se/~agx775x/>

There are hundreds of other similar facts from the Qur'an producing the same results, over and over – exact multiples of 19. To read more, please visit <http://www.submission.org/miracle/>

Here are some examples showing us the same pattern in our creation and in the universe:

- It takes 266 days or 38 weeks for a baby to fully develop. 266 is 9x14, 38 is 19x2.
  - The waves in the ocean break at 19 degrees.
  - The maximum number of electrons in an atom is 114, 19x6.
- Haley's comet revisits our solar system once every 76 years, 19x4.
- All forms of life are made of 19 L-Amino acids.

Does this help us determine whether the Bible is the unaltered word of God or not?

Absolutely! Having a scripture in which every letter is authenticated as the perfectly preserved word of God, everything else must be measured against those words. It serves as a litmus test for the truth if you will. This immediately points us to areas of strong suspicion in the Bible, and helps us identify the true identity of Jesus and his mission.

The conclusion this message and miracle gives us is the same as all the previous messages and miracles: There is no god except the one God – the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He alone is worthy of worship. We shall worship Him alone.

## 4-2-5 Jesus And The Quran

### True Story of Jesus

-

[Qur'an, Chapter 19 (Mary):16-37]

Mention in the scripture Mary. She isolated herself from her family, into an eastern location. While a barrier separated her from them, we sent to her our Spirit. He went to her in the form of a human being. She said, "I seek refuge in the Most Gracious, that you may be righteous." He said, "I am the messenger of your Lord, to grant you a pure son." She said, "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me; I have never been unchaste." He said, "Thus said your Lord, 'It is easy for Me. We will render him a sign for the people, and mercy from us. This is a predestined matter.'" When she bore him, she isolated herself to a faraway place. The birth process came to her by the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "(I am so ashamed;) I wish I were dead before this happened, and completely forgotten." (The infant) called her from beneath her, saying, "Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided you with a stream. " If you shake the trunk of this palm tree, it will drop ripe dates for you. " Eat and drink, and be happy. When you see anyone, say, 'I have made a vow of silence; I am not talking today to anyone.'" She came to her family, carrying him. They said, "O Mary, you have committed something that is totally unexpected. " O descendant of Aaron, your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother unchaste." She pointed to him. They said, "How can we talk with an infant in the crib?" (The infant spoke and) said, "I am a servant of GOD. He has given me the

scripture, and has appointed me a prophet. " He made me blessed wherever I go, and enjoined me to observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and the obligatory charity (Zakat) for as long as I live. " I am to honor my mother; He did not make me a disobedient rebel. And peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I get resurrected." That was Jesus, the son of Mary, and this is the truth of this matter, about which they continue to doubt. It does not befit GOD that He begets a son, be He glorified. To have anything done, He simply says to it, " Be," and it is. He also proclaimed, " GOD is my Lord and your Lord; you shall worship Him alone. This is the right path." The various parties disputed among themselves (regarding the identity of Jesus). Therefore, woe to those who disbelieve from the sight of a terrible day.

[3:45-60] The angels said, " O Mary, GOD gives you good news: a Word from Him whose name is `The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary. He will be prominent in this life and in the Hereafter, and one of those closest to Me.' " He will speak to the people from the crib, as well as an adult; he will be one of the righteous." She said, " My Lord, how can I have a son, when no man has touched me?" He said, " GOD thus creates whatever He wills. To have anything done, He simply says to it, `Be,' and it is. " He will teach him the scripture, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel." As a messenger to the Children of Israel: " I come to you with a sign from your Lord - I create for you from clay the shape of a bird, then I blow into it, and it becomes a live bird by GOD's leave. I restore vision to the blind, heal the leprous, and I revive the dead by GOD's leave. I can tell you what you eat, and what you store in your homes. This should be a proof for you, if you are believers. " I confirm previous scripture - the Torah - and I revoke certain prohibitions imposed upon you. I come to you with sufficient proof from your Lord. Therefore, you shall observe GOD, and obey me. " GOD is my Lord and your Lord; you shall worship Him alone. This is the right path." When Jesus sensed their disbelief, he said, " Who are my supporters towards GOD?" The disciples said, " We are GOD's supporters; we believe in GOD, and bear witness that we are submitters." " Our Lord, we have believed in what You have sent down, and we have followed the messenger; count us among the witnesses." They plotted and schemed, but so did GOD, and GOD is the best schemer. Thus, GOD said, " O Jesus, I am terminating your life, raising you to Me, and ridding you of the disbelievers. I will exalt those who follow you above those who disbelieve, till the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is the ultimate destiny of all of you, then I will judge among you regarding your disputes. " As for those who disbelieve, I will commit them to painful retribution in this world, and in the Hereafter. They will have no helpers." As for those who believe and lead a righteous life, He will fully recompense them. GOD does not love the unjust. These are the revelations that we recite to you, providing a message full of wisdom. The example of Jesus, as far as GOD is concerned, is the same as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, " Be," and he was. This is the truth from your Lord; do not harbour any doubts.

#### Recommended Links

#### Original Language of the Scriptures

[http://www.qtm.net/~trowbridge/NT\\_Hist.htm](http://www.qtm.net/~trowbridge/NT_Hist.htm)

[http://religion.rutgers.edu/jsseminar/jsem\\_b.html](http://religion.rutgers.edu/jsseminar/jsem_b.html)

<http://westarinstitute.org/Polebridge/GosJesus/gosjesus.html>

#### Contradictions

[http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/jim\\_meritt/bible-contradictions.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/jim_meritt/bible-contradictions.html)

<http://www.submission.ca/christians/bible-contradictions.html>

[http://members.aol.com/JAlw/joseph\\_alward.html](http://members.aol.com/JAlw/joseph_alward.html)

[http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/donald\\_morgan/atrocity.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/donald_morgan/atrocity.html)

<http://www.nobeliefs.com/DarkBible/darkbible3.htm>

[http://www.near-death.com/experiences/bible\\_analysis5.html](http://www.near-death.com/experiences/bible_analysis5.html)

[http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/donald\\_morgan/atrocity.html](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/donald_morgan/atrocity.html)

[http://religion.rutgers.edu/jseminar/jsem\\_b.html](http://religion.rutgers.edu/jseminar/jsem_b.html)

Violence/Cruelty

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible/>

Leviticus 26:22

Numbers 31:17-18

Ezekiel 9:4-6

Deuteronomy 20:13-14

Deuteronomy 28:53

Judges 21:10-12

Hosea 13:16

Jeremiah 48:10

Leviticus 20:9-11

Numbers 14:17-19

Exodus 20:4-6

Genesis 34

4-2-6 Gematria And Numerology

Mr. Heaster's Response Speech

## **Introduction**

I must admit when I read my colleague's opening statement, I was somewhat taken by surprise. The statement promised at the outset to show "proof that the majority of the Bible is indeed the word of



God” and “proof that will clear up issues that for so long have been debated and disputed among Christians and non-Christians alike”. I was disappointed to then go on to read a treatise on the number 19 and how significant it appears to be for the Qur’an. NO passages were quoted from the manuscripts of the Bible to try and show the Bible has been altered. Instead, a numerology study on number 19 in the Qur’an! So I ask: where is the concrete evidence that the text of the Bible has been altered? For this debate requires such concrete evidence.

As mentioned in my opening statement, there were many many variant readings in the Qur’an text - Muhammad was illiterate and what he said was written down by various people until Caliph Uthman ordered all the variant copies of the Qur’an to be destroyed, apart from that compiled by Zaid-ibn-Thabit. If by mentioning all the strings of words/letters/phrases that add to the number 19 in the Qur’an it was to convince readers that this is the only piece of literature that displays such patterns, then the writer is mistaken. Other writings have similar features; the Bible has patterns associated with the number 7, for example, and there are a lot of features of nature that have the number 7 as their pattern. The main question I would ask my colleague is, how does a pattern of the number 19 (or any number in fact!) really transform lives, today, in practice?

## Gematria Doesn’t Prove Inspiration

The argument that gematria ‘proves’ the Qur’an to be God’s word runs into major problems in that amazing patterns of gematria can be discerned in much other literature which flatly contradicts the Qur’an. This was a common literary device used by many writers and scribes in Babylon and Egypt, but especially was it widespread amongst the Jewish rabbinical writings. In the Qumran literature, as well as many of the Jewish Apocryphal writings, the Talmud and the Mishnah, there are similar features of gematria to those claimed for the Qur’an. See D.S.Russel, *The Method And Message Of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964) p. 127. Seeing Mohamad was illiterate and lived amongst Jews, it is highly likely that his early scribes were Jews, and it is not surprising that they built in such patterns. The Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh regularly employs features based around the number 7 [see John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968 p. 107]. Ugaritic literature is replete with these phenomena. See Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome: P.B.I., 1949) p. 27. It has been shown that Sargon II built the wall at Khorsabad according to the numerical value and implications of his name (Vincent Hopper, *NumberSymbolism*, New York: Columbia, 1938 p. 62).

### 4-2-7 Gematria And Hebrew Words

Many such claims have been for the Bible text too. " Below are the Hebrew words of the very first verse in the Bible.

In the beginning

Created

God

(An indefinite article which is not translatable)

The heavens

And (with indefinite article)

The earth

There are three important nouns in this first verse God, heaven, and earth. The numeric values of these three nouns are 86, 395, 296, respectively. When these three numeric values are added, the total value [777] is found to be a number which divides perfectly by 7 a number which is a multiple of 7, which is 111 7 s. Is it not strange that the numeric value of these words is a value which divides perfectly by seven a value which is an exact multiple of seven? Notice that the numeric value of the words is not 776 or 778, but exactly 777. If the numeric value / gematria were 776 or 778 it would not divide evenly by 7.

Feature One

The numeric value of the three important Hebrew nouns, God, heaven, earth, is exactly 777 or 111 7 s

Feature Two

It is strange to note that the numeric value / gematria of the verb in the first Bible verse of Genesis is also a number which divides perfectly by 7 a number which is an exact multiple of 7. The numeric value of the Hebrew verb created is exactly 203 or 29 7 s

Feature Three

Strange to say, the numeric value of the first, middle, and last Hebrew letters in this first verse is also a number which divides evenly by 7. The numeric value of these three letters is exactly 133 or 19 7 s

Feature Four

The numeric value of the first and last letters of all of the seven Hebrew words in this verse is also a number which divides perfectly by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 1393 or 199 7 s (Notice the numeric value is not 1392 or 1394 but 1393, always a number which is an exact multiple of 7)

Feature Five

The number 1393, which is the numeric value of the first and last Hebrew letters of all the seven words, divides in the following manner. The numeric value of the first and last letters of the first word and the last word is a number which divides evenly by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 497 or 71 7 s

The numeric value of the first and last letters of the words remaining between the first and last words also divides perfectly by 7. Their numeric value is 896 or 128 7 s

(497 plus 896 equals 1393)

Feature Six

The Hebrew participle ETH which is not translatable into English in the Bible, occurs twice in the sentence of seven words. The article the also occurs twice. The numeric value of these two words which occur twice also divides by 7. Their numeric value is exactly 406 or 58 7 s.

#### Feature Seven

The last letters of the first and last words have a numeric value of exactly 490 or 70 7 s

#### Feature Eight

the number of Hebrew words in this verse is exactly 7.

#### Feature Nine

The total number of Hebrew letters in these seven words also divides perfectly by seven is an exact multiple of 7. The number of letters is exactly 28 or 4 7 s

#### Feature Ten

The first three of these seven Hebrew words contain the subject and predicate of the sentence. These three words are translated "In the beginning God created". The number of actual letters in these first three Hebrew words is exactly 14 or 2 7 s. The last four of these seven words contain the object of the sentence. These four words are translated the heavens and the earth. The number of letters in these last four Hebrew words is 14 or 2 7 s

#### Feature Eleven

These last four Hebrew words consist of two objects. The first is the heavens, and the second is and the earth. The number of letters in the first object is exactly 7.

The number of letters in the second object in the Hebrew is 7

#### Feature Twelve

The three leading words in this verse of seven words are God the subject and heavens and earth the objects. The number of letters in these three Hebrew words is exactly 14 or 2 7 s

The number of letters in the other four words of the verse is 14 or 2 7 s

#### Feature Thirteen

The shortest word is in the middle. The number of letters in this word and the word to its left is exactly 7

#### Feature Fourteen

The number of letters in the middle word and the word to its right is exactly 7.

These sevens these numeric features or facts are strangely hidden beneath the surface. They are truly beyond the view of ordinary readers of the Hebrew words and are discovered only by special investigation and counting.

The above are only a few examples of the many amazing numeric facts which have been discovered in the structure of this first verse of only seven Hebrew words. Literally dozens of other phenomenal numeric features strangely underlie the structure of this verse & .." (" Mathematics Prove Holy Scriptures" , Karl Sabiers, reprinted 1969, pp.21-27).

From earliest times, many Christians, myself included, have been cynical of these claims. It doesn't need computer techniques and clever counting to prove whether or not a document is from God. In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries after Christ, there arose many Gnostic writings. They claimed that their writings were from God because of the amazing patterns of gematria in them. Irenaeus responded, and on this occasion I would agree with him totally:

“No one should seek to prosecute inquiries respecting God by means of numbers, syllables and letters. For this is an uncertain mode of proceeding, on account of their varied and diverse systems, and because every sort of hypothesis may at the present day be, in like manner, devised by any one; so that they can derive arguments against the truth from these very theories, insomuch as they may be turned in many different directions” (*Against Heresies*, Book 2:25:1, published in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* , Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951, Vol. 1 p. 396).

The fact that the Jewish writings, the Bible, Babylonian epics, the Gnostic writings, the Qur'an etc. all display features of gematria means that it is a non-argument to say that gematria proves any one of those writings to be the only unaltered word of God. This is the logical fallacy which the Moslem argument seems to have fallen into. Gematria is largely pseudo-science- and the way that appeals have to be made to the supposed fact that all waves break at an angle of 19 degrees is a reflection of this. Islam must be intellectually desperate if it has to recourse to this kind of argument. Even if some amazing co-incidences can be discerned, this does not prove in any sense the claim that therefore the literature which exhibits such co-incidences must therefore be inspired. Many Moslems are in fact embarrassed by the claims made about the Qur'an from gematria. The fact literature can be produced which has such 'amazing' features shows clear enough that there is no reason to think that it must be inspired. If it all is, then God has inspired totally contradictory material.

#### 4-2-8 Problems With Gematria

Summing up, gematria can't prove inspiration. So my explanation of the claims of gematria would be:

- pseudo-scientific methodology
- biased sampling of the literature
- co-incidence. Anyone with a background in statistics can tell you that there is such a thing as pure co-incidence. A photograph was once published in a British newspaper of three cars whose registration plates varied only by one letter each, were parked in the same direction, on the same street, of the same colour and year. And yet they were owned by people in totally different parts of the country.

Although some claim to 'prove' the Bible through its features relating to the number 7, I don't think the Bible needs this crutch to support it. God's word doesn't need such appeals to validate it. Many documents have features of 7 if one looks close enough. John J. Davis gives an example of a 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Aramaic document which has an opening sentence which contains 49 letters and signs; the first numerical sign in the verse was 21. When all the numerals of the sentence are added together the total is 28. The sentence contains only 7 sibilants. The date of the letter when written in numerals and each letter is added up, comes to 7. If gematria proves inspiration, then this document is inspired. Quite simply, patterns of gematria don't prove a document is inspired.

It just isn't so that "It [gematria] serves as a litmus test for the truth if you will". By saying this, my friend is raising the stakes. If other books can be shown to have the same features, then they too are truth. Yet many of those books contradict both the Bible and the Qur'an.

A message claiming to be divine and apparently proved to be so because it contains a startling combination of numbers should still not be accepted if the historical and moral content of such a message or book fails to confirm its divine origin. Christians have rightly perceived that if the sources of the information in the Qur'an are found to have been in existence before the time of Mohammed, as indeed they were; and if its historical information is faulty; then the Qur'an cannot be accepted as divine. We thus find the "proof" offered by this type of numeric to be simply irrelevant.

### **Gematria: Problems In Methodology And Facts**

The idea that the Qur'an has many number patterns in it divisible by 19 was promoted chiefly by Ahmed Deedat and a Dr. Khalifa. However their analysis has many problems. The opening blessing (the *Bismallah*) at the beginning of most of the chapters of the Qur'an is usually (but not always) ignored and some of the occurrences of words are not what Dr. Khalifa claims. This is enough to change the numbers and invalidate the theory.

The numerology system used by Khalifa and Deedat has a further problem for Moslems in that it doesn't fit the entire Qur'an. In particular Q 9:128,129 is out of step with the numeric pattern and Khalifa and Deedat argue that these two verses should be removed from the text of the Qur'an. This is a severe problem for Moslems. To use the numerological theory to support the Qur'an's veracity they have to reject part of the text of the Qur'an. Earlier Moslems believed that these two verses were part of God's revelation. How can a Moslem be certain that there are not more surprises of this kind? As a result of this reasoning, Moslem authorities have rejected the numerology methods outlined and have threatened Deedat and Khalifa with branding as *Murtad* or as *Kafir* (either of which could be life threatening).

There are many conflicting texts of the Qur'an. There is the well known dispute between Shiite and Sunni Muslims over the composition of the text. Arthur Jeffery "Material for the History of the Text of the Qur'an" (New York, Russell F. Moore, 1952) has something like 90 pages just on variant readings of the text which are documented. So any claim to prove the Qur'an by gematria falls down because the exact original text is such a question of debate- and, it is a debate which cannot be resolved, seeing that Mohammad was illiterate and the book existed only in an oral form for some time.

Moslems themselves accept the problem which there is with the texts. Consider Saleh al-Wahaihu, "A Study of Seven Quranic Variants," International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Vol. V

(1989), #2, pp. 1-57: " It is interesting to note that in scholarly Muslim journals, there is beginning to be a grudging acknowledgement of the fact that there are variant and conflicting readings on the text of the Qur'an".

My friend's argument depends heavily upon the numbers of verses in the Qur'an. But he is implying that the division of the book into verses was directly from God. How, therefore, can he explain that fact that the division of verses in the Qur'an is based on five different systems:

- the Kufah system, following the tradition of Ali;
- the Basra system, following Mohammed's companion Asim ibn Hajjaj;
- the Shami system of Syria used by Mohammed's companion Abdu'lla-h ibn Umar
- the Makkah system and
- the Madinah system.

This makes it obvious that Mohammed did not undertake the division into verses. As far as the ordering of the Suras is concerned this was done by Khalif Uthman and thus the argument falls flat. For there is no evidence that Uthman was inspired by God in the way he divided up the verses.

The sheer intellectual desperation of my friend's argument is reflected by some real heavy pressurizing of evidence to make it fit in with the '19' pattern. Thus: "It takes 266 days or 38 weeks for a baby to fully develop. 266 is  $9 \times 14$ , 38 is  $19 \times 2$ ". Well I could just as well argue that the incubation period of the human embryo is 280 days ( $7 \times 40$ ). Or again: "The waves in the ocean break at 19 degrees". Really? Every wave...every place...in the Arctic ocean too? How can this debatable suggestion transform human life in practice? How does it prove anything about the Qur'an?

"The Qur'an mentions 30 different numbers. The sum of these numbers is 162146, which equals  $19 \times 8534$ "

30 different numbers...? But 30 isn't divisible by 19. If there were, say, 19 different numbers, then this would be seized upon as evidence, it seems.

"In all suras with Quranic Initials\*, the initials occur in their respective sura in exact multiples of 19. Sura 2 for example has the initials A.L.M."

These are the initials of the scribes who copied them. A.L.M., for example, stands for Amar Li Muh. I do not believe there was, therefore, any intentional structuring of the initials of the scribes according to the number 19. Closer analysis of my colleague's claims reveals that there are major problems in both methodology and the plain facts of the analysis suggested.

Thus in Sura 36, where the initials are Y and S, there are 48 S and 237 Y. Though neither of these sums can be divided by 19, the combined total is  $15 \times 19$ . This is not particularly outside the bounds of probability. The analysis suggested tries improve the results by stating for example that in all Suras with the initials ALM at the top, the respective letters in the three Suras combined add up to a figure that is divisible by 19. In this case the sum of all A's and L's and M's in Suras 2,3,7,13,29-32 add up to 26676, which is equal to  $19 \times 1404$ . In order to make this total divisible by 19, he had to



29	ALM	784	554	347	168															
					5															
30	ALM	545	396	318	125															
					9															
31	ALM	348	298	177	823															
32	ALM	268	154	158	580															
36	YS	48	237		285															
38	28	28																		
40	HM	389	64	453																
41	HM	276	58	334																
42	HM-ASQ	308	53	53	99	57														570 (361+209)
43	HM	317	45	362																
44	HM	145	16	161																
45	HM	200	31	231																
46	HM	227	37	264																
50	Q		57			57														
68		133	133																	
TOTALS	17499	11780	8683	1235	152	304		107	387	482		582	221	114	133	137				41816

Frankly, if divisibility of all these figures by 19 is proof that the Qur'an is inspired by God...well, it isn't. There are just too many problems with gematria.

Duncan Heaster

4-2-9 Christian Criticisms Of Islam Answered

The Moslem Response: Second Speech

## Is The Bible The Unaltered Word Of God? II

One advantage of discussions like this, is the opportunity to identify and hopefully free ourselves of misconceptions we may have about the faith of others. Therefore I would like to start by clearing up a some misconceptions about Islam that my debate companion shares.

1: "There are flat contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, especially relating to the records of the crucifixion of Jesus."

The Qur'an agrees with and proves most events surrounding Jesus, including the virgin birth, the miracles, and the fact that his body was crucified. It does not agree however with the interpretation of those events, in raising Jesus to the same level as God, or even suggesting he is God.



2: "Muhammad was illiterate."

While many Muslims believe that he was illiterate, Muhammad was a merchant, and as such he had to master the alphabet. The suggestion that Muhammad was illiterate opposes all the Quranic accounts of Muhammad. This misconception is based on an attempt to attribute a 'miraculous aspect' of the revelation of the Qur'an, by those who failed to understand that the revelation of Qur'an was a miracle in its own right.

3: "There were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text...and what he said was written down by various people.. If this had been done to the Bible, one would be left wondering whether we have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. "

It is very interesting that you choose to phrase yourself exactly this way, as what you are describing is actually exactly what happened to the New Testament. There were so many variant readings of the Gospel of Jesus by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, that Constantine arranged the first ecumenical council in 325 A.D, during which 318 of the 1800 Bishops met to settle the Arian dispute regarding the identity of Christ. The trinity was accepted as the official stand, and all other beliefs and versions of the Gospels were banned.

The New Testament was definitely written down by various people. It certainly wasn't written down by Jesus, or his disciples, unlike the original Qur'an, which was written by Muhammad. From the Qur'an we learn that people said about the revelations that Muhammad preached, "Tales from the past that he wrote down; they were dictated to him day and night." (25:5)

The deviation between the original Qur'an and the one put together by the committee of scribes appointed to make copies of the Qur'an, was the adding of two verses at the end of Sura 9 to honor the prophet. The adding of these two verses caused a division among the early Muslims, which resulted in a war. Even though the version with these two verses included were conveyed to the generations that followed, they have always been regarded as very suspect. One reason for this suspicion is the fact that they are reported to be Mekkan verses (i.e. revealed in Mekka), although the chapter (Sura) is a Medinan Sura (i.e. revealed after the prophet migrated to Medina). Another reason is the fact that every single verse in the Qur'an was verified by a multiplicity of witnesses except the last two verses of Sura 9; they were found only with Khuzeimah Ibn Thaabet Al-Ansaary. This exception was justified with inventing a Hadith (story attributed to the prophet) stating that Khuzeimah's testimony equals that of two men! The miracle of the Qur'an clearly exposes these two verses as false.

4: "Muslim claims about the Bible's errancy are so wildly exaggerated. Ahmed Deedat in *Is The Bible God's Word?* claims there are 50,000 errors in it- 40 / page! No published book would have 40 errors / page. Why such gross exaggeration? Has he ever actually listed them all...? "

I share your belief that the claim of 50.000 errors is wildly exaggerated. I find your reaction to this claim very interesting however. If the Bible is indeed the absolute unaltered word of God in your mind, then the words you want to use here is not "wildly exaggerated" and "a gross exaggeration" but rather "completely false." You also wrote that " The Dead Sea Scrolls...reveal how the texts have lost virtually nothing" Virtually nothing is one thing. Absolutely nothing is another.

5: "Islam claims the original Old and New Testament Scriptures were lost long ago. And yet the Qur'an says that they were in existence in the first century and at the time of Muhammad."

The Old Testament and the New Testament have been in existence ever since they were revealed. The truth can be found in the representations of them today, as can the blatant attempts to inject in them words to promote the worship of other than God.

6: If the New Testament is so hopelessly corrupt, as Islam claims, then where is the true record of His words? “Why does the Qur'an tell Jews and Christians to follow the precepts of their respective Scriptures, speaking of them with great reverence - if they are so utterly corrupted? “

There is a big difference between something being “utterly or hopelessly corrupted” and “containing some discrepancies.” The absolute majority of the Biblical message is intact.

The true record of Jesus words are imbedded in the Bible, and completely unaltered in the Qur'an. The hearts of those guided by God will recognize those words, as well as recognize the words never spoken by Jesus, as they are not said in the true ‘spirit’, as you put it.

The few manipulations are easily detectable once we realize their root cause, i.e. promotion of idol worship. For the Christians that have sensed these things relief has arrived. Through the miracle (<http://www.submission.org/miracle/>) of the Qur'an they will find solid confirmation of their justified suspicions, and experience a renewed sense of discovering the actual words spoken by Jesus.

7: “Their presupposition that the Bible *must* be wrong because it disproves the Qur'an drives them to make assumptions and claims without evidence. “

As I've clearly demonstrated in my opening statement, this is as far from the truth as it can be. God has given ALL of us a proof, not only of the Qur'an, but also of the authenticity of the original Old and New Testament. And as I have already stated, most of the Bible is not wrong. Again, the incorrect areas are easily detected once we understand their root cause.

“If the true, inspired Old and New Testaments existed at the time of Muhammad and were read by " the people of the book" [i.e. Jews and Christians]...then this would mean that from the first up to at least the seventh centuries there were both false and true Old and New Testaments circulating.”

The first writings to circulate among early Christians were Paul's letters. In fact, much of what we recognize today as the basic teachings of Christianity came to us through Paul, although he never met Jesus. He was the major missionary to the gentiles in the years immediately following the crucifixion.

He spread his version of the message by writing letters to different congregations, often trying to solve localized problems, or to consolidate the faithful into one cohesive congregation, rather than to document and spread the teachings of Jesus. There are many indications in Paul's letters that there were powerful and authoritative opponents to his teachings. Paul wrote that these opponents were teaching a " gospel other than the gospel you accepted" and preaching about " another Jesus:

“...when someone comes preaching another Jesus than the one we preached, or when you receive a different spirit than the one you have received, or a gospel other than the gospel you accepted, you seem to endure it quite well. I consider myself inferior to the " super-apostles" in nothing. [2 Corinthians 11:3-5]

Although he does not question the authority of those he refers to as the 'super-apostles', he does try to match their qualifications with his own: " Since many are bragging about their human distinctions, I too will boast" (2 Cor. 11:18).

One thing we do know is that the differences among the early members of the church were deep and divisive. Paul's letter to the Galatians makes that clear. Scathingly, Paul exhorts his readers to stick to the gospel he had delivered to them: "I directly withstood him, because he was clearly in the wrong. He had been taking his meals with the Gentiles before others came who were from James. But when they arrived he drew back to avoid trouble with those who were circumcised. The rest of the Jews joined in his dissembling, till even Barnabas was swept away by their pretense. As soon as I observed that they were not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I had this to say to Cephas in the presence of all: " If you who are a Jew are living according to Gentile ways rather than Jewish, by what logic do you force the Gentiles to adopt Jewish ways?" [Galatians 2:6-14]

We see here that initially it was James, Cephas and John who recognized Paul's authority. What about the other Jerusalem apostles? Were they the important and prominent ones who wanted Paul to add to his teachings? If not, why were they not mentioned? And what was he supposed to add? It is logical that these opponents were original apostles, and that they wanted him to preach the following of Mosaic law.

Later, in Antioch, even Cephas had a run-in with Paul over the practice of Mosaic law. Paul accuses him and the other Jews of dissembling, and not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel and of wanting to force the Gentiles to accept Mosaic law. If Paul attacked even his supporters among the Jerusalem apostles, it is inevitable that he was at odds with them as a group.

Given the extremely strong prohibition of idol worship in any form, which is at the base of Mosaic law, it is almost certain that any tendency to deify Jesus would have been strongly resisted by the Jerusalem apostles. This could well have been the basic cause of the rift between Paul and the original apostles.

"Extra-Biblical history confirms that the Roman world was indeed overrun by the Christian preaching of the resurrected Jesus. Why did they do this?.... The Bible must be the unaltered word of God for these things to all be true."

The Roman world, that accepted the concept of Trinity during the Nicaea conference in 325, had gone through several rulers in a period of 3 years. Constantine was looking for something to unite his kingdom. Accepting the concept of a Christian God that had a son did not differ too much from the way the Romans already perceived god-hood, already worshipping several gods with sons and daughters. Those that opposed the deification of Jesus this way at that time were banished or killed.

History has shown us that people can move in amazing unison, guided by mad leaders. If we consider this a proof for truth, then how are we to consider Hitler? Regardless of how forceful a majority is, or how persuasive and charismatic their leader is, they can never be considered righteous as long as their message is not rooted in the very first commandment in all scriptures: "There is no god except the One God".

It is interesting to note that almost all uncommon men at the time Jesus were considered to be celestially begotten somehow. We can see direct connections between heathen mythology and the beliefs adopted by the Christian Church. The mythologists had gods for everything. In Christianity

today there are saints for everything. The pantheon had been filled with the statues of god, and the Church became filled with statues of saints.

“If the inspired Scriptures can provide such totality of knowledge, then there is no need for another book to show us the truth about God. “

What we need is guidance to achieve salvation. That guidance and that salvation has been available ever since the first human being walked the earth, long before the Old, the New and the Final Testament. Totality of knowledge will never be given to or achieved by anyone except God.

God has promised us that He will increase our knowledge and that He will continue to show us His signs in the horizon and within ourselves until we realize that God is speaking to us, yet He tells us that “the knowledge given to you is minute.”

“Muslims can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. “

If providing dates, places, actual names for those responsible for writing the passages is a criteria for accepting something as false, then it should be an equally important criteria for accepting something as true. This however is not the case, since I agree that there are other factors which make us believe in the message, including the ‘spirit of the message’ as you mentioned, and not when and how the ink hit the paper.

Just because something is old doesn’t mean that it has to change. Changes happen for a reason. Beyond unintentional and uncontrollable changes, they are meant to fill a purpose, to achieve a certain result. Once this result is achieved, it is in the interest of those protecting that result, to maintain their work. Thus, it is to be expected that there are very old samples of the Bible that agree with the Biblical versions presented today.

A scripture being old is not an absolute argument that it was changed. A scripture no longer represented in its original languages, containing contradictions in its most fundamental message, is however a reasonable reason to suspect manipulation. If raising quantity is an issue of proving authenticity, then where is the trust in the “spirit” of the message, and where is the “quoting the Bible itself as proof of its authority,” as you mentioned.

If something being old or available in large numbers, are used in determining the authenticity of a message, then people immediately after the departure of Jesus would have been justified in rejecting his message.

For those that feel that admitting to one single discrepancy in the Bible equals having to throw it all out the window, a serious and open-minded discussion becomes very difficult. Regardless of the discrepancies in the Bible, it is still full of beautiful words of wisdom and guidance from God. Throwing out the entire Bible due to the few discrepancies would be to throw the baby out with the bath water.

## Inspiration

There is no doubt that God’s revelations are products of His inspiration to those chosen to reveal His words to us. This has nothing to do with the integrity and belief, or lack thereof, of those who took it

upon themselves to reproduce and translate God's message after the fact. As you yourself so well express:

“And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Muslim. Where is the evidence that God inspired Caliph Uthman to choose Zaid-ibn-Thabit's version? “

I must conclude that you are willing to apply the same question for all the versions of the Gospels available to us today. Where is the evidence that God inspired Paul? Where is the evidence that God inspired the writers of the different versions of the Gospel? Where is the evidence that Constantine choose the correct versions to support?

There is a group of Christian scholars called the “Jesus Seminar” which have embarked on the bold journey of seriously investigating these issues. From their site I quote:

“We are about to embark on a momentous enterprise. We are going to inquire simply, rigorously after the voice of Jesus, after what he really said. In this process, we will be asking a question that borders the sacred, that even abuts blasphemy, for many in our society. ....Our basic plan is simple. We intend to examine every fragment of the traditions attached to the name of Jesus ...”

#### 4-2-10 The Quran As A Miracle

##### Final Statement From Duncan Heaster

My friend has drawn a parallel between the miracles of Jesus and what he considers to be the ‘miracle’ of the mathematical code that supposedly underlies the Qur’an. But I submit that this parallel is invalid for the following reasons:

- The miracles of Jesus and His apostles were for all to see. Nobody could doubt that a great prophet had arisen (Lk. 7:16; Acts 4:16). Even His enemies had to admit that He “did many miracles” (Jn. 11:47). The worst they could do was to criticize Him for healing a lame man on the sabbath, arguing that the ‘work’ of doing such a miracle should have been performed on another day (Lk. 13:14). He gave His disciples power to perform the same kind of miracles as He did (Jn. 14:12). Their miracles likewise were accepted as such even by their opponents (Acts 4:16).
- The ‘miracle’ of Qur’an numerology is hotly denied by many who have studied it, and even many Moslems deny it, as I evidenced in my previous statement. So it is hardly in the same order of ‘miracle’ as the miracles of Jesus.
- The arguments for numerology ‘proving’ the Qur’an have only recently appeared. They supposedly depend upon an unspecified computer program to discover. The implication is that there was no ‘miracle’ to support the Qur’an until recent times. Are we supposed to conclude that for centuries Moslems without access to computers and the numerical arguments ‘believed’ the Qur’an on the basis of an unreasoned faith, merely due to tradition? And are we to conclude that those many Moslems today without such access, or who simply reject it (as I do) as scientifically invalid, are likewise following a book in which there is no concrete reason to believe? This may in fact be the case, but I pose this as a rhetorical question.
- For numerology to prove the Qur’an as a miracle would require that the evidence was “easy to understand”, to use my friend’s words. But it isn’t. It requires a computer to discern them, so my

friend has claimed. Many intelligent Moslems do not understand it nor agree with it. And I know no case of where someone has converted to Islam because of the numerological arguments presented. Yet if numerology is *the* definitive proof that the Qur'an is miraculous, then I would have expected that many would convert to it because of this.

- From where does my friend know that Jesus did miracles that proved that He spoke the truth? From where does he know that Jesus did actually speak truth? The only source of evidence is the New Testament. And yet he claims this document is hopelessly corrupted. He seems to me to have argued himself into intellectual and logical self-defeat. But it is not my intention to capitalize on this fact. Let the seeker after truth simply reflect upon it.

- A similar tautology is found in the claim that: "It is ignorance of ...the miracle of the Qur'an which makes people compare it with other reported similar patterns in the Ancient literature". Isn't this circular reasoning? You don't accept it's a miracle, so, you find fault with the gematria that 'proves' it is a miracle? I am not unwilling to accept a miracle. But I want to see the evidence. It's the same with claims to perform miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. I am open to persuasion, but I compare them against Bible teaching and also analyze what is claimed to have happened. And I, along with many others, reject those claims. To say 'You don't accept the miracle because you don't accept the evidence' is not really saying anything- indeed, it implies that we are somehow to be bullied into accepting a miracle. Therefore the miracle itself, clearly enough, isn't a miracle. It falls down under investigation.

- Following on from this, I am in agreement with Qur'an 17:36 which says: "You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight and the brain, and you are responsible for using them". The generations of largely illiterate, computer-less people who have lived since the production of the Qur'an could never have verified the Qur'an using the [pseudo] mathematical techniques my friend has suggested. Therefore, on his logic, are we to conclude that those Moslems never verified their faith in the Qur'an, but merely accepted Islam as the unverified faith of their fathers? According to the presentation made by my friend, this would seem an inescapable conclusion.

To claim that Qur'an 74:31 teaches that the number 19 is "to convince the Christians and Jews [that this is a Divine scripture]" actually falsifies the Qur'an. For the arguments based on gematria are rejected by many Moslems too. Does this mean that Moslems are unconvinced even by their own Qur'an? Therefore their faith in Islam must rest purely on tradition and upbringing. And why were the numerological arguments not used more often down the centuries? And why is it that the argument about the number 19 has *not* convinced hardly any Christians nor Jews...?

You ask: "You must believe that [the numerical patterns in the Bible] have some meaning". I tried to make it clear that I do not believe that those patterns have any real meaning, at least in terms of persuading anyone that the Bible is the word of God. I am then totally confused by the statement that "Gematria is by no means the basis for the miracle of the Qur'an". Well if so, what other evidence is there? And why has this debate focused, from the Moslem side, almost exclusively on explaining and justifying this line of 'evidence'? I find it incredible that in a debate about the Qur'an being the word of God, and whether or not the Bible is the unaltered word of God, the Islamic position has almost solely focused on proving the Qur'an to be Divine by gematria. And then, at the conclusion of the debate [after the arguments have been answered or at least exposed as needing far more proof], we are told that gematria is in fact no basis at all for believing the 'miracle' of the Qur'an. I submit that no real evidence has been placed before you that the Qur'an is the word of

God, and the arguments which I have given as to why the Bible is the unaltered word of God have not been answered.

## Summary

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. "Taste and see, that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). The ultimate proof that the Bible is God's word comes through reading it. I want to suggest that you read it for yourself. I can recommend a little plan which I have used almost every day of my life since early childhood. It's called *The Bible Companion*. It contains no teaching, no dogma. It's just a list of Bible chapters to be read each day, and in this way you can systematically read the whole Bible through in the course of a year- something very few people on this earth [professing Christians amongst them] have actually achieved. Send me an e-mail and I'll get a free copy sent to you. And it is the Bible's message which is what clinches the argument.

### 4-2-11 A Brief Summary Of The Bible Message:

1- There is only one God, not a 'trinity'

2- Jesus is the Son of God, not God Himself; He didn't exist before He was born. He had all our temptations and human experiences, but He never sinned. He gave His life for us in a painful death, but then, because He never sinned, God resurrected Him from the dead.

3- Through baptism into Christ by the dipping in water of an adult, we share His death and resurrection

4- so when Jesus Christ returns we will be resurrected, judged and given eternal life in His Kingdom- which will be based here on this earth. This Kingdom will be like the world was in the garden of Eden, when God first created mankind- and even better. All the problems which are now on earth- war, famine, sadness, even death itself, will be finally ended- for ever.

5- After death we are unconscious- 'hell' means just 'the grave'.

6- The soul is not immortal; we are made of dust and return to the dust. The spirit is the power of life within us, which God takes back when we die. We don't go on existing in any conscious form after death.

7- 'Satan' is a symbol for the evil human desires inside us, against which we must struggle; it is not the name of a dragon or monster that exists. God is 100% powerful; He doesn't share His power with 'satan'. All our problems come from God, not satan, and therefore there is a positive spiritual purpose to them.

8- By reading the Bible for ourselves we can find the true way to God.

I do appeal to you, to study these things, and give yourself no rest until you have come to surely know the true Gospel. I do so hope you will study our free Bible study course; and set yourself the aim, to be baptized one day, by dipping in water. Then you will surely have the hope of eternal life. OK we can't imagine eternal life. I can only suggest we imagine a long, long line, with no end, stretching on into the distance; and we in this life are just a few millimetres at the start of it. This

really is our hope, if we are baptized into Jesus and live in Him. I plead with you, to take all this seriously, and not treat it as mere religion, as just something ordinary.

The purpose of Jesus Christ and the doctrines about Him which are found in the Bible was to radically transform human life in practice. There is a real basis for authority in Christianity- the Bible. Islam lacks this. All you can do is to read the Bible for yourself. Pray to the one true God for guidance, that He will bring you closer to Himself. Consider the real possibility that you could be baptized into the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. I urge you to give yourself no rest about these matters. Contact us for free literature and a free Bible study manual, available in over 35 languages, which will enable you to systematically study the Bible in your own home at your own pace. May God bless you.

#### 4-2-12 The Quran Code

##### Moslem Final statement

Miracles are blessings from God to those who believe and seek the truth, not to arrogant human beings that decided not to accept God's message to them. Miracles by themselves do not convey a message, but proves the authenticity of the message delivered through God's messengers.

When Jesus walked the earth he was supported by powerful miracles from God that the people may know that he spoke the truth. By presenting proof for the Gospel he preached he also confirmed the previous revelations in the Old Testament. The mathematical miracle of the Qur'an fills exactly the same function, and confirms previous revelations.

We humans have been given the gift of free will by God, which allows the doubters to question and reject God's miracles, and the sincere to reap the benefits for accepting them.

Although Jesus showed great miracles, most people did not believe him and even pursued to ridicule, persecute, and eventually crucify him. Similar things happened to Moses and all the other prophets. It should not surprise us to see history repeats itself when it comes to God's miracle in the Qur'an.

Mr. Heaster wrote: "where is the concrete evidence that the text of the Bible has been altered? For this debate requires such concrete evidence."

In my opening statement I provided several links to information about this. In my second article, I provided evidence from the Bible of the fact that there were disputes between the original disciples of Jesus and Paul, whose version is the one most prevalent today.

#### **The Quran Code: The Proof**

There is no other scripture or piece of literature displaying the same deliberate and overwhelming structure as the Qur'an, which is far beyond human capability yet easy to understand. The studies based on number 7 and 11 in the Bible are nowhere near the complexity and clarity of the code of the Qur'an.

The Quranic code leaves no stone unturned. It covers every single letter, every single word, every



single verse and every single chapter of the whole Qur'an. There is no change of method in how to count or what to include, as is the case with all other attempts to imitate the code of the Qur'an. It is ignorance of the complexity and overwhelming clarity of the miracle of the Qur'an which makes people compare it with other reported simple patterns seen in the Ancient literature or scriptures.

## Imitators

Just as in the days of Moses, when the magicians threw their sticks and they appeared as serpents to the people through their magic, there will always be poor imitators of God's awesome signs and structures to us. This fact serves the important function to expose those who seek excuses to disregard God's signs to hold on to their old beliefs and ways. The old beliefs being protected always involves a message suggesting that something or someone else beside God have or should have some power.

## Do Numbers Change Lives?

You asked, "How does a pattern of the number 19 (or any number in fact!) really transform lives, today?"

How does anything divine transform our lives? When studying how the previous messengers and prophets were received we see that God's signs have always had various effects on different people. The effect number 19 will have is clearly spelled out in the Qur'an.

[74:30] Over it is nineteen.

[74:31] We appointed angels to be guardians of Hell, and we assigned their number (19) (1) to disturb the disbelievers, (2) to convince the Christians and Jews (that this is a divine scripture), (3) to strengthen the faith of the faithful, (4) to remove all traces of doubt from the hearts of Christians, Jews, as well as the believers, and (5) to expose those who harbour doubt in their hearts, and the disbelievers; they will say, "What did GOD mean by this allegory?" GOD thus sends astray whomever He wills, and guides whomever He wills.

None knows the soldiers of your Lord except He. This is a reminder for the people.

I guess you have to ask what the numerical observations in the Bible are designed to achieve for the people studying them. Certainly, you must believe that their existence have some meaning and deserves attention, since it was designed by God and discovered by His will?

Although you credit some of these observations as being "amazing" and "startling", you do not accept them as being significant since you say, "Although some claim to 'prove' the Bible through its features relating to the number 7, I don't think the Bible needs this crutch to support it. God's word doesn't need such appeals to validate it. Many documents have features of 7 if one looks close enough. " I guess we both agree then that "amazing" and "startling" is one thing, and "miraculous another.

About mathematical coding in general you continue, "It doesn't need computer techniques and clever counting to prove whether or not a document is from God."

What it needs or not, or what we need or not, is not for us to decide. You may not realize it, but what you are in fact saying is that it would be wrong of God to reveal a sign using the computer, based on a deliberate mathematical pattern?

God is in no need, period. We are the ones that need Him. God doesn't need to reveal a scripture or to send messengers and prophets supported by powerful signs and miracles to guide us. But God chose to set up this system for our benefit. He also chose to grant us the freedom to question any aspect of this system until the Day of Judgement.

Looking back at the signs God revealed to our ancestors, we see that He always revealed signs that suited each generation and time. At the time of Moses magic was a big thing. At the time of Jesus healing the sick was considered a big deal. Today we live in the computer era, in which almost everything is controlled or influenced by numbers.

## The Quran Code: Gematria

You say, "Gematria Doesn't Prove Inspiration." I completely agree that gematria itself does not prove inspiration or revelation any more than numbers or words in general. It is when those numbers, words and gematrical value of the same are woven into a perfect pattern beyond human knowledge and capacity that it does.

Gematria is by no means the basis for the miracle of the Qur'an. Most aspects of the code have in fact nothing to do with the gematrical values of the letters.

You also say "If other books can be shown to have the same features, then they too are truth. " *If* doesn't quite cut it when making the most important decision of our lives. It is enough of a struggle to deal with what *is*.

"A message claiming to be divine and apparently proved to be so because it contains a startling combination of numbers should still not be accepted if the historical and moral content of such a message or book fails to confirm its divine origin."

Again you use the word "if". We either accept something as being of divine origin or not. When we accept something as divine nothing in this world should abrogate our respect and complete obedience of such a message. There is no such thing as 'I accept this as divine if it coincides with my previous view of the world.'

We came to this world because our opinions are twisted. Our way of looking at things is incorrect. This is why we need guidance from God. What arrogance would make us believe that we are entitled to reject something clearly divine because it does not coincide with our personal sense of moral?

A message that is not divine will never be proven to be divine. No one can fool God or produce a miracle without His authorization. For the record, the moral contents, laws and facts in the Qur'an have testified to its divine origin long before it was confirmed by the revelation of the mathematical miracle.

"if the sources of the information in the Qur'an are found to have been in existence before the time

of Mohammed, as indeed they were; and if its historical information is faulty; then the Qur'an cannot be accepted as divine. We thus find the "proof" offered by this type of numeric to be simply irrelevant."

"If" again.... I'm assuming that you are referring to information known to previous generations repeated in the Qur'an. Information being repeated in later scriptures is nothing new, as we clearly see in the New Testament as well. Jesus clearly said "I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it." The Qur'an confirms many of the previous events and miracles, and provides more details about them.

History is often the version of powerful persuading the world of their view.

God, the Most Merciful, does not however leave our destiny to depend on accounts of strangers that lived thousands of years before us. When such accounts are of any value to our salvation, God reproduces whatever is relevant of them in His revelations to us. Thus historical information can be a useful and valid source, but must be measured against God's scripture, not the other way around.

It would be interesting to know if you can think of even one independent historical piece of information which goes against the Quranic accounts, that is found in the Bible, which has any relevance at all to the way you practice your religion?

### **The Quran Code: Coincidences**

You say, "Anyone with a background in statistics can tell you that there is such a thing as pure coincidence."

Anyone who is either ignorant of who God is, or too arrogant to accept who God is, would agree with you. To explain any event by coincidence does not exist in the heart of a person who believes in the attributes with which God presents Himself to us: Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Alpha and Omega, Innermost and Outermost.

In fact, the major difference between a person who believes in God with all His attributes compared to one that do not, is the quality of understanding that God is running absolutely everything. Thus, there is no such thing as a co-incidence.

[10:61] ...Not even an atom's weight is out of your Lord's control, be it in the heavens or the earth. Nor is there anything smaller than an atom, or larger, that is not recorded in a profound record.

[6:59] ....Not a leaf falls without His knowledge. Nor is there a grain in the depths of the soil. Nor is there anything wet or dry, that is not recorded in a profound record.

God's laws are absolute. There are no single exceptions to His laws. This can only be achieved by absolute control of all things. Thus, there are no coincidences. The concept of "coincidences" is invented by those who seek

to put limits on God to allow the introduction of the need of other elements.

"A photograph was once published in a British newspaper of three cars whose registration plates

varied only by one letter each, were parked in the same direction, on the same street, of the same colour and year. And yet they were owned by people in totally different parts of the country.”

This is a perfect example of how something out of the ordinary caught your attention, and enough attention of others to make it into the papers. Yet, the pattern in this event is very insignificant compared to the overwhelming, powerful and completely solid and consistent pattern of divisibility of 19 in the Qur’an.

This event proves that God placed in us the instinct to react to patterns beyond the norm. This also proves that even for those that do believe that there is such a thing as a co-incidence, at some point they will be convinced that there is something extraordinary about a situation. Thus, events can only be explained away to a certain point. The point God takes us to when He reveals His miracles, is the point where there are no excuses to be made. Believe that.

What is perceived as divine or not differs from person to person. We are all responsible as individual to investigate what comes our way and make our choice. Whether we verified or researched enough before making that most crucial decision, we are still responsible for it.

### **Alleged Problems with the Quranic Miracle / The Quran Code**

- The opening statement of most of the Quranic chapters (In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful) has never ever been numbered. Thus, it would have been more logical to complain if they were counted, and if the miracle depended on numbering what was not numbered before the revelation of the miracle.

- Raising the issue of the different presentations of the Quranic verses as an argument against the Quranic code is kind of strange, as the existence of these different presentations actually confirm that there is one original text from which the others are derived. Would it be logical to consider the existence of all the different and adjusted presentations of the Biblical text as an argument against the Bible as most of the world knows it?

The oldest known copies of the Qur’an clearly shows the division of the verses as the majority of Muslims and the world knows them, and as proven by the Quranic code.

- Variant readings of the Qur’an? The only “variant” reading ever related to the Qur’an, is the one with two extra verses at the end of Sura 9, added to honor the prophet. As it turns out, these verses served a very important function in proving how well the Quranic pattern protects it from ANY alteration. It confirms that all the original 6346 verses has been perfectly preserved. To read more about this, [click here](#).

- About the Quranic Initials you wrote: “These are the initials of the scribes who copied them. A.L.M., for example, stands for Amar Li Muh.”

These Initials has been known as “the mysterious Quranic Initials.” No explanation of these Initials made sense until the revelation of the miracle. The theory you raise here is not based on any evidence. Nor is it logical or in consistency with the explanation of these letters in the Quranic text.

[10:1] A.L.R. These (letters) are the proofs of this book of wisdom.



					<u>(19x63)</u>		
<u>15</u>	<u>ALR</u>	<u>493</u>	<u>323</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>912</u> <u>(19x48)</u>		
<u>19</u>	<u>KHYA</u> <u>S</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>343</u>	<u>117</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>798</u> <u>(19x42)</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>TH</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>251</u>				
<u>26</u>	<u>TSM</u>	<u>484</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>94</u>			
<u>27</u>	<u>TS</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>94</u>				
<u>28</u>	<u>TSM</u>	<u>460</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>1767</u> <u>(19x93)</u>		
<u>29</u>	<u>ALM</u>	<u>774</u>	<u>554</u>	<u>344</u>	<u>1672</u> <u>(19x88)</u>		
<u>30</u>	<u>ALM</u>	<u>544</u>	<u>393</u>	<u>317</u>	<u>1254</u> <u>(19x66)</u>		
<u>31</u>	<u>ALM</u>	<u>347</u>	<u>297</u>	<u>173</u>	<u>817</u> <u>(19x43)</u>		
<u>32</u>	<u>ALM</u>	<u>257</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>570</u> <u>(19x30)</u>		
<u>36</u>	<u>YS</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>237</u>	<u>285</u> <u>(19x15)</u>			
<u>38</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>152</u> <u>(19x8)</u>					
<u>40</u>	<u>HM</u>	<u>380</u>	<u>64</u>				
<u>41</u>	<u>HM</u>	<u>276</u>	<u>48</u>				
<u>42</u>	<u>HM-ASQ</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>209</u> <u>(19x11)</u>
<u>43</u>	<u>HM</u>	<u>324</u>	<u>44</u>				
<u>44</u>	<u>HM</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>16</u>				
<u>45</u>	<u>HM</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>31</u>				
<u>46</u>	<u>HM</u>	<u>225</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>2147</u> <u>(19x113)</u>			
<u>50</u>	<u>Q</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>57</u> <u>(19x3)</u>				
<u>68</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>133</u> <u>(19x7)</u>					

Finally

To you, the reader of this debate, I would like to say that all this information should be worth nothing to you until you take it through the last most important step, the step of verification. God gave you your hearing, your eyesight and your brains, and you are responsible for using them. You are responsible for what you attribute to God.

[Qur'an 17:36] You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brain, and you are responsible for using them.

Prominent and charismatic leaders or presenters in the form of priests, imams, or powerful family members, constitute for many the sources from which they derive their religious information and conclusions. This is nothing short of a disaster for the soul of any human being. To love God with all our heart and all our soul it has to be real, it has to be ours. There are no short cuts here.

[Qur'an 6:94] " You have come back to us as individuals, just as we created you the first time, and you have left behind what we provided for you. We do not see with you the intercessors that you idolized and claimed that they will help you. All ties among you have been severed; the idols you set up have abandoned you."

Peace

Additional Comment: The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.

The following path of logic is quite devastating to the Islamic position. The path of logic goes like this:

1. The Quran accepts that the Bible as it existed at the time of Mohammed is the Word of God
2. The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.
3. The Quran states that the word of God as it was in the Torah, the Prophets and the Gospel records must be treated as a whole, and that it is impossible to make a distinction between the various books.
4. The Quran claims that anything unclear in the teaching of Mohammed can be clarified by the Bible. This again implies that the text of the Bible cannot be changed.
5. Further, Moslems are condemning themselves because the Quran says that only satan can claim to have altered God's word.
6. Therefore Moslems are contradicting themselves in claiming that the text of the Bible has been altered in some places. There is no evidence that the text of the Bible has been altered significantly since the time of Mohammed.

1. The Quran accepts that the Bible as it existed at the time of Mohammed is the Word of God

(Bakara 2:136 ) Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, add that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

( Ankebut 29 :46 ) Do not argue with the people of the scripture (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) except in the nicest possible manner- unless they transgress-and say, "We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you, and our God and your God is one and the same; to Him we are submitters.

Statements that the Torah cannot be changed:

Bakara 2 :4 ,41 , 44 ,51 ,53, 87 ,91

Al-i mran 3: 3-4 ,48 ,50 ,65 , 93

Maide 5:43-46, 66-68 , 110

En'am 6.154

Tevbe 9:111

Hud 11:110

Isra 17:2-4

Secde 32:23

Mu'min 40:53-54

Ahkaf 46:12

Statements that the Psalms cannot be changed:

Nisa 4:163

Isra 17:55

Enbiya 21:105

Fat1r 35:25

Statements that the whole Old Testament cannot be changed:

Al-i Imran 3:3-4, 48 ,49

Nisa 4:163



Maide 5:46 -47, ,66 – 68, 110

Tevbe 9:111

Hadid 57:26-27

Statements that the whole New Testament cannot be changed:

Bakara 2:136

Bakara 2:285

Al-i Imran 3:119

Nisa 4:136 ,163

Maide 5:43-47 ,68

Ankebut 29:46

Shura 42:15

(Maide 5:47) Let the People of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed; such are evil-livers

Bible passages which are quoted in the Quran:

Gen 17:14

Gen 24:4

Gen 34:27-28

Num 33:2

Dt 29:58

Dt 28:61

Dt 29:20-21 ,27

Dt 31:9 , 23-24

Josh 8:31

Josh 23:6

1 Kings 2:3

2 Kings 14:6

2 Kings 23:18

2 Kings 25:4

2 Kings 35:4

Ezra 3:2

Ezra 6:18

Neh 8:14

Neh 13:1

Dn 9:11-13

Jn 1:4-5 ,9-12

Jn 8:31-32 ,36

Rom 3:1-4

Heb 4:12

Heb 12:25-29

1 Jn 2:24

2 Jn 1:9

2 The Quran states that the word of God cannot be altered.

( En' am 6:115 ) The word of your Lord is complete, in truth and justice. Nothing shall abrogate His words. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.

(En'am 6: 34 ) there is none that can alter the Words (and decrees) of Allah.

(Yunus 10:15 ) Say: It does not beseem me that I should change it of myself; I follow naught but what is revealed to me; surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a mighty day.

See too

Yunus 10:64

Isra 17:77

Kahf 18:27

Ahzab 33:62

Fatr 35:43

Fetih 48:23

Kaf 50:29

3 The Quran states that the word of God as it was in the Torah, the Prophets and the Gospel records must be treated as a whole, and that it is impossible to make a distinction between the various books.

( Bakara 2:136 ) Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, add that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

Bakara 2:285

( Bakara 2:85 ) Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other?

( Al-i Imran 3:3-4 ) He sent down to you this scripture, truthfully, confirming all previous scriptures, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel

( Maide 5:43) How come they unto thee for judgement when they have the Torah, wherein Allah hath delivered judgement (for them)? Yet even after that they turn away. Such (folk) are not believers

( maide 5:68) Say: O People of the Scripture! Ye have naught (of guidance) till ye observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto you from your Lord. That which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) from thy Lord is certain to increase the contumacy and disbelief of many of them. But grieve not for the disbelieving folk

( bakara 2:62 ) Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve

Bakara 2:213; Maide 5:49

Even Muhammed had recourse to the Torah so it shows that the Torah was not thought to have been changed at his time.

( al-i Imran ): Say: Produce the Torah and read it (unto us) if ye are truthful. Saffat 37:156-157

See too:

Nisa 4:150-152

Ra'd 13:36

Hicr 15:91

Ankebut 29:46

(Bakara 2:113 ) The Jews said.....the Christians said....."Yet, both of them read the scripture.

(Bakara 2:44 ) What! do you enjoin men to be good and neglect your own soulswhile you read the Torah; have you then no sense?

(Yunus 10:64 ) They shall have good news in this world's life and in the hereafter; there is no changing the words of Allah; that is the mighty achievement.

(Maide 5 :43 )..... when they have the Torah, containing GOD's law.....

4. The Quran claims that anything unclear in the teaching of Mohammed can be clarified by the Bible. This again implies that the text of the Bible cannot be changed.

(Maide 5:48 ) Then we revealed to you this scripture, truthfully, confirming previous scriptures, and superseding them.

( al-i Imran 3:3) He hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture with truth, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel.

( Yunus 10:94 ) And if thou (Muhammad) art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture (that was) before thee

Enbiya 21:7

Bakara 2:41

Nisa 4:47

Yunus 10:37

Fatir 35:31

Ahkaf 46:12

(Maide 5:44 ) We have sent down the Torah, containing guidance and light. Ruling in accordance with it were the Jewish prophets, as well as the rabbis and the priests, as dictated to them in GOD's scripture, and as witnessed by them. Therefore, do not reverence human beings; you shall reverence Me instead. And do not trade away My revelations for a cheap price. Those who do not rule in accordance with GOD's revelations are the disbelievers.

5 Further, Moslems are condemning themselves because the Quran says that only satan can claim to have altered God's word

(Hac 22 :52 ) And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet, but when he desired, the Shaitan made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allah establish His communications, and Allah is Knowing, Wise.

(Hicr 15:9 ) Absolutely, we have revealed the reminder, and, absolutely, we will preserve it.

Bakara 2:255

Meryem 19:64

Saffat 37:3,7

Vaka 56:77-82

Hakka 69:44-47 ,51 Cin 72:26-27

This article was produced from research by Huseiyn G, edited by Duncan Heaster

#### 4.3 Prologue:

##### What Abraham / Ibrahim Believed About Jesus

I want to begin on common ground. If you open the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, you find that Matthew begins his account of the Gospel by saying that Jesus was the son of Abraham / Ibrahim. And later, Paul says the same: the Gospel was preached to Abraham / Ibrahim, in that the promises made to him are the essence of the Christian Gospel (Gal. 3:8). He says that his hope, the Christian hope, was the hope of receiving the promises made to the fathers: Abraham / Ibrahim, Isaac and Jacob (Acts 26:8). The whole of the *true* Christian Gospel can be understood from the life and faith of Abraham / Ibrahim. He is “the father of the [Christian] faithful” (Rom. 4:11,16). As we shall show in section 2, many bearing the name ‘Christian’ sadly have no appreciation of this at all. Their doctrines and religion is far from Abraham / Ibrahim and the real Jesus. The writer and publishers of this book have no connection at all with these groups. When 4.125 says that “God did take Abraham / Ibrahim for a friend”- did you know, this is exactly what both the Old Testament (2 Chron. 20:7; Is. 41:8) and New Testament (James 2:23) say? A footnote in Daryabadi’s translation of the Qur’an says: “The English word ‘friend’ does scant justice to the idea of *khalil* which in Arabic denotes the dearest or most sincere friend who has no rival”. Why, then, was God *so* fond of Abraham / Ibrahim?

It was not only because of what he did, his submission to God. It was because of his faith. And faith is something which occurs within the human heart. It can’t be that just by being literal sons of Abraham / Ibrahim we have any special standing with God: “Not all are children of Abraham / Ibrahim because they are his descendants” (Rom. 9:7). That wouldn’t be fair- that regardless of sin or submission / obedience, some would be blessed because of their ancestry. So: “It is *men of faith* who are the sons of Abraham / Ibrahim... So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham / Ibrahim who had faith” (Gal. 3:7,9). We must have the characteristics and faith of Abraham / Ibrahim if we are to be his true children: “Those who share the faith of Abraham / Ibrahim, who is the father of us all [who are true Christians]” (Rom. 4:16). And 2.124 says just the same, in saying that Abraham / Ibrahim was to be a model / pattern to all nations. 22.78 says all true believers will follow “the faith of your father Abraham / Ibrahim”. With this we are in agreement as

Christians of the Abrahamic faith. 3.67,95 stresses that Abraham / Ibrahim believed in one God, not a trinity or plurality of Gods. And this is indeed so- if we are to be true children of Abraham / Ibrahim, we too must reject the trinity and believe in but one God.

But how can we “share the faith of Ibrahim”? What was that faith? For it must have been faith *in* something. Faith isn't just a religious emotion. The Gospel was preached to Ibrahim (Gal. 3:8). If we can understand what God promised to him, then we know the Gospel. And God promised him that:

1. Genesis 17:8 “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”. So Abraham was told that he and his children would live for ever on this earth. So, eternal life is an idea that comes up in the Old Testament. Note that- because the essential message of the Bible is the same all the way through. How could this be?

2. Turn on to Genesis 22:17,18 “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice”. Abraham was to have a son who would be the source of blessing for the whole world. Now the way to understand the Bible is to see how the Bible itself quotes itself and gives us the interpretation. Now these words we have just read are quoted in the New Testament- in Acts 3:25,26. Let's go there and find the interpretation: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities”. So, who is the seed of Abraham? Jesus. And what are the blessings he would enable for men and women of the whole world? The blessings of forgiveness of sins and salvation. Let's go further. To Galatians 3:16 “ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ”. So, the seed of Abraham was one man, singular, Jesus. But how could that one man become so many, as many as the stars in the sky? Let's read Galatians 3:27-29 “ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”. So, only those who have been baptized into Christ have a part in these promises- the promises of eternal life here on earth. This is why we must be baptized if we are going to be saved! It's not enough to reason that we are the literal children of Ibrahim.

What is baptism, then? It isn't sprinkling. The New Testament is written in Greek, and the word translated 'baptism' means really to dip. It was used about a ship sinking, being submerged, or a piece of cloth being dyed from one colour to another by immersing it. Have a look at Mathew 3:13-16 “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him”. Jesus went " down into" the water and came " up out of it" . He was baptized as an adult, not as a baby; by dipping, not sprinkling. That's why it was done in a river. And if He was baptized, so should we be. This dipping and rising up signifies the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that we

have decided to make His death and resurrection our own. This is why it has to be by immersion, not by sprinkling. Have a look at Romans 6:3-5 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”. This is why we appeal to you to be baptized- make it your aim in life, to accept Jesus Christ!

By being baptized into Jesus, we become part of Him, and therefore the promises to Ibrahim about his special son apply to us. Therefore when He returns, we will be resurrected, judged and then, if we have lived lives which maintained faith in God’s grace, we will be given the eternal life which He now has. Then we will live for ever in God's Kingdom here on earth. If you believe this, then life has a new meaning. Whatever material problems we have, we will realize that they are only temporary, and when Christ returns He will give us a new and eternal life. This is why in the Bible and in Christ there is real HOPE. The hope ahead is so wonderful that our present problems do not seem so great.

Yet Islam sees the righteousness of Abraham / Ibrahim consisting in that he *submitted* to God: that he *did* good works. But this is not the complete picture. The New Testament points out that although he was “justified by works when he offered Isaac”<sup>(1)</sup> he was also justified by *faith* in the promises which God had made to him. Genesis 15:6 says that his *faith* “was counted to him as righteousness”. His righteousness was thus *counted to him*- it wasn’t in that he *did* a long list of things. And God by grace reckoned, counted, this man as righteous. It was in *this* that Ibrahim was our great example. God saw him as righteous because he *believed*. Romans 4:18-22: “Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness”. This was not blind resignation to the will of God. It was an active faith in what was not then visible. And *this* is what so pleased God. Abraham / Ibrahim is our father in the sense that we too have righteousness *imputed* / counted to us: “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:23-25).

Abraham / Ibrahim’s offering of Isaac showed his *faith*- but in what? He said: “God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8). His faith was that God would provide a future sacrifice. Thus he built the altar Jehovah-Jireh: Jehovah / Allah will provide. And who was this lamb? It was Jesus, of whom it was said later: “Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29 cp. Is. 53:10). And so we read in Hebrews 11:17-19: “By faith Abraham / Ibrahim, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure”. It wasn’t just blind obedience, he showed faith. [in the promises, in the future Jesus, in the resurrection]. He believed that because God’s promises through Isaac would be fulfilled, therefore there must be a resurrection of Isaac if he killed him. And he associated the possibility of this resurrection with “the lamb of God”, whom God would provide. He saw that Isaac’s resurrection would somehow be enabled by this Messiah figure, who would die as a sacrifice and through that death enable resurrection, in that death and the power of sin behind it would be broken. He clearly

didn't see this "lamb of God" as just another in a long line of prophets. Jesus said: "Your father Abraham / Ibrahim rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn. 8:56). When was Abraham / Ibrahim glad? The only time when he laughed was when he was told that he would have a son (Gen. 17:17). He believed that promise, and saw in it the promise of Jesus. He knew that the birth of Isaac meant that the promised Messiah would therefore come- because he would be a descendant of Isaac. This totally disproves the idea that Jesus was already personally existing in Heaven at this time. He couldn't have been, for Ibrahim to look ahead to the day of Jesus, who would be a literal descendant of Ibrahim through Isaac. And so we can understand Paul's inspired logic: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son" (Rom. 9:7-9 cp. Gen. 21:12).

There was something else in which Ibrahim showed faith. "*I have made you* the father of many nations" (Rom. 4:17) required faith. Ibrahim had to look ahead to the day when his special descendant, Jesus, would have become as many as the stars in the sky. This plural 'seed' would not just be one nation; but of many nations. Men and women of all nations would come to see Ibrahim as their spiritual father, because they accept "the faith of Ibrahim". They too would believe that Jesus was the special son of Ibrahim, knowing that He therefore hadn't pre-existed, wasn't God Himself; but was a real son of Ibrahim who was also "the lamb of God", which Ibrahim believed would be provided by Jehovah. And they would be looking for that son, Jesus, to enable them to inherit the land promised to Ibrahim *for ever*. And they would believe that if they died, the promises of God would surely be fulfilled through their resurrection.

Ibrahim didn't just blindly submit to God (see Gen. 18:23-25). He had a reasoned faith. Indeed, other men of faith likewise questioned with God, and didn't just submit (e.g. Moses, Ex. 32:11,12; Jeremiah, Jer. 12:1-4). Abraham / Ibrahim *considered* his infertility, Sarah's barren womb; and yet despite this "without being weakened in faith" he believed still (Rom. 4:19 RV), just as he "*considered* that God was able to raise men even from the dead" (Heb. 11:19). And 2.260 admits too that at this time Abraham / Ibrahim had faith in resurrection: "Abraham / Ibrahim said, My Lord! Show me how thou givest life to the dead".

And yet there is something the matter with Qur'an when we read: "Why dispute ye about Abraham / Ibrahim, when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him?" 3.65. But, they were... The essence of the Gospel, as Paul says, was taught to Abraham.

#### Footnote

(1) Muslims claim that it was Ishmael, not Isaac who was offered in sacrifice. They claim that the command to sacrifice his "only son" meant that as Ishmael was born before Isaac, therefore it must refer to Ishmael. However, Genesis 22:2 states clearly that this was "thine only son, Isaac" (see too Heb. 11:17,18; James 2:21). Significantly, the Qur'an itself does not say that Ishmael was sacrificed- the name of the son isn't given ( 37.100-113). The argument is based upon the Hebrew text of the Bible. But if the Bible is to be appealed to, then Genesis 22:2 must be also accepted. The Muslim cannot just quote some verses and not others. Hagar, Ishmael's mother, was not the wife of Abraham / Ibrahim but rather his "maid", as she is repeatedly called (Gen. 16:2,3,6,8,9). Isaac was the only *legitimate* son of Abraham / Ibrahim. Ishmael had parted from Abraham / Ibrahim some years before, along with Hagar (Gen. 21:14). If indeed the Qur'an was inspired by God, why then did He not correct the idea that the sacrificed son was Isaac? Ishmael is mentioned in the Qur'an



elsewhere (2.127). It is also significant that the Qur'an never mentions Hagar in any way. And the Qur'an really contradicts Islamic beliefs about Ishmael in that it says that the son to be sacrificed was the one promised to Abraham / Ibrahim ( 37.101) and yet it also says that Isaac was the son promised to Abraham / Ibrahim ( 37.112).

### 4.3

#### What The Bible Says About Jesus

##### 4.3.1 *Al-Masih* The Birth Of Jesus

God's purpose of salvation for men was centred around Jesus Christ/ *Al-Masih*. The promises which He made to Eve, Abraham and David all spoke of Jesus as their literal descendant. Indeed, the whole of the Old Testament points forward to, and prophesies about, Christ. The Law of Moses, which Israel had to obey before the time of Christ, constantly pointed forward to Jesus: " The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24). Thus at the feast of Passover, a lamb in perfect condition had to be killed (Ex. 12:3-6); this represented the sacrifice of Jesus, " the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). The spotless condition which was required for all the animal sacrifices pointed forward to the perfect character of Jesus (Ex. 12:5 cp. 1 Peter 1:19).

Throughout the Psalms and prophets of the Old Testament there are countless prophecies about what Messiah would be like. Note that the Psalms are recognized by the Qur'an to have been inspired by God (4.163). They particularly focus on describing how the Messiah would die. And the Qur'an recognizes that Jesus was *Al-Masih* the Jewish Messiah. Islam's refusal to accept the idea of a Messiah who dies can only be due to their inattention to these prophecies, a few of which are now presented:-

<b>Old Testament prophecy</b>	<b>Fulfilment in Christ</b>
" My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1).	These were the very words of Jesus on the cross (Mt. 27:46).
" I am despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him" (Ps. 22:6-8).	Israel despised Jesus and mocked him (Lk. 23:35; 8:53); they shook their heads (Mt. 27:39), and said this as He hung on the cross (Mt. 27:43).
" My tongue cleaveth to my jaws...they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps. 22:15,16).	This was fulfilled in Christ's thirst on the cross (Jn. 19:28). The piercing of hands and feet refers to the physical method of crucifixion used.
" They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Ps. 22:18).	The precise fulfilment of this is found in Matthew 27:35.
" I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and am an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Ps. 69:8,9).	This well describes Christ's feeling of estrangement from his Jewish brethren and his own

	family (Jn. 7:3-5, Mt. 12:47-49). This is quoted in John 2:17.
" They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. 69:21).	This happened while Christ was on the cross (Mt. 27:34).
Note that Psalm 22:22 is specifically quoted as applying to Jesus in Hebrews 2:12.	
The whole of Isaiah 53 is a remarkable prophecy of Christ's death and resurrection, every verse of which had an unmistakable fulfilment. Just two examples will be given:-	
" As a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth" (Is. 53:7)	Christ the Lamb of God remained silent during his trial (Mt. 27:12,14).
" He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death" (Is. 53:9).	Jesus was crucified along with wicked criminals (Mt. 27:38), but was buried in the tomb of a rich man (Mt. 27:57-60).

Note particularly the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. This prophecy has several descriptions of a man who has to suffer greatly in order for salvation to be attained. The following points about *Al-Masih* / Messiah emerge from Isaiah 52:13-53:12:- He was to suffer physically more than any other human being will ever do (52:14).

- His suffering would result in 'sprinkling' " many nations" (52:15). The idea of sprinkling recalls the sprinkling of the blood in order to atone for sins under the Law, perhaps specifically referring to the sprinkling of the water of separation for cleansing (Num. 19). The blood of his sufferings would therefore enable people from many nations to have forgiveness of sins.

- The news about him would be widespread, but be disbelieved by the Jews (52:15; 53:1-3).

- Messiah's own people would deliberately stop themselves perceiving his Messiah-ship: " We hid as it were our faces from him...we esteemed him not" (53:3). This recalls the language of Leviticus 13: 44,45, suggesting that Israel would perceive Messiah as smitten with the leprosy of sin. The record of the New Testament, along with the commentaries of the Talmud, show that many Jews have branded Jesus as a sinner unfit for their association.

This Messiah figure, who would die and thereby enable forgiveness of sins, is clearly Jesus of Nazareth. Notice that all these prophecies were given before the time of Jesus, and the manuscripts exist in the Dead Sea scrolls- which were copied before Jesus was born.

It is little wonder that the New Testament reminds us that the " law and prophets" of the Old Testament is the basis of our understanding of Christ (Acts 26:22; 28:23; Rom. 1:2,3; 16:25,26). Jesus himself warned that if we do not properly understand " Moses and the prophets" , we cannot understand him (Lk. 16:31; Jn. 5:46,47).

That the Law of Moses pointed forward to Christ, and the prophets prophesied of him, should be proof enough that Jesus did not exist physically before his birth. The false doctrine of the physical

'pre-existence' of Christ before birth makes a nonsense of the repeated promises that he would be the *seed* (descendant) of Eve, Abraham and David. If he were already existing up in heaven at the time of these promises, God would have been incorrect in promising these people a descendant who *would be* Messiah. The genealogies of Jesus, recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, show how Jesus had a pedigree which stretched back to those people to whom God had made the promises.

The promise to David concerning Christ disallows his physical existence at the time the promise was made: " I *will* set up thy seed *after* thee, which *shall* proceed out of thy bowels...I *will be* his father, and he *shall be* my son" (2 Sam. 7:12,14). Notice the future tense used here. Seeing that God *would be* Christ's Father, it is impossible that the Son of God could have already existed at that point in time when the promise was made. That this seed "*shall proceed out of thy bowels*" shows that he was to be a literal, physical descendant of David. " The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David...Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne" (Ps. 132:11).

Solomon was the primary fulfilment of the promise, but as he was already physically in existence at the time of this promise (2 Sam. 5:14), the main fulfilment of this promise about David having a physical descendant who would be God's son, must refer to Christ (Lk. 1:31-33). " I *will* raise unto David a righteous Branch" (Jer. 23:5) - i.e. Messiah.

Similar future tenses are used in other prophecies concerning Christ. " I *will* raise (Israel) up a Prophet like unto (Moses)" (Dt. 18:18) is quoted in Acts 3:22,23, which defines the " Prophet" as Jesus. " A virgin (Mary) *shall* conceive, and bear a son, and *shall* call his name Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). This was clearly fulfilled in Christ's birth (Mt. 1:23).

### The Virgin Birth

The record of Christ's conception and birth does not allow for the idea that he physically existed beforehand. Those who hold the false doctrine of the 'Trinity' are driven to the conclusion that at one moment there were three persons in heaven, and then one of them disappeared and somehow turned into a foetus in Mary's womb, leaving just two in heaven. We have seen in Scripture that all existence - including that of God - is existence in a physical, bodily form. We are therefore left to conclude from the 'pre-existence' belief that Christ somehow physically came down from heaven and entered into Mary's womb. All this complex theology is quite outside the teaching of Scripture. The record of Christ's beginning gives no reason whatsoever to think that he physically left heaven and entered into Mary. The lack of evidence for this is a big 'missing link' in Trinitarian teaching.

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with the message that " thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (i.e. she was a virgin). And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:31-35).

Twice it is emphasized that Jesus *would be* the Son of God on his birth: evidently the Son of God did not exist before his birth. Again, the many future tenses need to be noted - e.g. " he *shall be* great" . If Jesus were already physically in existence as the angel spoke those words to Mary, he would already have been great. Jesus was the " offspring" of David (Rev. 22:16); the Greek 'genos' implying Jesus was 'generated from' David.

Hints at a virgin birth are to be found in the description of David's Messiah-seed as the begotten son of God (Ps. 2:6,7; 89:26,27). For God to beget a son involves His action upon a woman to make her conceive His son, without the intervention of a man. This is exactly how millions of people believe and have believed since the first century that Jesus of Nazareth came into existence.

It is a consistent Divine principle that sin must result in death. In order for Messiah to resurrect from death to eternal life and ascension to Heaven (" pleasures for evermore" , Ps.16:11), he must therefore have been sinless. This is confirmed by a number of other scriptures. Thus Messiah is called by God " the man that is my fellow" (Zech. 13:7) - a man can only be called God's " fellow" due to his supreme righteousness. Messiah " is just (righteous), and (therefore) having salvation" (Zech. 9:9). Thus he was to bring salvation to others through his own righteousness. He wasn't just another prophet, as Islam claims.

For this reason Jeremiah 23:5,6 calls Messiah " The Lord our righteousness" , showing that through that one man's perfect character, God's righteousness would be imputed to His people. He was to be the promised seed of David: " I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper...he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" .

- One of the reasons for this would be because of his sufferings. "There is no beauty that we should desire him...we did esteem him smitten of God" (53:2,4).

### The Conception Of Jesus

Through the Holy Spirit (God's breath/power) acting upon her, Mary was able to conceive Jesus without having had intercourse with a man. Thus Joseph was not the true father of Jesus. It must be understood that the Holy Spirit is not a person; Jesus was the Son of God, not the Holy Spirit. Through God's use of His Spirit upon Mary, " *therefore* also that holy thing" which was born of her was " called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). The use of the word " *therefore*" implies that without the Holy Spirit acting upon the womb of Mary, Jesus, the Son of God, could not have come into existence.

That Jesus was 'conceived' in Mary's womb (Lk. 1:31) is also proof that he could not have physically existed before this time. If we 'conceive' an idea, it begins within us. Likewise Jesus was conceived inside Mary's womb - he began there as a foetus, just like any other human being. John 3:16, the Bible's most famous verse, records that Jesus was the " *only begotten* Son" of God. Millions of people who recite this verse fail to meditate upon what it implies. If Jesus was " *begotten*" , he 'began' (a related word to " *begotten*" ) when he was conceived in Mary's womb. If Jesus was begotten by God as his Father, this is clear evidence that his Father is older than he - God has no beginning (Ps. 90:2) and therefore Jesus cannot be God Himself. Mt. 1:18 speaks of "the birth of Jesus Christ" using the word 'genesis'- the absolute beginning.

It is significant that Jesus was " *begotten*" by God rather than being created, as Adam was originally. This explains the closeness of God's association with Jesus - " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Christ being *begotten* by God, rather than just created from dust, also helps explain his natural aptitude for the ways of God his Father.

Isaiah 49:5,6 contains a prophecy concerning Christ as the light of the world, which he fulfilled (Jn. 8:12). He is described as meditating on " the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant"

. Christ was therefore " formed" by God in Mary's womb, through the power of His Holy Spirit. Mary's womb was evidently the place of Christ's physical origin.

We have seen that Psalm 22 prophesies Christ's thoughts on the cross. He reflected that God " took me out of the womb...I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Ps. 22:9,10). In his time of dying, Christ looked back to his origins - in the womb of his mother Mary, formed by the power of God. The very description of Mary in the Gospels as Christ's " *mother*" in itself destroys the idea that he existed before his birth of Mary.

Mary was an ordinary human being, with normal human parents. This is proved by the fact that she had a cousin, who gave birth to John the Baptist, an ordinary man (Lk. 1:36). The Roman Catholic idea that Mary was not of ordinary human nature means that Christ could not have been both " son of man" and " son of God" . These are his frequent titles throughout the New Testament. He was " son of man" by reason of having a totally human mother, and " son of God" because of God's action on Mary through the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35), meaning that God was his Father. This beautiful arrangement is nullified if Mary was not an ordinary woman.

" Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one...What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?...how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 14:4; 15:14; 25:4). This puts paid to any idea of an immaculate conception being possible, either of Mary or Jesus.

Mary being " born of a woman" , with ordinary human parents, must have had our unclean, human nature, which she passed on to Jesus, who was " made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). The language of his being " *made*" through Mary's agency is further evidence that he could not have physically existed without his birth by her. The Diaglott renders Galatians 4:4: " Having *been produced* from a woman" .

The Gospel records frequently indicate Mary's humanity. Christ had to rebuke her at least thrice for a lack of spiritual perception (Lk. 2:49; Jn. 2:4); she failed to understand all his sayings (Lk. 2:50). This is exactly what we would expect of a woman who was of human nature, whose son was the son of God, and therefore more spiritually perceptive than herself, although he, too, shared human nature. Joseph had intercourse with Mary after Christ's birth (Mt. 1:25), and there is no reason to think that they did not have a normal marital relationship from then on.

The mention of Christ's " mother and his brethren" in Matthew 12:46,47 would therefore imply that Mary had other children after Jesus. Jesus was only " her *first* born" (Mt. 1:25; Lk. 2:7). The Catholic teachings that Mary remained a virgin and then ascended to heaven therefore have absolutely no Biblical support. As a human being of mortal nature, Mary would have grown old and died: apart from this we read in John 3:13, " no man hath ascended up to heaven" . The fact that Christ had human nature (see Heb. 2:14-18; Rom. 8:3) means that his mother must have had it too, seeing his Father did not have it.

And yet in contrast to these glorious truths, the Qur'an categorically denies that Jesus is the Son of God:

"The Christians call Christ the Son of God...in this they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" ( 9.30)

“They say “God hath begotten a son!”...no warrant have ye for this!” (10.68).

The objection that God would require a consort of wife to produce a son flatly contradicts the great Islamic tenet that God can do all things. If Muslims can believe that Mary became pregnant without a man’s involvement, why can they not believe that God had a son without having a woman? To say that God had no son because He has no wife is as absurd as saying that God is not alive because He doesn’t draw breath.

In passing, the claim made by some Muslims that Jesus never called Himself the Son of God is simply not so (Jn. 3:16; 5:22,23,30; 10:36; 19:7; Mk. 14:61,62; Mt. 11:27; 17:5). His own parable of the husbandmen showed that He saw Himself as the Son, the heir, rather than just another servant / prophet, as Islam claims He is (Mt. 21:33-43; Mk. 12:1-12; Lk. 20:9-18 cp. Acts 7:52). Jesus asked His followers who people thought He was. They replied that many considered Him to be one of the prophets. “But who do you say that I am?”, He asked them (Mt. 16:15). And He was clearly thrilled when Peter replied that Jesus was far more than a prophet; He was “the Christ, the Son of the living God”. We consider Islam’s claim that the New Testament is corrupted in an Appendix.

And yet the Qur’an clearly states that Jesus was the son of Mary, without the intervention of a man. She was a virgin into whom God breathed His Spirit (3.47; 19.20; 21.91). There is a basic contradiction within the Qur’an: Jesus was the son of a virgin through the power of the Spirit, but not the Son of God. The question: So whose son was he? Begs itself to be asked. It cannot also be true that “the similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust” (3.59). There is surely a difference: Adam was created, whereas Jesus was the *begotten* Son of God. The Qur’an fails to explain *why* Jesus was born in this way. The Christian understanding makes so much more sense of this wondrous miracle: that truly in Jesus we behold “God with us”. Not that He was God Himself, but as the Son of God and yet also Son of man, we see the manifestation of God in flesh: His coming down to us. Islam frequently stresses that all God does is for a purpose: if so, then what was the *purpose* of the virgin birth, according to Islam? Likewise why is Mary the only woman mentioned by name in the whole Qur’an, and why such honour given to her, if there is no particular significance in the virgin birth: “O Mary! God hath chosen thee...above the women of all nations” (3.42). Luke 1:42 says that Mary was “blessed among women” *because* her son would be the greatest amongst men: not just one in a line of prophets. The virgin birth and the Divine Son ship of Jesus go together.

The Old Testament prophets make it clear that Messiah was to be the descendant of David (Jer. 23:5; Ez. 34:24; Is. 11:1-5,10; Mic. 5:2 cp. Jn. 7:42; Mt. 22:42; Rev. 22:16). This is exactly what was demanded by the promises to David: “He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore” (1 Chron. 17:12-14). An inspired commentary upon these promises is to be found in Psalm 89:26-29,35,36: “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to *endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven...Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me”. The promised Son was to cry to God as His Father. He would be made the firstborn (He didn’t, therefore, exist beforehand).

And so the question must be answered by Muslims: Whose son is *Al-Masih*, the Messiah? Martha and Peter both answered this question by saying that Messiah is the Son of God (Mt. 16:16; Jn. 11:27 cp. Mt. 26:63). Mark's Gospel is a record of "Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1); and it is a feature of the Christian faith that we accept "that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" (Jn. 20:31 cp. Lk. 4:41).

#### 4.3.2 "Say not "trinity" : The Nature Of Jesus

"Say not "trinity": desist...for God is one God" (4.171). With this we would totally agree.

There is a fine balance to be drawn between those passages which emphasize the degree to which " God was in Christ" , and those which highlight his humanity. The latter group of passages make it impossible to Biblically justify the idea that Jesus is God Himself, " very God of very God" , as the doctrine of the Trinity wrongly states. (This phrase " very God of very God" was used at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., where the idea of God being a 'trinity' was first promulgated; it was unknown to the early Christians.) The word 'trinity' never occurs in the Bible.

One of the clearest summaries of the relationship between God and Jesus is found in 1 Timothy 2:5: " There is *one* God, *and* one *mediator* between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus" . Reflection upon the highlighted words leads to the following conclusions:-

- There being only *one* God, it is impossible that Jesus could be God; if the Father is God and Jesus is also God, then there are two Gods. " But to us there is but one God, the Father" (1 Cor. 8:6). 'God the Father' is therefore the only God. It is therefore impossible that there can be a separate being called 'God the Son', as the false doctrine of the trinity states. The Old Testament likewise portrays Yahweh, the one God, as the Father (e.g. Is. 63:16; 64:8).

- In addition to this one God, there is the mediator, the man Christ Jesus - " *...and* one mediator..." . That word " and" indicates a difference between Christ and God.

- Christ being the " mediator" means that he is a go-between. A mediator between sinful man and sinless God cannot be sinless God Himself; it had to be a sinless man, of sinful human nature. " The *man* Christ Jesus" leaves us in no doubt as to the correctness of this explanation. Even though he was writing after the ascension of Jesus, Paul does not speak of " the God Christ Jesus" .

Several times we are reminded that " God is not a man" (Num. 23:19; Hos. 11:9); yet Christ was clearly " the son of man" , as he is often called in the New Testament, " the *man* Christ Jesus" . He was " the Son of the Highest" (Lk. 1:32). God being " *The Highest*" indicates that only He has ultimate highness; Jesus being " the *Son* of the Highest" shows that he cannot have been God Himself in person. The very language of Father and Son which is used about God and Jesus, makes it obvious that they are not the same. Whilst a son may have certain similarities to his father, he cannot be one and the same person, nor be as old as his father.

In line with this, there are a number of obvious differences between God and Jesus, which clearly show that Jesus was not God himself:-

GOD	JESUS
" God cannot be tempted"	Christ " was in all points

(James 1:13).	tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4:15).
God cannot die - He is immortal by nature (Ps. 90:2; 1 Tim. 6:16).	Christ died for three days (Mt.12: 40; 16:21).
God cannot be seen by men (1 Tim. 6:16; Ex. 33:20).	Men saw Jesus and handled him (1 Jn. 1:1; Lk. 24:39 stress this).

When we are tempted, we are forced with a choice between sin and obedience to God. Often we choose to disobey God; Christ had the same choices, but always chose to be obedient. He therefore had the possibility of sinning, although he never actually did. It is unthinkable that God has any possibility of sinning. We have shown that the seed of David promised in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 was definitely Christ. Verse 14 speaks of Christ's possibility of sinning: " *If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him.*

### The Nature Of Jesus

The word 'nature' refers to what we naturally, fundamentally are. The Bible speaks of only two natures - that of God, and that of man. By nature God cannot die, be tempted etc. It is evident that Christ was not of God's nature during his life. He was therefore totally of human nature. From our definition of the word 'nature' it should be evident that Christ could not have had two natures simultaneously. It was vital that Christ was tempted like us (Heb. 4:15), so that through his perfect overcoming of temptation he could gain forgiveness for us. The wrong desires which are the basis of our temptations come from within us (Mk. 7:15-23), from within our human nature (James 1:13-15). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should be of human nature so that he could experience and overcome these temptations.

Hebrews 2:14-18 puts all this in so many words:-

" As the children (us) are partakers of flesh and blood (human nature), he (Christ) also himself likewise took part (i.e. " partook" , R.S.V.) of the same (nature); that through death he might destroy...the devil...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the (nature of the) seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest... to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" .

This passage places extraordinary emphasis upon the fact that Jesus had human nature: " He *also himself likewise*" partook of it (Heb. 2:14). This phrase uses three words all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. He partook " of the *same*" nature; the record could have said 'he partook of IT too', but it stresses, " he partook of the *same*" . Hebrews 2:16 similarly labours the point that Christ did not have angels' nature, seeing that he was the seed of Abraham, who had come to bring salvation for the multitude of believers who would become Abraham's seed. Because of this, it was necessary for Christ to have human nature. In *every* way he had " to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. To say that Jesus was not totally of human nature is therefore to be ignorant of the very basics of the good news of Christ.



Whenever baptized believers sin, they can come to God, confessing their sin in prayer through Christ (1 Jn. 1:9); God is aware that Christ was tempted to sin exactly as they are, but that he was perfect, overcoming that very temptation which they fail. Because of this, " God for Christ's sake" can forgive us (Eph. 4:32). It is therefore vital to appreciate how Christ was tempted just like us, and needed to have our nature for this to be possible. Hebrews 2:14 clearly states that Christ had " flesh and blood" nature to make this possible. " God is Spirit" (Jn. 4:24) by nature and although He has a material body, as " Spirit" He does not have flesh and blood. Christ having " flesh" nature means that in no way did he have God's nature during his lifetime.

Previous attempts by men to keep God's word, i.e. to totally overcome temptation, had all failed. Therefore " God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3 A.V. mg.).

" Sin" refers to the natural proneness to sin which we have by nature. We have given way to this already, and continue to do so, and " the wages of sin is death" . To get out of this predicament, man needed outside help. He himself seemed incapable of perfection; it was and is not within flesh to redeem the flesh. God therefore intervened and gave us His own Son, who had our nature, with all the promptings to sin which we have. Unlike every other man, Christ overcame every temptation, although he had the possibility of failure and sinning just as much as we do. Romans 8:3 describes Christ's human nature as " sinful flesh" . A few verses earlier, Paul spoke of how in the flesh " dwelleth no good thing" , and how the flesh naturally militates against obedience to God (Rom. 7:18-23). In this context it is all the more marvellous to read that Christ had " sinful flesh" in Romans 8:3. It was because of this, and his overcoming of that flesh, that we have a way of escape from our flesh; Jesus was intensely aware of the sinfulness of his own nature. He was once addressed as " Good master" , with the implication that he was " good" and perfect by nature. He responded: " Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mk. 10:17,18). On another occasion, men started to testify of Christ's greatness due to a series of outstanding miracles which he had performed. Jesus did not capitalize on this " because he knew all, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (Jn. 2:23-25, Greek text). Because of his great knowledge of human nature (" he knew *all*" about this), Christ did not want men to praise him personally in his own right, seeing that he knew how evil his own human nature was.

### The Humanity Of Jesus

The Gospel records provide many examples of how completely Jesus had human nature. It is recorded that he was weary, and had to sit down to drink from a well (Jn. 4:6). " Jesus wept" at the death of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). Most supremely, the record of his final sufferings should be proof enough of his humanity: " Now is my soul troubled" , he admitted as he prayed for God to save him from having to go through with his death on the cross (Jn. 12:27). He " prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup (of suffering and death) pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mt. 26:39). This indicates that in some ways Christ's 'will', or desires, was different from that of God.

During his whole life Christ had submitted his will to that of God in preparation for this final trial of the cross: " I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (Jn. 5:30). This difference between Christ's will and that of God is proof enough that Jesus was not God.

Throughout our lives we are expected to grow in our knowledge of God, learning from the trials which we experience in life. In this, Jesus was our great example. He did not have complete knowledge of God beamed into him any more than we have. From childhood " Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (i.e. spiritual maturity, cp. Eph. 4:13), and in favour with God and man" (Lk. 2:52). " The child grew, and waxed (became) strong in spirit" (Lk. 2:40). These two verses portray Christ's physical growth as being parallel to his spiritual development; the growth process occurred in him both naturally and spiritually. If " The Son is God" , as the Athanasian Creed states concerning the 'Trinity', this would not have been possible. Even at the end of his life, Christ admitted that he did not know the exact time of his second coming, although the Father did (Mk. 13:32).

Obedience to God's will is something which we all have to learn over a period of time. Christ also had to go through this process of learning obedience to his Father, as any son has to. " Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience (i.e. obedience to God) by the things which he suffered; and being *made* perfect (i.e. spiritually mature), he became the author of eternal salvation" as a result of his completed and total spiritual growth (Heb. 5:8,9). Philippians 2:7,8 (further commented on in Digression 27) records this same process of spiritual growth in Jesus, culminating in his death on the cross. He " *made* himself of no reputation, and *took upon him* the form (demeanour) of a servant...he *humbled himself* and *became* obedient unto...the death of the cross." The language used here illustrates how Jesus consciously forged ahead in his spiritual development, making himself more and more humble, so that finally he " *became* obedient" to God's desire that he should die on the cross. Thus he was " *made* perfect" by correctly responding to his sufferings.

It is evident from this that Jesus had to make a conscious, personal effort to be righteous; in no way was he forced to be so by God, which would have resulted in him being a mere puppet. Jesus truly loved us, and gave his life on the cross from this motive. The constant emphasis upon the love of Christ for us would be hollow if God forced him to die on the cross (Eph. 5:2,25; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 2:20). If Jesus was God, then he would have had no option but to be perfect and then die on the cross. That Jesus *did* have these options, makes us able to appreciate his love, and to form a personal relationship with him.

It was because of Christ's willingness to voluntarily give his life, that God was so delighted with him: " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life...No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (Jn. 10:17,18). God being so pleased with Christ's willing obedience is hard to understand if Jesus was God, living out a life in human form as some kind of tokenistic association with sinful man (Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). These records of the Father's delight in the Son's obedience, is proof enough that Christ had the possibility of disobedience, but consciously chose to be obedient.

That *God* resurrected Jesus and glorified him with immortality is a major New Testament theme:-

- " *God*...raised up Jesus...Him hath *God* exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour" (Acts 5:30,31).
- " *God*...hath glorified his Son Jesus...whom *God* hath raised from the dead" (Acts 3:13,15).
- " This Jesus hath *God* raised up" (Acts 2:24,32,33).
- Jesus himself recognized all this when he asked *God* to glorify him (Jn. 17:5 cp. 13:32; 8:54).

If Jesus was God Himself, then all this emphasis would be out of place, seeing that God cannot die. Jesus would not have needed saving if he were God. That it was God who exalted Jesus demonstrates God's superiority over him, and the separateness of God and Jesus. In no way could Christ have been "very and eternal God (with) two...natures...Godhead and manhood", as the first of the 39 Articles of the [apostate] Church of England states. By the very meaning of the word, a being can only have one nature. We submit that the evidence is overwhelming that Christ was of our human nature.

And so you can see that there are certain similarities between what Muslims believe and the true message of real Christianity. There *is* one God; and Jesus was *not* God. Nor was his mother Mary the mother of God. Whilst true Christianity and Islam *are* fundamentally different, there is here some common ground. I feel rather like Paul, who also sought common ground with his audiences: "What you worship as unknown, this I declare to you" (Acts 17:23). It isn't another God I put to you: but rather the same God which you have been worshipping in ignorance. The Qur'an acknowledges the virgin birth, sinless-ness, ascension and second coming of Jesus; these are actually the springboard for appreciating the real answer which God has given in Jesus to man's need.

#### 4.3.3 The Qur'an And The Death Of Jesus

Muhammad accepted Jesus as the Messiah and 11 times in the Qur'an calls Him this [*Al-Masih*]. And yet the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah make it clear that He was to die; and that although He would be human, and not God Himself, He would be somehow more than man. Yet in other places the Qur'an claims He was no more than a servant or messenger (43.59; 5.78). Semitic peoples understood clear enough that Messiah was and is a title far different to that of any other prophet (see the difference between the two in Mk. 8:28,29). It is a contradiction in terms to say that "The Messiah, Son of Mary, was no more than an apostle" (5.78). Jesus Himself pointed out that David thought that the Messiah would be greater than him: "He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Mt. 22:43-45). Note that *Masih* is not an Arabic word; it is a word imported into the Qur'an and used solely of Jesus. "The greatest Muslim scholars such as Zamakhshari and Baidawi... admitted that it was a borrowed word" (Jeffrey, *The Foreign Vocabulary Of The Qur'an* p. 265). Yet the idea of *Messiah* in the Old Testament is based on Daniel 9:25,26: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined". The Messiah was to die ("be cut off"). Yet He was to come before God Himself, and be given an eternal Kingdom on earth: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is and everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13,14).

"They [the Jews] said in boast "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary". But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them...for a surety they killed him not" (4.157).

To deny that God gave Jesus to die for us is to turn away from the height of love which God showed. In the sacrifice of Jesus we see the very essence of love: “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...In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:9,10).

Muslims seem to think that the love of God is shown by giving us *things* like health, wealth etc. But this is missing the point. The quintessence of the love of God is that He gave His Son. We may not be wealthy nor healthy; but the gift of God’s Son to die for our sins is what imparts a joy and grace to the whole experience of life and living. And there is an assurance that because God *so* gave Jesus, we will be granted “all things” of salvation: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?...For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:32,38,39). Islamic commentary on Abraham / Ibrahim’s willingness to offer his son is that a man could show no greater love than to offer his son. So, what greater love could God show than to offer *His* Son for us, whom He so loved? And yet Islam refuses to make this connection: they deny that God would be prepared to offer His Son to die.

Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of the crucifixion. Jesus applied Isaiah 53 to His own sufferings: “I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was numbered with transgressors’; for what is written about me has its fulfilment” (Lk. 22:37). He clearly predicted His own death: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again...Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again...Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Jn. 6:51; Mt. 17:22,23; 20:18,19,28). And He was willing to die (Mt. 26:39). He knew all that was going to happen, and yet He went along with it; He didn’t run away (Jn. 18:4).

There is a system of truth whereby one true thing leads to another. The fact that Jesus was the begotten Son of God shows His love. These ideas are often linked in John’s writings. The love of God is expressed to us in that He gave that only begotten Son to die for us. This makes a sharp contrast with Islam, which understands the love of God to be shown to us through His material gifts to us in this life, as a kind master may reward an obedient slave. Yet the love of God in giving His Son is so infinitely more passionate, gripping, tragic, and thereby the more demanding of response. This explains why in the 99 titles of God found in the Qur’an, never do we read of Him as “Father”. And yet this is the most common title for God in the New Testament. We can now become the Sons of God, His very own dear children (Rom. 8:14-16). The Divine parentage of Jesus, that God Himself had a son, opened up the wonderful possibility that we might become the Sons of this same God: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Jn. 1:12). Because Islam has rejected the Divine parentage of Jesus, they have rejected the concept of God as their Father, and instead leave God as a distant being who mechanically judges sin and rewards the obedient. They see God as a master who owns a human servant: not as a Father who has a precious child. Quite simply, Islam denies the extent of the love of God; it shies away from a God who offers a close, constant, passionate relationship with those

who wish to become His children. 1 John 3:1 says it all: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not”. Note that the Fatherhood of God was in principle taught in the Old Testament too (Ps. 103:13; Prov. 3:12; Is. 64:8; Mal. 2:10). The difference between a father / child relationship and a master/ servant one is that the basis of relationship is in the first one, love, grace, and care exist simply for reason of the fact that the child exists. The master / servant one is on the basis of duty and payment. We enter salvation only because it is our Father’s good pleasure to grant it to us (Lk. 12:32). This wonderful covenant relationship will result in a far more loving, grace-filled, compassionate life than that found in Islam. Jesus drew out the essential difference between the two systems in Matthew 17:25,26: “...What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free”. We as God’s children are free, under no obligation... apart from the endless obligation of gratitude and gracious response. Our debt to the Father and His Son becomes transmuted into a debt to all men (Rom. 1:14).

All this is why the Christian prays simply: “Our Father” (Mt. 6:9); whereas the Muslim must pray: “Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Reckoning” ( 1.2-4). We do not demean God by speaking of Him as Father; He has instead elevated us up nearer to His level, in that for those baptized into Christ, they too are Sons of God, joint heirs with His only begotten Son: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together ” (Rom. 8:17). The love of God was revealed and is required of us, simply because Jesus was the Son of God, given to die to enable us to reach up to the level where He was and is: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another... And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”(1 Jn. 4:7-11,16 ). The Sonship of Jesus opened the way for us to become adopted sons of God: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father “ (Gal. 4:4-6 ). We are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). As Jesus cried “Abba, Father”, so can we who are in Him (Mk. 14:36 cp. Rom. 8:15,16). The love of God is revealed in that He sent His son to die for us (1 Jn. 4:9,10; Rom. 5:8). The love of Jesus likewise was crystallized in His death: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends...now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Jn. 15:13; 13:1). To deny that He died is to deny this love, and to preclude ourselves from being touched and transformed by its very existence.

The love of God and Jesus was shown therefore in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died (Rom. 5:8). This is a far cry from the Islamic God who ‘loves’ those obedient to Him by giving them material blessings. In the parable of the prodigal son, the Divine Father runs out to welcome the doubting son (Lk. 15:20). This stands in direct contrast to 6.141; 7.31: “God loves not the prodigal...the wasters”. The story of the prodigal son being welcomed by the Father running out to meet him is just so powerful. This God is our God. He is not a God far away, but a God who is near (Is. 55:6). He is not a God who is totally different to us, as the Qur’an claims. He created us in His

image (Gen. 1:27; James 3:9). We are to be imitators (Greek ‘mimickers’) of Him, as beloved children (Eph. 5:1). We are to be holy, because He is holy (Lev. 19:2); perfect, because He is perfect (Mt. 5:48). We are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17), hoping to “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). In the cross, God rent the heavens and came down to be involved in the tragedy of humanity (Is. 64:1). This is the extent and passion of His involvement with us; and this is why I unashamedly appeal to you, to not keep God afar off. But let Him come near to you, in accepting that He had a Son, whom He gave to die to you, to make that way of escape for you from your own humanity...and appropriate that death and resurrection to yourself through the act of baptism.

It is on this subject that Islam and Christianity are mutually exclusive. The Qur’an says: “They neither crucified nor killed him” (4.157). Acts 2:23 says the opposite: “This Jesus...you crucified and killed”. The Qur’an gives no explanation of what happened to Jesus. To say that “so it was made to appear to them” begs the questions: How and why? To which no answers can be given. The Qur’an itself says that Jesus was on earth at the time, the Jews came to arrest Jesus, they wanted to have Him killed, and that someone was crucified that day looking like Jesus. For the Jews were convinced He was dead. If Muslims believe all this, then why not accept what is surely the more probable and logical- that Jesus Himself was the one crucified?

It is impossible for Him to have been snatched away to God’s presence in Heaven- for mortal flesh cannot see God. He was a man, of our nature [not of God’s nature]. So He would need to be granted God’s nature, which is immortal, if He were to be in Heaven. And yet Muslims believe Jesus will return and then die and be buried next to Muhammad. A mortal man can’t exist in Heaven, and yet the Muslim contention requires this.

To deny that Jesus died is to deny the New Testament as any kind of true record. And yet Muslims do refer to it- why, if it is so totally unreliable? Remember that Muhammad was told: “He sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur’an]...and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel” (3.3). John 19:25-27 records how Jesus on the cross speaks to Mary as his mother; why would Mary have been at the foot of the cross if it wasn’t Jesus there? And what about all the references by Jesus Himself to His upcoming death and resurrection (Mt. 17:9,22-23; 20:18-19; Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Lk. 9:22; 22:22; Jn. 8:28; 12:34)? These would all be nonsense if He Himself never died. The Qur’an claims that Jesus said: “Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life again” (19.33)- and the same words are recorded of John the baptist (19.15). God said of Jesus, according to 3.55: “O Jesus! I will cause you to die and raise you to myself” (translation confirmed by Muhammed Asad, *The Message Of The Qur’an* p. 75). The same Arabic phrase translated “raise you to myself” occurs in 4.158, where it is said that God raised Jesus up to Heaven to escape death; but in 3.55 we are told that this raising up occurs *after* His death. The serious contradictions within the Qur’an have to be faced up to. And also it has to be noted that there is strong historical evidence that a man called Jesus was crucified as the New Testament says He was. To simply deny this is desperate indeed. And there was no *need* for a human substitute to have hung there instead of Jesus: for, as in His babyhood, God could easily have saved His Son from death without deceiving the world and causing an innocent bystander to die a painful death by torture.

Footnote:

The author was privileged to participate in a public debate with Imam Kalam Azad in New Amsterdam, Guyana on Easter Sunday, 2001 on the subject: "Did Jesus die on the cross?". Videos and transcripts of the debate are available.

#### 4.3.4 Evidence For The Resurrection Of Jesus

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. 15:17), wrote Paul. It would mean that we have "hope in this life only" (1 Cor. 15:19). Our religion would just be a crutch to help us cough and hack our way through our years, and that would be all. Yet in Jesus there is *hope*. And the hope is the "the hope of the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 23:6). Remember how Ibrahim believed his son would be resurrected as a result of God's provision of a sacrificial lamb. And likewise for all of us, our resurrection is a result of the fact that Jesus was our representative [not our substitute], one of us, yet who overcame sin. Through being "in Him", His resurrection opens the way for ours. For all that is true of Him becomes in some way true of us. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19). Jesus Himself testified to His own death and resurrection: "I am he that lives, and was dead... I [therefore] have the keys of the grave" (Rev. 1:18). Because of His resurrection, those who are "in Christ" have the hope of sharing in that resurrection when He returns. Consider the force of Romans 6:3-5: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*". Because *He* lives, therefore the lives we live now are lived out "in newness of life".

Because he had our nature, Christ had to die. He was a descendant of Adam through Mary, and all of Adam's children have to die (1 Cor. 15:22). All Adam's descendants had to die because of his, Adam's, sin, regardless of their personal situation. "Death reigned...through the offence of one (Adam) many be dead...the judgment was (on account of) one (Adam) to condemnation (to death)...by one man's disobedience many were *made* sinners", and therefore had to die (Rom. 5:14-19 cf. 6:23). As a descendant of Adam, Jesus had to die, he inherited mortal nature from Adam through Mary, his mother.

Apart from Jesus, all of Adam's descendants deserve this punishment, for we have all sinned personally. Jesus had to die because he was of our nature, sharing in the curse which came upon Adam's descendants. Yet, because he personally had done nothing worthy of death "God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24 N.I.V.). Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Thus it was due to Christ's perfect character, his "spirit of holiness", that he was raised.

Christ did not die on the cross *only* because he was of human nature. He willingly gave his perfect life as a gift for us; he showed his love for us by dying "for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), knowing that through his death he would gain salvation from sin and death for us (Eph. 5:2,25; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 2:20). Because Jesus was perfect in character he was able to overcome the result of sin by being the first person to rise from the dead and be given immortal life. All those who identify themselves with Christ through baptism and a Christ-like way of life therefore have hope of a similar resurrection and reward.

In this lies the glorious significance of Christ's resurrection. It is the "assurance" that we will be resurrected and judged (Acts 17:31), and if we have truly followed him in this life, share his reward

of immortal life, “*knowing* (confidently) that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 6:3-5). As sinners, we deserve eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Yet, on account of Christ’s perfect life, obedient death and his resurrection, God offers us the *gift* of eternal life, completely in accord with all His principles.

To displace the effects of our sins, God “imputeth righteousness” (Rom. 4:6) to us through our faith in His promises of salvation. We know that sin brings death, therefore if we truly believe that God will save us from it, we must believe that He will count us as if we are righteous, although we are not. Christ was perfect; by being truly *in* Christ, God will count us as if we are perfect, although personally we are not. God made Christ “to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God *in* him” (2 Cor. 5:21), i.e. being *in* Christ through baptism and a Christ-like life. Thus for those “in Christ Jesus”, he is “made unto us...righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30,31); the following verse therefore encourages us to praise Christ for the great things he has achieved. “In the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith” (Rom. 1:17, N.I.V.). Understanding these things is therefore a necessary part of knowing the true Gospel.

All this was made possible through Christ’s resurrection. He was the “firstfruits” of a whole harvest of people who will be made immortal through his achievement (1 Cor. 15:20), “the firstborn” of a new spiritual family who will be given God’s nature (Col. 1:18 cf. Eph. 3:15). Christ’s resurrection therefore made it possible for God to count believers in Christ as if they are righteous, seeing that they are covered by his righteousness. Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (a word meaning ‘to be righteous’)” (Rom. 4:25).

It’s no wonder, then that the Old Testament predicted that Messiah would be resurrected. It was hinted at right back in the promises to David: " I will set up thy seed after thee...I will establish His kingdom" (2 Sam. 7:12). For the phrase " set up" the Septuagint uses a Greek word elsewhere translated 'resurrect'. This great seed of David was to be the Son of God (2 Sam. 7:14) and also a literal descendant of David (v.12). Thus Messiah was to have one Divine and one human parent, as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 " A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" - God with us. The meaning of the child's name being related to the means by which he was born, it follows that a 'virgin' here does not just mean a young woman. The Septuagint translation of the Bible, made by Egyptian Jews 200 years B.C., uses the word 'parthenos' for " Virgin" , which definitely means a virgin in the sexual sense. Thus we have here a prophecy of a virgin birth of Messiah, by the direct activity of God upon the virgin rather than that of a man.

Psalms 16:10 describes Messiah's brief death and resurrection: " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" - i.e. he would be raised before decomposition of the body set in. And after this, he was to ascend to Heaven: " In thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps.16:11). This cannot apply to David, seeing he died and has been buried many years.

## Summary Of Evidence For The Resurrection

*by John Thorpe*

The evidence for the resurrection is considerable, and belief in the resurrection does not need to rely directly on belief in the inspiration of the Bible. Essentially the evidence available can be broken



down into two types, physical evidence of the empty tomb and witness evidence of meetings with the risen Jesus.

#### a) The Empty Tomb

The empty tomb is mentioned in the gospels in passing. It is also attested, indirectly, by sources outside the Bible. It must have existed for three reasons:-

- The body of the crucifixion victim did not disappear in a cloud of smoke or self destruct after death; it must have been placed somewhere. However, no one managed to produce the body after the claim of the resurrection, even though it was in the interests of both Jews and Romans to do so. Therefore the body was not available and the tomb in which it had been placed was empty.
- The tomb was near Jerusalem. Anyone who wished to visit it from Jerusalem would have been able to do so easily. The fact that so many people in Jerusalem were convinced of the truth of the resurrection with its account of an empty tomb shows that the empty tomb really existed.
- The Jews spent considerable effort in proclaiming that the disciples stole the body from the tomb while the guards were asleep. This would have been a ludicrous story to distribute if the tomb still had the body of Jesus inside it.

#### b) The Witnesses

The witnesses are people who saw Jesus alive after his resurrection. Several of these are noted in the gospels, but a convenient list of them is given in 1 Corinthians where Paul writes:-

And that he was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve: After that, he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain to this present, but some have fallen asleep. After that, he was seen by James; then by all the apostles. And last of all he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Cor 15:5-8).

This list contains more than 500 people. The readers of the letter are reminded that most of these were still alive in their day (55 AD - 25 years after the events described in the resurrection narratives). This would mean that the witnesses were available for questioning. Had they not existed it would have been easy for the opponents of Paul (of whom there were many) to have stated this and hence to have shown his letter false and destroyed his case.

The existence of so many witnesses means that what they testified to - a solid and living Jesus - must also have existed.

#### c) Secondary Witnesses

The testimony of the earliest witnesses of the first century was backed up by the lengths that these witnesses would go to rather than deny their faith that Jesus had died and been raised again. The fate of many of these is described by Tacitus in the following words: "Mockery of all sorts accompanied their deaths. They were covered with the skins of wild animals and torn to death by dogs, or they were fastened to crosses and , when daylight failed, were burned to illuminate the night". (Tacitus, Annals 15:44)

Large numbers of Christians died in this way in the persecution of Nero; similar persecutions continued on and off for more than a century afterwards before they gradually died out. According to letters published by Pliny a Christian could avoid the death penalty by recanting, but no one ever did. It is painfully clear that the early Christians had complete confidence in their belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

## Summary

Any theory about what happened to Jesus at the crucifixion and subsequent events must account for all this evidence. It must explain both an empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. It must account for why everyone involved, including all the disciples, was so convinced of the resurrection of Jesus that they were prepared to allow themselves to be killed rather than to declare a lack of belief in it.

### 4-3-4-1 The Swoon Theory

The "Swoon" Theory of the resurrection of Jesus is the theory that although Jesus was crucified he did not die on the cross. Instead he seemed to die, was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb, where he revived. He then went out of the tomb and showed himself to his disciples who jumped to the conclusion that he had been raised from the dead by God. This theory is espoused by only a small number of Moslems, but as it appears in the works of the main Islamic polemicists it is likely to be met with fairly frequently in the future.

This theory hangs on the question of whether Jesus could have survived the crucifixion and then escaped the tomb in which he had been laid. In fact it is impossible that Jesus could have survived the crucifixion. It is possible for a victim to survive a crucifixion for six hours, provided that they remain conscious throughout and are prepared to support themselves on their legs. However, once anyone lapses into unconsciousness they will die in about 20 minutes from the accumulation of fluid in the lungs. Jesus is reported as having died at about the ninth hour (Mt. 27:50). He must at least have slipped into unconsciousness at this point. However, he was not brought down from the cross immediately. Instead there was time for Joseph of Arimathea to go to Pilate and beg the body of Jesus from him (Mk. 15:43; Jn. 19:38). There was then a further delay while Pilate sent someone out to make certain that the body was dead. (Mk. 15:44,45) Even then Jesus was not removed immediately; Joseph first went to buy some fine linen to act as grave clothes (Mk. 15:46). It is highly unlikely that this set of events could be completed in the twenty minutes that would be needed for Jesus to remain alive on the cross.

A further problem for the swoon theory is the spear thrust. This brought forth blood and water. The water can only have been from the lungs or pericardium. Thus the spear thrust was a deep one. As Jesus was lifted up on a cross at the time this thrust must have come from below as well as to the side. Because of this it would need to pass through the diaphragm to reach the lungs, and through either the spleen or the liver. This would have been enough to ensure the death of Jesus even if he had been in full health. If the spear pierced the pericardium then this would also have killed Jesus. Incidentally both the spleen and the liver bleed after death (look in any butcher's shop).

Supposing that by some miracle (and it would need to be a real miracle) Jesus had managed to survive this. He would be dying from his wounds. Being shut up in a cold tomb without food or water for 48 hours or more would certainly kill him. Apart from the loss of blood caused by his

scourging, the wounds in his hands and feet and the spear thrust in his side would almost certainly become infected. He would be unable to move until death took him.

The swoon theory now requires Jesus to remain immobile from the Friday evening to early Sunday morning and then to suddenly get up and feel better. He managed to open the stone from the wrong side. The stone would have been large, at least two tonnes, and it was sealed. The women going to the tomb felt unable to move it without help (Mk. 16:3). In spite of Jesus' wounds (which would have been severe) he manages to push the stone aside and then tackles a guard of the most efficient soldiers in the ancient world. This isn't a real person: this is superman! For an encore he walks seven miles on feet pierced with nails to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13). Here he manages to convince two disciples that he has been supernaturally raised from the dead and now enjoys eternal life.

This is not within the realms of possibility. Even more problematical is what happened to Jesus afterwards. Was an ordinary man raised up to heaven? If he died on earth, where is the tomb? There is a Moslem sect which believes that Jesus is now buried in Kashmir, but the tomb they show is not nearly old enough to be genuine. [There is friend of mine in Guyana whose brother journeyed specially to Kashmir to investigate. He says that there is a large crater which is claimed to be a footprint of Jesus- although all Biblical evidence is that He was a man of normal size. More information about this is available from the author. If Muhammed was indeed "the comforter" who Jesus prophesied would lead into all Truth, it is significant that Muslim groups have such major differences of agreement; and Muslim nations fight each other to this day].

#### 4-3-4-2 The Crucifixion Substitute Theory

The theory that Jesus was never placed on the cross at all, but that some substitute was crucified instead is a more popular theory than the swoon theory. There are a number of candidates for the person substituted but there is particularly convincing evidence for none of them. For example, consider the possibility that the person crucified was Judas. The evidence for this is from the Gospel of Barnabas, but this is a late medieval forgery and cannot be relied on even to get the geography of Israel correct, let alone the details of the crucifixion. All the candidates for a substitute suffer this same problem of lack of evidence.

One thing that is certain about the events of Passover 30 AD is that someone whom the authorities believed to be Jesus was crucified. The evidence for this is very strong. Not only do all four gospels mention the death of someone on the cross (identifying the person as Jesus) but Jewish sources and Roman historians also give witness to the death.

One of the Barioth says:

On the Eve of the Passover they hanged Jesus (E Baraitha, Sanhedrin 43a)

Tacitus says:

"Christos, the founder of the name [Christian] suffered the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate and this pernicious superstition was checked for a while, only to break out again" (Tacitus, Annals 15:44)

Another indisputable fact is that the tomb in which this person was buried was empty on the Sunday following the crucifixion. Again, this is without any doubt. The tomb was near Jerusalem and

anyone who wished could examine it. The Jews consistently proclaimed that the disciples had stolen the body, a ludicrous claim if the tomb was not empty. Neither the Jews nor the Romans were ever able to produce a body, something that it would have been very much in their interests to do as it would have put an end to Christianity very early on.

The substitute theory fails to explain the empty tomb. Whoever was crucified must have been buried afterwards. Within three days the tomb where they were buried was empty. Where had they gone? Had God raised the substitute from the dead? Why should God raise the substitute from the dead when he was not prepared to raise his own Son? The substitution theory provides no answer to any of these questions.

#### 4.3.5 The Qur'an And The Ascension Of Jesus

The Qur'an claims that Jesus ascended to Heaven in order to escape death (4.157,158). Yet the New Testament teaches that He ascended to Heaven as part of His exaltation, the reward and result of His sufferings. Because He humbled Himself to the death of the cross, therefore He was highly exalted (Phil. 2: 8-9). This idea of humility is not attractive to any of us, not least Muslims. Their perception of Jesus is of a man who was saved from being humiliated by being glorified. Yet the Bible teaches that Jesus was humbled and as a result of this humiliation, was glorified: and this must be our pattern too in the life of following Him (Jn. 13:31-33; Heb. 5:7-9; Col. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:19-21; 4:13; Rev. 5:12).

Muslims claim that Jesus only ascended to a lesser heaven; whereas the Old Testament teaches that Messiah is to sit on the right hand of the throne of God Himself (Ps. 16:11; Dan. .7:13). He "ascended far above all heavens" (Eph. 4:9), to the throne of God Himself (Rev. 3:21). The purpose of the ascension of Jesus was not to save Him from temporary death - if so, why has He remained there for 20 centuries? When the Son of God was under threat earlier, God sent Him away into Egypt (Mt. 2:13,20). Again, we ask *why* is it that Jesus alone of all men, according to the Qur'an, was taken to Heaven for so long? If He is just another of many prophets, why this special treatment? And why was He, according to the Qur'an, the only man who never died (4.156,157)? If the wages of sin is death, this would mean that He never sinned, and was the only man never to have sinned. This makes Him far more than just another prophet. There is a serious tension within the Qur'an relating to the nature of Jesus. He is spoken of in very exalted terms [probably because much of the Qur'an text is merely borrowed from the New Testament]; and yet on the other hand, seeks to downplay Him.

#### 4.3.6 Islam And The Return Of Jesus

Islam teaches that Jesus will return from Heaven, destroy the Antichrist, and lead believers into an era of peace, ruling over all the earth- and then, He will die and be buried next to Muhammad. Again, the God who is ignorantly worshipped must be declared... this is all true, in that Jesus Christ *will* return and do these things: but He will not die! The Kingdom He will establish will be eternal. If He didn't sin - and He can scarcely be in the presence of God for 2000 years if He did sin - then why should He have to die? The Old Testament prophets speak of Messiah reigning eternally; and His priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, being eternal, in that he ever lives to make intercession for His people (Ps. 110:4).

Jesus will return in glory: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the star shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other ” (Mt. 24:29-31). Right now, His face shines as the sun (Acts 26:13; Rev. 1:16). How can this be, if He is just another of many prophets, who will return to earth and die? When Jesus appears, “we shall be made like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2). He comes to give us life, to make us like Him, in that in this life we shared through baptism His death and resurrection. It cannot be that He then dies. “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:48,49).

The Qur’an in 3.49 and 5.113 says that Jesus has the power to raise the dead given to Him by God. This is what the New Testament teaches too. However, the question arises: Why should Jesus have this power rather than any other prophet? Clearly there was something unique about Him. It is only the true Christian Gospel which can give an answer to the question *why* only Jesus has this power. It was because He was our representative, He died and rose again, and therefore He can share that life and resurrection with those who associate themselves with His death and life through baptism, and through living out in their lives “in Christ” what these things demand. Only because He was the Son of God could Jesus have such power over death: “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will...For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (Jn. 5:21,26)

#### 4.4 Man's Need For The Death And Resurrection Of Jesus

##### 4.4.1 Man's Need

I once heard a very significant comment from a Turkish Christian. He knows some isolated villages which had been staunchly 'Christian' for centuries, but in the last 100 years had become Moslem. But they retained an old Christian meeting room, where a Christian man they called 'the priest' lives. Although they're all Moslems, whenever they sin, or the village judges someone to have sinned, they go to see 'the priest' and enter into the meeting room, where he sprinkles water on them and tells them Jesus forgives them. Now all this is of course far from Biblical Christianity as we know it, but it serves to illustrate the crisis of Islam- there is no provision for mercy, grace and forgiveness, and it is this which our new brethren and sisters are so enthusiastically grasping and preaching in its true terms.

The Qur’an teaches as does the Bible that due to Adam’s sin in Eden, the whole of humanity were cursed (2.36). The question is, how to escape from this? Again, the Qur’an seems to identify the problem without giving any hope of salvation or concept of redemption. Sadly we have to say that the Qur’an reads as if someone wrote it having poorly remembered the Biblical text. Thus the tree which Adam ate is called “the tree of eternity” (20.120). If this were so, then Adam should still be alive. The Biblical record makes so much more sense: Adam was told not to eat of the tree of knowledge; he ate of it; and was punished by not being allowed to eat of the tree of eternal life. The Qur’an suggests that all man has to do as a result of Adam’s sin is to repent and ask forgiveness. But God would not change His principles: He had said that eating of the fruit meant they must die. And so they had to. Repentance alone is not enough; for the wages of sin is death. It cannot be that God would simply waive His principles on emotional grounds. But He *is* compassionate, and He is a saviour God, and He went straight on to tell Adam and Eve of the way to salvation. There was to be a descendant of the woman who would destroy the power of the snake [i.e. sin] with a fatal blow to

the head. During this conflict, the descendant of the woman would be bruised temporarily in the heel (Gen. 3:15). This we understand to mean that Jesus, the descendant of the woman through Mary, would suffer temporarily [in that He died and then resurrected] in order to permanently destroy the power of sin.

Sin separates a man from God (Is. 59:2). I seriously wonder to what extent Islam has a concept of sin; and because they do not perceive sin as a real and felt offence against God, there is no joy in forgiveness, no appreciation of grace; and their understanding of the nature of God as cold and indifferent fails to inspire them to show these things to others. Forgiveness, grace, forgiving somebody whilst they are still sinning against you [as God did to mankind on the cross]- these are foreign to Muslims; because this is their view of God. And we become like what we worship. The whole of the Bible is about sin and our personal struggle with it. "The prophets"- David, Jeremiah, Abraham / Ibrahim, Isaac, Jacob etc. - all have their sins and struggles recorded, and as David often wrote in his reflections upon his sin with Bathsheba, these things are an inspiration to others to believe in the gracious forgiveness and mercy of a loving Heavenly Father. We need not just a succession of prophets to teach us God's way. We need a Saviour, to save us from the results of our disobedience.

The Law of Moses presented mankind with something similar in outline to the requirements of Islam - in that believers were required to follow specific laws. But man was and is incapable of perfect obedience to such a system. It becomes slavery rather than giving the freedom of salvation. In Christ, the whole concept of legality has been done away. When we read in Romans of "the law" having been done away, the Greek often carries the idea of 'law / legality' (see RV). The true Christian is under grace, not law. Virtually all ritual, ceremony and form has been stripped away from the true worship of God. No code of dress, rites or ceremonies for worship; no daily exercises or routines of piety. Instead, we seek for the reflection of the man Jesus Christ in our lives, thinking and being. The New Testament speaks of "the spirit of Jesus", which we understand to be a spirit / way of life in conformity to His. All the time we are seeking to act and speak as He would have done in our situation. We strive for a holy, loving, patient character like His. And insofar as we achieve this, we are witnessing Him to this world. This is why so many Muslims have been converted to Christianity - not so much by debate, as by the living example of those truly "in Christ". True Christianity [and there is much false Christianity in this world] isn't just a religious message, comprised of propositions. It is above all a *life* to be received, a living out of the doctrines of Jesus. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). We all sin. So, we must all die. Therefore any attempt at justification with God through *doing* things is simply doomed. We are thrown upon our desperate need for His grace.

The whole Islamic concept of sin is what makes the cross unnecessary to them. They believe that God forgives who He wants, as He wants; and that sin isn't really a separation from God, but rather it is a slip made because God created man with a weak nature. This effectively makes God responsible for sin, which can't be right. Because God predestinates our fate, there is no need for atonement or reconciliation with Him. And this explains the fatalism and lack of spiritual energy found in many Islamic people. There is no real concept of having offended God; there is no real forgiveness from Him, although there is the idea that sin can be cancelled out by keeping certain commandments. Yet the Bible reveals that there *is* forgiveness with God, that He may be feared (Ps. 130:4). David reflected on his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba: "Against you, you only have I sinned" (51:4). God was grieved at His heart that man sinned at the time of Noah (Gen. 6: 6). It's an amazing idea, when we first grasp it: that you and I, down here on earth, can really touch the heart of Almighty God. That our sins so hurt Him, He allows Himself to get personally hurt and offended

by us; and our attempts at righteousness can touch the heart of God Almighty. We aren't just predestined: our destiny is in our hands. This is why God through Moses and Joshua told His people: "Choose life, that you may live..." (Dt. 30:19; Josh. 23:8,11; 24:14). This is the passion and urgency behind those appeals. To obey or disobey was in the power of those individual people. They had nobody else to blame for their rejection of God's offers; and for those who accepted, nobody could or will take their joy from them. Thus Job rejoiced that he would see Jehovah [Allah] for himself, and nobody else would see their maker in quite the same way as Job would (Job 19:26-27).

Because sin exists as a reality, something we can blame nobody else for, not a 'devil' up in the sky or beneath us, but we alone are 100% responsible for our sins...therefore we need atonement. God has decreed that sin must result in death. We have already sinned; therefore we must die. But God wants to save us. And He doesn't do that by saying 'Well OK, I wasn't serious about all that stuff about commandments'. He is serious, deadly serious. Because He is a just and moral God, therefore there must be a basis for forgiveness. This basis for forgiveness is totally un-provided by Islam. In the Old Testament, He offered forgiveness on the basis of animal blood being shed, as representative of the death of the sinner. But the animal wasn't a full representative of the sinner. It was an animal, not a man. And yet, God provided forgiveness through their blood. Why, seeing they weren't truly representative of the sinner? Because, they pointed forward to the blood of a future sacrifice, of a representative man, who would never sin (Heb. 9:28; 10:4-6,10-12). Through being counted as "in him", all that was true of Him would become true of the person who became in covenant relationship with Him. That person was Jesus - a man like us, although the Son of God. Our representative, with our nature and temptations, but who never once sinned. And we enter that covenant with Him, we become "in him", so that all that is true of him becomes true of us...by being baptized [immersed] into His death and resurrection. This Saviour couldn't have been Muhammad - for Muhammad sinned and asked for forgiveness (33.37; 47.19; 48.2). No man [who has sinned] can redeem his brother (Ps. 49:7). The wonder of it all is that we are saved by pure grace. The more that sinks into us, the more we are inspired to live lives of grace, of imputing the best to others, of having the love that thinks no evil (1 Cor. 13:5). And the more we realize that we do have genuine freewill, the more we will live lives of spiritual energy and dynamic service. To believe in complete predestination is to believe that God forces human beings to act against His own will.

#### 4.4.2 God's Provision

We have shown earlier that the way of escape is through the death and resurrection of Jesus: a man like us, the descendant of Ibrahim, yet who never sinned, strengthened in this by His being the Son of God. And this saviour from sin was prophesied all through the Old Testament: "I will bring my servant the Branch [a clear reference to Messiah]...I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day" (Zech. 3:8,9). And remember, the Qur'an recognizes Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

To reject the cross, as Muslims do, is to act like Peter did when he tried to dissuade Jesus from dying on it. Jesus told him: "Get behind me Satan! You are not on the side of God but of men" (Mt. 16:23). The cross was God's way. There is something repulsive about the cross - whenever Jesus started talking to His followers about it, they always changed the conversation onto another topic. And so this is what Islam has done. It has tried to make this rejection of the cross which is rooted in our natures, something theologically and intellectually respectable. But it is taking the side of men and not that of God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their iniquities unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). He was manifested in the death of His Son. God made Jesus to be a sin offering, even though Jesus Himself never sinned, "that we might become the righteousness

of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). These are wonderful, marvellous things! Don’t *you* want to become “in him” by baptism, so that *you* can really share in this wondrous process of atonement and reconciliation with the God you love, but are separated from...?

God knew that just telling us to be submissive [‘Muslim’] and obedient wouldn’t be enough. Our natures are so biased towards disobedience. Yet in the fact Christ died, we not only have forgiveness through His blood (1 Jn. 1:7); we have an inspiration to a life of dedication. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, *that* we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24).

We know we will sin - and “whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it” (James 2:10). The way of escape cannot be through vowing never to sin again. In this sense the system of commandments “which promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom. 7:10). And in any case, the fact we have sinned already, even once, requires we die. Adam’s sin in Eden is a clear enough example.

#### 4.4.3 The Need For Baptism

And all this is the reason why we must make a conscious decision to identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus through baptism: a dipping in water, into His death and resurrection. I am aware that many false Christian groups seek to glory in the numbers of Muslims they have baptized. We are not like this. No true Christian is merely interested in numbers they baptize. They will love people, and will want the lives of people to be transformed. Jesus Himself said some hard things, and they were nearly all in the context of encouraging people to weigh up carefully their commitment to Him. When a man wanted to follow Him wherever He went, He replied that He had nowhere to lay His head - even though it seems that most nights of His ministry, He probably did have somewhere to sleep (Mt. 8:19,20). This kind of hyperbole [exaggerated statement] is common on the lips of Jesus. He spoke of how a man must sit down and count the cost *first*; and when “many believed in him”, He tested the sincerity of their faith until they finally tried to stone Him (Jn. 8:30,48,59). When “many believed in his name” one Passover, “Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men...he himself knew what was in man” (Jn. 2:23-25).

#### Where To From Here?

You need to be baptized. But don’t just go to any ‘Christian’ church and get baptized. Jesus said that first of all, we must understand the Gospel- the *real* Gospel, that which was preached to Abraham / Ibrahim so many years ago - and then, once we properly believe, be baptized. And Jesus Himself warned us that “many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ” (Mt. 24:5); that “many” will say to Him when He returns “Lord, Lord, didn’t we do many miracles in your name...?”. And He will tell them that He never knew them (Mt. 7:22,23). This means that “many”, perhaps even the majority, of those claiming to be Christians aren’t the genuine thing. There is a huge apostasy amongst Christians. Now this doesn’t mean that there is no such thing as true Christianity in existence. It *is* there, as this book has sought to show.

I suggest you need to get yourself a Bible, both Old and New Testaments, if you don’t already have one. And read it daily. I use a plan called ‘The Bible Companion’, which gives certain chapters to read every day. Tens of thousands of Christians world-wide read every day according to that plan, and it binds us together wonderfully. By using the plan, you’ll read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in the course of a year. And devote yourself to a systematic study of the basic doctrines of the Bible. We have a Bible study course which you can do on your own, with no need



to attend churches or listen to pastors or priests. And when you have finished this and understand it, we'd be so happy to arrange for someone to come and have a chat with you and baptize you if you are ready. We care for you; we are with you. We want to help you. If there is some overwhelming material problem in your life or community that stops you from being able to concentrate on what is most important - studying God's word and committing yourself to His Son, Jesus - then write and tell us about it. We might be able to do something to help. But above all, pray to God, and ask Him to guide you to His Son, to His Kingdom; ask Him to open your eyes to understand His word as you read and study it.

I so hope to hear from you!

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4.5

The Practical Power Of The Doctrine Of Jesus

*The Lord Jesus Shared All Our Temptations; He Was A Man Of Our Nature, He Didn't Pre-Exist.*

Therefore in the daily round of life, He will be a living reality, like David we will behold the Lord Jesus before our face all the day. We will really believe that forgiveness is possible through the work of such a representative; and the reality of his example will mean the more to us, as a living inspiration to rise above our lower nature. Appreciating the doctrines of the atonement enables us to pray acceptably; " we have boldness and access with confidence by *the Faith*" - not just 'by faith', but as a result of *the Faith* (Eph. 3:12). Hebrews so often uses the word " therefore" ; *because of the facts of the atonement, we can therefore come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience* (Heb. 4:16). This " boldness" which the atonement has enabled will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4); our experience of imputed righteousness will lead us to have a confidence exuding through our whole being. This is surely why 'boldness' was such a characteristic and watchword of the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:19; 1 Jn. 4:17). Stephen truly believed that the Lord Jesus stood as his representative and his advocate before the throne of grace. Although condemned by an earthly court, he confidently makes his appeal before the court of Heaven (Acts 7:56). Doubtless he was further inspired by the basic truth that whoever confesses the Lord Jesus before men, He will confess Him before the angels in the court of Heaven (Lk. 12:8).

The connection between the atonement and faith in prayer is also brought out in 2 Corinthians 1:20 RSV: "For all the promises of God in him are yea. That is why we utter the Amen through him". The promises of God were confirmed through the death of Jesus, and the fact that He died as the seed of Abraham / Ibrahim, having taken upon Him Abraham / Ibrahim's plural seed in representation (Rom. 15:8,9). Because of this, "we utter the Amen through [on account of being in] Him". We can heartily say 'Amen', so be it, to our prayers on account of our faith and understanding of His atoning work.

The fact the Lord Jesus didn't personally pre-exist needs some meditation. It seems evident that there must have been some kind of previous creation(s), e.g. for the creation of the Angels. God existed from infinity, and yet only 4,000 years ago did He have His only and His *begotten* Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans - only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000 year time span. In the spectre of infinite time and space, this is wondrous. That the Only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawled on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time. He died so that God could work out our salvation; and the love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Is. 62:5). Almighty God, who existed from eternity, is likened to a first timer, with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this. He died for *me*, in the shameful way that He did. Our hearts and minds, with all their powers, are in the boundless prospect lost.

### Jesus Christ Is The Son Of God

1 John strongly links belief in Christ as the Son of God with a life of true love. They had heard from "the beginning" of their contact with the Gospel that Christ was the Son of God: and yet also the need to love one another. The "message" which they had heard from the beginning was that Christ was the Son of God (2:24); and yet it was also that we should love one another (3:11). This is why in the context of teaching the need for love, John warns against false teaching regarding the nature of Christ as Son of God (2:22,23; 4:1-4; 2 Jn. 7-11). "The word...from the beginning" was the 'logos' of Christ (Jn. 1:1-3); and yet in John's letters, the word from the beginning was that we should love each other (2:7; 3:11). This is the essence of belief in Christ: love for each other. This is where the doctrine of Christ leads. And for this reason, Paul pronounces an 'anathema' upon both those who teach another doctrinal Gospel, "another Jesus" (Gal. 1:8,9); as well as those who do not love the Lord Jesus personally (1 Cor. 16:22). "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" (3:23). "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" [i.e. your brother]. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us...whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him" (4:12,15). But why is there this link between love, and belief in Jesus of Nazareth being the begotten Son of God? Theologically, it could be said that if we accept Him as God's Son, then we must likewise accept all God's other sons, begotten as they are by His Spirit. But practically, are we not being taught to see the *pure wonder* of the way in which *Almighty God had a Son* and gave that Son, so freely and so painfully, for us...? The *pure wonder* of God having a Son of our nature, a child and then a man who showed us the essence of God displayed in human flesh and temptation; and then giving Him to us... If we see this, we will naturally show love to our brethren. So it isn't just a case of thinking yes, we believe Jesus was Son of God, not God the Son – and period. No. There's infinitely more to it than this. This faith and understanding can tear down every barrier between men, and provide the inspiration for a life of true, self-sacrificial love. The true *wonder* of it all simply must be meditated upon. That God's very own son should begin so small, as an ovum, "a single fertilized egg barely visible to the naked eye, an egg that would divide and re-divide until a foetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager".

Because Jesus was the *only* Son of God, therefore He is *full* of the Father's grace and truth. John 1:14 makes this connection between fullness and only Son-ship. Because of the wonder of this, we should therefore hear Him, respecting and thereby obeying His word simply because of our appreciation of who He is and was- the Son of God (Lk. 9:35). Quite simply, to *truly* believe in Jesus as Son of God means that we will have a sure Hope of passing beyond the gates of the grave into the Kingdom (Mt. 16:16 cp. 18).

## Jesus Never Sinned

The extent to which this man from Nazareth, who sneezed and slept and thirsted as we do, was really God manifest in the flesh...this needs sustained personal meditation. That from the larynx of a Palestinian Jew really came forth the words of Almighty God; to the extent that it had to be said that never man spake like this man; and He Himself could assure us that heaven and earth would pass, but not His words (note the links with Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 1:10-12)...that this man died for us...rose again, ascended...and now works His saving work for us, hour by hour. Mark records how a man once in an offhand way addressed the Lord Jesus as “good master”. The Lord Jesus’ response was to say that if the man *really* accepted Him as ‘good’ he ought to share His cross, and sell what he had and give to the poor. The real extent of Jesus’ goodness will move us to deep personal response, if we truly perceive it.

## Jesus Is The Christ

If we deny Christ, we deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 Jn. 2:22); and yet we deny Christ if we don’t preach Him (Mt. 10:33). It follows that if we really believe that Jesus was not just Jesus of Nazareth but the Christ of God, therefore we won’t deny Him but will preach Him. This is why there is connection between confessing Jesus as Christ and preaching Him (Jn. 9:22; Acts 18:5; Phil. 2:11). A grasp of who the Lord Jesus really is and the height of His present exaltation will naturally result in a confession of Him to the world, as well as a deep personal obedience to His word and will (Heb. 2:1). “But and if ye should suffer for righteousness sake...fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man” (1 Pet. 3:14,15). *Knowing and having* Christ as Lord of our hearts will practically enable us to overcome tribulation, and will lead to a suitably humble witness in response. The Gospel is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4 RSV). 2 Cor. 2:14-17 invites us to see the Lord Jesus after His victory - which can only refer to His victorious death on the cross - leading a victory parade, in which we are the triumphant soldiers, carrying with us burning incense. This represents our preaching of the Gospel, as part of our participation in the joyful glory of the Lord Jesus’ victory on the cross. And yet that incense is used as a double symbol - both of us the preachers, who hold the aroma, and yet we are also the aroma itself. We are the witness. But the motivation for it all is our part in the victory procession of the Lord Jesus, going on as it does down through the ages, as He as it were comes home from the cross.

## The Lord Jesus Died And Rose Again, And Was Made Lord And Christ (Acts 2:36)

His resurrection is the basis for ours. Despite the emotion and hardness of death itself, our belief in resurrection is rooted in our faith that our Lord died and rose. When comforting those who had lost loved ones in the Lord Jesus, Paul doesn’t simply remind them of the doctrine of the resurrection at the return of Jesus. His focus instead is on the fact that “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess. 4:14).

The fact Jesus is Lord has vital practical import for us. In Romans 14:7-9, Paul speaks of the need not to live unto ourselves, but to rather live in a way which is sensitive to the conscience and needs of others. Why? “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living”. Because He is our Lord we therefore don’t live for ourselves, but for Christ our Lord and all those in Him. When Paul exalts that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, this isn’t just some literary flourish. It is

embedded within a context of telling the believers to quit materialism, indeed to flee from its snare. 1 Timothy 6:6-14 concern this; and then there is the passage about Christ's exaltation (6:15,16), and then a continued plea to share riches rather than build them up (6:17-19). Because He is Lord of all, we should quit our materialism and sense of self-ownership. For we are His, and all we have is for His service too. And the principle of His being Lord affects every aspect of our spirituality. Dennis Gillet truly observed [in *The Genius Of Discipleship*]: "Mastery is gained by crowning the Master as Lord and King". And Peter likewise says that those who reject the Lordship of Jesus (2 Pet. 2:10) indulge in sexual immorality. The height of His Lordship ought to mean self-control in our lives; because He, rather than our own passions, is Jesus and Master of our soul. Joseph's amazing exaltation in Egypt was clearly typical of that of the Lord Jesus after His resurrection. As a result of Joseph's exaltation, no man could lift up even his hand or foot without exception within the sphere of Joseph's power. And the Lord Jesus' exaltation has the same effect and imperative over us.

Because Jesus is Lord and Master, and because He is our representative in every way, therefore all that He did and was becomes an imperative for us to follow. Thus: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn. 13:13,14). They called Him "Lord and Master", but *wouldn't* wash each other's feet. Like us so often, they had the right doctrinal knowledge, but it meant nothing to them in practice. To know Him as Lord is to wash each other's feet, naked but for a loincloth, with all the subtle anticipations of the cross which there are in this incident. "Wherefore [because of the exaltation of Jesus] [be obedient and] work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [i.e. in humility]" (Phil. 2:12). And so it is with appreciating God's greatness: the deeper our realization of it, the higher our response. Thus Solomon built a "great" house for Yahweh, "for great is our God above all gods" (2 Chron. 2:5). Israel prayed to God but without meaning, "though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him" (Hos. 11:7). They theoretically knew Him as "the most High" but in their hearts they failed to exalt Him. And so their prayers remained as empty words.

James 2:1 (Gk.) gives the Lord Jesus the title of "the glory" (as also in Lk. 2:32; Eph. 1:17). And James makes the point that we cannot believe in the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory and have respect of persons. This may seem a strange connection at first sight. But perhaps the sense is that if we see the *height* and surpassing extent of *His* glory, all others will pale into insignificance, and therefore we will be biased for or against nobody and nothing because of the way they are all as nothing before the brightness of the glory of the Lord Jesus we follow. The RV mg. Makes the point clearer: "Do ye, in accepting persons, hold the faith of the Lord of glory?". This explains why when Paul sat down to write to churches (we call them 'ecclesias') riddled with worldliness, immorality and false doctrine, he takes as his repeated opening theme the greatness and exaltation of the Lord Jesus.

There's one more especially noteworthy thing which the sheer *height* of the Lord Jesus' exaltation leads us to. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...wherefore...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:9-12). These words are alluding to Isaiah 45:23,24: "...unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord [Jesus] have I righteousness and strength". We all find humility difficult. But before the height of His exaltation, a height which came as a result of the depth of the degradation of the cross, we should bow our knees in an unfeigned humility and realization of our sinfulness, and thankful recognition of the fact that through Him we are counted righteous.

As with many aspects of doctrine, it is often difficult for us to appreciate how radically revolutionary they were in the first century context; and in essence they should lose none of their radical-ness with us. David Bosch observes: “Christians confessed Jesus as Lord of all lords - the most revolutionary political demonstration imaginable in the Roman Empire”. Philip Yancey likewise: “As the church spread throughout the Roman empire, its followers took up the slogan “Christ is Lord”, a direct affront to Roman authorities who required all citizens to take the oath ‘Caesar [the state] is Lord’” (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 246). It hurt, it cost, to recognize Him as Lord. And so it should with us, especially those who live in Islamic societies. Men and women died for this; and we likewise give our lives in response to that very same knowledge. There is a tendency, which the Lord Jesus Himself brought to our attention, of calling Him Lord but not doing what He says. To know Him as Lord in truth is axiomatically to be obedient to Him (Lk. 6:46).

Faith is also inculcated by an appreciation of the height of His exaltation. He now has all power in Heaven and in earth, and this in itself should inspire us with faith in prayer and hope in His coming salvation. On the basis of passages like Exodus 4:7; Numbers 12:10-15; 2 Kings 5:7,8, “leprosy was regarded as a “stroke” only to be removed by the Divine hand which had imposed it” (L.G. Sargent, *The Gospel Of The Son Of God*, p. 28). The leper of Mark 1:40 lived with this understanding, and yet he saw in Jesus nothing less than God manifest. Inspired by the height of the position which he gave Jesus in his heart, he could ask him in faith for a cure: “If thou wilt, *thou canst* [as only God was understood to be able to] make me clean”.

Because Christ is Lord of all, we must preach Him to all, even if like Peter we would rather not preach to them. This was the motivational power and reality of Christ’s universal Lordship for Peter (Acts 10:36). The same link between Christ’s Lordship and witness is found in Philippians 2:10 and 1 Peter 3:15 (which alludes to Is. 8:13 - Yahweh of Hosts, of many ones, becomes manifest now in the Lord Jesus).

The reality of the Lordship of Jesus is used in Revelation (19:12, 16) to encourage the brethren to continue fearless in their witness despite persecution. Jesus is Lord of the kings of the earth; He has control over the world; therefore, no human power can harm us without His express permission and purpose. The exhortation of Psalm 110 is powerful: because Jesus is now seated at the Father’s right hand, His people offer themselves as freewill offerings in this, the day of His power. They are arrayed in “holy attire” because *He* has been made the Priest after the order of Melchizedek- they share in the work which His exaltation has enabled (Ps. 110:1,3,4 RV mg.).

The ascended Christ was highly exalted and given the Name above every Name, so that for those who believed this, they would bow in service at the Name of Jesus. Peter preached in and about the name of Jesus - this is emphasized (Acts 2:31,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30; 5:28,40,41; 10:43). The excellence of knowing Him and His character and the wonder of the exalted Name given on His ascension (Phil. 2:9; Rev. 3:12) lead Peter to witness. Because of His exaltation, we confess Jesus as Lord to men, as we later will to God at judgment (Phil. 2:9). According as we confess Him before men, so our judgment will reflect this. Lifting up Jesus as Lord is to be the basis of giving a witness to every man of the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15 RSV). The knowledge and experience of His exaltation can only be witnessed to; it can’t be kept quiet. 3 John 7 refers to how the great preaching commission was obeyed: “For his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing (material help) from the Gentiles” (Gentile believers). For the excellence of knowing His Name they went forth in witness, and moreover were generous spirited, not taking material help to enable this. The knowledge of the Name of itself should inspire to active service: for the sake of the Lord Jesus’ Name the Ephesians laboured (Rev. 2:3).

Because “all power is given unto me...go ye *therefore* and teach all nations” (Mt. 28:18,19). The great preaching commission is therefore not so much a commandment as an inevitable corollary of the Lord Jesus’ exaltation. We will not be able to sit passively in the knowledge of the universal extent of His authority / power. We will have to spread the knowledge of it to all (see “Into all the world” for more on this, especially the way 1 Timothy 3:16 alludes to the preaching commission as having already been fulfilled the moment it was uttered, so strong is the imperative). There may be some similarity with the way in which the exaltation of Israel / God’s people was so that all men would be witnessed to (Dt. 4:6).

The greatness of Christ clearly influenced Mark’s witness; he began his preaching of the Gospel (of which his Gospel is but a transcript) by quoting Isaiah’s words about how a highway was to be prepared “for our God” and applying them to the Lord Jesus, whom he saw as God manifest in flesh. Appreciating the height of who Jesus was and is, clearly motivated his preaching. And it should ours too. This is why Paul in the face of every discouragement could preach that “there *is* another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:7). This was the core of his message; not so much that there *will be* a coming King in Jerusalem, but that there *is* right now a King at God’s right hand, who demands our total allegiance.

The Lord Jesus’ Blood Was Shed For Our Redemption. Christ Died The Dreadful Death He Did For Us

If we understand something of the ‘mechanics’ of the atonement, and grasp something of the fact that they were outworked in a real, historical man, we will see that the final realization of the redemption achieved at the cross will be when Christ comes back. Having expounded the Lord Jesus’ cross for several chapters, Paul concludes: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). Here we see two fundamental first principles linked: If we understand something of the atonement, we will earnestly look for the second coming, when the redemption achieved on the cross will be brought unto us (cp. 1 Pet. 1:13). An enthusiasm for the second coming, spurred by a realization that the bringing of salvation then is an outworking of the cross, will lead to a loose hold on the things of this life.

Paul had a debt to preach to all men (Rom. 1:14). But a debt implies he had been given something; and it was not from “all men”, but rather from Christ. Because the Lord Jesus gave us the riches of His self-sacrifice, we thereby are indebted *to Him*; and yet this debt has been transmuted into a debt to preach to all humanity. Our obligation to the Lord Jesus for His death for us issues in an obligation to preach that message to others.

Consider the implications of 2 Corinthians 5:20,21: “On behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ: be ye reconciled to God [because] him who knew no sin he made to be a sin [a sin offering?] on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him”. *Because* of the cross, the atonement which God wrought in Christ’s offering, we beseech men to be reconciled to God. Appreciating the cross and the nature of the atonement should be the basis of our appeal to men. And indeed, such an appeal is *God* appealing to men and women, in that there on the cross “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself”. The blood and spittle covered body of the Lord Jesus lifted up was and is the appeal, the *beseeking* of God Himself to men. And this is the message that we are honoured to preach on His behalf; we preach the appeal of God through the cross.

The reality of the Lord Jesus' crucifixion was the basis of Peter's appeal for men to repent: "Repent ye therefore [and he spoke not only to those who had crucified the Lord Jesus], and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:17-19). And think through the reasoning of 1 Corinthians 1:13: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?". The fact Jesus was crucified for us means that we should be baptized into that Name, and also be undivided.

Therefore, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it...so ought men to love their wives" (Eph. 5:25). The Greek for "gave himself" is mainly used of the Lord Jesus giving up the spirit to the Father. His death was as an act of the will, He gave up His life rather than it being taken away from Him. This matchless peak of self-control and self-giving for us must somehow be replicated in the humdrum of daily domestic relationships. He carried our sins "that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (Gk. Weals- Peter saw them) ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

*Because Of The Suffering Entailed In The Putting To Death Of Our Sins By The Lord Jesus' Cross, We Should Respond In Likewise Mortifying Them*

To put it mildly, our experience of His death for us should lead us to be generous spirited in all ways. In appealing for financial generosity to poorer brethren, Paul sought to inspire the Corinthians with the picture of Christ crucified: "For ye know the grace [gift / giving] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor [Gk. a pauper], that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). In the light of this, we should not just be generous from the abundance of what we have; we should become as paupers in our giving. The Lord Jesus' giving wasn't financial; it was emotional and spiritual. And so, Paul says, both materially and in these ways, we should likewise respond to our brethren, poorer materially or spiritually than we are. "The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:14 Philips; it "urges us on", NRSV).

By God's grace, the Lord Jesus tasted death *for* (Gk. *huper*) *every man*, as our representative: "in tasting death he should stand for all" (NEB). In His death He experienced the essence of the life-struggle and death of every man. The fact the Lord Jesus did this *for us* means that we respond *for Him*. "To you it is given *in the behalf of* (Gk. *huper*) Christ, not only to believe on Him [in theory], but to suffer *for his sake* (Gk. *huper*)" (Phil. 1:29). He suffered *for us* as our representative, and we suffer *for Him* in response. This was and is the two-way imperative of the fact the Lord Jesus was our representative. He died *for all* that we should die to self and live *for Him* (2 Cor. 5:14,15). "His own self bare our sins [as our representative] in his own body [note the link "our sins" and "his own body"] that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24,25). We died with Him, there on His cross; and so His resurrection life is now ours. He is totally active for us now; His life now is *for us*, and as we live His life, we should be 100% *for Him* in our living. He gave His life *for us*, and we must lay down our lives *for Him* (1 Jn. 3:16). There are about 130 reference to being "in Christ" in the New Testament. But if any man is truly in Christ, he is a new creature, and the old things pass away; it must equally be true that "Christ [is] in you". If we are in Him, He must be in us, in that we live lives around the principle of "what would Jesus do?". His spirit becomes ours.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 urges us to preach the salvation in Christ to all men, because He died for us, as our representative. He died *for* [the sake of] all (5:14,15), He was made sin *for* our sake (5:21); and therefore we are ambassadors *for* [same word] His sake (5:20). Because He was our representative, so we must be His representatives in witnessing Him to the world. This is why the preaching of Acts was consistently motivated by the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection for the

preachers. By baptism into the name of Jesus, men confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There was and is no other name given under Heaven by which men can be saved; “every name” under the whole Heaven must take on the name of Jesus in baptism. This is why Acts associates His exaltation (Acts 2:33; 5:31) and His new name (Acts 2:21,38; 3:6,16; 4:10,12,18,30; 5:40) with an appeal for men and women to be baptized into that Name. Realizing the meaning of the Name of Jesus and the height of His exaltation meant that they realized how “all men” could have their part in a sacrifice which represented “all men”. And thus they were motivated to preach to “all men”. And thus Paul’s whole preaching ministry was a bearing of the Name of Jesus before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

*Human Nature / The Flesh Cannot Be Atoned For, Or A Sacrifice Offered For It; It Must Be Cut Off*

So we can’t keep living the fleshly life thinking that somehow we will be atoned for. We must at least seek to put to death the flesh: not just get forgiveness for the same sins and carry on doing them. Even if this is in practice our experience, there must be a dominant desire to cut off the flesh and a counting of ourselves as dead to sin. We should do this because Christ bore our sins and by the cross healed our spiritual weakness in prospect; we respond to the death of sin which He achieved by cutting off our flesh (1 Pet. 2:24).

In the light of ten chapters of detailed exposition of the meaning of the blood of Christ, *therefore let us...* Paul triumphantly drives home (Heb. 10:19-25):

- Let us enter boldly “into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”. This is only possible through a deep knowledge of sin forgiven. Our prayer life should be a positive and up building experience: “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”. Reflection on the atonement, believing it all, will result in a positive and unashamed faith.

- “Let us hold fast...without wavering”. If the belief of the cross is imprinted upon our minds, reflected upon not for a few fleeting minutes on Sundays but often throughout each day, we won’t waver. The natural tendency to blow hot and cold in our spiritual endeavours will be vanquished beneath an unceasing wonder at what was achieved. It is only sustained reflection upon the cross which can, in an almost mystical way, impart an unceasing verve of inspiration.

- “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”. Again the doctrine of the atonement and that of the second coming are linked. As we realize more and more clearly that very soon the final outworking of the cross will be achieved in the actual physical granting of redemption to us, so we will be inspired to more and more earnestly seek the welfare of our brethren. If we believe in the atonement, we will naturally seek to break bread. Whether it means summoning the courage to meet with those we naturally would rather not meet with, bringing the wine to the meeting, we will be motivated to rise up and serve in these ways by the eternal and personal truth of the cross.

As the blood of the ram had to be put on the ear, thumb and toe (Lev. 8:23), so the blood of Christ’s atonement should affect every aspect of our lives; our hearing [i.e. our perception], our doing and walking...



## The Basis Of Our Salvation Is That We Are Justified, Counted By Righteous, By Our Faith And Baptism Into The Representative Sacrifice Of The Lord Jesus. His Righteousness Is Thereby Counted To Us

Throughout Romans, the point is made that the Lord Jesus counts as righteous those that believe; righteousness is imputed to us the unrighteous (Rom. 2:26; 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,22,23,24; 8:36; 9:8)

If *God* is our justifier, where is he that condemns us, or lays any guilt to our charge (Rom. 8:33,34)? And yet in family life, in relationships with others...we are so so quick to feel and hurt from the possible insinuations of others against us. We seek to justify ourselves, to correct gossip and misrepresentation, to “take up” an issue to clear our name. We all tend to be far too sensitive about what others may be implying about us. All this reflects a sad lack of appreciation of the wonder of the fact that we are justified *by God*, and in His eyes - which is surely the ultimately important perspective - we are without fault before the throne of grace, covered in the imputed and peerless righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Paul, misrepresented and slandered more than most brethren, came to conclude: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me [right now] is the Lord ” (1 Cor. 4:3-4). The judge is the justifier, according to this argument. Paul is not justified by himself or by other men, because they are not his judge. The fact that God alone is judge through Christ [another first principle] means that nobody can ultimately justify us or condemn us. The false claims of others can do nothing to ultimately damage us, and our own efforts at self-justification are in effect a denial of the fact that the Lord Jesus is the judge, not us, and therefore He alone can and will justify.

These thoughts are meshed with another first principle in John 5:44, where the RV mg. has the Lord Jesus telling the Jews that they sought glory “one of another” because they didn’t seek the glory that comes from the one God. Because there is only one God, there is only one glory, one Name of God, one standard of spirituality, one judge, one justifier. Whilst men seek glory and approbation and acceptance and justification from other men, they are denying the principle of one God. If there is only one God, we should seek His honour and justification, to the *total* exclusion of that of men. Hosea had revealed this truth earlier: “I am the Lord thy God...and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me...neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee [i.e. thee alone] the fatherless findeth mercy” (Hos. 13:4; 14:3). Because God alone can give salvation and mercy, therefore there is no space for worshipping or seeking for the approbation of anything or anyone else; for the receipt of mercy and salvation are the only ultimate things worth seeking. There is only one God who can give them, and therefore we should seek for His acceptance alone.

But the very same Greek word is used in Romans of *our* self-perception. We must count / impute ourselves as righteous men and women, and count each other as righteous on the basis of recognizing each others’ faith rather than works: “Therefore we conclude [we count / impute / consider] that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law... Likewise reckon [impute] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”. (Rom. 3:28; 6:11). We should *feel* clean and righteous, and act accordingly, both in our own behaviour and in our feelings towards each other. The mind of love imputes no evil to others, as God doesn’t to us (1 Cor. 13:5; AV “thinketh no evil”, [same word] to count / impute in Romans). And again the word occurs in 2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to *think* [same word impute] any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God”. We *are* able to count / feel to ourselves as righteous: for God has counted us righteous. And if we can believe this, we will

overcome that difficulty which there is within every one of us of truly counting our brother to be righteous, of having the love that truly believes and sees only the best in others.

Despite Being Saddled With Our Nature, The Lord Jesus Christ Died And Rose Again For Me, For My Justification And Salvation. His Life And Death Were A Surrender Of All To The Cause Of My Redemption, To God's Glory

And so I too must surrender all, I will willingly strive to do this, for the glorious wonder of knowing this Man who died for me to enable such great salvation. He died and rose so that He might be made Lord of His people (Rom. 14:9); if we believe in His resurrection and subsequent Lordship, He will be the Lord Jesus of our lives, Lord of every motion of our hearts. We are yet in our sins, if Christ be not risen (1 Cor. 15:17). But He has risen, and therefore we are no longer dominated by our moral weakness. Because baptism united us with His resurrection, we are no longer in our sins (Col. 2:13). Therefore the baptized believer will not "continue in sin" if he really understand and believes this (Rom. 6:1 and context). Ours is the life of freedom with Him, for He was and is our representative [note that He represents us now, in His freedom and eternal life, just as much as He did in His death].

We died and rose with Christ, if we truly believe in His representation of us and our connection with Him, then His freedom and sense of conquest will be ours; as the man guilty of blood was to see in the death of the High Priest a representation of his own necessary death, and thereafter was freed from the limitations of the city of refuge (Num. 35:32,33). Because Christ really did rise again, and we have a part in that, we must *therefore* abstain from sin, quit bad company and labour with the risen, active Lord (1 Cor. 15:34,58). The representative nature of the Lord Jesus' death means that we are pledged to live out His self-crucifixion as far as we can; to re-live the crucifixion process in our imagination, to come to that point where we *know* we wouldn't have gone through with it, and to grasp with real wonder and gratitude the salvation of the cross. "As one has died for all, then all have died, and that He died for all in order to have the living live no longer for themselves but for Him who died and rose for them" (2 Cor. 5:14,15 Moffatt). It has been powerfully commented: "To know oneself to have been involved in the sacrificial death of Christ, on account of its representational character, is to see oneself committed to a sacrificial life, to a re-enactment in oneself of the cross" (W.F. Barling, *The Letters To Corinth*). Such is the power of a true, lived-out baptism. If we have really died and resurrected with the Lord Jesus, we will be dead unto the things of this world (Col. 2:20; 3:1). This is why Paul could say that the greatest proof that Christ had risen from the dead was the change in character which had occurred within him (Acts 26:8 cp. 1 Tim. 1:15-16.). This was "the power of his resurrection"; and it works within us too. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth aren't just facts we know; if they are truly believed, there is within them the power of ultimate transformation.

## **Appendices**

### **4.6 The Qur'an Or The Bible?**

#### **4.6.1 Problems With The Qur'an**

##### **Roots In Paganism**

Many versions of Christianity are so deeply mixed up with paganism that it is apparent that they are merely another form of paganism. Thus the pagan feast of December 25<sup>th</sup>, on which an evergreen

tree was worshipped, was appropriated to fake Christianity and re-interpreted as the birthday of Jesus. The Bible is clear enough that the Lord Jesus was not born in December but probably some time in October. What happened was that existing pagan religious rites were mixed together with some Christian ideas to form another religion; but that is all that was created, mere religion, and not the truth of God.

Sadly there is evidence that the Qur'an did just the same in order to create the 'new' religion of Islam. Consider the following evidence:

- The cult of the Moon-god worshipped a god called 'Allah', using the crescent moon as its symbol. Islam has this very same symbol, and appropriated the term 'Allah' to describe the god of the new religion of Islam. Significantly, the Old Testament prophets, which Islam claims to accept, condemn worship of the moon god (Dt. 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5). This would explain why the Qu'ran is written on the assumption that its primary readers know exactly who 'Allah' is- they did, because there is archaeological evidence to show that 'Allah' was the well known Moon god.

- Islam's assumption of the crescent moon as it's symbol, being found on the flags and coins of many Islamic states and on top of mosques, as well as being the signal for Ramadan to begin, is proof enough that Islam's root is in the cult of the Moon god; for archaeologically there is firm proof that the crescent moon was the pagan symbol of this cult.

- "Allah is the greatest" implies that the Qu'ran was written against a background of polytheism. What Mohammed was saying was that the Moon god 'Allah' was to be accepted as the supreme of all other pagan gods. He therefore appealed to his pagan neighbours; whilst also claiming to Jews and Christians that this 'Allah' was the same as the God of the Old Testament.

- Mecca was a shrine for the moon god. It was the most sacred site of paganism in the Arabian peninsular at the time of Mohammed. The moon god was worshipped by praying towards Mecca a few times each day, by throwing stones at the devil; fasting for Ramadan; giving support to the poor; and by making a pilgrimage to Mecca. All these very things were picked up and inserted into the new religion of Islam.

## Contradictions

There are many contradictions within the Qur'an, but these are considered to be "abrogations", i.e. something better being substituted (2.106). Muslims themselves admit there are around 200 such abrogations within the book. And yet this whole concept surely contradicts 4.82: "Had the Qur'an been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy". But these "abrogations" *are* discrepancies... And there are major contradictions of fact, too.

Muslims are quick to point out contradictions of numbers within the Bible text. Many of these are perfectly explicable. Some [not all] are caused by variant readings of *one letter* of the Hebrew text. But the Qur'an has many such contradictions too. Thus the time period of "the great day of God" is said to be 1000 years in 32.5; and 50,000 years in 70.4. This isn't a difference of one letter - a whole word is inserted (*Khamsiina*- 50). Likewise 50.38 says that the entire creation took 6 days; whilst 41.9-12 says it took 8 days. 2.136,285 say that all apostles are equal; but 2.253 says that the apostles were endowed with gifts "some above others". 17.103 says that Pharaoh was drowned in the sea; whereas 10.90-92 says that he was converted and saved alive from the Red Sea. 7.124 has Pharaoh

telling his magicians that he will crucify them - but crucifixion was not invented until about 1300 years later. And then there is the contradiction between 19.33 and 4.157 over whether or not Jesus died. Everything is supposed to be obedient to God, hence the idea of predestination (30.26); but some are disobedient (7.11). The sin of idolatry is supposedly unforgivable (4.48,116). But some idolaters are forgiven (4.153). Fasting can be avoided by feeding the very poor; and yet, fasting is an inescapable Muslim duty (2.184,185). Adultery is punishable by 100 lashes (24.2), life imprisonment (4.15), or death - according to a verse of the Qur'an which was supposedly later discovered. According to 2.62, Jews and Christians will be saved; yet 3.85 says that any other religion than Islam cannot give salvation. And are we to really believe that shooting stars are missiles being thrown at Satan (37.6-10; 67.5; 72.6-9)?

The claim that the Qur'an is written so perfectly, in ideal Arabic, and is unsurpassed for its literary beauty is all very subjective. The material is very haphazard in its presentation, issues are raised and left without conclusion, only to reappear later in a garbled form. And it has been observed that there are in fact grammatical errors in the Qur'an :

Incorrect plural (2.177)

Feminine plurals where masculine should be used (4.162; 7.160)

Wrong person used (3<sup>rd</sup> rather than 1<sup>st</sup>) (63.10)

And it is hard for Muslims to explain why the Qur'an repeats parts of Jewish Midrash [commentaries] almost word for word, even though they were evidently written well before the Qur'an . Thus Sura 21 about Abraham / Ibrahim in Babylon is almost verbatim out of the words of Jonathan Ben-Uziel in the Midrash Rabbah on Genesis 15:7.

#### 4.6.2 Problems In The Ahadith

*by John Thorpe*

The Ahadith purport to be reliable accounts of the words and actions of Muhammad and his companions. It is therefore reasonable to look at these accounts and to see what light they throw on the prophet-hood of Muhammad. One test is to compare them against each other, the Qur'an and known fact. When this is done, several problems immediately appear. Here are a few examples from Sahih Bukhari.

##### Inheritance

According to one hadith in volume 4 (SB 4.55.546), Abdullah bin Salam asked Muhammad to answer three questions in order to prove his prophet-hood. Two of these are inconsequential, but the third was: "Why does a child resemble its father, and why does it resemble its maternal uncle?". The answer to this question (and the other questions) was claimed by Muhammad to have come from God via the angel Gabriel: Allah's Apostle said, "Gabriel has just now told me of their answers.". The answer given is, however, somewhat unexpected to modern ears: As for the resemblance of the child to its parents: If a man has sexual intercourse with his wife and gets discharge first, the child will resemble the father, and if the woman gets discharge first, the child will resemble her. This is completely contradicted by modern genetics and our knowledge of inheritance, although 'Abdullah bin Salam seems to have found it convincing.

## The Height Of Adam

According to SB 4.55.543 Allah created Adam, making him 60 cubits tall. This would be a height of 90 feet (27½ metres). No animal body can function at this height. The highest that the heart could pump blood from the feet would be less than 32 feet (9.81 metres); any greater height than this would cause a vacuum lock to develop in the circulation system. In fact the height at which the circulation system breaks down would be considerably less than this due to friction between the blood and the walls of the blood vessels.

## Satan In The Nose

The Prophet said, “If anyone of you rouses from sleep and performs the ablution, he should wash his nose by putting water in it and then blowing it out thrice, because Satan has stayed in the upper part of his nose all the night.” (SB 4.54.516). Does Satan live in people's noses at night? How big is he? How many people's nose does he manage to live in at once?

## Rats Are Jewish

The Prophet said, “A group of Israelites were lost. Nobody knows what they did. But I do not see them except that they were cursed and changed into rats, for if you put the milk of a she-camel in front of a rat, it will not drink it, but if the milk of a sheep is put in front of it, it will drink it.” I told this to Ka’b who asked me, “Did you hear it from the Prophet ?” I said, “Yes.” Ka’b asked me the same question several times.; I said to Ka’b. “Do I read the Torah? [i.e. I tell you this from the Prophet.]” (SB 4.54.524). The teaching here is that rats were once Jews and the evidence given is because they will not drink camel's milk. As this is a general argument it must be taken to refer to all rats (possibly Jereboas).

## The Wings Of The House Fly

The Prophet said “If a house fly falls in the drink of anyone of you, he should dip it (in the drink), for one of its wings has a disease and the other has the cure for the disease.” (SB 4.54.537). This tells us that disease is spread by house flies because one wing contains poison. The other wing contains the antidote to that poison. This explanation is very poor by modern standards, although it speaks much for the powers of observations of Islamic scholars that they connected disease with house flies.

## Fever

The Prophet said, “Fever is from the heat of the [Hell] Fire; so abate fever with water.” (SB 4.54.486). A very similar statement is found in SB 4.54.483. Modern medicine has shown that a fever is a defence mechanism against invasion by foreign micro-organisms.

## Dogs

Muhammad had a superstitious fear of dogs: The Prophet said, “Angels do not enter a house which has either a dog or a picture in it.” (SB 4.54.539). Allah’s Apostle ordered that the dogs should be killed. (SB 4.54.540). The next two sections indicate that anyone keeping a dog as a pet will lose some of their reward.

## Intestines

This hadith is from Sahih Muslim, but it is a particularly powerful example: Allah's messenger [peace be upon him] said: A believer eats in one intestine, whereas a non-believer eats in seven intestines (SM 3.22.5118). Modern anatomy shows that this is not true!

## Fear Of Wind And Eclipses

SB 2.17.144 tells us that: Whenever a strong wind blew, anxiety appeared on the face of the Prophet [fearing that the wind might be a sign of Allah's wrath]. SB 2.18.167 tells us a similar thing about solar eclipses. The problem here is that a prophet should know the truth about such things, that they are natural phenomena which should not cause fear in the righteous.

## Muhammad Under The Influence Of Magic

Even worse, there are several hadith which tell us that Muhammad was sometimes under an enchantment which made him imagine things that were not so and tell untruths. SB 4.53.400 says: Once the prophet was bewitched so that he began to imagine that he had done a thing which in fact he had not done... SB 4.54.490 gives another version of the tradition which starts: Magic was worked on the Prophet so that he began to fancy that he was doing a thing which he was not actually doing. The hadith then goes on to say who bewitched him ('Lubaid bin Al-A'sam) and how Muhammad was cured. A similar account appears in SB 7.71.660. This causes a serious problem for Moslems. If Muhammad sometimes imagined things, then he is of no value as a prophet.

These and other inconsistencies in the Ahadith lead to one of the following conclusions: either even Ahadith with the status Sahih are suspect and never came from Muhammad at all, or Muhammad was no prophet (or both). The idiosyncrasies he showed in terms of dogs, eclipses and wind suggest a man with strange obsessions, and also weaken the case that Muhammad was a prophet; a prophet would know that winds and eclipses are natural phenomena and not signs of God's wrath.

The failure of the Ahadith is a more serious problem than one might, at first, realise. One of the weaknesses of Islam is that there is no direct method of validating the Qur'an. The reason that the Qur'an is taken to contain the words of Muhammad is because there is a witness of tradition that this is the case. This witness should be enshrined in the Ahadith.

If the Ahadith are found to be wanting then the most useful witness to the origin of the Qur'an has failed and there is no reason to treat it as a book written in the early period after the death of Muhammad or to treat it as the unaltered word of God.

If, on the other hand, one can show that the Isnad method of establishing the truth of a hadith is valid, and that the Ahadith in books like Sahih Bukhari really are accurate accounts of the sayings of Muhammad, then we must accept that the sayings above were really made by Muhammad. As some of these sayings are known to be factually incorrect we know that the person who originally made them was not a prophet from God. A belief in the accuracy of the Ahadith must lead one to reject the claim that Muhammad was a prophet.

The tradition that Muhammad was sometimes under a spell during which time he did not speak the truth is a very awkward one for Moslems. If Muhammad sometimes deceived others, how can we

trust any of his words? Why should we not believe that part (or all) of the Qur'an was delivered while he was under a delusion?

#### 4.6.3 Moslem Criticisms Of The Bible Answered

There are flat contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, especially relating to the records of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Muslim simply assumes that the Qur'an is right and the Bible wrong; but this is to start with a presupposition, and then seek evidence to support it. To say that the Bible has been changed by the Jews hardly seems likely - both Old and New Testaments are full of criticisms of the Jews. The texts of both Testaments have been in the possession of both Jews and Christians, so they would both have had to agree if the texts were indeed to be tampered with. For 200 years before the time of Jesus, the Hebrew Old Testament existed in Greek translation as the Septuagint, and this would have had to be changed along with the Hebrew texts, if indeed the Old Testament was changed by Christians as Islam requires. Muslims can give no dates, no places, no names, responsible for the changing of the Bible texts which they assume happened. Their presupposition that the Bible *must* be wrong because it disproves the Qur'an therefore drives them to make assumptions and claims which totally lack evidence. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal how the texts have lost virtually nothing through the generations of recopying - these manuscripts were of the Old Testament, dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Their correspondence with later manuscripts is exact! The Codex Alexandrinus contains the entire Septuagint and also New Testament, written on vellum dating back to at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD; and the Codex Siniaticus contains the New Testament written in at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The Codex Vaticanus dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Note this is all before the times of Muhammad. And yet these three different manuscripts are all in substantial agreement! The first two are housed in the British Museum, London; and the third in the Vatican. So there is no way that it can be said that the text of the New Testament has been changed over at least 17 centuries! It is therefore no argument to say that over time, a manuscript must inevitably change. On this basis, we could expect the Qur'an to have changed too. There are at least 24,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts available for analysis - far more than for the Qur'an. The next most well supported book, Homer's *Iliad*, has only 643. And there are original fragments of John dating back to 120 AD, and of Matthew to 65 AD. The few variant readings do not affect in any way the sense of the text; and none of the variant readings contradicts anything written elsewhere in the New Testament. There are so many allusions to the New Testament in contemporary writings of the first 3 centuries AD that it is possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament apart from 9 verses! Nothing like this is possible with the Koran because the text was not so firmly fixed. There were many many variant readings in the Qur'an text - for Muhammad was illiterate and what he said was written down by various people - and these were only ended when Caliph Uthman ordered all other copies of the Qur'an in existence to be destroyed apart from that compiled by Zaid-ibn-Thabit (see John Gilchrist, *Muhammad And The Religion Of Islam* pp. 176-199). If this had been done to the Bible, one would be left wondering whether we did have the original text, and whether it hadn't been tampered with. And this question must afflict every intellectually honest Muslim. For where is there any evidence that God inspired Caliph Uthman to do this?

Muhammad was told: "He sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur'an]...and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel" (3.3) And Jesus was "sent the Gospel" (5.46). Islam assumes that the Torah and the Gospel were sent from God, but the Old and New Testaments which we now have are not the same thing. Yet this claim is just lacking in any evidence at all. The books which they claim were revealed to Moses [Torah- *Tawraat*] and Jesus [the Gospel- *Injil*] just don't exist anywhere, nor is there any evidence for them ever having existed. The Qur'an deepens the problem by stating

that these books were those in the hands of Jews and Christians at the time of Muhammad (5.44,50). Jews and Christians are told that the Law and Gospel have come to them as revelation from the Lord (5.71). And the Qur'an is said to be a confirmation of what was in the Scriptures which the Jews of Medina were reading at the time of Muhammad (2.91; 10.94). But the books which they possessed at his time were the Old and New Testaments as we now know them. There is *no* evidence that any other books existed! If God, as Muslims claim, preserved the exact text of the Qur'an, why could He not preserve these other books as well? And why does the Qur'an tell Jews and Christians to follow the precepts of their respective Scriptures, speaking of them with great reverence - if they are so utterly corrupted? How can it be that the Qur'an calls down curses on "the people of the book" if they do not obey the Torah and Gospel (5.47)- if these documents are hopelessly corrupted. How can we obey a Law and Gospel which is unknown? There are a number of Muslim writers from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries who insist that the commonly accepted Old and New Testaments were in fact what was in the hands of "the people of the book" (as the Qur'an calls Jews and Gentiles) at that time. Al-Ghazzali, one of the greatest Muslim theologians ever, lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and quoted the Bible without ever doubting the trustworthiness of the text. "Al-Ghazali did not accuse the Christians of altering the texts, but rather of misinterpreting them" (Wismer, *The Islamic Jesus* p. 165). Fakhruddin Razi, who died in 1209 "...confirming categorically that the Biblical text has not been changed..." (Ananikian, *The Alteration of The Bible According To the Moslems*, The Muslim World, Vol. 14 p. 77).

It is significant that it is later generations of Muslim apologists, not the Qur'an itself, who say that the Jews corrupted the Bible text. The passages in the Qur'an (e.g. 5.14,44) which are quoted by them speak of the Jews of Medina twisting words and distorting the verbal recitation of the Qur'an - not of scribes corrupting Hebrew manuscripts.

The sheer intellectual desperation of Muslim critics makes one wonder what is driving them. Many of the supposed contradictions in the Bible are so easily answerable that one wonders why they have to resort to them if the Bible is so fundamentally flawed. Thus they claim that because Matthew writes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, his Gospel couldn't have been written by him. But Allah, whom Muslims suppose wrote the Qur'an, writes in the same 3<sup>rd</sup> person: "He is Allah, there is no god except Him" (59.22)- and they don't think that this disproves that Allah is the author. Likewise, Muslim claims about the Bible's errancy are so wildly exaggerated. Ahmed Deedat in *Is The Bible God's Word?* Claims there are 50,000 errors in it- 40 / page! But no book written would have 40 errors / page. Why such gross exaggeration? Has he ever actually listed them all...?

### **The most commonly raised criticisms are:**

#### 1. The Genealogies Of Jesus

Both Matthew and Luke agree on the genealogy from Abraham/Ibrahim to David. From there, Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus through Solomon, and Luke through Nathan. Matthew takes us to Joseph, the legal guardian of Jesus: and Luke to Mary. He speaks of Jesus as the "supposed" son of Joseph. He doesn't mention any women in his genealogy - and for the sake of sustaining a masculine genealogy, Joseph is named in her place. The early chapters of Matthew focus on Joseph's role, whereas those of Luke focus on Mary.

2. Many of the supposed contradictions relating to numbers – e.g. one record saying "hundreds" another "thousands"- are understandable once it is recognized that the words translated with these terms refer to military units, not exact numbers. Likewise a Roman 'century' contained not 100 but



80 soldiers. The following are commonly quoted in Moslem handbooks of how to prove contradictions in the Bible:

2 Sam. 10:18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

1 Chron. 19:18 But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host.

*Comment: The difference between 700 chariots and 7000 men is because there would have been around 10 men in each chariot; hence there is no contradiction between 700 chariots recorded by one historian, and 7000 "men which fought in chariots" in another record. 40,000 horsemen and 40,000 footmen can be reconciled by any of the following:*

- They may have arrived on horses but fought on foot

- It could be that both 40,000 horsemen and a further 40,000 footmen were killed. 2 Sam. 8:4 describes a similar victory likewise in terms of how many horsemen and how many footmen were killed.

- Adam Clarke comments: "It is very probable that, in former times, the Jews expressed, as they often do now, their numbers, not by words at full length, but by numeral letters; and, as many of the letters bear a great similarity to each other, mistakes might easily creep in when the numeral letters came to be expressed by words at full length. This alone will account for the many mistakes which we find in the numbers in these books, and renders a mistake here very probable. The letter  $\text{ז}$  zain, with a dot above, stands for seven thousand,  $\text{ז}$  nun for seven hundred: the great similarity of these letters might easily cause the one to be mistaken for the other, and so produce an error in this place".

1 Kings 7:26 And it was an hand breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths.

2 Chron. 4:5 And the thickness of it was an handbreadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths.

*Comment: It could be that the container had a capacity of 3,000 baths, but it was filled to 2,000 baths normally. It should also be remembered that the Chronicles account was written during or after the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. It is possible that a new container had been built by that time, larger than the one initially built by Solomon. 2 Chron. 3:3 speaks of "cubits after the first measure", referring to how the earlier definition of measures such as cubits, during the time of Moses, were not the same as the Babylonian measures. Adam Clarke cites evidence that "the Babylonish cubit was a palm or one-sixth shorter than the cubit of Moses". The definition of a "bath" was probably also different. This is why Ez. 43:13, as a prophecy given in Babylon, had to define the cubit specifically as the Jewish cubit rather than the Babylonian cubit.*

1 Kings 4:26 And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

1 Kings 9:25 And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

*Comment: It could be that 40,000 stalls were for horses; but 4,000 for the 1,400 chariots themselves (1 Kings 10:26) and some horses. Or, there were 40,000 horses in 4,000 stables, 10 horses / stable, which would be reasonable. Another possibility is that 1 Kings 4:26 speaks of the number of horses Solomon had in total throughout his kingdom, whereas 1 Kings 9:25 speaks only of the 4,000 he had in Jerusalem. The Septuagint reads 4,000 in 1 Kings 4:26. There could have been a slight copying error between 'arbaim' [forty] and 'arbah' [four]. Our position is that the original texts were inspired and infallible, but there may have been slight errors in translation and copying of those texts.*

1 Chronicles 18:9 Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah; He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to enquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had war with Tou;) and with him all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass.

2 Samuel 8:9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass

*Comment: Joram is clearly another name for Hadoram  
Ezra 2:5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five.  
Nehemiah 7:10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two.*

*Comment: The list in Ezra was made in Babylon, when the Jews who wanted to return to Judah made a kind of register. The Nehemiah list was made when they actually arrived in Jerusalem. The differences in numbers reflect the fact that some died on the way; others maybe registered but didn't come, preferring to stay in the soft life of Babylon at the last minute. Other areas show higher numbers in Nehemiah's list of those who arrived; because presumably others at the last minute decided to come with them.*

*Also, the Ezra list was compiled before the people had been ordered by their genealogies. By Nehemiah's time, everyone had been placed in families more accurately, especially those who didn't know their genealogy. This would account for some of the differences of numbers for the different families and areas.*

2 Kings 8:25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.

2 Chron. 22:2 Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

*Comment: This would appear to be a case of a confusion between the Hebrew letter for 'twenty' and that for 'forty'; the difference is miniscule. It would seem this was a copyist's error. However, it is just possible that 2 Chron. 22:2 is referring to the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of the kingdom of his mother's family, i.e. it was the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of the reign of the family of Omri in Israel.*

2 Sam. 8:4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred

chariots.

1 Chron. 18:4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them an hundred chariots.

*Comment: The difference between 700 and 7000 is a matter of a point over one of the letters. This would then be a copyist's error, not an error of the original inspiration. Alternatively, the smaller number of 700 may refer to the chief officers captured; or seven 'hundreds' or companies, of 10 men each, making the 7000 total of 1 Chron. 18:4.*

2 Samuel 24:9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

1 Chronicles 21:5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.

*Comment: The 800,000 men of Israel compared to the 1,100,000 could be because the 800,000 were the potential men of war who were numbered, excluding the standing army which David already had- comprised of 24,000 men who served every month, i.e. 288,000 / year. If they had 12,000 officers, 1,000 for each tribe, then this would explain the 'missing' 300,000 (see 1 Chron. 27:1).*

*The differences in the numbers of Judah could be because the 30,000 not numbered in 2 Sam. 24:9 refer to those of Levi and Benjamin, whom Joab didn't count; or, 470,000 was rounded up to 500,000.*

#### 4.6.4 The Bible: Written By Inspiration

God's spirit is His power, thoughts and disposition, which He reveals through the actions which His spirit performs. We mentioned in the previous section how God's spirit was seen at work in the creation: "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13) - the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters to bring about the present creation (Gen. 1:2). Yet we also read that "by the word of the Lord" the world was made (Ps. 33:6), as exemplified by the Genesis narrative recording that "God said" things were to be created, and it happened. God's spirit, therefore, is very much reflected in His word. Likewise our words express our inner thoughts and desires - the real 'us' - very accurately. Jesus wisely pointed out: "Out of the abundance of the heart (the mind) the mouth speaketh" (Mt. 12:34). So if we would control our words, we must firstly work on our thoughts. God's Word, then, is a reflection of His spirit, or thoughts. It is such a blessing that in the Bible we have God's words written down so that we might understand God's spirit or mind. David spoke of how God's word and "own heart" are parallel (2 Sam. 7:21); God's mind/spirit is expressed in His Word. God achieved this miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of *INSPIRATION*. This term is based around the word "spirit":

#### **In-spirit-ation**

"Spirit" means "breath" or breathing, "Inspiration" means "in-breathing". This means that the words which men wrote while under "inspiration" from God were the words of God's spirit. Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget the wonder of the fact that it is the words of God's spirit, and therefore provides all that we need in order to have a true knowledge of God.

“From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished (‘thoroughly equipped’, N.I.V.) unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

If the inspired Scriptures can provide such a totality of knowledge, then there is no need for some ‘inner light’ to show us the truth about God. But how many times do people speak of their personal feelings and experiences as being the source of their knowledge of God! If an acceptance in faith of God’s inspired Word is enough to equip completely someone in the Christian life, there is no need for any other power of righteousness in our lives. If there is such a need, then God’s Word has not completely equipped us, as Paul promises it will. To hold the Bible in our hands and believe that it really is the Word of God’s spirit takes quite some faith. The Israelites were reasonably interested in what God’s Word had to say, as are many “Christians” today. We all need to carefully reflect on Hebrews 4:2.

“Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them (Israel in the wilderness): but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it”.

Instead of growing to have total faith in the power of God’s spirit-word, it is far more attractive to take a spiritual short-cut: to reason that a power of righteousness suddenly comes upon us, which will make us acceptable to God, rather than having to experience the pain of consciously bringing our lives into obedience to God’s word, and thereby letting God’s spirit truly influence our hearts.

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God’s word has led many Christians to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God. They have suggested that much of what we read in the Bible was just the personal opinions of the writers. But Peter effectively disposes of such woolly reasoning.

“We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it...above all, you must understand (this is vital!) that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:19-21 N.I.V.).

We must “above all” believe that the Bible is inspired. The doctrine of inspiration is so often emphasized in the Bible text (e.g. Mt. 15:4; Mk. 12:36; Acts 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).

### **The Writers Of The Bible**

A solid belief in the total inspiration of the Scriptures is therefore vital. The men who wrote the Bible were irresistibly carried along by the spirit which inspired them, so that their words were not their own. The Word of God being the truth (Jn. 17:17) and providing rebuke and correction (2 Tim. 3:16,17), it is not surprising that with many people it is unpopular - for truth hurts. The prophet Jeremiah suffered much opposition for speaking forth the words God inspired him with, and so he determined not to record or publicize the words which he was given. But because the writing of God’s Word is a result of God’s will rather than human desire, he was “carried along by the Holy Spirit” so that he had no choice in the matter. “I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me...Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay”

(Jer. 20:7,9). Peter describes this idea of the Bible writers being ‘carried along’ with the same Greek word used in Acts 27:17,27 about a ship being ‘driven’ by the wind, out of control.

Likewise when Balaam was determined to curse Israel, the spirit of God made him speak out a blessing on them instead (Num. 24:1-13 cf. Dt. 23:5). He could not ‘escape from’ God’s word (Num. 22:12 Heb. 1:1).

A surprising number of the men whom God inspired to speak His word went through periods of reluctance to do so. The list is impressive.

- Moses (Ex. 4:10)
- Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6)
- Ezekiel (Ez. 3:14)
- Jonah (Jonah 1:2,3)
- Paul (Acts 18:9)
- Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-14)
- Balaam (Num. 22-24)

This all confirms what we learnt in 2 Peter 1:19-21 - that God’s Word is not the personal opinion of men, but the result of men being inspired to write down what was revealed to them. The prophet Amos reflected: “The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Am. 3:8). At times Moses lost the sense of his own personality, so strong was his inspiration by God: “All these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses..” (Num. 15:22,23); these words were actually said by Moses (v. 17). Jeremiah spoke “from the mouth of the Lord” and yet Yahweh spoke “by the mouth of Jeremiah” (2 Chron. 36:12,22) - this is how close was the relationship between God and the men He spoke through. Their mouth was His mouth. There are many times in the writings of the prophets where it is hard to determine whether the personal pronouns refer to God or the prophet (e.g. Jer. 17:13-15) - so close was the manifestation of God through them. “The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea” (Hos. 1:2) prefaces His command to tell Hosea to go and show God’s love towards faithless Israel by marrying and living with a worthless woman. Hosea was God’s Word to men, as supremely the Lord Jesus was “the word made flesh”, and we likewise must put into practice the spirit which is in God’s word.

Another strand of evidence for this is that the writers of the Bible realized that they did not fully understand the things which they wrote. They “searched” for the correct interpretation - “unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things” which they wrote (1 Pet. 1:9-12). The actual words they recorded were not their own but God’s and they wished to understand better the things they recorded for Him. The following provide obvious examples: Daniel (Dan. 12:8-10); Zechariah (Zech. 4:4-13); Peter (Acts 10:17). The child Samuel likewise didn’t know Yahweh but still spoke His word (1 Sam. 3:7).

If these men were only partly inspired, we do not have access to the true Word or spirit of God. If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then it follows that they had to be completely taken

over by God's spirit during the period of inspiration - otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in purity. An acceptance that God's Word is completely His, provides us with more motivation to read and obey it. "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Ps. 119:140).

Thus the books of the Bible are the work of God through His spirit, rather than the literature of men. The truth of this is shown by considering how the New Testament refers to the Old Testament writings.

- Matthew 2:5 (R.V. mg.) speaks of how it was "written through the prophets" - God was writing through them. The R.V. margin always uses the word "through" when describing how God wrote by the prophets.

- Matthew 2:15 quotes from Micah, but says: "[that] which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...". Likewise Hebrews 2:6: "one [actually David] in a certain place testified...". The personality of the prophet is irrelevant compared to the fact that it is God's word which He spake. There are other examples of where the name of the prophet is suppressed as if to show it is not so relevant (Mt. 1:22; 2:23; 21:4).

- "The Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake..." (Acts 1:16). This is how Peter quoted from the Psalms ( cf. Heb. 3:7).

- "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias" (Acts 28:25 - this was how Paul quoted Isaiah). Luke 3:4 speaks of "the book of *the words of Esaias*" rather than just, 'the book of Isaiah'.

The human authors of the Bible were therefore relatively unimportant to the early Christians; it was the fact that their words had been inspired with the spirit of God which was important.

We will conclude this section with a list of verses which show that God's spirit is revealed to us through His written word.

- Jesus plainly stated, "The words that I speak...are spirit" (Jn. 6:63); He spoke under inspiration from God (Jn. 17:8; 14:10).

- We are described as being re-born by both the spirit (Jn. 3:3- 5) and the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).

- "The words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the...prophets" (Zech. 7:12).

- "I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:23) associates a true understanding of God's word with the action of His spirit upon us - reading the Book without understanding is of no avail, seeing that the spirit/mind of God is not being revealed to us.

- There are parallels between God's spirit and His word in many passages: "My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth..." (Is. 59:21); "For Thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart (spirit)" (2 Sam. 7:21); "I will put my spirit within you (your heart - see context)..."; "I will put my law... in their hearts" (Ez. 36:27; Jer. 31:33).

God is His spirit (Jn. 4:24), and God is His Word (“the word was God”); it evidently follows that His words therefore reflect His spirit. Our attitude to God’s Word is our attitude to Him. Because that word is pure, therefore we love it (Ps. 119:140); when we break commandments, we are despising God’s Word (Am. 2:4). This is where belief in inspiration has a powerful practical effect.

## The Power Of God’s Word

As God’s spirit refers not only to His mind/disposition but also to the power by which He expresses those thoughts, it is to be expected that His spirit-word is not just a statement of His mind; there is also a dynamic power in that word.

A true appreciation of that power should make us eager to make use of it; any feelings of embarrassment associated with doing so should be overcome by our knowledge that obedience to God’s word will give us the power which we need to accelerate out of the small things of this life, towards salvation. Out of much experience of this, Paul wrote:-

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel (the word) of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

Luke 1:37 (R.V.) harps on the same theme: “No word of God shall be void of power (spirit)”.

Bible study and applying it to our lives is therefore a dynamic process. It is quite unrelated to the cold, academic approach of theologians and also to the ‘feel-good’ Christianity of many churches, whereby a few passages are briefly quoted, but no effort made to understand or apply them. “The word of God is quick (living) and powerful”; “the word of His (God’s) power” (Heb. 4:12; 1:3). “The word of God...effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). Through the Word, God is actively at work in the minds of true believers, every hour of the day.

The Gospel which you are learning is therefore the true power of God; if you allow it to do so, it can work in your life to change you into a child of God, showing the spirit/mind of God to some degree in this life, preparing you for the change to God’s spiritual nature which will come at Christ’s return (2 Pet. 1:4). Paul’s preaching was “in demonstration of the spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4).

We are surrounded by those who have a semi-faith in the Bible as God’s Word, despite their claims of commitment to Christ. Similarly they claim to believe in God, and yet fail to accept that He is a real person. By denying the total inspiration of Scripture and its supremacy over our personal feelings and convictions, they are denying God’s power. The words of 2 Timothy 3:5 come to mind: “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”, i.e. the power of the word of the Gospel.

Our fundamentalism is mocked by the world (“You don’t believe it like that, do you?!”), and so was that of Paul and his band of preachers: “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

Bearing all this in mind, can’t we each hold the Bible in our hands with an ever greater measure of respect, and read it with ever more eagerness to understand and obey?

## The Attitude Of God's People To His Word

A sensitive reading of the Biblical record indicates that the Bible writers not only recognized that they were inspired, but they also treated other Bible writers as inspired. The Lord Jesus is pre-eminent in this. When Jesus quoted from the Psalms of David, he prefaced this with the words, "David in spirit..." (Mt. 22:43), showing his recognition of the fact that David's words were inspired. Jesus also spoke of Moses' "writings" (Jn. 5:45-47), showing that he believed Moses to have literally written the Pentateuch. Some Bible critics have doubted whether Moses could write, but the attitude of Christ clearly contradicts their approach. He called Moses' writings "the commandment of God" (Mk. 7:8,9). It is also claimed that much of the Old Testament is myth, but Jesus and Paul never treat them as such. Jesus spoke of the Queen of Sheba as an accepted historical fact (Mt. 12:42); he did not say, 'As the story goes about the Queen of Sheba...'.

The attitude of the Apostles was identical to that of their Lord. It is epitomized by Peter who said that his personal experience of hearing Christ's words with his own ears was eclipsed by the "more sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Peter believed that Paul's letters were "Scripture" as much as the "other Scriptures", a phrase normally used about the Old Testament writings. Thus Peter saw Paul's letters as being as authoritative as the Old Testament.

There are many allusions in Acts, the Epistles and Revelation to the Gospels (e.g. cf. Acts 13:51; Mt. 10:14), indicating not only that they were all inspired by the same spirit, but that the Gospel records were treated as inspired by the New Testament writers. Paul in 1 Timothy 5:18 quotes both Deuteronomy 25:4 (in the Old Testament) and Luke 10:7 as "Scripture". Paul hammers home the point that his message was from Christ, not himself (Gal. 1:11,12; 1 Cor. 2:13; 11:23; 15:3). This was recognized by the other apostles; thus James 4:5 quotes Paul's words of Galatians 5:17 as "Scripture".

God "has spoken" to us in Christ; there is therefore no need for any further revelation (Heb. 1:2). It can be observed that the Bible alludes to other writings which are now not available (e.g. the book of Jasher, the writings of Nathan, Elijah, Paul to Corinth), and John's third Epistle implies that John had written an unpreserved letter to the church which Diotrephes had refused to obey. Why have these writings not been preserved for us? Evidently because they were not relevant to us. We can therefore rest assured that God has preserved all that is relevant for us.

It is sometimes claimed that the New Testament books were gradually accepted as being inspired, but the fact that the Apostles treated each other's writings as inspired surely disproves this. There was a miraculous spirit gift available to test whether letters and words which claimed to be inspired really were so (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2). This means that the inspired letters were immediately accepted as inspired. If there was any unguided human selection of what went into our Bible, then the book would have no authority.

### Summing Up

The Qur'an says that the Old and New Testaments were given to men as inspired by God

The texts we now use clearly contradict the Qur'an

Muslims therefore say that the texts were corrupted.



Seeing the manuscript evidence for the Old and New Testaments goes back well before the birth of Islam, it follows that this must have happened before the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

Islam claims the original Old and New Testament Scriptures were lost long ago.

And yet the Qur'an says that they were in existence in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and at the time of Muhammad.

How can this be, if they were lost or corrupted? Where are the original, inspired texts?

There is *no* evidence any such radically alternative text of Old and New Testaments ever existed.

If the true, inspired Old and New Testaments existed at the time of Muhammad and were read by "the people of the book" [i.e. Jews and Christians]...then this would mean that from the 1<sup>st</sup> up to at least the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries there were false and true Old and New Testaments circulating. But there is no evidence of this. And yet there is evidence e.g. from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the early manuscripts were faithfully transcribed over the ages. Where did these other 'uncorrupted' texts come from? Who copied them out over the centuries? There are too many fundamental questions that remain unanswered.

#### 4-6-5 The Missing Body Of Jesus

Islam considers Jesus to be a great prophet, but says he didn't die nor rise from the dead. This raises at least two fundamental questions:

- The teachings of Jesus were based around His predictions of His forthcoming death and resurrection. If these didn't come true, then how can He be a "great prophet"? For the whole thrust of His message was falsified if He neither died nor resurrected. He promised life to His followers conditional upon His own resurrection. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19). He surely isn't worth accepting as a prophet if His teaching was so fundamentally deluded.

- If we are to accept Jesus as a prophet, surely His words must be written down somewhere for this claim to be true? If the New Testament is so hopelessly corrupt, as Islam claims, then where is the true record of His words?

If Muslims accept that the words of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament are true, then they really have to accept the rest of the book. For they would be hard pushed to prove that the four Gospels are inspired by God but the rest of the New Testament isn't. If the New Testament is indeed the inspired record, as Christians believe it to be, then the repeated stress it gives to the death and resurrection of Jesus must be given its' full weight. The words of Jesus Himself state in crystal clarity that He died and resurrected: "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). These words teach that His resurrection is the basis of the Hope He offers to mankind. And Paul was inspired to write in perfect harmony with this: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept...For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

And perhaps most piercingly, Paul extended this logic : "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins....if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:17). These words are so relevant to Islam. If Jesus Christ is merely a prophet

whose words are helpful for “this life”, then not only are we listening to a deluded man, but “we are of all men most miserable”. But the example of the disciples and early Christians shows that they were not in this case at all. They were willing to suffer the loss of all things for preaching the good news of the resurrection of Jesus. They felt impelled by the reality of the resurrection to preach this, with no prospect of personal gain but only loss. They smiled at their sufferings (Acts 4:18-20; 5:41), and turned the world upside down by their witness (Acts 17:6). Extra-Biblical history confirms that the Roman world was indeed overrun by the Christian preaching of the resurrected Jesus. And the question inevitably arises: why did they do this? A.D. Norris has correctly observed:

“They did it

- (i) Because they had stolen the body and let it corrupt somewhere else, and had the ability (for no purpose) to elaborate a vast framework of deceit from Scripture and invented appearances;
- (ii) Because a Jesus not quite dead had struggled inexplicably from the tomb and gasped an agonized greeting in their terrified ears
- (iii) Because Jesus rose from the dead.

These are not three choices. We have a simple decision to make: conviction, or mental suicide” (*The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ* p. 13). Theories of stolen bodies and swoons would not have motivated men like Paul to make the dramatic changes which they did, nor would they have been enough to motivate the world-changing evangelism which was inspired by the resurrection of Jesus. Further, despite everyone wanting to know what had become of the body of Jesus of Nazareth, nobody has ever claimed that they obtained the corpse or skeleton. Why would the idea of the resurrection of Jesus become so popular straight after His death, if indeed His corpse or skeleton was still lying in the tomb where He was buried? *Where is, then, the missing body?*

Men like Confucius and Muhammad developed a large following before their deaths. Yet Jesus died the death of a loser. Why, then, was the movement He started so successful, when His ministry ended in apparent failure? Only His resurrection provides an answer.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then the bones of Jesus lay somewhere in Palestine. And there's been a huge search for them. Significantly, nobody has ever seriously claimed to have found them-anywhere! When His corpse was the most hunted for of all time. There are of course other stories of 'resurrections' around the world. But not one of them had the effect which that of Jesus of Nazareth had. Those missing bodies didn't transform the world by radically transforming countless individual human lives. There's an account of a supposed 'resurrection' of a man in Tibet in 1953, documented in Chogyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966) pp. 95 ff. The account describes the dead body getting smaller over a period of days, and then disappearing. But nobody knows where the man went to. There was no record of anyone meeting the man later. He didn't change anyone's life. At best, this is a story of a missing body- not a resurrection. The more one considers those stories, they make the resurrection of Jesus the more unique.

#### 4.7 Islamic Claims About Muhammad

There are many embellishments around the personality of Muhammad which have been made in Muslim tradition; but there is a difference between the image which many Muslims have of Muhammad, and the actual information which is contained within the text of the Qur'an. For

example, the idea that there is *nur-I-Muhammadi*, “the light of Muhammad”, is not found in the Qur’an. It is purely an Islamic tradition. The New Testament clearly states that Jesus is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12).

If Muhammad was indeed the last prophet, whose word in the Qur’an is unalterable, then there should be no need for a Muslim to rely upon the traditions or sayings of other Muslims as the basis for faith and living. Seeing that the Qur’an was written down some time after Muhammad died, it follows that those who wrote down the oral traditions were not prophets; they were not inspired by God’s spirit to write. The Biblical account of inspiration is far more appealing, and brings God that much closer to His word. Every word is as it were the breathing of God Himself to us, albeit through the pens of men. Those words aren’t just the writing down of a man’s words, remembered and passed on by uninspired men, written down by fallible people who lacked the Spirit of God guiding them. The Ahadith, or short stories about Muhammad, rest for their authority upon the good reputation of those who passed them on. There is no mechanism to show whether or not the stories were passed on accurately or not. Because of this there are variations in Islamic belief and practice, resulting in the divided state of Islam (Shi’ite, subdivided into the Twelvers and the Seveners; Alawites; Druze; Sunni etc.).

Muslim claims that the Old Testament predicts the coming of Muhammad raises the question of whether the Old Testament is corrupt or not. Muslims quote from the Old Testament; and yet they claim that the original Old Testament given to Moses has been lost, and that the Old Testament text which we now have has been corrupted. They can’t have it both ways. Their quotation of Deuteronomy 18:18 as relevant to Muhammad is an example: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him”. The similarities with Jesus are far greater than with Muhammad:

- Moses and Jesus both left Egypt to do God’s work (Mt. 2:15)- Muhammad was never in Egypt.
- Both forsook riches (Heb. 11:25,26 cp. 2 Cor. 8:9). Muhammad never did this.
- Deuteronomy 18:15-18 makes it clear that the similarity between Moses and the later prophet would be in that like Moses, the coming One would be a mediator between God and His people. As Moses sprinkled the people with blood under the old covenant, so Jesus “is the mediator of a new covenant” through His own blood (Heb. 9:15).
- The Jews who believed thought that Jesus fulfilled Deuteronomy 18:18: “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world...Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet” (Jn. 6:14; 7:40). Acts 3:22 specifically says that this is indeed so: “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you”.
- When the Jews asked Jesus to give them a sign, just as Moses had done (Jn. 6:30), He created bread in the same way as Moses gave manna in the wilderness; and then He discoursed about the similarities and superiorities between Him and Moses: “I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man

eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (Jn. 6:48-51).

- Muhammad was hardly a prophet “from among their brethren”, as he was not a Jew. The phrase “their brethren” is used in the context (Dt. 18:2) to refer to the other tribes of Israel apart from Levi (as Judges 20:13). Earlier in Deuteronomy 17:15 the Jews were told they could only have a king “from among your brethren...you may not put a foreigner over you”.

- “I will put my words in his mouth” was not uniquely true of Muhammad . The same words are used of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:9) and also Jesus: “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (Jn. 12:49,50).

Again, the desperation of Muslim claims raises questions as to why they have to resort to this level of appeal if truth is really behind them. Thus the Qur’an claims that Jesus prophesied the coming of a prophet called Ahmad (61.6). But although there are some similar letters to ‘Muhammad’ , these are two different words. The two names exist to the present day as quite different personal names. Muslims claim that the *parakletos* of John’s Gospel is really *periklutos*, a word with a similar meaning [“one who is praised”] to Ahmad. But these are two totally different words in the Greek text. If as Muslims claim the New Testament was corrupted, then the question is, where are the original uncorrupted manuscripts? Is it not that Islam has been driven to create evidence for the erroneous claims of the Qur’an ? In any case, the *parakletos* was to abide “for ever”, as a comfort to the disciples, as a replacement and substitute for the personal presence of Jesus which they were now losing - not to appear hundreds of years later as a person called Muhammad . The *parakletos* is clearly defined as the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26), which they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4,5).

A similar desperation is found in claims that the Gospel Of Barnabas ought to be included in the Bible, and it denies the crucifixion and prophecies of Muhammad. Yet this ‘Gospel’ was first published in 1907, although it seems to have been written some time before that, and was subsequently reprinted by Muslims. It totally contradicts the other Gospels and the rest of the New Testament - as well as the Old Testament. Thus it claims that the Jubilee year came every 100 years (*The Gospel of Barnabas* p. 104), whereas the Old Testament teaches this was to be every fiftieth year (Lev. 25:11). Further the text says: “The year of Jubilee, which now cometh every hundred years”, as if alluding to the way that Pope Boniface in the 14<sup>th</sup> century decreed that the year of Jubilee should be observed every 100 years. Parts of the ‘Gospel’ quote from Dante’s *Divina Comedia* and *Inferno*. And the Qur’an claims there are seven heavens (2.29), whereas the Gospel of Barnabas says there are 10 Heavens (p. 223). It speaks of “the vegetative soul”, quoting from Aristotle. And Nazareth is presented as a harbour city on Galilee (p. 23), when it was inland. The Qur’an says that Mary experienced “the pangs of childbirth” and pain (19.23), whereas ‘Barnabas’ repeats the Roman Catholic idea that she brought forth Jesus without pain (p. 5). ‘Barnabas’ says that Jesus said “I am not the Messiah” (pp. 54,104), whereas the Qur’an often says He was the Messiah (3.45 etc.).

#### 4.8 Islam And Women

by John Thorpe:

In spite of current Moslem propaganda, many Moslem women know that they lack protection from men. In their marriage they have no right to demand that their husband remains faithful to them. The husband can divorce them very easily for any reason, without their being able to prevent it, but they have no similar right themselves. On divorce their ex husbands do not need to support them beyond a limited period of time. They can be deserted sexually for no particular reason and they may be required to accept the presence of another woman. They can also be beaten by their husbands.

Real Christianity provides guarantees for women on all these points as well as on all other points claimed by Moslems. The Bible requires that women are to be treated equally with men (Gal. 3:28), excepting for the duties of speaking during meetings (1 Cor. 14:34), although in any family it is the husband who is to be the leader (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1). The problems listed above are all met in the Bible. Husbands must love their wives and look after them (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19). They must remain faithful (18 verses in the New Testament, including Mt. 5:27,28). They may not leave their wives (Mt. 5:32), or even abandon them sexually (1 Cor. 7:5). They may not add another wife to the family (Mt. 19:5; 1 Tim. 3:2,12). This provides a level of security for women which is simply not available to Islamic women.

4.9

A Summary Of The Christian Gospel

## **1. GOD**

1.1 There is a personal being called God

1.2 whose character is a perfect blend of righteousness and mercy

1.3 having a real, personal existence,

1.4 whose image we bear.

1.5 The angels are His messengers

1.6 who cannot sin,

1.7 sharing God's nature.

1.8 The Christian hope is to be given God's nature in a bodily form at Christ's return.

## **2. THE SPIRIT OF GOD**

2.1 God's spirit refers to His power, breath and mind,

2.2 through which He achieves all things

2.3 and is everywhere present.

2.4 The Holy Spirit refers to this power used to achieve certain ends.

2.5 At various times in the past, men possessed the miraculous gifts of the spirit.

2.6 These are not at present available,

2.7 God's power now being revealed to us through His Word.

2.8 The Holy Spirit does not force people to be spiritual against their own will.

2.9 The Bible was completely inspired by God's spirit.

2.10 The Bible is our only authority in our relationship with God.

### **3. THE PROMISES OF GOD**

3.1 The Gospel was preached in the form of the promises made to the Jewish fathers.

3.2 The seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 refers to Christ who was temporarily 'bruised' by sin, the seed of the serpent.

3.3 In fulfilment of God's promises, planet earth will never be destroyed.

3.4 Abraham's and David's seed is Christ;

3.5 we can be in Christ by belief and baptism,

3.6 so that these promises have relation to the true believers.

### **4. GOD AND DEATH**

4.1 By nature man is mortal, prone to sin, and

4.2 cursed as a result of Adam's sin.

4.3 Christ had this human nature.

4.4 The soul refers to 'us', our body, thinking or person. There is no such thing as an 'immortal soul'.

4.5 The spirit refers to our life force/breath and disposition.

4.6 Death is a state of unconsciousness.

4.7 At Christ's return there will be a bodily resurrection only of those who have heard the true Gospel and are accountable for their response.

4.8 Knowledge and appreciation of God's word will be the basis of the judgment.

4.9 The full granting of immortality will occur at the judgment seat.

4.10 The punishment of the responsible wicked will be eternal death.

4.11 'Hell' refers to the grave. It is not a place of torture for the wicked.

4.12 'Gehenna' was an area outside Jerusalem where rubbish and criminals were burnt.

## **5. THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

5.1 The people of Israel were the Kingdom of God in the past.

5.2 This has now been ended, but will be re-established at Christ's return,

5.3 in the form of a world-wide Kingdom on earth, ruled over by Christ on God's behalf.

5.4 The first 1000 years (or 'Millennium') of this Kingdom will see the true believers of all ages ruling over the ordinary mortal people who are alive at Christ's return.

5.5 The Kingdom is therefore not now established politically.

5.6 We are saved by grace through our faith, rather than by our works.

## **6. GOD AND EVIL**

6.1 The 'devil' as a word means 'false accuser' or 'slanderer'.

6.2 'Satan' as a word means 'adversary',

6.3 and can refer to both good and bad people.

6.4 Figuratively, the devil and satan can refer to sin and the flesh.

6.5 The serpent in Eden was a literal animal;

6.6 the Genesis record of man's creation and fall is to be understood literally rather than in symbolic terms.

6.7 'Demons' as sinful spirits, departed spirits or forces of sin do not exist.

6.8 Christ 'casting out demons' means that he cured sicknesses.

6.9 Lucifer does not refer to a sinful angel.

6.10 God is all powerful; He does not share His power with any sinful being who is opposed to His ways.

6.11 Trials in the life of a believer ultimately come from God rather than being the result of 'bad luck' or a sinful being called 'the devil'.

## **7. JESUS CHRIST**

7.1 The 'trinity' as widely understood in Christendom is a doctrine which is not taught in the Bible.

7.2 Christ was born of the virgin Mary

7.3 who was an ordinary woman of human nature.

7.4 Jesus had human nature,

7.5 but had a perfect, sinless character,

7.6 Jesus died as a perfect sin offering of his own free will.

7.7 Jesus was raised after his death on the cross.

7.8 Jesus did not physically exist before his birth;

7.9 although he was in God's mind/purpose from the beginning.

7.10 Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins

7.11 in order to gain salvation both for us and himself.

7.12 Jesus died as our representative,

7.13 not as a substitute as widely believed in Christendom.

7.14 The Law of Moses was ended by Christ's death,

7.15 therefore we do not have to keep it now, including the Sabbath.

## **8. BAPTISM**

8.1 Without baptism, there can be no hope of salvation;

8.2 belief and baptism allow us to share in the Abrahamic promises,

8.3 and is for the forgiveness of sins.

8.4 Baptism is by complete immersion in water

8.5 of an adult who knows the Gospel.

8.6 Those immersed without a full knowledge of the true Gospel must be baptized again, properly.

8.7 Understanding the true Gospel is required for baptism to be valid.



## **9. LIFE IN CHRIST**

9.1 After baptism, a believer must seek to be separate from the ways of this sinful world,

9.2 and develop Christ-like characteristics.

9.3 Participation in occupations and pleasures which lead us to break the commandments of God are incompatible with a truly Christian life.

9.4 Baptized believers should meet with and have fellowship each other, whenever and wherever humanly possible.

9.5 Baptized believers should regularly break bread and drink wine in memory of Christ's sacrifice.

9.6 Regular prayer and Bible reading are necessary for the baptized believer.