

ISLAM - A “ME TOO” RELIGION
CHAPTER ONE
HOW DID ISLAM BEGIN?
(The history of Mohammed)

It is not possible to tell the story of Mohammed's life with complete historical accuracy for the sources available consist largely of traditions, some of which originated long after the death of Mohammed. The source that is most reliable is the Koran, which means “the reading” and refers to the holy book of Islam which consists of a collection of revelations Mohammed claimed to have received from God. Many of the following facts about Mohammed’s history are those on which most of the Muslim and non-Muslim writers agree, based on the writings of early Muslim historians.

Mohammed was born in Mecca around 570A.D. and the name given to him means “praised.” Mecca was a chief city of Arabia and was both an important commercial centre and a shrine city. In it from ancient times had been located a cubical building called the Kaaba (meaning “cube”), which was also known as the “House of Allah.” Islamic tradition maintains that the angel Gabriel instructed Abraham and his son Ishmael to build the Kaaba for a house of worship. For this reason Moslems world-wide pray facing Mecca. But there is no Biblical or historical evidence to prove that Abraham was instructed to build the Kaaba at Mecca. If he did, it would be known as the “House of Yahweh” not the “House of Allah,” because Yahweh was the name of Abraham’s God not Allah.

A more likely scenario is that Ishmael’s Arab descendants at some stage prior to Mohammed built this cubical structure to rival the most holy place in Israel’s temple built by Solomon which was a cube, and regarded as the house of their God Yahweh, the God of Abraham (1 Kings 6:19-). This conclusion is due to the sizes of the two structures being so similar, which is hardly a coincidence. The base of the most holy place in Israel’s temple was 20x20 cubits. Due to a large cubit measuring up to 21 inches (53.3cm), 20x20 cubits would be up to 35x35 feet (10x10m) square. Differing measurements are given for the base of the Kaaba. Some say it was 10x10m and others give measurements ranging from 10x12m square, making it a very similar size as the most holy place in Israel’s temple. However, the Kaaba was made 3 metres higher, probably to outdo the Jewish holy place

To the Moslems “Allah” signifies “the Most high God” who the Arabs came to recognize in Mohammed’s day as the one and only supreme God. Their ancestor Abraham and his sons Ishmael and Isaac were strict monotheists, but later in history their descendants lapsed into idolatry. But exile cured Israel of idolatry, and long before Mohammed’s

day they reverted to strict monotheism. And it is believed that Mohammed was influenced by them to do the same. But as we shall see, prior to Mohammed, the Arabs were still idolaters and had filled the Kaaba with idols.

Some believe that Mohammed's "Allah" became to the Arabs the equivalent of Israel's "Yahweh," which was the name of the God of Abraham, referred to many times by name in the Jewish Scriptures. But Mohammed and those who came after him put their own spin on, and built their own theology around Allah, turning him into a very different God from Yahweh, the God of the Bible, who their ancestors Ishmael and Abraham originally served and worshipped. It cannot therefore now be said that Yahweh, the God of Israel is the same God as Allah the God of Islam. And Deuteronomy 18:20 warns that anyone claiming to be a prophet who does not speak in the name of Yahweh, but who speaks in the name of another god, shall die.

The name of Mohammed's father was Abdullah, which means "slave of Allah." But, though the Arabs originally recognized Allah as supreme, they later did not consider him to be the only god, nor did they place importance on his worship. They ended up worshipping 360 other Arab gods, one for each day of the Arab calendar, and at the time of Mohammed's youth, the Kaaba was full of the images of these gods and goddesses.

When the Arabs came to Mecca to trade at the annual fairs, they also performed the customary rites of the pilgrimage to Kaaba, walking around it 7 times, and kissing or touching the black stone which was built into the wall which was a meteorite about 18 centimetres in diameter to which great significance was attached. According to Moslem tradition, the black stone was given to Adam on his expulsion from paradise in order to obtain forgiveness of sins. Though the Arabs were not a very religious people, the shrine at Mecca and its ritual were precious to them as an important element in their cultural heritage.

The political situation in Arabia was not good and many tribes were frequently warring with each other. As an Arab proverb says: "I and my cousins against the world: I and my brothers against my cousins: I against my brothers." Long ago it was prophesied that Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arabs, would be "a wild ass of a man who would be against everyone and everyone against him" (Genesis 16:12).

The popular religion did not satisfy those few individuals who wanted to know about God. It is said that a small group of intelligent men known as Hanifs used to meet together to discuss these political and religious problems. However, from ancient times large numbers of Jews had resided in Arabia, and some of them were in Mecca. In Medina, which was 450 kilometres north of Mecca, there were 3 large tribes of

Jews, with their synagogues and Scriptures which claimed to be inspired by the One True God of Abraham. They had prospered materially and their education and standard of living were higher than those of the pagan Arabs around them.

The Arabs knew that the Jews were anti-idolatry and therefore did not worship idols, but were worshippers of Yahweh, the unseen supreme God, regarded as the One and Only True God worshipped by Abraham.

There were also Christians in Arabia. In the north there were several Arab tribes which had become Christians. In the south in Nejran were many professing Christians who had their Scriptures in the Syriac language. But their missionaries did not have great success converting the Arabs, most of whom remained pagans (idol worshippers).

THE GROWING YEARS OF MOHAMMED

Mohammed's father died before he was born and his mother died when he was 6 years old, so he was entrusted to the care of his grandfather. The old man soon died and Mohammed was taken by his uncle, Abu Talib, who was kind to him. Mohammed's family was part of a very powerful tribe called Quraish, which was responsible for the Kaaba (the cubical shrine). But although the uncle was influential, he was poor, and it is said that for a time Mohammed served as a shepherd in the desert. It is also said that when he was 12 years of age he accompanied his uncle, who went with a trading caravan to Syria.

Mohammed became a man of ability and good character. At the age of 25 he was employed by a wealthy attractive widow in Mecca, named Khadijeh, to accompany her caravan to Syria. So successful was he in this trading business venture, that on his return, Khadijeh who was 40 years of age, (15 years older than Mohammed), made him an offer of marriage. Mohammed agreed and his wife gave him love and wealth and an influential position in Meccan society. Two sons and four daughters were born to them, and until her death 25 years later, Mohammed took no other wife. To their great sorrow, both sons died in infancy.

During his marriage, Mohammed associated with the chief people of Mecca, and became well acquainted with the religious and political situation in his country. His wife was a relative of one of the intelligent men known as the Hanifs who met together to discuss political and religious problems, and this relative had become a Christian. And it is to be expected that if Mohammed discussed with him his religious views, this would include the sacred Scriptures believed by Christians (and Jews) to be inspired by the One true God of Abraham. Mohammed would have known that the original Biblical Jews and Christians worshipped a supreme God known as Allah to the Arabs and did not worship idols and

images. Though he continued to worship at the Kaaba, it is believed that it had dawned upon him that the idols in the Kaaba were no gods.

From what we know of the history of Mohammed it seems clear that he was a sincere seeker for God. Due to not being able to read or write, he never systematically studied the Scriptures, which he knew were in the possession of the Jews and Christians. But he later attested on the basis of what he had heard, that the Scriptures were true and many statements in the Koran confirm this, due to the fact that the Scriptures are the only historical source from which those statements in the Koran could be found.

Unfortunately the information concerning the teaching and doctrines taught in the Scriptures that were given to Mohammed, were given by people who held to wrong interpretations and applications. The Jews only accepted the Old Testament and not the New, resulting in believing that the law given through Moses, with all of its rituals and ceremonies, was still binding. They also rejected Jesus as son of God and Messiah and did not believe in his resurrection. And the “Christians” (Roman Catholics at that time) had, in fulfilment of the Apostle Paul’s prediction, “turned away from the truth and turned to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3). They changed the One God of Israel into 3, a trinity, and worshipped Mary and set up images of Christ, Mary and the saints in their churches, which Mohammed regarded as idolatry. As a result, to the end of his life, Mohammed never learned the true teaching of the Scriptures and the gospel message. He was never informed that the doctrine of the Trinity is a false doctrine invented by an apostate church and passed on to the majority of the Protestant churches in Christendom.

HOW MOHAMMED BECAME REGARDED AS A PROPHET

It is said that Mohammed and other seekers for God used to go from time to time to a cave 5 kilometres from Mecca to meditate and worship. One night in the month of Ramadan, about the year 610A.D. when Mohammed was 40 years of age, he and his family (wife and 4 daughters) were at this cave. According to tradition, the angel Gabriel came to Mohammed in a dream as he slept and commanded him to recite. The command was twice repeated and Mohammed asked what he was to recite. The angel replied, “Recite thou in the name of the Lord, who created man from clots of blood” (Koran, Sura 96). When he awoke Mohammed was in great doubt as to what this experience meant. Was it from the Jinn, the evil spirits who inspired the soothsayers, or was it from Allah? Mohammed had heard from the Jews about the prophets whom God had sent to the people of Israel. But no prophet had ever been sent to the Arabs. Could this be a message from Allah that he was to be a prophet and apostle to his own people? His wife assured him that this was indeed

an appointment to the prophetic office. However, it seems that for some months, during which time no more revelations came to him, Mohammed was deeply depressed and even contemplated suicide.

After about 2 years, other “revelations” began to come to Mohammed in various forms. Sometimes he saw the angel Gabriel, sometimes he only heard a voice, and sometimes he heard the sound of a bell through which the words of the angel were brought to him. Sometimes the message came in a dream, and at other times it came in the thoughts of his mind. When revelation came to him his whole frame would become agitated, and perspiration would pour down his face. He would often fall to the ground and foam at the mouth. The messages always came to him in the Arabic language, and Mohammed spoke the words that he received, and they were written down by people who heard them from his lips. It is generally supposed by Muslims that Mohammed was illiterate. After his death these messages were collected and incorporated in the Koran (the Arabic is Qur’an, which means “reading or recitation”) involving 114 chapters known as “suras.” Mohammed was convinced that the words which came to him were not his own, but the very Word of God. The Muslims therefore believe that the Koran is not Mohammed’s book but God’s.

THE HEART OF MOHAMMED’S MESSAGE

The heart of the message which Mohammed advocated was that there is no God but Allah, the one true God, who created heaven and earth and everything in them - a message affirmed almost word for word many times in the Jewish Scriptures thousands of years before Mohammed was born. Also part of the heart of his message was that man is God’s servant and it is his first duty to obey Him. God’s goodness and mercy are seen in His provision for all the needs of man, and men must be thankful and grateful. A great and terrible day is coming, when the earth will be shaken, and God will raise all the dead to life, and will judge them. He will reward those who worship Him and do good deeds, and will condemn in the fires of hell those who do evil deeds, the worst of which is associating other gods with God.

These doctrines also form part of the heart of the Scriptures. Muslims claim they came to Mohammed by direct revelation from God. We believe they came to him from contact with the Jews and the influence of their Scriptures. There was no other religion in the world besides Judaism that vigorously affirmed the strictly monotheistic concept of God, and physical resurrection and they had been doing it long before Mohammed came on the scene. It would therefore be arrogant and presumptuous for any other religion that came after Judaism to claim to be the originators or sole

advocates of the doctrine.

THE EFFECTS OF MOHAMMED'S PREACHING

When Mohammed made the claim that he was a prophet sent by God, there were few people who at once believed on him. They were his wife Khadijeh, a young cousin Ali, who was a member of his family, and his adopted son Zaid. Then an honourable merchant, later known as Abu Baker, who was not a relative, professed faith in Mohammed. And others, most of them people of humble origin, joined the movement. But the leading people of the city, whom Mohammed was eager to win, ignored and soon began to ridicule him. Who did he think he was to make such a claim for himself? They regarded his message about resurrection as incredible. How could dead bones come to life again? They accused him of sorcery and fraud. As Mohammed began to attack the gods in the Kaaba, saying they were no gods, the men of Mecca became increasingly angry and began to persecute his little band of a hundred or so followers. But they could do nothing to Mohammed because he was protected by his uncle Abu Talib.

The persecution became so severe that Mohammed sent 80 of his followers to Ethiopia, which was a Christian country. They were well treated there, until they later joined Mohammed in Medina. The opposition did not stop Mohammed's bitter denunciation of his enemies, whom he threatened with the wrath of God. New converts joined him and he encouraged them to be strong by telling them stories he had heard of the courage of the ancient prophets in times of suffering recorded in the Scriptures.

THE FORMATION OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

During these years Mohammed was engaged in building up a community of people bound together not by blood ties, as in Arab society, but by faith in Allah and his apostle. Their basic belief, which later became their creed about 60 years after Mohammed's death was "There is no god but Allah; Mohammed is the apostle of Allah." Among the religions of the world, there is not one that has a shorter creed. This is the motto of the Muslim's life. By repeating these words, an unbeliever can be accepted and a backslider can be welcomed back. Those who submitted in faith to Allah and his apostle were known as "Muslims," since in Arabic Muslim (or Moslem) means "one who submits." From the same Arabic root comes "Islam," which means "submission." This became the name by which the movement was known. So "Islam" refers to the religion, and "Moslem" or "Muslim" refers to the followers of that

religion.

Islam was from the first conceived to be a “church-state” - a religio-political society, in which Mohammed was under God, the ruler in matters both religious and civil. His position resembled that of Moses in the theocracy of Israel. The Quraish (those who controlled the city of Mecca and its Kaaba) realized that a state within their state was being created, and they deeply resented its presence.

In the tenth year of his mission (620AD) Mohammed suffered two great losses. His uncle Abu Talib and his faithful wife Khadijah died. After a few months he sought comfort by marrying the widow of one of the believers. He also married Ayisha, the seven year old daughter of his friend Abu Bakr, whom he took to his abode three years later. She became his favourite wife.

THE DECISION TO MOVE TO MEDINA

Being unable to make further progress in Mecca, Mohammed saw no alternative but to a transfer of his mission to a more favourable location. He decided to go to Yathrib, a city 450 kilometres north of Mecca, which after his going there became known as Medina (“the city of the prophet”). The people there were more open minded and about half of the inhabitants of that region were Jews.

The pagan Arabs looked up to the Jews for their superior culture which had its source in the Scriptures, but they resented their economic success and wealth.

It is said that in 621AD Mohammed met 12 men from Medina who had come to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage and converted them to Islam. They made more converts in their city, and at the pilgrimage a year later, 72 men and 2 women from Medina met Mohammed and swore allegiance to him, promising to defend him with their lives. He also promised to fight for them. From this allegiance we see the nature of the society Mohammed wanted to establish.

As the time of his death approached, Mohammed had a dream which must have cheered him as he contemplated his 13 years of unsuccessful effort to win the people of his native city of Mecca to his side. He saw himself carried from Mecca to Jerusalem, the city which he and his followers faced in their worship, as did the Jews. From Jerusalem he was carried up into heaven where he talked with apostles and prophets of the past, and was attested and honoured by them. In some of the Moslem traditions this “night journey” is regarded as an actual bodily ascension to heaven. But his favourite wife Ayisha insisted that on that night Mohammed did not leave his bed (1 bn 1 shaq / hisham 265). It was not a physical journey but a dream, possibly triggered from his subconscious by the account in the Scriptures of Jesus physically ascending to heaven from

the mount of Olives at Jerusalem. (The Bible categorically claims that Jesus alone among men has ascended to heaven John 3:13),

THE MIGRATION TO MEDINA

In his final message to the people of Mecca Mohammed sternly denounced them for their unbelief and threatened them with terrible punishment, both in this world and also in the next. He then told his followers to make their way in small parties to Medina, a journey of several weeks by camel. Learning that the Quaraish were planning to prevent him from departing, he and Abu Bakr escaped from the city, hid for several days in a cave, and then by a safe route made their way to Medina.

This migration took place in the summer of 622AD and is called in Arabic “Hijra” which means “migration” or “emigration.” Muslims date their history from this date, since it is thought that Islam truly began when Mohammed and his followers established their community in Medina. Today in Muslim lands’ documents, letters, newspapers, etc, are dated from “Hijra.”

During his years in Mecca, Mohammed never claimed divinity or that he had performed a miracle to prove he was a prophet. However, when asked what sign he could show to convince the people that God had sent him, he replied that his miracle was his revelations, later recorded in the Koran, the verses of which are called “signs” in Arabic. Jesus however, not only received revelations, but also performed real signs such as healing lepers, restoring sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and raising the dead. Mohammed considered the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians to be true, but he believed the followers of these religions had misinterpreted them and had corrupted their religions. It can be inferred from this that he believed he was called by God to restore the true teaching of the Scriptures. He believed that God had sent him to call people (Arabs and Jews) back to the true worship of God, which was the religion of Abraham. (Mohammed of course claimed to be a descendant of Abraham through his son Ishmael). In leading his followers in worship, Mohammed imitated the Jews in facing Jerusalem, and he was eager to win the allegiance and support of the Jews (who were also of course descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac).

MOHAMMED IN MEDINA

Mohammed soon became civil as well as the religious leader in Medina, as more and more people submitted to him and became Muslims. It seems that he ruled wisely and brought law and order to his

new capital, which had previously suffered considerable in-fighting.

Mohammed at first looked to the Jews in Medina to support his claims. It was probably at this time that a revelation came to him to take a conciliatory attitude toward people who had not believed on him, and not to use force to induce them to accept Islam. The command was: "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Sura 2:257).

Though some Jews assured Mohammed that his coming had been predicted in their Scriptures, which was the attestation he wanted, most of them remained aloof. They knew he did not fit into the category of their Biblical prophets and certainly could not be their Messiah, who must be of the family of David. When Mohammed detected their attitude, he called them hypocrites. They then told him frankly that his coming was not foretold in their Scriptures, and he replied by accusing them of misinterpreting their sacred books. He did not at that stage charge them with changing the text of the Scriptures, but of omitting and rejecting the reference to him.

In the second year of the Hegira, the break with the Jews became complete. He had at first observed their holy day of Atonement, but now instituted in its place the Ramadan month of fasting. He also instituted the Feast of Sacrifice in memory of Abraham's sacrificing the ram instead of his son (whom Mohammed believed to be his ancestor Ishmael, not Israel's ancestor Isaac). Up until now, Mohammed and his followers had faced north toward Jerusalem in their worship, but Mohammed claimed to have had a revelation to change the prayer direction to Mecca. Having failed to win the Jews, Mohammed sought in this way to win the favour of the Quraish in Mecca.

Mohammed justified this radical change by asserting that the Kaaba in Mecca had been dedicated by Abraham and was the original centre for the worship of God. This turnabout in worship was an act of great significance, for it indicated an abandonment of the Jewish-Christian tradition and connection, and the launching forth of a new course which was related to, but in many essentials in conflict with the teachings of the Bible. Islam had now been established as an independent religio-political system, based only on those parts of the Scriptures and Mohammed's own private interpretations of them which suited his cause.

THE DECISION TO USE FORCE

Mohammed had tried for 13 years by peaceful means to induce the people of Mecca to submit to him and had failed. He claimed that he was then given a revelation: "O prophet, contend against the infidels and be rigorous with them" (Sura 9:74). So he resorted to the sword and captured and raided the caravans of Mecca. By hurting them and helping

himself, he was able to alleviate financial difficulties he and his party were experiencing.

Encouraged by his victories, Mohammed went forth in person with 350 armed men and defeated the army of 1,000 men who had come from Mecca to protect a caravan returning from Syria laden with merchandise. It is said that 49 men in the army from Mecca were killed, while Mohammed lost 14 of his followers.

This victory was of great importance for Islam. It gave Mohammed confidence that God was with him, and it convinced his followers that they were on the winning side, and would profit from future victories. It alarmed the Quraish in Mecca, who began to fear they would finally be defeated by Mohammed. It also induced many pagan Arabs to come to Medina and submit to Mohammed as their ruler. And it indicated that the sword was more effective than the tongue in making converts for Islam!

ATTACKS ON THE JEWS

The Jews were unhappy over Mohammed's victory and some of them composed and recited verses in which they ridiculed the people of Medina for submitting to a man who had slain his own Arab people in battle. The Muslim historians tell of at least 4 Jews, one of whom was a woman, who were assassinated by the zealous followers of Mohammed for this crime. They were not even rebuked by Mohammed for doing this.

Regarding the Jews as his enemies, Mohammed determined to get rid of them. When one community of Jews called Banu Qainuqa, refused to accept Islam, the Muslims drove them from their homes and confiscated all their property. This action was repeated against other Jewish communities.

Muslim tradition states that Gabriel came to Mohammed on one occasion and ordered him to arise and strike a large Jewish tribe called the Banu Quraiza, due to their failure to participate in one of his battles. The women and children were sold into slavery, their property was divided among Muslim soldiers, and their 800 men were taken to Medina and there massacred by beheading. Thus the Jews in and about Medina were eliminated.

THE WIVES OF MOHAMMED

After the death of his first wife Khadijeh, Mohammed took one wife after another. After he married his 6th wife he desired to marry Zainab, the beautiful wife of Zaid, his adopted son. According to Arab custom it was unlawful for a man to marry the wife of an adopted son, even if her husband divorced her. However, Mohammed claimed to have

received a revelation that God permitted him to have Ainab, whereupon Zaid divorced her and she became Mohammed's 7th wife. At the time of his death, according to Muslim historians, Mohammed had 12 wives and 2 concubines.

Ultimately Mohammed raised an army of 10,000 men to conquer Mecca, which he did, due to them realizing further resistance was useless and due to the threat of force by the sword they accepted the Muslim faith. Mohammed went to the Kaaba and ordered all the images be brought out one by one and ceremoniously destroyed them. He took over the rule of the city from which he had fled 8 years before. Mecca now became the centre of Islam with Mohammed as supreme leader.

CONVERSION BY FORCE COMMANDED

During the following year, many tribes, realizing that they could no longer resist Mohammed, came and submitted to him. At this time Mohammed claimed to have received a revelation which cancelled the previous command not to use force in making converts (Sura 2:257). It was this: "When the sacred months are past, kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them, and seize them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush; but if they shall convert and observe prayer and pay the obligatory alms, let them go their way" (Sura 9:5). The purpose of this command was to put an end to idolatry, and it was outwardly, at least, highly successful.

Not only were pagans forced at the point of the sword to become Muslims, but a Christian prince in the north of Arabia named Ukaider was also threatened with death if he did not accept Islam. From this it can be inferred that Christians at this time were regarded as polytheists. This was due to the doctrine of the Trinity, which Muslims regarded as believing in three gods, not one.

In discussion with the Christians of Nejran in the south of Arabia, Mohammed said Jesus was his brother (probably because they were both descendants of Abraham). Mohammed said that Jesus was only a servant of God, by whose permission he had healed the sick and raised the dead to life. Mohammed did not accept that Jesus was God's son but the Christians did and refused to deny this to become Muslims. On this occasion Mohammed permitted these Christians to keep their religion and be under his protection, provided they paid a high tribute. Mohammed made no effort to learn from them the true teachings of their religion. He only wished to subdue and control them, and in this he succeeded.

FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE AND DEATH OF MOHAMMED

In the 10th year of the Hegira, Mohammed went to Mecca for the Greater Pilgrimage and it is said that 100,000 people accompanied him. He performed all the rites of the pilgrimage according to the ancient pagan customs, thus incorporating them into his religion. He there delivered an address in which he said: "This day I have perfected your religion for you" (Sura 5:5).

Not long after the return of Mohammed to Medina he became very ill. Finally, on June 8, 632AD, Mohammed died as he rested on Ayisha's lap. It is said that a grave was dug in that very place and later a Mosque was built and the grave became a place of pilgrimage.

Disputes arose over who Mohammed's successor should be . Assassinations took place and wars followed over this issue and still do, Muslims slaying Muslims. However, in spite of these serious internal difficulties, the Muslim armies eager for plunder and conquest, went forth with the sword to conquer the world. They met with amazing success which they believed was proof that God was with them.

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CHAPTER TWO QUESTIONING THE VALIDITY OF MOHAMMED'S CLAIMS

When you analyse the history of Islam, there were basically two things that launched it as a religion and Mohammed as its prophet. The first was Mohammed's claim to have had a revelation that Allah alone was God and all idols are not gods and must be rejected, and that Mohammed should be accepted as Allah's prophet. Secondly, Mohammed's use of the sword to enforce his religion and himself as the prophet. Let us now consider these two launch pads:

Mohammed didn't need a special revelation from God that there is only one God and that idols are not gods. 2,000 years before Mohammed was born Abraham believed in one God, and the Jews, Abraham's descendants through Isaac believed the same for over 2,000 years before Mohammed was born and taught it right up to Mohammed's time and beyond up to our present day.

Ishmael was Abraham's first son, not born by his wife but by an Egyptian slave named Hagar, and Mohammed traced his lineage back to Ishmael. It is evident from the names of Ishmael's 12 sons listed in Gen. 25:12-16 that they migrated eastward into Arabia, and it is generally accepted that the Arabs descended from them. Isaac, however, was Abraham's second son, born by Sarah, Abraham's only wife, from whom the Jews descended. This means that the Arabs and Jews are half brothers, both descended from Abraham but through different mothers. For this reason Mohammed said on one occasion that Jesus was his brother.

As already mentioned, Abraham was a strict monotheist, and for the most part the Jews strictly held to the same conviction, and it is affirmed countless times in their Scriptures. From ancient times large numbers of Jews had resided in Arabia, and there was a community in Mecca. In Medina there were 3 large tribes of Jews, with their synagogues and Scriptures which were inspired by the One true God of Abraham, whose name was known as Yahweh and which Allah is regarded by some as the Arabic equivalent. The Arabs knew that the Jews were anti-idolatry and strict monotheists, worshippers of the one supreme God. The concept of the one and only supreme God believed by the Jews would therefore be well known. At the time the pagan Arabs (i.e. idolaters) looked up to the Jews for their superior culture which had its source in the Scriptures, and it is evident that Mohammed knew about these Scriptures. As we have seen, in the early days before Mohammed publicly professed belief in one supreme God, he had religious discussions with a Hannif who was one of his wife's relatives who had become a Christian, and such discussions would have inevitably involved the Scriptures which teach that there is

only one God. It is clear that initially, Mohammed endorsed the Scriptures and would therefore be familiar with the monotheistic concept of God. Being illiterate, unable to read or write, Mohammed could not read or study the Scriptures himself, but it is clear from his history that he picked up a smattering of knowledge about them from what he heard. However, due to the Jews not accepting that Mohammed had been prophesied in their Scriptures, and due to the so-called “Christians” believing God was a Trinity, Mohammed believed the followers of these religions had misinterpreted and corrupted the Scriptures and God had appointed him to restore and call people back to the true faith of Abraham.

In view of these facts of history, it is not difficult to perceive Mohammed himself being influenced by the Scriptures and realizing that there was only one true God and that idols are false gods. And this conviction could have easily inspired him with the desire to campaign for Allah and promulgate and promote his name. Intense desire can lead to dreams - dreams about being called and commissioned by God to contend for him. History abounds with this kind of phenomenon, resulting in countless sects and cults being led by false prophets and Messiahs who, claiming to be divinely appointed, have been deceived by self-induced dreams into self-appointing themselves. The Scriptures themselves record many examples of this happening and warn of more occurring later. For example, Ezekiel 13:2-3: “Thus says the Lord to those who prophesy out of their own hearts: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.”

This brings us back to Mohammed’s dreams. Were they inspired by the human spirit or the Holy Spirit? How can we tell? How can we decide? Is there a yardstick against which they can be tested and measured? If not, we are at the mercy of every false prophet and deceiver under the sun. Surely we don’t have to just take a man’s word for it and believe everything he says without some kind of proof or evidence! Just because something is written down on paper doesn’t prove it is inspired.

The only and true test of authenticity is whether or not a dream is consistent with the teaching of the Scriptures which were inspired by the omniscient infallible God of Abraham. As the Scriptures declare in Isa. 8:20: “If anyone does not speak according to this Word it is because they have no light (enlightenment) in them.” Also 1 Pet. 4:11: “If any man speaks (i.e. on behalf of God) let him speak consistently with the oracles of God” (i.e. the Scriptures). Without the yardstick of the inspired Scriptures, the sky is the limit. Every Tom, Dick and Harry could claim to have had a divinely inspired visitation and communication and many do, and there would be no way of testing them without the Scriptures. Even Mohammed himself at one point is exhorted to test the truthfulness of his own message against the contents of the previous divine revelations to

Jews and Christians (10:94).

So the question is: How does Mohammed measure up in this regard? Are his so-called “revelations” consistent with the Scriptures? Well, take for example his claim that the angel Gabriel came to him at a cave as he slept and said that God created man from clots of blood (Sura 96). In the Scriptures, in the book of Genesis which records the history of Abraham, it is recorded that God made man out of the dust (or clay) of the ground, not blood (Gen. 2:7). He created man with blood but not out of blood. And when God spoke about death, He did not say: “For thou art blood and unto blood shalt thou return.” No! He said: “For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). The high ranking angel Gabriel clearly would not contradict God and His Word by telling Mohammed that man was created from clots of blood and repeat it twice. Significantly enough, when Mohammed awoke he was in great doubt as to whether his experience was from the Jinn (devil) or Allah. One thing is certain: it wasn’t from God - not the God of Abraham. And if this was the case with this dream, it immediately casts doubts on all his other dreams.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE KORAN

Muslims are quick to claim that there are contradictions in the Bible, especially in relating to numbers, but they can be explained and many books are available to demonstrate this. But at the moment the point being made is that there are many contradictions in the Koran. Yet, according to the Koran (4:82): “Had the Quran been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.” So, on the basis of the Koran’s own testimony, it cannot be from God if it contains discrepancies, and it does! Muslims claim the Koran is perfect and has never been changed. But manuscript evidence shows something different. We have 6 earliest manuscripts and they don’t agree. They are different from the Koran that is used today. More than 26 different Arabic Korans have been discovered around the world that don’t agree with one another.

An example of the discrepancies in the Koran is that Mohammed claimed that God told Abraham to offer Ishmael as a sacrifice upon Mount Moriah at Jerusalem, not Isaac. But according to the Scriptures, it was Isaac not Ishmael who Abraham was asked to offer (Gen. 22). The life of Abraham is recorded in considerable detail from Genesis chapter 12 to chapter 25, and these 13 chapters are presented in strict chronological order. In chapter 21 Ishmael and his mother Hagar were expelled from Abraham’s camp due to Ishmael’s antagonistic behaviour towards Isaac, and there is no record of them ever being seen again by Abraham. (God promised Abraham the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates and told him to walk through it (Genesis 15:18. 13:14-17). Abraham’s

journeys are recorded in Genesis and there is no mention of him going down into Arabia to Mecca with Ishmael). Some years after expelling Hagar and Ishmael, it is recorded in the next chapter (Genesis 22) that God asked Abraham to offer up Isaac not Ishmael as a sacrifice at Jerusalem. So it was quite an outrageous lie and deception on Mohammed's part to substitute his ancestor Ishmael for Israel's ancestor Isaac, and so seriously contradict the Word of God.

It is important to remember that the book of Genesis, the first book in the Scriptures, was given over 2,000 years before Mohammed was born and it is the original and only historical record of Abraham, and its accuracy and authenticity has been confirmed by the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947. Anyone including Mohammed wanting to recount or give an accurate commentary on Abraham's history, would have to base it on the Genesis account for there is no other. But Mohammed has failed to do this in the most fundamental way possible. He has lied. It is not surprising therefore that Islam says it is permissible to lie if necessary for the sake of Islam. Mohammed had the audacity to add and subtract at will from the divinely inspired record and tailor-make it to suit his own racial prejudices and anti-Semitic pre-convictions. There could be nothing more serious than changing a sacrifice appointed by God, which Mohammed has done by substituting Ishmael for Isaac - a clearly Arab bias and anti-Jewish action, not the correct response to a divinely inspired message.

Other contradictions in the Koran are as follows: The time period of "the great day of God" is said to be 1,000 years in 32:5, but 50,000 in 70:4. Likewise 50:38 says the entire creation took 6 days while 41:9-12 says it took 8 days. 17:103 says Pharaoh was drowned in the sea, but 10:90-92 says he was converted and saved alive from the Red Sea.

According to one hadith in volume 4, Mohammed claims that God told him via the angel Gabriel that if a man has sexual intercourse with his wife and gets discharge first, the child will resemble the father, and if the woman gets discharge first, the child will resemble her. This is completely refuted by the modern science of genetics, and confirms that Mohammed's so called "revelations" were of man not of God.

According to volume 4, Allah created Adam 60 cubits tall, i.e. 90 feet or 27½ metres. No animal body can function at this height. The human heart could not pump blood to that height. Where did Mohammed get this idea from? Not from God! It is unscriptural, unhistorical, and irrational.

It is on record that Mohammed referred to some Jews who were cursed and changed into rats. The evidence given that Jews are rats is because if you put the milk of a she camel in front of a rat it will not drink it, and due to the teaching of the Torah about camels, the Jews will not drink milk from a camel.

Another unscientific theory presented in volume 4 is that one of the wings of a fly has a disease and the other has the cure for the disease. Also: fever is caused by the heat of a fire and can be abated with water; angels do not enter a house which has a dog or a picture of a dog; a believer eats in 7 intestines. Very unscientific reasoning!

There are several hadith which tell us that Mohammed was sometimes under the influence of magic (enchantment) which made him imagine things that were not so and tell untruths. S B 4. 54. 490 gives another version of the tradition which starts: Magic was worked on the prophet so that he began to fancy that he was doing a thing which he was not actually doing. The hadith then goes on to say who bewitched him ('Lubaid Bin Al-a'sam') and how Mohammed was cured. A similar account appears in S B 7. 71.660. This causes a serious problem for Moslems. If Mohammed sometimes imagined things, then his credibility as a prophet disappears.

Muslims believe God created angels sinless but they will finally die and be raised in the resurrection. Jesus taught that angels cannot die and therefore will not need a resurrection (Luke 20:35-36).

As we have seen, Mohammed had an aversion to the virgin Mary conceiving by the power of God and of Jesus being the son of God due to being divinely begotten. However, the Scriptures unashamedly use the biological terms of conception and begettal and unequivocally state that Mary "conceived" by the Holy Spirit and that Jesus was "begotten" by God. One thousand years before Jesus was even born, the Scriptures prophesied that he would become God's son due to being begotten by Him (Psalms 2:7). And 700 years before he was born, the Scriptures prophesied that his birth would be as a result of a virgin giving birth to him (Isaiah 7:14). There is no way in which these Scriptures can be negated with the stroke of a pen without any evidence to support it other than prejudice. If God chose to have a son, could there be anything more serious than denying this and virtually accuse Him of being a liar?! Having a son does not negate the oneness of God as is implied in the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus never taught the doctrine of the Trinity but upheld the monotheistic doctrine of God believed by Abraham. In his prayer to God, Jesus referred to Him as "the only true God" (John 17:3). The Greek word translated "only" is "monos" from which "monotheistic" is derived and means single, solitary, undivided, as in the words monorail, monocle, monogamy. Jesus believed in true monotheism that God is a single solitary undivided person. He is "one" in a mathematical or numerical sense - one person, not three. And so Jesus confessed: "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Jesus was "one" with his Father in the sense of being united in heart, but not the same person nor equal.

There are literally hundreds of prophecies in the Scriptures referring

to Jesus. His birth, the nature of his birth, the place of his birth, the time in history of his birth, the length of his ministry, the signs and miracles of his ministry, the time of his death and nature of his death, the length of period he would be dead, his resurrection and ascension to heaven and his second coming etc etc were all prophesied in the Scriptures long before he was born, forming a mould into which only one man in history can fit and that man is not Mohammed but Jesus. Mohammed has no such mould in the prophetic writings to which he can appeal to be vindicated as a true fore-ordained prophet. He claimed to be a prophet but true prophets don't merely forth-tell messages, they also fore-tell future events, and he never prophesied and no prophecies were given about him before his birth or after.

The Scriptures clearly teach that a prophet is vindicated as a prophet when his prophecies are fulfilled. Mohammed lacks this vindication because he never prophesied the future. Reference is made in the Koran to Gog and Magog and apocalyptic events that will occur in the end time, but they were all prophesied by the Biblical prophets long before Mohammed's time, and the Koran merely regurgitates them, adding a Muslim flavour. All the Biblical prophets prophesied and the pages of the Scriptures are full of their prophecies. Incredible far-reaching prophecies are given of nations mentioned by name, many of which have been fulfilled and more are showing signs of being fulfilled today. The Koran is devoid of such prophecies.

Mohammed is a self-appointed, self-proclaimed false prophet who has led millions astray. He even had the audacity to assert that Jesus was not crucified and did not really die even though the Scriptures testify of many, including his own mother seeing him crucified and risen from the dead.

Mohammed's inability to prophecy future events as did the Biblical prophets, and his contradictions, inconsistencies, idiosyncrasies and unscientific superstitious notions displayed in his utterances; disqualify him on the most fundamental grounds as a prophet of God. If the Arabs had known and believed the Scriptures, Mohammed's ministry would never have got off the ground! His religion thrived on ignorance and continues to do so because Muslims are discouraged from reading and believing the Scriptures inspired by God's Holy Spirit.

Mohammed clearly endorsed the authority of the Scriptures and many references in the Koran testify to this. But he contended that many of the Biblical accounts had been changed and falsified and given wrong interpretations and applications. And we would agree with him particularly in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity which emerged around the 3rd century A.D. and was contrary to the monotheistic concept of God revealed to Abraham and his Jewish descendants, and confirmed

by Jesus.

NO REFERENCE TO MOHAMMED IN THE SCRIPTURES

But unfortunately Mohammed himself was also guilty of twisting, misinterpreting and misapplying Scripture to suit his own ends. He very conveniently rejected Scriptures that disagreed with his own prejudices and convictions, setting himself up as an authority over and above God who inspired those Scriptures. He also convinced himself that some Scriptures prophesied his coming and we will now look at those Scriptures and see how he twisted and wrongly applied them.

Take for example Deuteronomy 18:15 where God told Moses that He would raise up a prophet from among his brethren. Mohammed believed that the prophet referred to here was himself. But in its context the reference to “his brethren” refers to Moses’ fellow Israelites whom he was leading to the promised land, not Ishmaelites (Arabs). It is impossible to apply this to Mohammed or the Arabs. To attempt to do so does a serious disservice to the Word of God. Deuteronomy 18:15 is actually quoted and applied to Jesus in Acts 3:22 and 7:37. Moreover, Deuteronomy 18 says that any man claiming to be a prophet who does not speak in the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel, but speaks in the name of another god (eg Allah) shall die.

Isaiah 29:9-14 is another passage that some Muslim scholars claim refers to Mohammed. Most Muslim scholars say Mohammed was illiterate and in this passage of Scripture in Isaiah 29 reference is made to an unlearned prophet. Because Mohammed couldn’t read or write, it is applied to him. This is a rather bizarre claim because if the context of the passage is studied carefully, it is referring to a false, unlearned and ignorant prophet who is being rebuked because he has taught the ideas of man and not God! If this were a prophecy about Mohammed, it would demonstrate that Islam is a false religious system based on the teachings of man and not God.

Muslim scholars also apply a verse in Jeremiah 28:9 to Mohammed which refers to a prophet of peace. But a careful consideration of the context reveals that Jeremiah is referring to a false prophet named Hananiah who prophesied peace and prosperity, whereas Jeremiah the true prophet predicted war and tumult that God was going to send as a judgement upon an ungodly nation. This is another example of Muslim scholars taking a reference to a false prophet and applying it to Mohammed. Anyone who knows the history of Mohammed knows he was not a man of peace, but war. He was a warlord.

In their conceit, Muslims are sure that as Moses and other prophets foretold the coming of Jesus, so Jesus must have foretold the coming of

Mohammed. One claim that is sometimes heard from Muslims is that Jesus referred to Mohammed when he said he was going to go away but would send the Comforter (Greek Paraclete). Some Muslim scholars have asserted that Jesus in this prediction did not use the word paraclete but the Greek word “periclutos” which means “praised.” In Arabic the word “Mohammed” means “praised,” so on this basis it is claimed that Jesus promised the coming of Mohammed, but Christians changed the word to paracletos in order to reject Mohammed. However, the original Greek text of the ancient manuscript, the Codex Vaticanus, which was written long before the time of Mohammed has not been changed. But apart from that, a careful study of the context of Jesus’ promise reveals that his reference to the Comforter was a reference to the Holy Spirit which he promised would inspire and empower his immediate disciples after his ascension to heaven, which it did in the first century A.D. It was not a promise that a prophet would come 6 centuries later! To equate Mohammed with the Holy Spirit power of God that inspired and empowered the Christians would even be contrary to Muslim doctrine, but such a conclusion is inevitable if it be insisted that the Comforter referred to Mohammed.

A “ME TOO” MOVEMENT

As we have seen, when Mohammed became civil as well as the religious leader in Medina, he looked at first to the Jews in Medina to support his claims that Allah was the one and only true God and Mohammed was His prophet. Some Jews accepted both of these propositions and also that Mohammed had been predicted in their Scriptures, but most of the Jews didn’t and remained aloof. They accepted the long-held belief that God was one, but they did not believe Mohammed was a divinely ordained prophet and they told him that he had not been foretold in their Scriptures. Mohammed was so convinced of his own self-appointment as a prophet that he in return charged them with misreading and misinterpreting the Scriptures and accused them of being hypocrites.

As already pointed out, in the second year of the hegira the break with the Jews became complete. Mohammed had formerly observed the Jewish holy day of Atonement, but now substituted it for the Ramadan day of fasting. Up until now, Mohammed and his followers had faced north toward Jerusalem in their worship, but Mohammed claimed to have had a revelation to change the prayer direction to Mecca. (Mohammed would not have considered that God in fact didn’t want Muslims looking toward His holy city of Jerusalem!) Having failed to win the Jews, Mohammed sought in this way to win the favour of the Quraish in Mecca.

This turnabout in worship was significant, for it indicated an

abandonment of the Jewish tradition, and the launching forth of a new religion, which was related to and contained doctrines and practices that reflected, resembled and imitated some of those believed and practised by the Jews. A committed Hamas member who converted to Christianity said: “The Muslims have borrowed rituals and traditions from all surrounding religions.” Even the use of beads like the Roman Catholic’s Rosaries. One type of Rosary has 99 beads, each bead representing one of the names of Allah. A smaller version has 33 beads. It is not difficult to see Mohammed’s religion as a “me too” copy-cat movement, seeking to rival and replace Judaism in particular by making various modifications. And, in view of Mohammed’s history , this comes as no surprise.

As mentioned earlier, Mohammed’s ancestor Ishmael was Abraham’s son, born not to his wife but to an Egyptian slave named Hagar, from whom Arab tribes descended. Isaac was also Abraham’s son born to his wife Sarah, and was Abraham’s heir according to God’s promise. During the celebration when Isaac was being weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking and antagonizing (persecuting) Isaac. He was jealous of Isaac being the centre of all the attention and of him being Abraham’s heir. He had a “me too” mentality. He wanted what Isaac had; he wanted to be what Isaac was. And this “me too” attitude seems to be the attitude that drove his descendant Mohammed to want to replace the Jewish religion with his own and eliminate the Jews. It is not difficult to see Ishmael’s persecution of Isaac as prophetic of the future animosity and antagonism of Arabs towards Jews, which is largely due to Mohammed’s counterfeit religion of Islam. However, it was not Isaac’s fault that Ishmael was expelled from Abraham’s household. God told Abraham to do it, not Isaac who was only a newly weaned child at the time.

The following are some examples of the “me too” mentality which led to Islam imitating and trying to replace the Jewish religion:

1. The primary statement in the Jewish creed given by God over 2,000 years before Mohammed states: “Hear O Israel Yahweh our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4). The primary statement in the Islamic creed similarly states “There is no god but Allah.”

2. God promised Isaac and his descendants (Israel) possession of the holy land and expelled Ishmael. Israel occupied the land over a period of around 1,500 years and archaeological evidence proves this. But due to sin, God caused the Jews to be exiled but promised to regather them and establish them as a nation. But during their exile the Muslims moved in with their “me too” attitude and claimed possession of the land.

3. The Jews were told to face Jerusalem when they prayed. Mohammed initially imitated this but later reversed the direction by telling the Arabs to face Mecca when they pray.

4. God told Israel to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Mohammed told

Muslims to make pilgrimages to Mecca.

5. The Jews built their temple on Mount Moriah at Jerusalem. The Muslims built a mosque on the same site, even though there were other places it could have been built, and multitudes of Mosques elsewhere.

6. Inside the Jewish temple regarded as the house of Yahweh, was the most holy place which was a cube in which the presence of Yahweh resided. Islam's most sacred site is the Kaaba at Mecca, and in Arabic "Kaaba" means "cube" because it is a square building, and was also known as the "house of Allah."

7. Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem. As his death approached, Mohammed had a dream of himself being carried up to heaven from Jerusalem, but Muslims later claimed it actually happened.

8. Moses received the 10 commandments at Sinai written by God on tablets of stone. Mohammed claimed that the "revelations" he received were written from eternity on a tablet in heaven and were brought down to him by the angel Gabriel. (Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, went a stage further and claimed to have received revelation from God on gold plates sent by an angel from heaven which got written down in the book of Mormon, a book similar in size to the Koran).

9. Israel practised circumcision. So do the Muslims.

10. In the laws given to Moses the Jews were told to abstain from eating certain foods. The Muslim law follows closely the Mosaic law, which forbids the eating of swine's flesh and other kinds of meats.

11. Jewish law required Saturday to be a sacred day. Mohammed imitated this but changed the day to Friday and made it the same kind of sacred day.

12. Abraham was asked by God to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Mohammed changed this and claimed it was his ancestor Ishmael, not Isaac, who God told Abraham to offer.

13. God gave Israel the Scriptures. Muslims claim that God has given them Scriptures - Mohammed's writings. But God said to Israel: "I have declared my Word to Israel and have not done so with any other nation" (Psalm 147:19). God chose the Israelites, not the Ishmaelites to be the recipients and custodians of His Word. Galatians 4 teaches that it was to be through Isaac's line not Ishmael's, that the nations were to be blessed. God's purpose of redemption was to be through Sarah and her son, not Hagar and her son.

14. God commanded Israel to kill all Canaanite idolaters because He wanted monotheistic Israel to inherit the land of Canaan which He had promised to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac. He never gave a promise to Ishmael's descendants to possess Canaan, and neither did He command them to kill fellow Arabs or Jews.

THE USE OF FORCE

Mohammed claimed that he was given a revelation to use force against those who would not submit to him and be violent with them. So he resorted to the sword, gaining great victories involving the killing of fellow Arabs. This gave Mohammed and his followers confidence that God was with him. It put fear into the hearts of the pagan Arabs, inducing many of them to submit to him as ruler. Mohammed could see that the sword was more effective than the tongue in making converts for Islam, so took advantage of it.

During Mohammed's 10 years in Medina, he planned 65 military campaigns and raids, and he personally led 27 of them. Warfare became the pattern of Muslim outreach. It was due to Mohammed being armed with the sword that initially enabled Islam to get established, not love for him or his religion. Fear, not love, gave the religion momentum and once it gained that momentum and new generations were indoctrinated, it multiplied exceedingly. A bigger contrast between Mohammed's religion involving force and Christ's teaching and promotion of love and peace could not be found.

Regarding the Jews as his enemies, Mohammed determined to get rid of them, driving them from their homes and confiscating all their property. Muslim tradition states that the angel Gabriel told Mohammed on one occasion to attack a certain Jewish community, resulting in 800 men being massacred, the women and children being sold into slavery and their property being divided among the Muslim soldiers.

Mohammed confessed that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures (the Bible) were true. This means he believed that the Biblical prophets were inspired by the One True God who he called Allah. It is to be expected therefore that the message of anyone claiming to be an inspired prophet of God must be in agreement with the messages of the prophets who preceded him. This is certainly the case with all the Biblical prophets. But the messages of Mohammed in many important respects contradict the Word of God revealed by previous divinely inspired prophets.

Because Mohammed could not read or write, he obviously never personally read and studied the Scriptures himself. He only knew what others told him or read to him. And unless he was told the true interpretation of the Bible and had the whole message read to him systematically from cover to cover, he would not know or understand its true message. And it is evident that this was the case. Not knowing the truth of God's inspired teaching through the Biblical prophets and apostles, Mohammed did not truly know Yahweh the One True God. He knew that He was one, but that is only knowing something about God, not

knowing Him. As we read in Scripture: “You believe in one God, you do well; but even the demons believe that and tremble” (James 2:19). Not truly knowing God, Mohammed placed political expedience and even personal preferences above the moral and ethical principles taught by the Scriptures. He used revelations which he claimed came from God, to justify actions that were clearly contrary to God’s revelation in the Scriptures, and which even the pagan Arabs considered wrong.

In claiming that Islam had replaced Christianity, and that he as the “seal of the prophets” had supplanted Christ, Mohammed rejected God’s holy purpose for the salvation of the world which is only possible through Christ alone. It is not possible therefore for Christians to consider that Mohammed was God’s prophet. Rather he is one of those false prophets foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24:24-25 who would lead many astray.

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CHAPTER THREE

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF MUSLIMS

In Islam as in Christianity there are many different sects and many schools of thought, but all agree in the creed which makes them Muslims: “There is no god but God, Mohammed is God’s apostle.” Most of them also agree in certain basic doctrines and duties of their religion.

Belief in God

1. Allah alone is God and all other gods are only idols which should not be worshipped. The basic belief of Islam is that God is One and attributing partners to God as in the case of the doctrine of the Trinity is the greatest sin one can commit.

Muslims believe God is not body or spirit or substance or attribute. He does not have parts or members and cannot be seen. He is different from anything man can conceive. He is the Creator of all things and sustains the universe by His power and nothing happens without His will. He requires obedience from men and will raise all the dead to life and will judge them. He is forgiving and will pardon whom He will. However, the Bible teaches that God is a person. Having made man in His image, God is clearly the prototype of man and refers to Himself as “Father.”

Belief in God’s angels and Satan

2. Muslims believe God created hosts of angels who are all sinless. They do not eat or drink and are sexless. They will finally die and be raised in the resurrection. Angels are of various ranks. Four bear up the throne of God. They are continually praising God and watch over believers and intercede for them. They take the souls of believers at death and also cause the death of sinners. Nineteen angels guard the gates of hell. Two fierce black angels visit corpses in the grave shortly after burial and ask them three questions: “Who is thy Lord? What is thy religion? Who is thy prophet?” The required answers are: Allah, Islam, Mohammed.

Muslim tradition names the four archangels as Gabriel, Michael, Izrail the angel of death, and Israfil, who will blow the trumpet on the last day to awaken the dead. Gabriel is God’s chief messenger, and in the Koran is referred to as the “Holy Spirit.” It is also accepted in the Koran that it was Gabriel who appeared to the virgin Mary and announced that she would have a son (Sura 19:17). And Michael is accepted as the guardian of the Jews. This information comes from the Scriptures in Daniel 12:1.

It is stated several times in the Koran that when God created Adam He commanded the angels to worship him (Adam). All did so except Iblis (diabolos, the devil), who refused, saying: “He was made of clay, but I was made of fire. I am better than he, so why should I worship him?” God

cursed Iblis for his disobedience and cast him out of paradise, and he became man's chief enemy. He is the head of all the demons. Ideas expressed here about souls and the devil are not supported by the Bible.

Belief in God's prophets

3. In the Koran the names of 28 prophets are found, most of whom are biblical characters. The greatest are said to be Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed because they all introduced new dispensations. It is affirmed that each of the great prophets foretold the coming of the prophet who would succeed him, and the last and greatest of the prophets is Mohammed, the "seal of the prophets" (Sura 33:40). No other prophet will come before the day of resurrection. However, the Bible says Elijah will! (Malachi 4:5).

The Koran contains many stories of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and other Old Testament characters; also of Zecharias and John the Baptist and Jesus. Some accounts agree fairly well with the biblical narrative, and some do not. This is due to Mohammed having never personally read and studied the Scriptures themselves, and having heard stories and interpretations from Jews and Roman Catholics which were either misinterpretations or vain human traditions. The knowledge which Muslims in general have of the biblical prophets is therefore inadequate and in many instances quite incorrect.

Belief in Jesus

4. Muslims consider Jesus to be a very great prophet; in fact, the greatest of the Great Prophets with the exception of Mohammed who took his place. The Koran tells of the birth of Jesus from the virgin Mary and of his miracles, although no detailed accounts are given of the miracles (Sura 5:110, 116).

Jesus in the Koran is called the "Messiah," the "Word of God," and a "Spirit from God." The title by which Muslims often refer to him is "Spirit of God." But he must not be called "son of God," a term generally understood in a physical sense, and he must not be worshipped as a god (Sura 4:169). The Koran has many verses which state that it is not fitting to their concept of the majesty of God that He should beget a son.

There is no suggestion in the Koran that Jesus ever sinned or asked for God's forgiveness, as did other prophets. The Koran says that Jesus "will be illustrious in this world and in the next, and one of those who have near access to God" (Sura 3:40). No other prophet, not even Mohammed, is praised as highly in the Koran as is Jesus Christ. But Muslim tradition has the audacity to claim that Christ's second coming is not, as Christians believe, to set up his kingdom on earth, but to tell Christians and the world to follow Mohammed.

It is a misdirected effort to honour Jesus that the Koran states that the Jews did not crucify him, but somebody like him (Sura 4:156). It is

believed that when Jesus was about to be crucified, God mercifully performed a miracle and delivered him from their hands. He caused someone else to look like Jesus who was crucified by mistake in his place. Jesus was taken by God to heaven, where he is alive today, and from whence he will come again to earth. Muslim misconceptions of the purpose of the cross have led to this conviction.

Belief that Mohammed was predicted

5. The Koran falsely states that Jesus announced the coming of an apostle whose name will be Ahmad (Sura 61:6). This is understood to be a prediction of the coming of Mohammed, the two words being derived from the same Arabic root. Hence, Muslims assert that in believing on Mohammed they have been obedient to the command of Jesus to accept Mohammed, but Christians have not. To the Muslims of the world, Mohammed is the supreme personality, though in the Koran it is stated that he is only an imperfect man like other men (Sura 18:110). However, Muslims later regarded Mohammed as a “perfect man,” a sinless being, whose example should be followed in everything.

Belief in the books of God

6. It is said that the number of books given to the prophets is 104. In the Koran there are references to the Torat (of Moses), the Suhuf (sheets or books of the prophets), Zabur (Psalms of David), Injil (gospel of Jesus), and Quran (Koran of Mohammed). All of these books are the Word of God and it is claimed that the teaching is all basically the same. However, it is asserted that when God gives a new book to one of the great prophets He thereby abrogates the previous books. For the present age the Koran is alone adequate, and after the coming of Mohammed, only its commands are binding on believers. (This would therefore mean that the book of Mormon which came after the Koran, cancels the Koran!) As in the case of the book of Mormon, the Koran is not regarded as the Word of man but the very word of God. It was written from eternity on the “Preserved Tablet” in heaven, and was brought down portion by portion to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel during a period of 22 years. It was spoken by Mohammed and written down by those who heard it and finally collected into a book, which, like the book of Mormon, is a little larger than the New Testament of the Bible.

For some years after the death of Mohammed there was great confusion as to what material of all that had been preserved of his teaching should be included in the Koran. Why, if all that Mohammed received was inspired? This puts a big question mark over the claim that the Koran is inspired. In relation to the Bible, “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). Finally in the caliphate of Othman (644-656) the Koran was put into its final text and was given official approval, and all other material was destroyed. (The caliphate of Othman was the 3rd

caliph or successor of Mohammed).

Belief in resurrection and judgement

7. One of the chief themes in the early preaching of Mohammed was the resurrection of the dead. At a time only known to God the earth will be shaken, the trumpet will be sounded by the angel Israfil, and all (Moslems) in heaven and all men on earth will die. Then the trumpet will sound again and all the dead will rise to life and be called to account. The bridge sirat will have to be crossed from which the wicked will fall into hell. True believers will be welcomed to Paradise and dwell by flowing rivers, recline on silken couches, praising God, and enjoying heavenly food and drink in company with dark eyed maidens. But the rejects will abide in the fires of hell forever, fed with boiling water. Only the martyrs slain in battle for Islam are granted immediate entrance into paradise at death. All other believers must await the day of resurrection. Between death and resurrection they are in a very deep sleep. One does not know until that day whether he is to go to hell or to Paradise.

Religious duties of Muslims

These sacred duties are sometimes called the “Pillars of Faith” and are usually held to be five: 1. prayers, 2. fasting, 3. alms giving, 4. pilgrimage to Mecca, and 5. holy war.

1. Every adult believer is duty bound to pray and worship 5 times (or among the She’ites 3 times) every day.

2. Mohammed commanded that the 9th month of the year, which is called Ramadan, be observed as a time of fasting. The fast was for 30 consecutive days, from dawn to sunset, but food could be eaten between sunset and dawn.

3. Since Mohammed was himself once an orphan and poor, it is not surprising that there is provision made in the Koran for helping the poor and orphans. There is what is called the “Purification Tax” for every Muslim. Sometimes it is stated that this tax for charity should be one tenth of one’s income.

4. Mohammed captured Mecca, his birthplace, which from ancient times had been a sacred city for the Arabs, and he made it the centre of the religion of Islam. He himself made the pilgrimage to Mecca and performed all the customary rites, and his example became law for his followers. Every Muslim man and woman who has the means to make the journey to Mecca should do so at least once in their life. Accordingly , every year in the month of the pilgrimage, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world make their way to Mecca.

5. We learn from the Koran (Sura 9:5) that a revelation came to Mohammed that he should make war on the idolaters of Arabia and force them to submit and become Muslims, and this he did. He did not interpret it in a spiritual manner. He went forth with his army with sword in hand

and killed his fellow Arabs. And the followers of Mohammed likewise used the sword to extend their empire, hoping to conquer all non-Moslems and force them into the fold of Islam, and thus establish Islam as the religio-political system for the world. They believed there must be war until Allah's army prevails.

However, many Muslims today who are shocked by the atrocities committed by Muslim terrorist organizations in the name of Allah, interpret Jihad in a spiritual manner, and say it means a peaceful striving for the cause of Allah. Islam, they maintain, must be advanced not by the sword, but by peaceful means, such as missionary efforts. However this is not how Mohammed and those after him for a long time interpreted his "revelations." And sad to say, Islamic terrorist organizations are actually acting more in accordance with Mohammed's revelations and actions, than his modern peace loving pacifist followers. Many verses could be quoted from the Koran which support violence in the name of Allah and encourage martyrdom. The minority groups in Islam who resort to violence can legitimately claim to be working within the basic parameters of Islamic Jihad. The claim that Islamic terrorism is politically motivated not theologically motivated (i.e. not taught in the Koran) is not correct. One thing is certain: Jesus was anti-violence. He said to love your enemies and turn the other cheek when attacked, which is what he did when he was crucified. But God vindicated him by raising him from the dead. Unfortunately there have always been Christians falsely so called who have resorted to violence, doing a disservice to Christ's teaching and example, and bringing dishonour on his name and cause.

Other Muslim practices

Another practice observed by Muslims in general is circumcision. Though not commanded in the Koran, it is the custom to circumcise all males in infancy or childhood. Another practise is the veiling of women. Mohammed forbade his wives to appear unveiled, and his example became law for most of the Muslim world. But in more modern times many Moslem women in some western cities don't wear veils due to the rights of women being promoted.

Another generally observed practise is that of abstaining from eating food forbidden by the religious law. The Muslim law follows closely the Mosaic law, which forbids the eating of swine's flesh and certain other kinds of meat. Camel flesh is not forbidden by Muslim law as it is in the Old Testament, but the use of alcoholic drinks is forbidden.

It is widely known that polygamy is permitted in Islam. Mohammed set an example in taking at least 12 wives and 2 concubines, but the Koran limits the number for other believers to 4 (Sura 4:31). However, they are permitted to marry more than one wife on the condition they are able to act equitably toward them all. Muslims who today wish to bring the

Islamic practices into harmony with modern usages are maintaining that the Koran really commands monogamy, because no man is able to treat “equitably “ more than one wife. Also, the increasing cost of living has made it difficult for most men to support more than one household. Whatever the cause may be, it seems that there is much less polygamy than there once was. In some Muslim countries polygamy has been made unlawful, except in unusual circumstances.

One cannot help but notice that the duties and practises incumbent on a Muslim are largely external. It would be possible for a person of evil character to go through the ritual of prayers 5 times a day, keep the fast, go to Mecca, eat no pork, and do all that the law requires. It was Jesus who stressed how evil the heart of man is and how fatally easy it is to go through the religious motions of outward acts but ignore the more important actions of love towards one’s neighbour. For this reason he said only the pure in heart will see God, and therefore: “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

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CHAPTER FOUR

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Some Muslims say there is no great difference between Islam and Christianity. Both believe in a living God not idols; both believe that Jesus was a great prophet sent by God; both believe in doing good deeds and hope to be forgiven by God and go to Paradise after death.

It is true that a Christian has more in common with a Muslim than he has with a Hindu or Buddhist. However, when the beliefs of Muslims and Christians are studied in more depth, it soon becomes evident that many doctrines divide them. So we will now consider in more depth some of the doctrines in which the faith of Islam and Christianity are radically different.

1. The authority of the Bible

There is a basic difference between Christians and Muslims in their attitude toward the Bible. It is clear from the Koran that Mohammed believed that the Scriptures were authentic, and in no place in the Koran is it suggested that they had been corrupted (Sura 4:48. 10:94). However, when the Jews told Mohammed that he had not been foretold in their Scriptures, he charged them with misreading or misinterpreting them. On this basis, Muslims today claim that the Bible is no longer trustworthy. Also, because the gospel record about Jesus is written by men (Matthew etc) and not Jesus himself, Muslims say it is not the book which God gave

to Jesus like the book (Koran) given to Mohammed. But Mohammed never wrote the Koran himself. He could not write. Others wrote his teaching for him! And only God knows how many of those writers remembered correctly what Mohammed said, and how many added their own ideas. Moreover, there are many things in the Bible that Muslims maintain are contrary to the Koran. For example, Scripture records how Noah and David and other prophets were guilty of sin, and Muslims say this is a false testimony. Statements in the Koran also deny that Jesus was the son of God and that he himself personally died on the cross and rose from the dead. The Koran not only misquotes the Bible, but also quotes Gnostic and heretical writings which even Bible scholars reject.

2. The nature and character of God

The supposed agreement between Moslems and strictly monotheistic Christians as to the oneness of God does not necessarily imply agreement as to the character of God. Yes, God is one, but what is He like? Is He good and loving and kind as well as strict and severe? Is He a father as well as God? Can one have a personal intimate relationship with him? It is here that the greatest difference between Moslems and Christians becomes apparent.

Christians often assume that all who believe in one God can agree He is our heavenly Father. But Moslems cannot call God "Father." In Islam God is unknowable because He has not made Himself known. Like the people of Athens, many Moslems worship an unknown God. The laws and commands of God are recorded in the Koran, but God Himself is not revealed there. In contrast to this, Yahweh the God of Israel constantly reveals Himself and makes Himself known in the Jewish Scriptures.

It is generally agreed that according to orthodox Islam, the purpose of man is not to know God and become more acquainted with His character or personality, but to know His requirements and obey them. The Koran does not describe God in relational terms. The emphasis in the Koran is not on revealing who God is, but on what He requires. And so Islamic understanding of God's relationship with man is not on a personal intimate level like a father and children, or friend or family, but more an impersonal level like master and slave. God is seen as the Sovereign Monarch, almost a tyrant who requires man to submit to Him as an obedient slave. One Moslem author wrote: "The greatest challenge upon this earth is not so much to explore God as to remember that there is one." Another Moslem scholar, Isma'il Al-Furuqi wrote: "Allah does not reveal Himself to anyone in any way. Allah only reveals His will ... Allah does not reveal Himself to anyone ... that is the great difference between Christianity and Islam."

For example: The Koran refers to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden but removes the reference in Genesis 3 to God walking and talking

with them. Likewise the reference in the Koran to the burning bush episode omits the reference to God conversing with Moses. The lack of relationship between Moslems and Allah is seen in their religion which does not believe that they will ever see their God even in paradise. He is a very distant and remote God, who only reveals his purpose and commands, not himself. Contrast Revelation 21:3 which says God will dwell with us in paradise and will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

God Himself says in Jeremiah 9:23: "Let not the wise man boast about his wisdom, let not the strong man boast about his strength, let not the rich man boast about his riches: But let him who boasts boast in this: that he knows me." And Jesus not only affirmed that eternal life necessitates believing God is one, but also depends on knowing Him. In his prayer to God (who he addressed as "Father") he said: "This is life eternal to know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ who you have sent" (John 17:1-3). He also said: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." Both Abraham and Moses are referred to in the Bible as God's friend (Isaiah 41:8. Exodus 33:11).

Long before Jesus came on the scene, the Scriptures portrayed God as a loving Father having sons. In Noah's day the descendants of Adam's son Seth are referred to as "sons of God" (Genesis 6:2). In Exodus 4:22 we read that God told Moses to say to Pharaoh: "Thus says the Lord, Israel is my son ..." Also Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." In Psalm 82:6 Jewish judges appointed by God are referred to as "children of the Most High." Angels are referred to as "sons of God" in Job 1:6. 38:7, and one angel in Daniel 3:25 is referred to as a "son of God." In Malachi 1:6 and 2:10 God is referred to as Israel's "Father:" "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" Reference to the Internet under the heading "Was God known as Father in the Old Testament Scriptures" soon reveals many references. When Jesus was asked how we should pray, it is not surprising therefore that he said we should start by saying: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." He also said: "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11). It is truly significant that God is referred to in the Scriptures as Israel's Father and they as His children or sons, but the Koran does not claim that kind of personal relationship for Moslems but prefers the impersonal. In this respect the God of the Bible is more endearing than the God of the Koran.

3. The relationship of Jesus to God

In relation to the Christian belief that Jesus is the only begotten son of God, the Moslem reaction would be: "You don't really think that God

took a wife and had a son do you?” But the gospel record is clear: The creative power of God (His Holy Spirit) overshadowed Mary, penetrated her ovum causing her to conceive (Luke 1:26-35). As in all conceptions, the embryo of Jesus was impregnated with genes from his mother and characteristics from his Father. God was clearly his biological Father and Mary was his biological mother. One thousand years before he was born, it was prophesied that the Messiah would be begotten by God (Psalm 2:7). God said: “I will be his Father and he will be My son” (2 Samuel 7:14 and Hebrews 1:5).

Since the time of Christ the majority of Jews have not accepted that Jesus is the son of God and regard the claim as blasphemous. The Moslem’s position on this issue is the same as the Jews and it was probably Mohammed’s early connections with them that influenced him in this direction. Moslems, due to misconceptions from Christendom, do not understand the real point and significance of the cross of Christ, and therefore cannot understand why God would have permitted such a holy and righteous prophet as Jesus to be crucified on a cross. So they have concluded that God performed a miracle by changing one of the enemies to look like Jesus who was crucified by mistake instead of Jesus, and took Jesus alive to heaven where he is today.

Moslems believe Jesus will one day return from heaven and punish pagans, Jews and Christians for their failure to accept Mohammed, God’s last and greatest prophet, and will help establish Islam as the one true religion of the world. But anyone acquainted with the teaching of Jesus and the Scriptures will realize how diametrically opposed such a view is with God’s revelation in the Scriptures. Jesus is not coming back to promote Mohammed or Islam. He is coming to promote himself as king of kings, and his God, the true God - Yahweh the God of Israel.

THE NATURE OF MAN AND ITS BEARING ON HIS FUTURE

Another radical difference between Islamic and Christian beliefs is seen in the understanding of man’s nature and how it relates to his eternal future.

Christians believe that Adam was created innocent and ignorant of sin. He had the potential to sin, but left to himself without any outside adverse influence, sin would not have occurred to him or be conceived by him. He was created “very good.” God did not create him with the desire or urge or inclination to sin. Being created very good, he was also obviously not created mortal. He did not have a mortal degenerative process active in his flesh nature leading and inclining towards death. God did not create him a dying creature.

But because God didn't want man to be a robot, like a machine that blindly obeys without thought, reason or choice, He allowed an outside adverse influence to put the idea of disobedience in Adam's head. This temptation was a test of Adam's obedience, and an opportunity to exercise his freewill, to make a choice between obedience and disobedience, life and death. There is a rich theme in Scripture which teaches that untested faith and obedience is valueless to God. For this reason He tests all His people and it all started with Adam.

As a result of Adam making the choice to respond to the sinful suggestion of the external influence and thereby committing sin, a propensity towards that choice became part of his nature. And due to hereditary factors, all of Adam's descendants inherit a sinful nature. This doctrine is known as "original sin." And due to the same hereditary factors, all of Adam's descendants also inherit mortality, and this doctrine could be called "original mortality," because it was due to Adam's sin that his descendants inherited a mortal nature. The Scriptures are emphatic about this. The sin of Adam and the sinful nature and mortality that came as a result, are unmistakably linked.

But the idea of original sin has no place in the teaching of Islam. It is taught that Adam's descendants suffered no ill effects as a result of his sin. It is claimed that man is born in a natural state of innocence and purity as Adam was before he sinned, and whatever becomes of him after birth is the result of external influences. It is not believed that a single act on Adam's part warped and tainted the human will. It is maintained that human beings are all created innocent, not inherently sinful, but they make choices to their detriment like Adam did.

However, Moslems do accept that Adam disobeyed God (sinned) and was punished by being given a death sentence which involved having a mortal nature. It cannot be denied that all of Adam's descendants inherit a mortal nature and die as a result of his sin. So it must be accepted that due to hereditary factors we are all mortal and die because of Adam's sin, but Moslems cannot accept that, due to the same hereditary factors we all also inherit a sinful nature.

It clearly cannot be argued that humans only become mortal and die because of their own personal individual sins, not Adam's, because a baby is born mortal even though it is innocent and has not sinned. So it is evident that there have been detrimental hereditary effects on human nature as a result of Adam's sin, and Scripture correctly teaches that these effects are both a sinful and mortal nature. The two go together as cause and effect.

Even if it could be proved that mortality and death are caused by personal individual sin, not Adam's sin, mortality and death would still occur and be a problem because everyone sins at some stage during their

life. Moslems claim that due to human nature not being inherently sinful, just ignorant and weak, anyone is able to achieve some sort of obedience if they know what is required of them, and if they are willing to make a whole-hearted effort to obey. But “some sort of obedience” is not perfect 100% obedience, and, as in Adam’s case, it only takes one sin to incur the death penalty.

So Moslems believe and hope that by doing their best and trying their hardest, they can earn and deserve acceptance and approval from God, and avoid judgement and condemnation. They seek to gain acceptance through their own human effort alone. They acknowledge that they sin and need forgiveness, but believe God will put their failures and successes in the balances on judgement day, and if their good works outweigh their bad works, they will be given eternal life and access to Paradise. Moslems therefore say they do not need a Saviour - a conqueror of sins, to get into Paradise. All they need is to make sure their own good works outweigh their bad works. So instead of needing a Saviour, all they need is a teacher and guide like Mohammed to tell them what God wants them to do and warn them of the consequences of not measuring up to an acceptable level of performance.

However, Adam’s single disobedient act caused death, because God pronounced death after that single act was committed. So if people can attain to eternal life if their good behaviour outweighs their bad behaviour, why do those whose good behaviour outweighs their bad die? And why did Adam have to die in the first place after just one act of bad behaviour, without being given the opportunity to outweigh it with good behaviour? The answer is clear: Just one act of sin - just one act of bad behaviour incurs the death penalty, irrespective of how many acts of good behaviour are performed. So it is futile trying to earn eternal life by outweighing bad behaviour with good behaviour.

When God put Adam’s obedience to the test, He made it clear to him that if he disobeyed (sinned) death would be the ultimate result. This indicated that in order to earn or deserve eternal life by human effort, 100% obedience was required. Just one single act of disobedience would disqualify from eternal life and result in death, much like one drop of black dye in a pure glass of water has a wholesale contaminating effect.

As a result of allowing the temptation to disobey, take control of his mind, and acting upon it, a propensity towards that choice of disobedience became permanently implanted in the human spirit or psyche. From that time forward, due to hereditary processes, all of Adam’s descendants inherited a sinful nature - a nature with a proneness to disobey. Hence, even the apostle Paul said: “In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing; what I want to do I end up not doing; even things I hate I do” (Romans 7:14-21). “The heart is deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked, who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Even Jesus said: “Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matthew 15:19). There are Moslem writers who agree with this, but many don’t.

The propensity or urge to sin is so strong, that left to himself no man throughout history was strong enough to fully conquer it and live a 100% righteous obedient life. And so, as we read in Romans 5:12: “Through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.” Again in v19: “By one man’s sin many were made sinners” (i.e. their nature became sinful). And so, “Sin has reigned unto death” (v21). No man was morally or spiritually strong enough to live the 100% righteous holy life that the righteous holy God required to earn eternal life. And so all died. God would not grant eternal life while the power of sin was undefeated. It would be a violation of His holy righteous nature to grant eternal life and leave sin, the cause of death unconquered. It would be like the police rescuing people who have been attacked and injured by a known criminal, but not be concerned about dealing with the criminal.

And so to earn and deserve eternal life is not a matter of doing more good works than bad, but to do no bad works at all, because as in Adam’s case, one bad work was sin and resulted in death. What was required was a man bearing the same sin-prone nature to live his life being subjected to tests and trials by God and tempted to sin like every other man, but arresting every sinful urge and not sinning, and achieving the 100% obedience that Adam and all other men failed to achieve. Only in this way could God’s holy and 100% righteous nature be satisfied and vindicated.

Because the flesh nature of man is sinful, it is called “sinful flesh” in Romans 8:3. But this verse actually states that Jesus himself partook of this sinful flesh, which means his flesh nature had the same propensity and potential to sin as all other men. As Hebrews 4:15 says: “He was tempted in all points like us, but never sinned.” His sinful nature came about as a result of being conceived by a woman who had the same nature. Her conception impregnated him with the genes responsible for those propensities. Because the problem was in those inherent sinful inclinations, Jesus had to partake of the flesh in which they resided in order to conquer them. And this is what he did by refusing to surrender and succumb to them. He was 100% obedient. He never sinned - the first and only man in history to manifest 100% righteousness and holiness, which is what was required by God to break the deadlock and stronghold of sin, and form a basis on which His grace could allow others to share in the victory.

Like all other men, the faith and obedience of Jesus was tested by God during his life and ministry, and this testing process culminated at the

cross. The cross, being such a cruel, painful, tortuous, ignominious death, was the climactic test of obedience. As we read in Philippians 2:8: “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Torture is the ultimate test of a man’s character, so the cross was the pinnacle and climax of all Jesus’ tests of obedience. It was the ultimate test of obedience that was required to conquer the full force of temptation and sin. Putting it in simple terms: The test involved a choice under extreme circumstances between doing God’s will or self-will - serving God or serving self.

To avoid the cross, Jesus would have had to sin by denying he was the Messiah, the son of God and king of Israel, because these were the two issues that led to his crucifixion. The test involved two choices: lie about his identity and live, or tell God’s truth and die. You see, the Jews regarded it as blasphemy worthy of death for anyone to claim to be the son of God, and the Romans regarded it as treason for anyone besides Caesar to claim to be king, and this would result in the penalty of execution. And it so happened that crucifixion was the method employed by the Romans at that time in history, and this was foreseen and prophesied by Bible prophecy 1,000 years before Jesus was crucified (Psalm 22:16). So the ultimate test for Jesus was to confess the truth that he was the son of God and king, and not sin by denying it in order to avoid the cross. From this perspective, the cross represents upholding the truth of God and being faithful and true to His Word, at the cost of your life. In this respect his death was a sacrifice.

And so Jesus succeeded where Adam and all other men failed. He passed every test, even the most painful one involving crucifixion. Because the wages of sin is death, and because Jesus never sinned, he could not remain dead, and his flesh could not see corruption, as was also prophesied in Psalm 16:10. God raised him from the dead to eternal life and he is the first and so far the only man in history to be given immortality. His resurrection vindicated his sinlessness and his right to be a saviour and redeemer.

HOW CAN A SINLESS CHRIST SAVE SINNERS?

So the question is: How can Christ’s victory over sin and death affect and benefit others who have sinned and died or face death? Romans 5 explains that just as many die because of the effect of one man’s sin (Adam), so also many, by God’s grace can be granted eternal life through the effect of one man’s obedience. Through being connected to Adam physically (genetically) we are mortal and die, but by being connected to Jesus spiritually by faith, we can become immortal and live forever. Through the one man Adam we inherit mortality and death, but through

the one man Jesus Christ we can inherit immortality and eternal life. And so the seeming injustice of the whole of humanity becoming mortal and dying as a result of one man's sin, is more than countered by the immeasurable grace of God, which has made eternal life available as a result of one man's obedience.

The story of David and Goliath illustrates this principle. Goliath the giant represents sin which was too strong for men to conquer. But David conquered him, resulting in all of his Israelite brethren being delivered and set free from subjection to Goliath. They didn't work for it themselves and therefore didn't earn it or deserve it. David did all the work. He earned his freedom by his own individual personal effort. But because the Israelites saw his victory and believed, acknowledged, and appreciated it, and because they were his family - his brethren, they benefited from it. It was given to them as a gift.

Another example can be illustrated in baseball. One by one the members in a team either miss hitting the ball or are caught out before making home base. All except the captain fall short of the goal. Finally the captain comes to strike the ball and hits it out of the park, and makes a solo home run, resulting in his team getting the victory. Although all the other members fell short and failed, they all share in the victory because they belong to the captain's team! Being in the captain's team is the key! But the captain would not be pleased if, as a result of his victory, all the other members of the team adopted a slack attitude and never made an effort to do as well as they could in their competitions.

The principle of salvation through Christ is summarized in these words: "By grace you are saved through faith. It is not by your own effort, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). This verse goes on to emphasize that we cannot be saved by our own works, but are nevertheless expected to do good works as an appreciation of the gift of salvation which God's grace gives. "Grace" means unmerited favour; favour that is not earned or deserved. And the basis of God's grace is believing that sin is serious - serious enough for Jesus to have to never commit it, even to the point of dying a horrendous death on the cross. Those who believe in Jesus and his 100% victory over sin, and are willing to make him master of their life, will by the grace of God, be set free from the power of sin and death, and will be given the free gift of eternal life when he returns to set up his kingdom on earth. Jesus alone qualifies to be saviour and redeemer, because he alone manifested the 100% righteousness required by God to break the deadlock of sin and earn eternal life.

But Islam has no saviour. Neither Mohammed nor any other Muslim has lived a 100% righteous sinless life. All have sinned and died and need a saviour to deliver them. None have fulfilled or satisfied God's requirement of 100% obedience in order for eternal life to be accessed.

But they imagine that they can each earn eternal life by their own good works and effort if it outweighs the bad. So they believe that God will grant them eternal life without dealing with the cause of death by making sure it has been conquered and defeated. In other words God doesn't care about vindicating His holy righteous nature and requirements; He doesn't mind rescuing people from death without ever dealing with the cause of death. But the fact is that just one sin results in death and no matter how many good works follow, they cannot alter the fact that "the horse has bolted," and needs to be captured and conquered.

It is clear from the Scriptures that God does not want eternal life to be something men can be proud about due to thinking they have earned and deserved it by their own works and effort. God's plan has always been for eternal life to be a gift on the basis of the work He has done through His son Jesus Christ. For that reason Jesus had to be divinely begotten. Under normal circumstances each person is impregnated with sin-prone genes from their human father and mother and therefore gets a double whammy of sin-prone genes which have resulted in failure to achieve 100% obedience. So in order to fulfil His desire for 100% obedience, God intervened by providing a son who, although conceived by a sin-prone mother, was begotten by a Father who was not sin-prone, resulting in the Spirit conquering the flesh. And for that reason Scripture says "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). What could not be done due to the weakness of sinful flesh, God has done by His Spirit indwelling the flesh.

God demonstrated Jesus' victory over sin and death by raising him from the dead. And hundreds of witnesses saw him, and many spoke with him and ate with him, testifying to his physical bodily resurrection. But such cannot be said about Mohammed. Mohammed sinned like all other men and died and is still dead, and it is only the wishful thinking of his followers that it is believed that he went to Paradise.

Eternal life is not just a doctrine or theory or philosophy to Christians. It is a hope based on practical, tangible, historical evidence. In the resurrection of Jesus, Christians have an example and evidence of eternal life. The Bible says Jesus is the "first fruits" of those who die believing in him. That is, he is a "specimen" of immortality. He is an example of what his followers will be like when he returns and raises the dead. Mohammed is no such example. Islam has no evidence in Mohammed or any other Moslem of the certainty and reality of resurrection from the dead. Neither Mohammed nor any other Moslem in the whole of Moslem history has been raised from the dead to eternal life and appeared before hundreds of witnesses to prove it. Without Christ they are all dead and will not gain eternal life.

But those who are willing to believe in Jesus Christ as God's

appointed saviour and repent of their sins and be baptized into his name and follow his example, shall be saved, and attain to eternal life. This of course includes the Moslem community. There are no racial barriers or distinctions in Christ. All are made one and are unified in him. Many Moslems have become Christians and are among the finest in the world. According to the New Testament of the Bible, Abraham's "seed" to whom the promises of eternal inheritance were made, does not only refer to those who are merely physical descendants of Abraham. No! It refers to those of any nation who believe the same promises of God given to Abraham and who display the same faith and obedience as Abraham. And all of those promises of course centre upon, and revolve around Jesus, not Mohammed or Buddha or Confucius or any other religious leader. Jesus alone is "the way, the truth and the life." There is no other name given under heaven by which we can be saved from sin and death. God has given him a name above every other name! God has appointed His only begotten son to be the future ruler of the earth and it is an insult of the highest order to substitute him for Mohammed or any other man.

"For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have been invested with Christ. There is neither Jew nor gentile (non-Jew) ... for you are all one (united) in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ then are you the true seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise made to him" (Galatians 3:26-29).

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