



STATEMENT DI-200-2

**TO EVERY MUSLIM AN ANSWER
(Part Two in a series on Islam from Forward magazine)**

by Joseph P. Gudel

Islam and Christianity are the two largest and most missionary-minded religions in the world. Their beliefs are very similar in many areas. They are both monotheistic, were founded by a specific individual in a definite, historically verifiable setting, are universal, and believe in the existence of angels, heaven and hell, a future resurrection, and that God has made Himself known to man via a revelation.

However, there also are many obvious differences between them, particularly in relation to the person of Jesus Christ, the way of salvation, and each faith's scripture or scriptures. These differences encompass the very foundational tenets of each religion, and therefore, while Islam and Christianity can both be false, they both cannot be true.

Our task is to examine each religion's apologetic, or defense of their faith, to see if the claims of either religion are verifiable. Particular attention will be paid to the founder and the scripture or scriptures of each faith. The reason for this should be self-evident: it is very easy for someone to make claims regarding himself, proving them is an entirely different matter.

ISLAMIC APOLOGETICS

Islam, like Christianity, believes that a person's faith must be reasonable as well as subjective, that we must worship God with our minds as well as our hearts. In sharing this common ground with Muslims let us then examine why they believe what they believe.

The Miracle of the Qur'an —The Islamic Claim

We must start our study of Islamic apologetics by examining their highest source of authority, the Qur'an. For Muslims, this is the pure word of God with no admixture of human thought or content. Indeed, many Muslims have such an intense jealousy for the Qur'an that they keenly resent its being possessed by a non-Muslim.

The word "Qur'an" comes from "an Arabic word meaning 'reading' or 'that which is to be read.'"¹ Muslims affirm that the Qur'an was given to Muhammad in the Arabic language, piece by piece, over a span of 23 years until his death (Qur'an 43:3; 44:58; 17:106). Muslim apologetics for the Qur'an cover four main areas: its preservation, eloquence, alleged prophecies, and compatibility with modern science.

1. Preservation of the Qur'an

Concerning the present authenticity of the Qur'an, Maulvi Muhammad Ali makes the following grandiose statement:

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As regards the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an, I need not detain the reader very long. From one end of the world to the other, from China in the Far East to Morocco and Algeria in the Far West, from the scattered islands of the Pacific Ocean to the great desert of Africa, the Qur'an is one, and no copy differing in even a diacritical point is met with in the possession of one among the four hundred millions of Muslims.² There are, and always have been, contending sects, but the same Qur'an is in the possession of one and all...A manuscript with the slightest variation in the text is unknown.³

Thus Muslims not only believe that the Qur'an is God's word in toto, they also are confident that no error, alteration, or variation has touched it since its inception. This, then, is one of their "proofs" that the Qur'an is a "miracle" from God.

2. Eloquence of the Qur'an

A second claim made to prove the supernatural origin of the Qur'an, found in *surah* (chapter) 17:88, is that its beauty and eloquence is self-sufficient proof that the author is God:

Say: "If the whole
Of mankind and Jinns
Were to gather together
To produce the like
Of this Qur'an, they
Could not produce
The like thereof, even if
They backed up each other
With help and support."

In a footnote within his translation of the Qur'an, Yusuf Ali states, "No human composition could contain the beauty, power, and spiritual insight of the Qur'an."⁴

However, Muslims do not believe that the Qur'an is a miracle solely because of its eloquence and beauty, but also because in *surah* 7:157 Muhammad is referred to as "The unlettered Prophet." Believing that he was illiterate, they ask how such a man could produce the Qur'an.

A final claim concerning the Qur'an's literary achievement is that it is so consistent throughout that no human could have devised it Suzanne Haneef asks "how the whole Qur'an could be so utterly consistent" if it did not originate from God.⁵

3. Prophecies In the Qur'an

The Qur'an speaks prophetically very little, if indeed it does prophesy at all. Hence, few Muslim apologists use fulfilled prophecy as a proof for their faith. However, there is a series of verses in the Qur'an which promise that the Muslims will be victorious, both at home and abroad.⁶ Maulana Muhammad Ali discusses these prophecies at length in his work *The Religion of Islam*:

...we find prophecy after prophecy announced in the surest and most certain terms to the effect that the great forces of opposition should be brought to naught...that Islam should spread to the farthest corners of the earth and that it should ultimately be triumphant over all religions of the world.⁷

4. Science and the Qur'an

Finally, there is one recent work, written by a French surgeon named Maurice Bucaille, that attempts to vindicate the divine origin of the Qur'an by showing its supposedly remarkable affinity with modern science. After citing a number of examples, Dr. Bucaille concludes that

...it is inconceivable for a human being living in the seventh century A.D. to have made statements in the Qur'an on a great variety of subjects that do not belong to his period and for them to be in keeping with what was to be known only centuries later. For me, there can be no human explanation to the Qur'an.⁸

The "Miracle" of the Qur'an — The Christian Response

1. Preservation of the Qur'an?

Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, in *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, tells us that at the time of Muhammad's death the surahs (or chapters) of the Qur'an had not yet been collated. This was accomplished during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr.⁹

The second Caliph, Omar, "subsequently made a single volume (*mushaf*) that he preserved and gave on his death to his daughter Hafsa, the Prophet's widow."¹⁰ Finally, under the Caliphate of Uthman all copies of the Qur'an were ordered to be brought in and any that deviated from Uthman's text were burned.

We have no quarrel with the Islamic position that since the Recension of Uthman the Qur'an has remained intact. However, because of the destruction of all deviant copies no one can know with any certainty if the present Qur'an is exactly the same as what Muhammad gave them.

Islam teaches that the only reason Uthman had all the other collections of the Qur'an burned except his was that there were slight dialectical variations in the different texts. However, there is some evidence which tends to refute this.

First of all, it is very significant that the Qurra, the Muslims who had memorized the entire Qur'an, were vehemently opposed to the Recension. And second, the Shi'ites, who are the second-largest Islamic sect in the world, claim that the Caliph Uthman intentionally eliminated many passages from the Qur'an which related to Ali and the succession of leadership which was to occur after Muhammad's death.

L. Bevan Jones, in his work *The People Of the Mosque*, succinctly answers the Muslim argument for the alleged miraculous preservation of the Qur'an: "But while it may be true that no other work has remained for twelve centuries with so pure a text, it is probably equally true that no other has suffered so drastic a purging."¹¹

2. Eloquence of the Qur'an?

Concerning the Qur'an's beauty, style, and eloquence, any unbiased reader would have to admit that this is certainly true of much of the Qur'an. However, eloquence itself is hardly a logical test for inspiration. If this were the criteria used to judge a work, then we would have to say that the authors of many of the great works of antiquity were inspired by God. Homer would have to have been a prophet for producing the magnificent *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the English language Shakespeare is without a peer as a dramatist, but it would be ludicrous to say that because of this his tragedies were of divine origin. Likewise for the eloquence of the Qur'an.

But what about the consistency of the Qur'an — can it be used to show that this Muslim scripture was inspired? To begin with, it can be shown that the Qur'an is not totally consistent, but rather has some major contradictions in it.¹² Even if we granted the thesis that the Qur'an was totally consistent this still would not prove anything. In an essay entitled "How Muslims Do Apologetics," Dr. John Warwick Montgomery demonstrates this for us:

This apologetic is likewise of little consequence, for the self-consistency of a writing does not prove that it is a divine revelation. Euclid's Geometry, for example, is not self-contradictory at any point, but no one claims that this work is therefore divinely inspired in some unique sense.¹³

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And finally, what about Muhammad's alleged illiteracy? First of all, there is a good deal of evidence against it. But even if we granted the fact that Muhammad could not read or write this still would not make the Qur'an miraculous. Why? Because all Muslims know that he had at least several amanuenses or scribes: and therefore, he could easily have composed the Qur'an in this fashion. This would not be unique, as there are precedents for this. One that most people will be familiar with concerns Homer. He was blind and thus, in all likelihood, could not write. Yet he was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the two greatest epics of the ancient world. In like fashion the question of whether or not Muhammad was illiterate really has no bearing on the case in question.

3. Prophecies in the Qur'an?

Can we say that Islam's vast expansion, predicted by Muhammad, is a fulfillment of prophecy? If we think this through for just a moment, I believe we can easily answer no.

To begin with, a leader promising his troops or followers a victory is not the least bit unique. Every commander or general does this in order to inspire his army and build up their morale. If they are then victorious, he is vindicated; if they lose then we never hear of his promises because they, along with his movement, are forgotten.

Also, the Muslim had several important incentives to consider while fighting to further the cause of Islam. If he died, he was promised to be allowed into paradise. If he lived and they were victorious in battle, the Muslim soldiers would divide up four-fifths of all the booty.

There is another reason why Islam initially expanded so rapidly. If we look at some of the Qur'anic injunctions about what the non-believers could expect at the hands of the Muslims, it is easy to understand why so many "submitted," as found in surah 5:36:¹⁴

The punishment of those
Who wage war against God
And his Apostle, and strive
With might and main
For mischief through the land
Is: execution, or crucifixion,
Or the cutting off of hands
And feet from opposite sides,
Or exile from the land.

The polytheists had two choices, submit or die. The Christians and the Jews had a third alternative, paying heavy tribute (Qur'an 9:5, 29).

A final point to be considered is that if the fast and far reaching growth of a movement indicated divine favor, then what about such conquerors as Genghis Khan? He consolidated the Mongol tribes and in a time span shorter than early Islam's conquered a much larger geographic area. Was his military success evidence that he was led of God? And what of Islam's own growth which was stopped in the West by Charles Martel A.D. 732) and in the East by Leo III (A.D. 740)? Does this mean that they lost favor with Allah? What of the later history of many Islamic countries who suffered the indignity of becoming colonies of the then world powers? No, we can find nothing mysterious or supernatural about Islam's amazing early growth or subsequent fall.

4. Science and the Qur'an?

A very recent Islamic polemic. *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* by Dr. Maurice Bucaille, attempts to demonstrate that the Qur'an must have been divinely inspired because it allegedly states many things that were unknown in the seventh century and have subsequently become known only in our twentieth century.

In answering Dr. Bucaille it must first be pointed out that the bulk of the book does not deal with the Qur'an and science. Rather, most of it is an attempt (using the techniques of higher criticism) to disgrace the Bible. The portions of his book which do attempt to show that the Qur'an is in amazing agreement with twentieth-century scientific knowledge are very vague.

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However, what if we were to grant his thesis that the statements in the Qur'an are in total agreement with modern science? Dr. Bucaille states that if this were true, then "it is unthinkable that a man of Muhammad's time could have been the author of them."¹⁵ I agree with his conclusion, assuming his thesis is true. If the Qur'an has detailed scientific statements which we have only recently discovered to be true, and yet it was written in the seventh century A.D., then it could not have been merely the product of Muhammad. But this does not identify the source of the information, it only shows that no human being could have written it without *superhuman* help.

If indeed the Qur'an had a supernatural origin, then we are still left with the task of finding out who its source was. Dr. Bucaille *assumes* that it must be God, but why? If we pause and think for just a moment, we realize that there are other supernatural beings besides God. One of these beings is referred to as Satan in the Bible, as well as in the Qur'an. The Bible tells us that he has been on the earth as long as man has, that he has powers and intelligence far superior to ours, and that he is "the father of lies" (John 8:44). To whisper some scientific facts into someone's ear would be no great feat for him. As a matter of fact the Bible says that he does appear to men from time to time: "For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). It is interesting that this is exactly the initial fear that Muhammad had the first time he heard the voice speak to him.¹⁶

5. Sources of the Qur'an

In concluding this section on the Qur'an the reader may be interested to know that many of the stories or accounts found within the Qur'an are traceable to very similar (sometimes almost identical) stories found in pre-Islamic writings. I would direct the reader to Clair-Tisdall's classic *The Sources of Islam*, Rev. W. Goldsack's *The Origins of the Qur'an*, and Samuel M. Zwerner's *Islam: A Challenge to Faith*.

Is Muhammad Prophesied in the Bible?

Virtually every religion that began after Christianity attempts to show that it is compatible with the Bible. They also endeavor, usually quite laboriously, to show that their founder or faith is referred to in the Bible.¹⁷ Thus it comes as no surprise to find that Muslims also claim that their founder was prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments.

Our question still needs to be answered: Although Islam is not unique in claiming to be verified by the Bible, might not its claims be nonetheless true? There are some minor, less detailed verses which Muslims claim are "prophecies" related to Muhammad. However, the verses which most Muslims cite as the most explicative are Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and John 14:16; 15:26; and 16:7.

1. Deuteronomy 18:15-18

The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.

According to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die."

And the Lord said to me: "What they have spoken is good.

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him."

This is universally held by Muslims as a prophesy pertaining to Muhammad.¹⁸ There are a number of reasons why they believe it cannot be referring Jesus.

First, the Promised Prophet was to be a Lawgiving Prophet.... Jesus laid no claim to giving a new law.... Secondly, the Promised Prophet was to be raised not from among Israel but from among their brethren and Jesus was an Israelite.... Thirdly, the prophecy was: "I will put my words in his mouth." But the gospels do not consist of words which God put in Jesus' mouth. They only tell us

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the story of Jesus and what he said in some of his public addresses and what his disciples said or did on different occasions. Fourthly, the Promised One *was* to be a Prophet, while the Christian view is that Jesus was not a Prophet, but the son of God.¹⁹

The Muslim will then point out the many ways in which Muhammad and Moses were alike. Each appeared among idolaters. They were both lawgivers who were initially rejected by their people and had to flee into exile, only to return later to lead their nations. They both married and had children, and were military leaders as well as spiritual leaders. After both of their deaths their successors conquered Palestine.

The Muslim conclusion is that this prophecy was fulfilled only by Muhammad: "If these words do not apply to Muhammad, they still remain unfulfilled."²⁰

Before we continue any farther, let us first analyze these points. The first objection raised against this prophecy having been fulfilled in Jesus was that Jesus was not a lawgiver. Muslims who claim this only show their own lack of understanding of the New Testament, as shown in John 13:34 and Galatians 6:2:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love another.

Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ

The next objection to this prophecy having been fulfilled in Jesus was that "brethren" must refer to the Ishmaelites, not to the Israelites themselves. This argument can easily be refuted by simply looking at how the term "brethren" is used in the Bible. One cogent example is found in Deuteronomy 17:15. Moses instructs the Israelites:

"You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother."

Now, did Israel ever appoint a foreigner as king over them? More specifically, was an Ishmaelite ever appointed king over Israel? Of course not. To choose a king "from among your brethren" refers to choosing someone from one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Likewise, the prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy 18 was to be an Israelite.

Another objection to Deuteronomy 18:15-18 being fulfilled in Jesus is that the Gospels allegedly do not consist of words which God gave Jesus, vitally important in light of verse 18. However, to say that Jesus did not speak what God the Father gave Him again betrays an abysmal ignorance of the New Testament: "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak" (John 12:49)²¹

The final objection raised against Jesus' fulfilling these verses is that Christians supposedly only view Jesus as the Sun of God, not as a prophet. Once again we see that the Muslim too often has little familiarity with the New Testament. Jesus Himself, prophesying His impending death, said that He must continue His journey to Jerusalem "for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).²²

The Muslim will point out that I still have not explained the many similarities between Moses and Muhammad. It is true that they have many correspondences, but there are also many differences. For example, if Muhammad was illiterate as virtually all Muslims assert, then he was not like Moses who "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). Muhammad is said to have received his revelations from the angel Gabriel, while Moses received the Law directly from God. Muhammad performed no signs or miracles to verify his calling, yet Moses performed many signs. Also, Muhammad was Arabic, while Moses was of Jewish origin.

If one were to peruse the Gospels, he would see that although Jesus was unlike Moses in some ways, in other ways He was very much like him. They were both Jewish, which is very important in light of what we have learned about the term "your brethren." They both left Egypt to minister to their people (Heb. 11:27; Matt 2:15). Both also forsook great riches in order to better identify with their people (Heb. 11:24-26; John 6:15; 2 Cor. 8:9).

So we see that both Jesus and Muhammad had similarities with Moses. In what special way then was this coming prophet to be "like unto Moses"? The answer is found in Deuteronomy 34:8-10 where two distinguishing characteristics of Moses are listed:

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,

In all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land,

And by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

This is a direct reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Notice that two specific things are mentioned about Moses here in referring back to the earlier prophecy. The first is that the Lord knew Moses "face to face."²³ Muhammad never had this type of relationship with God; indeed, in Islam God is so transcendent that except for the unique case of Moses He never spoke directly with men.

Jesus, "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14), is the only one who ever had a relationship with God like Moses had. In fact, Jesus' relationship far surpasses that of Moses: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

The second characteristic feature of Moses, that he came with many "signs" and "wonders," hardly needs to be expounded on. The many miracles that both Moses and Jesus worked are well known. The Qur'an itself testifies that *Muhammad worked no miracles.*²⁴

And finally, Jesus Himself tells us who the prophet is that Deuteronomy 18:15-18 is prophesying: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46).²⁵

2. John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7

Muslims claim that the verses speaking of the coming "Comforter" ("Paracletos" in the original Greek) are actually references to the coming of Muhammad. The reason for this is that in the Qur'an Jesus is made to say that after Himself an apostle would be sent, "Whose name shall be Ahmad" (Qur'an 61:6). The following is Yusuf Ali's commentary on this verse:

*"Ahmad," or "Muhammad," the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word Periclytos. In the present Gospel of John, xiv. 16, xv. 26, and xvi. 7, the word "Comforter" in the English version is for the Greek word "Paracletos," which means "Advocate," "one called to the help of another, a kind friend" rather than "Comforter." Our doctors contend that Paracletos is a corrupt reading for Periclytos, and that in their [sic] original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our holy Prophet Ahmad by name.*²⁶

Thus Muslims believe that all of our Bibles have been corrupted and that the apostle John really used the word "Periclytos" in these verses, not the word "Paracletos."

In examining the Muslim claim that the text has been corrupted the textual critic would quite rightly look to the actual textual evidence. There are over 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament which date from before A.D. 350. Not once in any of the manuscripts which contain these passages do we find the word "Periclytos" used. The word that we find used every time is "Paracletos." Thus, there is absolutely *no textual evidence* which would back up their contention that the text was corrupted.

The Muslim position is even more lamentable when we carefully read these verses to see what Jesus was saying. There is a great deal which could be said about each verse; however, we will limit our review to the obvious discrepancies between the Islamic position and what is actually being said: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter,²⁷ that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). First of all, Jesus said that the Father "will give *you* another Comforter." Who was Jesus addressing in these verses? The Arabs, or more specifically, the Ishmaelites? Of course not. He is speaking to Jewish believers. Hence the "Comforter" would be sent initially to them. This cannot be referring to Muhammad.

Second, this verse states that the "Paracletos," the "Comforter," would "abide with you forever." How can this apply to Muhammad? The Muslim prophet has been dead and buried for over 1,300 years.

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"Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). Here "the Spirit of Truth" is used as another title or synonym for the "Paraclete." We see from this verse that the "Paraclete" would be "in you." Again, it is impossible to reconcile this statement with the Islamic position.

John 14:26 completely devastates the Muslim hypothesis that Muhammad was actually the one being prophesied in the verses dealing with the coming "Comforter" (or "Paraclete"): "*But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*" Jesus said that the "Comforter" is "the Holy Spirit." This is the reason why all of the Muslim apologists stay away from this verse, only quoting the verses they like. Jesus commanded His disciples — in Acts 1:4-5 — not to "depart from Jerusalem," for they would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit *not many days from now.*"

Do these verses really apply to Muhammad appearing 600 years later in Mecca? Only a person already biased and completely credulous could believe this. The fulfillment of Jesus' words occurred 10 days later on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), not six centuries later, hundreds of miles from Jerusalem.

Prof. 'Abdu 'L-Ahad Dauud, in *Muhammad in the Bible*, states that this alleged prophecy "is one of the *strongest proofs* that Muhammad was truly a Prophet and that the Qur'an is really a divine revelation"²⁸ (emphasis added). If these verses constitute one of their "strongest proofs," then I will not belabor the reader with "lesser proofs." I believe that Blaise Pascal succinctly summarized the situation: "Any man can do what [Muhammad] has done; for he performed no miracles, he was not foretold. No man can do what Christ has done."²⁹

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

In the remaining space it will be impossible to give more than an overview of the evidences for the Christian faith.³⁰ The two areas we will examine are the evidences for the reliability of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ.

The Reliability of the Bible

For Muslims the Bible is virtually worthless as far as being an authentic revelation from God. They believe it has been totally corrupted and is therefore not trustworthy. However, if we examine the biblical documents, using the same thorough standards any historiographer would use, we discover that its reliability is unimpeachable.

The New Testament documents, for example, have more manuscript authority than any 10 works of antiquity put together. As mentioned earlier, we have over 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament dating from before A.D. 350. In comparison, the number two book in all of ancient history for manuscript authority is the *Iliad* with 643 manuscripts.

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, dean of the Simon Greenleaf School of Law and a noted theologian, comments on this: "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."³¹

When we turn to the text of the New Testament itself we see that the writers of the New Testament books claimed that they were eyewitnesses, or close associates of eyewitnesses, of the events they narrated.³² We also have excellent external evidence confirming this. Papias, a disciple of the apostle John, confirms the fact that Mark did indeed write the Gospel which is ascribed to him, obtaining his information from the apostle Peter.³³ Polycarp, another disciple of the apostle John, taught his own disciple Irenaeus that the men to whom the four Gospels are ascribed were in truth their real authors.³⁴

In addition to these evidences we can also add the findings of modern archaeology. Time after time archaeology has vindicated biblical accounts which had previously been ridiculed as being grossly inaccurate.³⁵ Concerning this, Nelson Glueck, a world-famous Jewish archaeologist, went so far as to say that "it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference."³⁶

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In any responsible examination of the biblical documents the evidence for their reliability comes out positive. Even well-known secular historians accept the biblical accounts as being historically reliable. A.N. Sherwin-White, a non-Christian, accepts without question the essential reliability of the Gospels and the Book of Acts:

For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming...any attempt to reject its historicity in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.³⁷

It is very interesting to note that Yusuf Ali, in his widely used English translation of the Qur'an, twice cites Sir Frederick Kenyon as a renowned authority.³⁸ Kenyon, formerly the principal curator of the British Museum, was one of the world's greatest authorities on textual criticism of ancient works. Concerning the textual reliability of the Bible, he concluded that "the Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God."³⁹

The Death and Resurrection of Christ

Muslims, denying that Jesus died on the cross, hold that no resurrection occurred. They do this not on the basis of the historical evidence but because the Qur'an simply denies that Jesus was crucified.' However, once again their beliefs fly in the face of all the evidence.

The following references are a listing of just some of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the sufferings of the Messiah and of their fulfillment in Jesus. We are told the Messiah would come in humility (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:6-9), would be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; Matt. 26:15), would suffer tremendously (Isa. 50:6; Matt. 26:67), would be pierced and scourged (Isa. 53:5; Matt. 27:26; John 19:34), would not speak in His own defense (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 27:12-14), would be slain (Isa. 53:8; Luke 23:46), would die among thieves and intercede for the transgressors (Isa. 53:12; Matt. 27:38; Luke 23:34), would be mocked (Ps. 22:7-8; Matt. 27:31, 39-40), would have his hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16; John 20:25-28), would have lots cast for his garments (Ps. 22:18; John 19:23-24), and would not have his bones broken (Ps. 34:20; John 19:33).

In the New Testament Jesus claimed to be God (John 8:58). Those closest to Him made the same claim for Him (1 John 5:20; 2 Pet. 1:1). Jesus said that the ultimate proof validating His claims would be His resurrection from the dead (Matt 16:21; 17:9; John 2: 18-21).

If these events did not occur (Jesus' death *and* resurrection), one is faced with tremendously difficult questions. What accounts for the change in Peter, from being a coward who denied even knowing Jesus, into being a martyr? What accounts for the change of Saul, the greatest persecutor of the early church, into the apostle Paul, the greatest missionary of the early church (who also suffered martyrdom)? What accounted for the birth of the Christian church itself? Christianity was not spread by force. The first Christians had no worldly incentives to preach Jesus' death and resurrection. Conversely, all they could expect were revilements, persecution, and martyrdom. The only satisfactory answer that can be given to these questions is that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, just as He promised.

Near the end of the eighteenth century La Revelliere-Lepeaux, a determined non-Christian, was attempting to replace Christianity with Theophilanthropy (a form of deism) as the religion of France. When he told Talleyrand his plans, "the cynical politician replied, 'All you have to do is get yourself hanged, and revive the third day.'"⁴¹

Indeed, Talleyrand very perceptively showed the main difference between Christianity and every other religion of the world. Jesus Christ raised Himself from the dead, thus verifying His claims to deity. Muhammad and all of the other founders of the various religions are still in the grave. Only Jesus has the power of life over death, as He said in John 11:25-26:

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if He dies, and everyone who lives and believes In Me shall never die.

NOTES

¹ Suzanne Haneef, *What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1979). p. 18.

² This was the approximate Islamic population when this book was published in 1921. Today the Muslim population is estimated to be between 800 million to one billion.

³ Maulvi Muhammad Ali, *Muhammad and Christ* (Lahore, India: The Ahmadiyya Anjuman-i-Ishaat-i-Islam, 1921), p. 7.

⁴ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *THE HOLY QUR'AN: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Qatar: Qatar National Printing Press, 1946), p. 401.

⁵ Haneef, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶ Qur'an 3:12; 41:53; 14:13-14.

⁷ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: The Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1950), p. 249.

⁸ Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science*, trans. Alastair D. Pannell and Maurice Bucaille (Paris: North America Trust Publication, 1978), p. 125.

⁹ Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. xxviii

¹⁰ Bucaille, *op. cit.*, p. 130

¹¹ L. Bevan Jones, *The People of the Mosque* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1932), p. 62.

¹² Due to lack of space this argument cannot be pursued here. The interested reader may write to the author in care CRI for further information on this.

¹³ John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978), p. 94.

¹⁴ Also, cf. Qur'an 4:47.

¹⁵ Bucaille, *op. cit.* p. 251.

¹⁶ Pickthall, *op. cit.*, pp. x-xi.

¹⁷ e.g. Mani, in the third century, claimed to be the "Paraclete" or the "Comforter" spoken of by Jesus in John 14:16, 26. The Baha'is, originating from within Islam itself, likewise believe that their founder Baha'u'llah was foretold in the Bible. And the Mormons believe that Ezekiel prophesied the coming of one of their scriptures, The Book of Mormon.

¹⁸ They also believe that the Qur'an refers to this in surah 7:157.

¹⁹ Hazrat Mirza Bashir-Ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran* (London: The London Mosque, 1949), pp. 84-85. Also cf. Ulfat Aziz-Ussamad, *Islam and Christianity* (Karachi, Pakistan: Begum Aisha Bauany Wakf, 1974), p. 96.

²⁰ 'Abdu 'L-Ahad Dauud, *Muhammad in the Bible* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1979), p. 2.

²¹ Also cf. John 7:16, 8:28.

²² Also cf. John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; Matt. 21:11; Luke 7:16.

²³ cf. Exodus 33:11.

²⁴ cf. Qur'an 17:59; 17:90-93; 6:37; 6:109.

²⁵ Also d. Luke 24:27.

²⁶ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 1540. (Also, cf. p. 144)

²⁷ The Greek word "Paracletos" may be translated as "comforter," "counselor," "advocate," or "helper."

²⁸ Dauud, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

²⁹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, number 599.

³⁰ The interested reader might consult the following works for a more in-depth understanding of Christian apologetics: John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, InterVarsity Press, and *Faith Founded on Fact*, Thomas Nelson; Norman L Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody Press; Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand*, Baker Book House; Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Here's Life Publishers; and Don Stewart, *The Bible*, Here's Life Publishers.

³¹ John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1976), p. 29.

³² e.g., 2 Pet. 1:16; Luke 1:1-2; Acts 4:19-20; 1 John 1:1, 3.

³³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 39.

³⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, I. I.

³⁵ e.g., William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Baker Book House, and *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* Baker Book House; Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*; Thomas Nelson Publishers; and E.M. Blaiklock, *The Archaeology of The New Testament*, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

³⁶ Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1969), p. 31.

³⁷ A.N. Sherwin-White, *Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 189.

³⁸ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 285, 287.

³⁹ Frederick G. Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York Harper and Brothers, 1941), p.23.

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⁴⁰ cf. Qur'an 4:157, 158.

⁴¹ Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York Oxford University Press, 1976), p.253.