

Islam

Islam at a Glance

Islam is the second largest, and arguably the fastest growing, religion in the world. Some Muslims¹ claim that Islam is a peaceful religion, while others use it to justify extreme acts of violence. So what is the truth about Islam? This paper shows that Islam is a man-made religion founded on violence, oppression and coercion.

The word *Islam* did not originally mean “submission” as many people have supposed. Instead, it described a warrior-like quality of heroism, defiance and bravery in battle. The Middle-East scholar, Dr. M. Bravmann, in *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, wrote:

[Islam was originally] a secular concept, denoting a sublime virtue in the eyes of the primitive Arab; defiance of death, heroism; to die in battle.

Islam was founded by Muhammad² in the early part of the seventh century, and the teachings of Muhammad are compiled in the Muslims’ sacred book called the Quran³. The word *Quran* means “sacred readings” and every devote Muslim believes that the Quran is the verbatim word of Allah, the Islamic equivalent of God. The Quran must not be subjected to any form of question or criticism. Beside the Quran, Muslims believe the Hadith (a book of traditions about Muhammad) and Sunna (a collection of Muhammad’s teachings). These are accepted with respect but they are not equal to the Quran.

The central teachings of Islam are the Five Pillars:

1. Confession that, “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”
2. Praying five times daily facing Mecca.
3. Giving alms to the poor.
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
5. One pilgrimage to Mecca during a lifetime, if possible.

Islam is essentially a Judeo-Christian heresy. Muhammad taught an apostolic succession of prophets who came with parts of Allah’s revelation – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ – but he was the final prophet, the Seal of Prophecy, to confirm and seal all previous revelation before the Day of Judgment. He admitted that Christ was sinless, born of a virgin, and performed miracles, and was the greatest prophet before his own appearance. But he rejected the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. As noted by Bishop Christopher Storrs:

Muhammad would not even grant that the crucifixion was historical; for if God had thus failed one faithful prophet, might he not fail his final prophet?

Muhammad initially tried to encourage Christians and Jews to follow him, but was rejected by both. He first commanded his followers to pray like Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, facing Jerusalem. But when the Jews and the Christians did not accept his message, he directed them to face Mecca.

Muhammad never claimed to be divine, “I am no more than all men; I am only human”, nor performed any miracles to verify his claims. He admitted that he was a sinner and even expressed that he needed help by asking his followers to pray for him. Bishop Storrs notes:

Muhammad indeed confessed to be a human prophet, sinful, and on occasions fallible; but his revelations were infallible.

¹ An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim. Also spelt Moslem.

² Also spelt Muhammed, Mohammed and Mohammad.

³ Also spelt Qur’an, Coran, Koran, Qo’ran and Qu’ron.

This human fallibility is clearly evident in Muhammad's love of warfare. Christian evangelist Lowell Lundstrom notes:

During Mohammed's ten years in Medina, he planned 65 military campaigns and raids, and he personally led 27 of them.

In Islam, Allah is so far removed from man that he is practically unknowable. He is believed to be Almighty, but the attributes of love and holiness are hardly mentioned. There is no provision for sin, and Allah has done nothing for the salvation of man that has cost him anything. There is no assurance of eternal life, and heaven is a place of sensual pleasures.

Islam has all the appearance of a man-made religion. It offers no solution to the problems of life, but instead makes life all the more difficult for everyone in the world. Its founder admitted to being sinful, and provided no proof to support his claims. Yet he expected his followers to believe his teachings and obey his commands, many of which promote violence and hatred. There is nothing about Islam to recommend it, and no reasonable basis for accepting it as God's truth.

The following sections provide a more detailed review of the Islamic faith. What follows is a summarised version of a more detailed discussion provided by Robert Morey in *The Islamic Invasion* (Christian Scholars Press, 1992).

The Claims of Islam

Muslims make certain claims about their religion which, as with any religion, need to be examined for credibility if they are to be accepted. The key claims of Islam are that:

- Allah is the God of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles of the Judeo-Christian Bible.
- Muhammad is the last, and greatest, of a series of prophets and messengers, starting with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Moses and Jesus, to whom Allah has revealed his will.
- Muhammad received the Quran as Allah's complete and final revelation for all mankind; Muhammad was the Seal of Prophecy.
- The life and teachings of Muhammad provide the perfect example for mankind to follow.
- The original manuscript of the Quran was perfect, and all subsequent, Arabic versions of the Quran are derived from it. However, no mortal man can faithfully translate the Quran into other languages.
- The Quran is superior to the Bible and the teachings of the Quran supersede those of the Bible.

These claims are examined in the following sections and shown to be devoid of credibility.

Historical Setting

If Allah is the God of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles of the Judeo-Christian Bible and the last revelation to mankind, then we should all become Muslims. But, on the other hand, if Allah is shown to be simply the product of the time in which Muhammad lived, then this claim of continuity is refuted.

Western scholarship over the last century has shown that the teachings of Muhammad and the Quran are derived from pre-Islamic custom, culture and religion. For example, inter-tribal fighting and vengeance were common and accepted practice, as were slavery and the kidnapping of women for harems. The harsh Arabian culture of Muhammad's day was one in which violence was the norm. Dr. William Montgomery Watt of Edinburgh University notes:

It should be emphasized that the Arabs did not regard killing a person as in itself wrong. It was wrong if the person was a member of your kin-group or an allied group; and in Islam this meant the killing of any believer. Out of fear of retaliation one did not kill a member of a strong tribe. In other cases, however, there was no reason for not killing.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Islam not only condones violence, but actually commands it in certain instances. In the Quran, Muslims are told in Sura 9:5⁴:

Fight and slay the [unbelievers] wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war.

And in Sura 5:33, they are commanded as to how to treat those who resist Islam:

Their punishment is ... execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land.

These commands are the complete opposite of those taught by Christ. For example, Jesus commanded his disciples, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

The dominant religion of Muhammad's time was that of the Sabeans, who worshipped the heavenly bodies. The moon was viewed as a male deity and the sun as a female deity, and between them they produced other deities such as the stars. The Sabeans used a lunar calendar to regulate their religious rites, including a month of fasting which would later be adopted as one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Other pagan⁵ rituals of the time included the requirement to bow and pray towards Mecca during set times of the day, and to make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca to worship at the Kabah⁶. Once at the Kabah, the pagans would run around it seven times, kiss a black stone, and then run about a mile to the Wadi Mina to throw stones at the devil. Islam has retained these, and many other, aspects of the pagan religion of Muhammad's day.

As might be expected of a pagan society, the Arabs of Muhammad's day were highly superstitious. They believed in the "evil eye", the casting of curses and spells, magic stones, fatalism, a class of earth-dwelling spirits called jinn (singular, jinni or genie), and fetishes (objects containing spirits, such as the fabulous genie in a bottle). It is no surprise, therefore, to find that the Quran also contains references to such things as the evil eye, curses, fatalism, and the jinn (e.g., Suras 55; 72; 113 and 114). Many Muslims still wear an amulet around their neck in which a part of the Quran is recorded to ward off the evil eye.

Pre-Islamic Arabia was also greatly influenced by foreign religions because of the extensive trade routes (both land and sea) between the Arabian Peninsula and the continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Quran contains remnants of religious influences that can ultimately be traced back to the ancient religions of Persia, India, China, Greece and Egypt. Many Jews, also, had settled in Arabia by the time of Muhammad, bringing with them stories from the Old Testament and other Hebrew writings. Early Christian influence is also noticeable, including the heretical teachings of the Gnostics.

The religious ideas and rites found in Islam and the Quran can be traced back to the influences of pre-Islamic culture, custom and religion. This shows that Muhammad, and not Allah, was the true author of the Quran and Islam. This explains why the Quran never defines or explains its ideas and rituals, or the identities of the people and places mentioned in its many stories. Muhammad simply assumed that the reader would already be familiar with

⁴ Also spelt Surah and means "chapter". The numbering used here is that of Yusuf Ali's translation.

⁵ The word "pagan" is used here in the sense of an indigenous, non-Abrahamic religion. In pre-Islamic Arabia (as in most non-Jewish and non-Christian regions), this was polytheistic (having a multitude of gods) and animistic (the belief that spirits inhabit physical objects).

⁶ In pre-Islamic times, a pagan temple. Also spelt Kaaba and Ka'bah.

these stories from their pre-Islamic sources. This conclusion emphatically repudiates the Muslim's claim of continuity of divine revelation from the Judeo-Christian Scriptures to the Quran. Further strong evidence for this conclusion is presented in the following sections.

Allah: The Moon God

Given the historical setting described above, it should be no surprise that Allah is the name of a deity that was already familiar to the Arabs of Muhammad's day. The word "Allah" comes from the compound Arabic word *al-ilah*. The word *al* is the definite article "the" and *ilah* is an Arabic word for "god". This fact is verified by Western scholarship, as demonstrated in the following citations:

"Allah" is a proper name, applicable only to [the Arabs'] peculiar God (Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, I:326).

"Allah" is a pre-Islamic name ... corresponding to the Babylonian Bel (*Encyclopaedia of Religion*, I:117).

Allah is found ... in Arabic inscriptions prior to Islam (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, I:643).

The Arabs, before the time of Mohammed, accepted and worshipped, after a fashion, a supreme God called allah (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. Houstsma, I:302).

Allah was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs; he was one of the Meccan deities (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. Gibbs, I:406).

Ilah ... appears in pre-Islamic poetry ... By frequency of usage, *al-ilah* was contracted to *allah*, frequently attested to in pre-Islamic poetry (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. Lewis, III:1093).

The archaeological evidence from Western scholarship demonstrates that the dominant religion of the Middle-East was the cult of the moon god. In Arabia, the moon was viewed as a male god, and the sun as a goddess. Allah was the personal name given to the moon god, and his symbol was the crescent moon. He was married to the sun goddess, and together they produced three goddesses known as "the daughters of Allah". These three goddesses were called Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat. The settlement of Mecca was built as a shrine for the moon god which made it the most sacred site in Arabia. An Allah idol was set up at the Kabah in Mecca alongside around 360 other idols. The faithful prayed towards Mecca and the Kabah, because that is where their gods were situated.

The Quraysh⁷ tribe into which Muhammad was born was devoted to Allah, the moon god, and to his three daughters, who were viewed as intercessors between the people and Allah. Muhammad's father and uncle both had Allah as part of their names; Abd-Allah and Obied-Allah, respectively. This proves that the title "Allah" existed before Muhammad was born. It also explains why Allah is never defined in the Quran; he was already well-known in Arabia, and the whole of the Middle-East, as the moon god.

At the time of Muhammad, it was widely accepted in Arabia that the moon god was the chief god among the pantheon of gods. This explains why the Muslim Prayer repeats the phrase "Allah is greater!" rather than "Allah is great!" – he is the greatest among the gods. Under the influence of the Judeo-Christian faith, Muhammad went one step further and proclaimed that Allah was not only the greatest god, but was also the *only* God. In this way, Muhammad was attempting to win over the Arabs, the Jews and the Christians to his new religion, but the Jews and the Christians of the time rightly rejected Allah as a false god.

⁷ Also spelt Quraish and Qorayshite.

Dr. N. A. Newman, in *Three Early Christian-Muslim Debates*, concluded: “Islam proved itself to be ... a separate and antagonistic religion which had sprung up from idolatry.” While Islamic scholar Caesar Farah, in his book *Islam: Beliefs and Observations*, concluded: “There is no reason, therefore, to accept the idea that Allah passed to the Muslims from the Christians and Jews.”

The Muslim’s claim that Allah is the God of the Bible and that Islam arose from the religion of the prophets and apostles is emphatically refuted by the archaeological and historical evidence. Islam is nothing more than a revival of the ancient moon-god cult. It has taken the symbols, the rites, the ceremonies, and even the name of its god from the ancient pagan religion of the moon god. As such, equating the God of the Bible with Allah is blasphemous, since it is tantamount to equating the living God with a man-made idol and a false god.

Allah and the God of the Bible

Islam claims that Allah is the same God revealed in the Bible. If this is true then the concept of God set forth in the Quran should correspond at all points to that of God found in the Bible. Conversely, if the Bible and the Quran have differing views of God, then this claim is refuted.

Samuel Zwemer, in *The Muslim Doctrines of God: An Essay on the Character of Allah According to the Koran*, notes:

There has been a strange neglect on the part of most writers who have described the religion of Mohammed to study Mohammed’s idea of God. It is so easy to be misled by a name or by etymologies. Nearly all writers take for granted that the God of the Koran is the same being and has like attributes as Jehovah or as the Godhead of the new Testament. [But] is this view correct?

The fact that Christian and Muslim scholars have been arguing over who has the true view of God ever since Islam first arose is clear evidence that God and Allah are fundamentally different. The following is a summary of some of the key differences between the God of the Bible and Allah of the Quran:

- **Knowable versus unknowable:** According to the Bible, God is knowable, not just in a factual sense, but in a personal and intimate way. It is true that we can never *fully* know God, because “his greatness no-one can fathom” (Psalm 145:3). Yet, even in the Old Testament the fundamental nature of God is knowable (e.g., Jeremiah 9:23-24), and in the new Testament we are told that Jesus Christ came into the world that we might know God intimately (e.g., John 17:3; 1 John 4:8; 5:20). To Muslims, the idea of knowing Allah is blasphemous because he is so transcendent, so exalted, that no man can ever know him personally.
- **Personal versus impersonal:** The God of the Bible is spoken of as a personal being with intellect, emotion and will. This makes sense, because the Bible tells us that God made man in his own image (Genesis 1:26-27), and since *we* have these attributes, so should God. In contrast, Muslims hold that Allah cannot be understood as a person, because this would lower him to the level of a man.
- **Spiritual versus non-spiritual:** The concept that God is a spirit is fundamental to the Jewish and Christian faiths (e.g., John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17). Muslims, however, regard this idea as blasphemous, because to them a spirit is a created being (e.g., Suras 19:17; 4:171), and to equate Allah with a spirit is to relegate him to the level of a creature.
- **Trinitarian versus Unitarian:** The God of the Bible is one God and three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This Holy Trinity is not three god’s, but one God existing as a unity of three persons. An approximate analogy is that of a human being comprising of a physical body, a spirit, and a mind. The Quran, however, explicitly

denies the Holy Trinity. In addition, it states that God is not a Father, Jesus is not the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit is not God.

- **Limited versus unlimited:** According to the Bible, God is limited by his own immutable and unalterable nature. For example, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), and he can never act in a way that would contradict his divine nature (2 Timothy 2:13). But according to the Quran, Allah is not limited by anything.
- **Trustworthy versus capricious:** Because the God of the Bible is limited by his own righteous nature, we can trust him to always do what is right. By comparison, Allah is not bound by his nature or his word, and is revealed in the Quran to be capricious and untrustworthy.
- **Love versus transcendence:** The chief attribute of the God of the Bible is love. The apostle John said, “God is love” (1 John 4:8), while the apostle Paul wrote: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). While the Quran refers to Allah as “the Merciful” and “the Loving”, it also says that he does not love those who are bad (Sura 3:140). Rather than love, the chief attribute of Allah is his transcendence. To think of Allah as having “feelings” towards man is blasphemous to Muslims, because this would reduce him to the level of a man.
- **Active in history versus passive:** In Islam, Allah never personally enters into human history or acts as an historical agent. He always deals with the world through his word, prophets, and angels. How different this is from the God of the Bible who entered the world in the form of a man to bring about the salvation of all of those who believe in him: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16-17).
- **Attributes versus no attributes:** The Quran never tells us in a positive sense what Allah is like in terms of his nature or essence. The so-called ninety-nine attributes of Allah are all negative in form, describing what Allah is *not*, but never telling us what he *is*. In contrast, the Bible provides enormous detail about whom and what God is.⁸
- **Grace versus works:** The grace of God towards mankind is a central theme in the Bible, both his *common grace* as seen in the many good things that he has provided for mankind, and in his *saving grace* provided through the atoning work of Christ (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:5-6).⁹ In the Quran, however, there is no concept of the grace of Allah; there is no saviour or intercessor, and no guarantee of salvation either by faith or good works.

Even in this brief comparison between the God of the Bible and Allah of the Quran it is clear that they are not the same deity. The true God has revealed himself in such a way that his nature and his name cannot be confused with the nature and name of any other deity.

The Life of Muhammad

The life of Muhammad can be known from material in the Quran, the Hadith, and other early Muslim traditions. There are also many biographies which have been written about him by both Muslim and Western scholars. The basic facts concerning Muhammad’s life are well known and are not issues of controversy.

Muhammad was born in Mecca in A.D. 570. He was born into the Quraysh tribe which controlled the city at Mecca and acted as the custodian of the Kabah and of the religious worship centred around it. Muhammad’s father died before he was born, and his mother died while he was still young. He was sent to live with his rich grandparents, but they later sent

⁸ For more detail, see *Key Bible Doctrines – Part 1: The Nature of God* on this website.

⁹ See also *Key Bible Doctrines – Part 4: God’s Grace* on this website.

him to live with a wealthy uncle, who in turn passed him on to a poor uncle who raised him as well as he could.

Muhammad's mother had an excitable nature and was involved in what today we would call "occult practices". She often claimed to have been visited by spirits (jinn), and to have visions and other religious experiences.

According to early Muslim traditions, the young Muhammad also experienced miraculous visions. During these experiences, he would often fall down on the ground, his body would begin to jerk, his eyes would roll back into his head, and he would perspire profusely. His friends would often cover him with a blanket. Later in life, Muhammad would interpret these episodes as divine visitations in which he received the word of Allah.

Based on the descriptions of these events, many scholars, both Western and Islamic, have concluded, or at least recognised the possibility, that they were epileptic seizures. In the Arab culture of Muhammad's day, epileptic seizures were interpreted as a religious sign of either demonic possession or divine visitation.

At the age of forty, following one of these "religious experiences", Muhammad claimed that Allah had called him to be a prophet and an apostle of a new religion. There was no tradition of being a prophet or apostle in Arabian religion. He used the term "prophet" in the hope that the Jews would accept him as the next prophet, and the term "apostle" in the hope that the Christians would acknowledge him as the next apostle.

Shortly after this, Muhammad began to have grave doubts about his sanity, and was concerned that he might be possessed by an evil spirit. He became so depressed, he decided to kill himself. However, on his way to the place where he was going to kill himself, he had another seizure in which he felt that Allah told him not to kill himself because he truly was called by Allah.

The Quran gives four conflicting accounts of Muhammad's call to be a prophet and an apostle. In Suras 53:2-18 and 81:19-24, we are told that Allah personally appeared to Muhammad in the form of a man, and that Muhammad saw and heard him. This was later abandoned, and we are then told in Suras 16:102 and 26:192-194 that Muhammad's call was issued by "the Holy Spirit". This term is not explained, but presumably it is a reference to the Holy Spirit of the Christian faith. He later abandoned this version as well, and in Sura 15:8 we are told that his calling was announced by "angels". Finally, this account is amended in Sura 2:97 so that it is only the angel Gabriel that issued the call to Muhammad and handed down the Quran to him. Obviously, not all of these versions can be true. Either one is true and the others are false, or they are all false.

With encouragement from his devoted wife, Muhammad began to share his call with his family and friends in secret. But when the message became public, he was subjected to considerable abuse and ridicule. At one point, the hostility against him was such that a crowd in Mecca laid siege to the section of the city where he lived.

In order to appease his opponents, Muhammad proclaimed that it was perfectly proper to pray to, and worship, the three daughters of Allah: Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat. This led to the famous "Satanic verses" in which Muhammad, in a moment of weakness and supposedly under the inspiration of Satan, succumbed to the temptation to appease the pagan mobs in Mecca (Sura 53:19). After being rebuked by his disciples, Muhammad reverted back to his monotheism and stated that Allah can "abrogate" (i.e., cancel) a past revelation. He would later claim that Gabriel himself came down from heaven and rebuked him for allowing Satan to inspire him to concede to the Meccan worship of the daughters of Allah. This only increased the ridicule and hostility against him, and he left Mecca for Ta-if.

Finding no converts in Ta-if, Muhammad returned to Mecca. On his way back, according to Suras 46:29-35 and 72:1-28, Muhammad preached to and converted the jinn! Thus, the male

and female spirits who inhabited the trees, the rocks, and the waters of Arabia were now Muslim and followers of Muhammad!

Back in Mecca, he found that the hostility to his message had grown even stronger. The merchants, in particular, were deeply concerned that the financial base of the city might be destroyed by his attack on the worship of idols at the Kabah. Muhammad once again left Mecca and this time moved to Medina where his preaching was received. While at Medina, Muhammad realised that his family and tribe would not give up their worship of idols unless they were forced to do so by physical violence.

Muhammad's military campaign against Mecca lasted ten years, from 622 to 632. He started by raiding Meccan trading caravans to obtain wealth and build up his army. His first major battle was against the Quraysh settlement at Badr on 13 March 624. This was a decisive victory for the Muslims, and signalled to the other tribes that a new power had arisen in Arabia. The Meccans then attacked Muhammad with a large army headed by Uhud. Muhammad lost this battle, although he had predicted victory. He was struck in the mouth by a sword, lost several teeth, and almost died from his wounds. It was a terrible defeat for him, and many of his followers fell away. Surprisingly, however, Uhud did not follow through and destroy Muhammad and his force.

Around this time Muhammad realised that the Jews were not going to convert, and decided to drop the observance of Jewish rites. He changed the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Mecca, replaced the Saturday Sabbath with the pagan Friday Sabbath, and reinstated various other pagan rites in which he had been raised. He then began attacking wealthy Jewish settlements. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15:648) notes:

When he discovered their military incompetence he appears to have been unable to resist the temptation to appropriate their goods; and his attacks on the flourishing Jewish settlement of Khaibar appears to have been designed to satisfy his discontent adherents by an accession of plunder.

After one Jewish town had surrendered, somewhere between 700 and 1000 men were beheaded in one day, the women and children were sold into slavery, and the town was looted.

Muhammad established a treaty with Mecca in March 628 establishing peace and religious freedom between the people of Medina and those of Mecca for ten years. However, within a year Muhammad broke the treaty and with an army of thousands forced Mecca to surrender to his leadership. He cleansed the Kabah of all its idols, suppressed all idol worship, and killed everyone with whom he had a personal vendetta. Muhammad had now become the undisputed political and religious leader of Mecca, and Arab tribesmen began to flock to him from all sides.

In his personal life, Muhammad was excessively immoral. He used violence to force people to accept his religious beliefs, and commanded his disciples to do the same in the name of Allah (e.g., Suras 9:5 and 5:33). Much of his warring, particularly against the Jewish settlements, was aimed at amassing wealth for himself, his family, and his tribe. And, despite the Quran permitting Muslims to have no more than four wives, Muhammad had at least twenty-two women in his harem according to Muslim scholar and statesman Ali Dashti. Of these, sixteen were wives, two were slaves or concubines, and four were what we today would call "groupies". One of his wives was only eight or nine years old when he had sex with her. Another was a Coptic Christian held against her will who refused to convert to Islam or to marry him. In another incident, he forced his adopted son to divorce his beautiful young wife so that he could marry her, falsely claiming that Allah had ordained it (Sura 33:36-38).

Little is known of the circumstances of Muhammad's death in 632 at the age of 62. What we do know is that his death was sudden and unexpected, and that Muhammad had no premonition of his own death. He had made no arrangements for a successor, nor set up any kind of governmental system to run things in the event of his death. Neither did he put

together his various revelations into what is now known as the Quran; this was done by his followers after his death. Because of this disorganised state of affairs, Islam soon broke into warring sects, such as the Shi'ites and Sunnis.

Muhammad's rise to power, and the establishment of his new religion, was achieved, not by peaceful persuasion, but by violence and coercion. The evidence of his life reveals him to be a deluded religious fanatic and tyrant, while Islam shows all the hallmarks of a being man-made religion.

Muhammad and Jesus Christ

Muslims claim that Muhammad and Jesus Christ were both prophets sent by Allah. If this is true, it is only logical that their ministries and messages should be consistent. The life and teachings of both Muhammad and Christ have been reconstructed by Western and Muslim scholars through careful examination of the founding documents for each religion, the Quran and the Bible. The claims by some Muslims that the Bible is corrupt, and that the only reliable information about Jesus comes from the Quran, are contrived and without foundation.

The following is a summary of some of the key differences between Jesus Christ of the Bible and Muhammad of the Quran:

- **Prophecy:** The Old Testament contains scores of prophecies pertaining to Christ which were precisely fulfilled at his first advent. In contrast, there are no prophecies concerning the appearing of another prophet after Jesus either in the Bible or Arabic, pre-Islamic literature.
- **Births:** The Quran and orthodox Islam fully accept the virgin birth of Jesus; Muhammad was born naturally.
- **Sin:** The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ lived a perfect and sinless life (e.g., John 8:46; 14:30-31). At his trial, his enemies could find no evidence against him, other than that of blasphemy for claiming to be the Messiah, and of insurrection for claiming to be a king (John 19:6-7). By comparison, the Quran acknowledges that Muhammad was a sinner (Sura 40:55; 48:1-2).
- **Miracles:** During his lifetime, Jesus performed many great miracles in public to demonstrate that he had been sent by God (e.g., John 5:36; 10:37-38; 14:11). In contrast, the Quran confirms in many places that Muhammad never performed a single miracle (e.g., Sura 17:91-95). Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, and demonstrated his authority over the forces of nature; Muhammad performed no miracles and had no more power than any normal man.
- **Divine and human natures:** According to the New Testament, Christ was both divine and human (e.g., John 12:44-46; Romans 5:17); according to the Quran, Muhammad was just a man (Sura 18:110).
- **The love of God:** Jesus preached the love of God for the world, and demonstrated this love by laying down his life so that all who believe in him will be saved (e.g., John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3-6). In contrast, neither Allah's love for man, nor man's love for Allah, plays any significant role in the preaching of Muhammad, the Quran, or the religion of Islam. Whereas the Bible points to the coming of Christ as the greatest proof and example of God's love for mankind, Islam cannot point to anything that reveals the love of Allah for anyone.
- **Morality:** The way that Christ lived his life exemplified his high moral teachings. He condemned hypocrisy, rejected the trappings of wealth, treated women with respect, showed compassion for the weak, commanded his disciples to love their enemies, and laid down his life for sinners. By comparison, Muhammad's life demonstrated many extraordinary moral failings. He killed and robbed others, used violence to force people

to believe his message, directed his disciples to kill, rob and subdue their enemies, and lusted after wealth, power and women.

- **Quality of teaching:** The teachings of Jesus contained in the Gospels are widely recognised as some of the most beautiful, eloquent and insightful teachings of any religious leader or philosopher before or since. Even his enemies had to admit that no one spoke with such authority and wisdom (e.g., Matthew 7:28-29; 22:15-22). In contrast, the teachings of Muhammad are frequently confused, ecstatic and difficult to interpret. They are also often contradictory with many earlier teachings being cancelled and replaced with later ones.
- **Death, resurrection and ascension:** When Jesus died, he died for the sins of the world in order that those who believe in him will be saved from the judgement of God. But Jesus did not remain dead. As proof of his divine calling and the truthfulness of his teachings, God the Father “raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 1:17-23). In contrast, Muhammad did not die for anyone except himself, he died in his sins, and he is still dead.
- **Heavenly Intercessor:** Having conquered death, Jesus has become, for those who believe in him, their Saviour and Intercessor. He is the only means by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12), and “the only mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy 2:5-7). Muhammad, however, is neither an intercessor nor a saviour. According to the Quran, people must save themselves (Sura 6:51,70; 10:3).
- **Personal relationship:** Many times in the New Testament Jesus spoke of the love he had for his disciples, even to the giving of his life for them (e.g., John 15:12-17). He also promised that this intimate relationship would continue after his death by way of the Holy Spirit at work in their hearts (e.g., John 14:15-21). In contrast, it is not possible to have a personal relationship with Muhammad because he is dead.
- **Return to Earth:** The New Testament contains many teachings about the return of Christ at the end of the current age (e.g., Matthew 24:1-31). At this time, he will take up his authority to rule over all the earth (e.g., Revelation 5: 6-14; 19:11-16). The Quran, however, contains no teachings about a return of Muhammad.

Even from this brief review, it is abundantly clear that Muhammad as revealed in the Quran was nothing like Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament. Nor, for that matter, was Muhammad like any of the Old Testament prophets. Christ and the true prophets of God were righteous, while Muhammad was unrighteous; they preached a consistent message of faithfulness to the one true God, while he preached a new religion of violence, oppression and coercion. Jesus and Muhammad do not represent the same God; on all the essential issues, they are poles apart.

The Quran

The Quran contains the sacred writings of the Islamic faith. The Quran itself claims to be the final revelation of the God of the Bible, and Muslims believe that the teachings of the Quran are superior to, and supersede, those of the Bible.

Muslims claim that Allah wrote the Quran in heaven on a stone tablet the size of a table and handed it down to Muhammad. And because it was written in this way by Allah, and not by Muhammad, it is flawless. As noted in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*: “To Muslims the absolute perfection of the language of the Quran is an impregnable dogma” (p. 267). Muslims also claim that no mortal man can translate the Quran from its original perfect Arabic into another language, and no person can write literature like that found in the Quran (e.g., Sura 12:2; 10:37,38).

If these claims are true, then this should be immediately evident from an examination of the text of the Quran. As might be expected, the Quran fails abysmally to live up to these claims of perfection when subjected to an unbiased examination.

Original Writings

From historical accounts, we know that Muhammad himself did not write or prepare the final manuscript of the Quran. His death was sudden and unexpected, and it was left to his disciples to try to piece together his teachings from memory and a few scattered records. These records were written on whatever was handy when Muhammad fell into one of his trances. The *Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* notes:

The Koran was collected from the chance surfaces on which it had been inscribed: “from pieces of the papyrus, flat stones, palm leaves, shoulder blades and ribs of animals, pieces of leather, wooden boards, and the hearts of men” (p. 230).

The Suras of the Quran are not presented in chronological order. Instead, they are arranged from the biggest Sura down to the smallest. This leads to tremendous confusion, especially since some earlier teachings are abrogated by later ones. The Muslim scholar Ali Dashti lamented:

Unfortunately the Qor’an was badly edited and its contents are very obtusely arranged. All students of the Qor’an wonder why the editors did not use the natural and logical method of ordering by date of revelation, as in `Ali ibn Abi Taleb’s lost copy of the text.

Quality of Literature

The Quran is as an entirely different kind of literature from that of the Bible. Whereas the Bible is replete with historical narrative, the Quran contains very little. Whereas the Bible explains unfamiliar terminology or territory, the Quran does not. And while the Bible presents a consistent message of God’s dealings with man from the beginning of creation to its end, the Quran presents a jumbled collection of mystical writings.

The Scottish scholar Thomas Carlyle once said about the Quran:

It is a toilsome reading as I ever undertook, a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, and incondite. Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran.

The German scholar Solomon Reinach commented:

From the literary point of view, the Koran has little merit. Declamation, repetition, puerility, a lack of logic and coherence strike the unprepared reader at every turn. It is humiliating to the human intellect to think that this mediocre literature has been the subject of innumerable commentaries, and that millions of men are still wasting time in absorbing it.

The historian Edward Gibbon described the Quran as “an incoherent rhapsody of fable, and precept, and declamation, which sometimes crawls in the dust, and sometimes is lost in the clouds.”

The fact that the Quran claims to be a continuation of the Bible actually damages its own credibility. In the final analysis, the Quran simply does not fit with the quality of the literature found in the Bible. Most Western scholars have concluded that to go from the Bible to the Quran is to go from the superior to the inferior, from the greater to the lesser, from the real to the counterfeit.

Perfect Arabic

The Muslim's claim that the Quran was written in perfect Arabic is patently false. In reality, it contains many grammatical errors, and includes many words and phrases which are not even in the Arabic language! Ali Dashti comments:

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

In his book, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Arthur Jeffrey documents over one hundred non-Arabic words in the Quran. These include Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, Akkadian, Ethiopian and Persian words and phrases.

The Quran also contains many variant readings. In his book *Material for the History of the Text of the Quran*, Arthur Jeffrey provides ninety pages of variant readings on the text of the Quran. For example, in Sura 2 he notes over 140 conflicting and variant readings.

Professor Guillaume in his book, *Islam*, notes that some of the original verses of the Quran were lost. For example, one Sura originally had 200 verses, but by the time Uthman standardised the text of the Quran, it had only 73 verses! The missing 123 verses have never been recovered. The Shi'ite Muslims claim that Uthman left out twenty-five percent of the original verses in the Quran for political reasons (McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia*, V:152).

Ali Dashti notes that a follower of Muhammad named Abdollah Sarh would often make suggestions for rewording the Suras which Muhammad accepted. This eventually led Abdollah to renounce Islam:

Abdollah renounced Islam on the ground that the revelations, if from God, could not be changed at the prompting of a scribe such as he. After his apostasy he went to Mecca and joined the Qorayshites.

Finally, the *Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* (p. 228) notes that the Quran was written in the dialect and vocabulary of the Quraysh tribe of Mecca. The textual evidence, therefore, clearly shows that the Quran was not written in perfect Arabic, but by a member of the Quraysh tribe residing in Mecca.

Translation into Other Languages

The claim that the Quran cannot be accurately translated into another language is clearly refuted by the existence of many accurate translations. It is also illogical. If the Quran really is God's final word to mankind, surely he would want it translated into every language to make it available to all the nations. This is certainly true of the Bible which has been translated into many different languages by the hard work and dedication of many faithful servants of God.

If anyone has a reason to deliberately mistranslate the Quran, it is the Muslims themselves. For example, the Yusuf Ali translation of the Quran into English, published in 1934, contains many such redactions. Ali was firstly a Muslim apologist, and secondly a translator. However, his translation is useful in two important respects. Firstly, the numerous footnotes in which he tries to rescue the Quran from its many errors and contradictions unwittingly alert the reader to their presence in the text. And secondly, his irrational arguments and obvious mistranslations of various texts, such as the one on the Trinity, lead the reader to become highly suspicious that he is trying to hide something. Nevertheless, readers of his translation should be aware of its hidden apologetic agenda.

Contradictions with the Bible and Secular History

The claim that the Quran is the final revelation of the God of the Bible can be easily refuted by noting the numerous contradictions between the Bible and the Quran. Just a few examples will be given here:

- **The days of creation:** The Bible tells us that God created the universe in six days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 20:11). Suras 7:51 and 10:3 agree with the biblical account, but in Sura 41:9-12 the Quran states that it took God eight days to create the world.
- **Noah's flood:** According to the Bible, all three sons of Noah entered the ark and were saved (Genesis 7:7,13). But in Sura 11:32-48, the Quran says that one of the sons refused to go into the ark and was drowned. Also, Sura 11:44 claims that the ark came to rest on top of Mount Judi, while the Bible says it came to rest on Mount Ararat.
- **Mistakes about Abraham:** The Quran says that Abrahams father's name was Azar (Sura 6:74); that he lived and worshipped in the valley of Mecca (Sura 14:37); that it was Ishmael, rather than Isaac, that Abraham went to sacrifice (Sura 37:100-112); that he had two sons, rather than eight, and two wives, rather than three; that he built the Kabah (Sura 2:125-127); and that he was thrown into a fire by Nimrod (Suras 21:68-69 and 9:69).
- **Mistakes about Moses:** The Quran states that it was Pharaoh's wife who adopted Moses rather than his daughter (Sura 28:8-9); that Noah's flood occurred in the time of Moses (Sura 7:136); that Haman lived in Egypt during the time of Moses and worked for Pharaoh building the tower of Babel (e.g., Sura 27:4-6); and that crucifixion was used in the time of Pharaoh (Sura 7: 124).
- **Mistakes about Mary:** In regard to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Quran states that her father's name was Imram (Sura 66:12); that she gave birth to Jesus under a palm tree (Sura 19:22); and that Zechariah was struck dumb for only three days (Sura 19:10). It also confuses the mother of Jesus with Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron (Sura 19:28), and tributes miracles and speeches to her which are not recorded in the Bible (Sura 19:23-26).
- **Mistakes about Jesus:** The Quran contradicts the Bible's teachings on the person and work of Jesus Christ by claiming that Jesus was not the Son of God, did not die for our sins, was not crucified, was not divine as well as human, and is not the Saviour (Sura 4:157; 5:19, 5; 9:30).
- **Mistaken understanding of the term "Son of God":** The Quran holds that Christians are guilty of blasphemy for claiming that Jesus was the Son of God mistakenly believing this term to imply that God the Father had sexual intercourse with Mary (e.g., Sura 2:116).
- **Mistakes about the Trinity:** The Quran misrepresents the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Muhammad mistakenly thought that Christians worship three God's – the Father, the Mother (Mary), and the Son (Jesus) (Sura 5:73-75, 116).
- **Chronological errors:** The Quran contains many chronological errors. For example, Nimrod and Abraham, Harman and Moses, and Mary (the mother of Jesus) and Aaron as contemporaneous. Similarly, the Quran puts together Noah's flood and Moses, and the tower of Babel and the biblical Pharaoh of Egypt. The Quran also states that crucifixion was used in the time of Pharaoh (Sura 7:124).
- **Historical errors:** The Quran also contradicts secular history in some places. For example, it claims that the Kabah was built by Adam and then rebuilt by Abraham; that the Jews made the golden calf in the wilderness at the suggestion of the Samaritans, a people who didn't exist at the time (Sura 20:87, 95); and that Alexander the Great was a Muslim who worshipped Allah and lived to an old age (Sura 18:89-98).

These are just a few of the many contradictions between the Quran and the Bible, and in some instances, with secular history. Muslims claim that the Quran is perfect, and therefore that any contradictions between the Bible or secular history and the Quran are due to corruptions in the former. However, they provide no evidence to prove these corruptions, or to prove that the text of the Quran is preferred over that of the Bible and other historical documents. The scientific evidence strongly supports the view that it is the Quran which is inaccurate.

Self-Contradictions

The Quran also contradicts itself in many places. Since the Quran claims to be free from all error as proof of its divine inspiration (e.g., Sura 85:21-22), the presence of just one error in the Quran is enough to falsify this claim. The following examples are sufficient to demonstrate that the Quran is far from perfect:

- **Conflicting accounts of Muhammad's reception of the Quran.** As already noted, the Quran gives four conflicting accounts of how Muhammad received the Quran. They cannot all be true.
- **Conflicting wording.** The Quran contains many examples of the same quotation given with conflicting wording (e.g., Suras 2:58 and 7:161).
- **Conflicting instructions.** At first Muhammad told his followers to face Jerusalem when praying, then he told them that since God was everywhere they could face anyway they wanted. But he later changed his mind again and commanded them to pray toward Mecca (Sura 2:115 cf. 2:144). Many scholars believe that these changes in direction were dependent on whether he was trying to please the Jews or the pagans.
- **The command to fight.** When Muhammad started his movement he told his disciples that they could defend themselves if attacked (Sura 22:39). Later he commanded them to go to war on his behalf (Sura 2:216-218). But as his army grew, he commanded more wars to compel the pagans to accept Islam and to gain wealth (Sura 9:5,29).

Convenient Revelations

The Quran contains a number of convenient revelations for Muhammad's personal benefit. For example, when Muhammad wanted his adopted son's wife, he conveniently received a revelation from Allah declaring that it was permissible for him to take another man's wife (Sura 33:36-38). When he wanted more wives, or wanted his wives to stop quarrelling, he got another convenient revelation for this (Sura 33:28-34). And when people bothered him at his house, he received a revelation setting up rules concerning when people could visit him and when they should not bother him (Sura 33:53-58; 29:62-63; 49:1-5).

Legendary Sources

Muhammad used considerable legendary and fanciful material as sources for the Quran. As noted by Professor Jomier, one of France's greatest Middle-East scholars:

Moslems receive these narratives as the word of God, without enquiring about their historical background. In fact we have there a popular, poetic form of legends, variants of religious themes known from other sources.

The Quran repeats fanciful Arabian stories as if they were true. These include legends about the jinn, the story of the camel that leapt out of a rock and became a prophet, the story of an entire village of people turned into apes because they broke the Sabbath, the story of seven men and their animals who slept for 309 years in a cave and woke up perfectly fine, and the story of the pieces of four dead, cut-up birds getting up and flying away.

The Quran also contains many stories that come from the Jewish Talmud, the Midrash, and a number of other apocryphal works. It also contains stories based on heretical Christian

Gnostic teachings. For example, in Suras 3:49 and 100:110, the baby Jesus speaks from the cradle! Later on, the Quran has Jesus making clay birds come alive.

Muhammad also adopted religious practices from the Sabeans, including worshipping at the Kabah, praying five times a day facing Mecca, and fasting for part of a day for an entire month. He also derived some of his ideas from eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism and Hinduism.

Immorality in the Quran

The Quran supports many practices which the Bible condemns as immoral. As already discussed, the Quran supports acts of violence, robbery, slavery and adultery. It is also racist. According to Suras 3:106 and 107, on Judgement Day, only people with white faces will be saved. People with black faces will be damned. As noted by Victor and Deborah Khalil:

American blacks have been widely wooed by Islam, but through misinformation. They hear, "Christianity is the white man's religion; Islam is the religion of all mankind." They are told that Allah and Muhammad are black. In reality, Muslims in the Middle East still regard blacks as slaves. It would be worse than blasphemy for them to believe that either Allah or Mohammed were black.

The oppression of women is another disturbing feature of Islam. Ali Dashti notes:

In pre-Islamic Arab society, the women did not have the status of independent persons, but were considered to be possessions of the men. All sorts of inhumane treatment of the women were permissible and customary.

The Quran states in Sura 4:34:

Men are the managers of the affairs of women. ... Those you fear may be rebellious – admonish; banish them to their couches and beat them.

In accordance with strict Islam, women can be kept prisoners in their own home, being denied the right to go outside the house by their husbands or fathers. In some countries, women must carry written permission from their husbands or fathers to be out of the house.

While the Quran does not require women to cover their faces with a veil, or to cover their bodies with the burqua, nevertheless, it is required by law or custom in many Muslim countries. What was once a practical dress worn by nomadic tribes women in the Arabian desert as protection from the sun and sand has now become a requirement of modern Islam.

A particularly distressing picture of women is contained in the Hadith where we are told that Paradise will contain beautiful women chained in various corners of a pavilion whose only purpose is to satisfy the sexual urges of men:

The statement of Allah, beautiful women restrained in pavilions. Allah's Apostle said, "In Paradise there is a pavilion made of a single hollow pearl sixty miles wide, in each corner there are wives who will not see those in the other corners; and the believers will visit and enjoy them.

The Quran promises a heaven full of wine and free sex (Sura 2:25; 4:57; 11:23; 47:15). But if, according to the Bible, drunkenness and sexual immorality is sinful on earth, then it cannot be acceptable in Paradise. This is yet more evidence that Islam is a reflection of the ideas and customs of seventh-century Arab culture, and not the will of God as described in the Bible.

Not Divinely Inspired

Muhammad did not preach anything new. Everything he taught had been believed and practiced in Arabia long before he was born. Even the idea of monotheism was borrowed from the Jews and the Christians. The stories, teachings, and rituals contained in the Quran can be fully explained in terms of pre-Islamic sources in Arabian culture, thereby refuting the

Muslims' claim for its divine origin. Instead, the fingerprints of Muhammad can be seen on its every page as a witness to its human origin.

Conclusions

The claims of Islam do not stand up to critical examination. Allah is *not* the God of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles of the Judeo-Christian Bible; Muhammad was *not* a prophet of the God of the Bible; and the Quran is *not* the Word of the God of the Bible.

Historical and archaeological evidence show that the religion of Islam was founded on ideas and beliefs already in existence in the Middle-East at the time of Muhammad. The Muslim deity, Allah, is nothing more than the ancient Arabian moon god promoted by Muhammad from chief among a pantheon of gods to the *only* god so as to appeal to the Jews and the Christians.

A comparison of the God of the Bible with Allah of the Quran clearly shows that they are not the same deity. The God of the Bible is knowable, personal, spiritual, trustworthy, righteous, gracious and loving. He is also intensely active in human history, demonstrating his love for mankind by sending his own Son into the world to be its Saviour. By comparison, Allah is unknowable, impersonal, capricious and transcendent. He has done nothing to demonstrate his love for mankind or show us how to be saved. Allah has provided no assurance of eternal life, either by faith or by works.

Similarly, a comparison between the life and teachings of Muhammad and those of Christ clearly shows that Muhammad was not a prophet sent into the world by the God of the Bible. While the Bible contains many prophecies pertaining to Christ, it contains nothing about Muhammad. And while Christ made many predictions about future events, Muhammad made none. And while Jesus performed many public miracles to demonstrate that he had been sent by God, Muhammad performed none. And while Christ was without sin, Muhammad was a sinner. And while the teachings of Christ are wise, insightful and authoritative, those of Muhammad are confused, mystical and devoid of moral value. The life and teachings of Christ are consistent with his claim to be the Son of God, while those of Muhammad are consistent with those of a sinful man.

Similarly, a comparison between the Bible and the Quran reveals that the Quran is not the inspired Word of God. The Quran does not even come close to the Bible in the quality of its literature, its historical accuracy, or the consistency and morality of its teachings. It contains many contradictions with the Bible, self-contradictions, convenient revelations, textual errors, and mythical stories. Rather than being a part of God's continuing revelation to mankind, the Quran contains all the hallmarks of a man-made religion.

The evidence is clear: Allah is a false God; Muhammad was a false prophet; the Quran is not the Word of God; and Islam is a false religion.

If you would like to be among those who are being saved, this is what you should do:

- ❖ **Pray to Jesus Christ.** "The Lord is near to all who call on him ... he hears their cry and saves them" (Psalm 145:18-19).
- ❖ **Read the Bible.** You should start by reading the whole of the New Testament, asking Jesus to help you to understand what you are reading.
- ❖ **Join a church.** It is vital that you find a church which holds the Bible to be the final authority in all matters of faith and practice for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Acknowledgments

Based on the book *The Islamic Invasion – Confronting the World's Fastest Growing Religion* by Robert Morey, Christian Scholar's Press, 1992.

Bible quotations are from the New International Version, 1984.