

An Open Letter to Muslims in the West

Recent atrocities perpetrated against the U.S. by supposed Islamic extremists have served to focus attention on Muslims living or visiting in the U.S. It has been pointed out, correctly, that those responsible for these attacks are not representative of the majority of Muslims. In spite of this fact, there have been scattered sporadic attacks on peace loving Muslims in the U.S. Such bigotry against Muslims is unbecoming of our country and inexcusable.

Of course, statements like those above have been reiterated frequently in the last few days. What I have not heard amidst all the urging to be tolerant, is any possible positive thing that peace loving Islamic peoples can do in response to the recent atrocity that would make such anti-Islamic bigotry so obviously wrong that even the people now practicing it, would see it as abhorrent.

I suggest a vigorous visible communications effort be made by Muslims in the freer Western democracies, to contact their fellows in the predominantly Islamic nations; especially those in leadership positions. It is vital that individuals, organizations and governments be encouraged to practice, in their own countries, the same tolerance they rightly expect in Western democracies. In a number of Islamic states there is blatant and frequent persecution of anyone espousing any other type of faith or practice. The frank and free discussion of religious ideas, which Muslims in the freer democracies often admire and regularly practice, is a criminal offense in many nations. In some nations and families, conversion to the Christian worship of God is a capital offense. This is even held as ideal by some Muslims within Western democracies like Canada and Britain. In many other places, people of other faiths routinely are imprisoned and many face death, simply because they do not embrace Islam.

What would happen if even 50% of the Muslims enjoying the freedoms of more tolerant nations engaged in a fervent letter writing campaign to their countries of origin? What if Islamic clergy were to preach tolerance regularly? What if Muslims by the thousands protested and demonstrated outside the embassies of any Islamic country that dared to try a person of non-Islamic faith for blasphemy or converting from Islam? Such pressure would bring at least a modicum of change, maybe more. Such pressure, applied by fellow Muslims, would surely be accepted more readily than the protests of infidels. Such pressure, applied by Muslims, would do much to silence those who think all Muslims are extremist.

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Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Philosophy?

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"Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Philosophy?" (an article from the Christian Research Journal, Fall 1993, page 16) by Ronald Nash. The Editor-in-Chief of the Christian Research Journal is Elliot Miller.

Summary

Many college students still encounter outdated charges that first century Christianity and the New Testament were heavily influenced by pagan philosophical systems. Prominent among such claims are the following: (1) elements of Plato's philosophy appear in the New Testament; (2) the New Testament reflects the influence of Stoicism; and (3) the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo was a source of John's use of the Greek word *logos* as a description of Jesus. Each of these claims may be easily answered, a fact which challenges the badly outdated scholarship that continues to circulate these allegations in books and lectures.

Did the Christianity of the first century A.D. borrow any of its essential beliefs[1] from the pagan philosophical systems of that time? Was first century Christianity -- the Christianity reflected in the pages of the New Testament -- a syncretistic religion (i.e., a religion which fuses elements of differing belief systems)?

Christian college students occasionally encounter professors who answer these questions in the affirmative and then attempt to use the claim that there are pagan roots behind the words of the New Testament to undermine the faith of Christian students in their classes. Many Christians who hear allegations like these for the first time are stunned and find themselves at a loss about the best way to handle such claims. The purpose of this article is to provide such Christians with the help they need to answer charges that the New Testament was influenced by pagan philosophy. In a separate article that will appear in the next issue of this journal, I'll tackle the related issue of whether the New Testament was influenced by pagan religious systems of the first century.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

During the period running roughly from 1890 to 1940, scholars often alleged that the early Christian church was heavily influenced by such philosophical movements as

Platonism and Stoicism. Special attention was given to the Jewish philosopher Philo (d. A.D. 50) whose thought, it was claimed, can be traced in the use of the word *logos* as a name for Jesus Christ in the early verses of John's Gospel.

Largely as a result of a series of scholarly books and articles written in rebuttal, allegations of early Christianity's dependence on pagan philosophy began to fade in the years just before the start of World War II. Today, in the early 1990s, most informed scholars regard the question as a dead issue. These old arguments, however, continue to circulate in the publications of a few scholars and in the classroom antics of many college professors who have never bothered to become acquainted with the large body of writings on the subject.

For example, in a widely used philosophy text, the late E. A. Burtt, a professor at Cornell University during the post-war period, argued that Paul's theology was dependent on ideas borrowed from the Hellenistic world.[2] Similar claims can be found in a widely used history of philosophy textbook by W. T. Jones, a professor of philosophy at California Institute of Technology.[3] Thomas W. Africa's history text, *The Ancient World*, makes repeated assertions about Christianity's dependence on pagan systems of thought.[4] While it is true that such examples exhibit a surprising lack of acquaintance with the scholarly literature, the false claims can still cause harm when believed by uninformed people.

This article will provide the reader with the most important claims made by proponents of an early Christian dependence on pagan philosophy during the Hellenistic age.[5] I will focus on three major claims: (1) the claim that elements of Plato's philosophy appear in the New Testament; (2) the claim that the New Testament shows signs of having been influenced by the system known as Stoicism; and (3) the allegation that the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo (whose thought was an odd mixture of Platonism and Stoicism) was a source of John's use of the Greek word *logos* as a description of Jesus (John 1:1-14), and also an influence on the thinking of the writer of the Book of Hebrews. In the case of each set of claims, I will direct the reader to information that points out the weaknesses of the assertions.

It should be obvious that this subject is too vast to be covered adequately in one short article. Hence, I will also direct the reader to more detailed treatments of the material. For example, everything discussed in this article is covered much more extensively in my book, *The Gospel and the Greeks*. [6]

My focus, it should be understood, is on the writers of the New Testament whom Christians regard as divinely inspired recipients of revealed truth. The well-known Christian commitment to the inspiration and authority of the New Testament documents does not oblige Christians to have the same commitment for Christian thinkers who wrote after the close of the New Testament canon. Students of church history recognize the presence of various unbiblical ideas in many of the early church fathers, such as Origen (A.D. 185-254).[7] My concern is with allegations of pagan ideas in the documents of the New Testament.

INFLUENCED BY PLATONISM?

This section will examine the major arguments that were once used in support of the view that the apostle Paul borrowed from Platonism. By the time we finish we will not only better understand why such claims are seldom made anymore; we will also have cause to marvel at how any careful student of the New Testament could ever have thought the charges had merit.

The publications that assert a Pauline dependence on Platonism tend to focus on a similar collection of charges. For instance, Paul's writings are supposed to reflect a dualistic view of the world -- a view that is said to be especially clear in his allegedly radical distinction between the human soul and body. Moreover, it is claimed, Paul manifests the typical Platonic aversion to the body as being evil, a prison house of the soul, from which the Christian longs to be delivered. Until this deliverance actually comes by means of death, the Pauline Christian is supposed to denigrate his body through various ascetic practices.

The obvious first step for the Christian to take in all this is to ask the person making the claims to produce the New Testament passages in which Paul's supposed Platonism appears. Romans 7:24 is the verse usually cited in support of the claim that Paul taught that the human body is a prison house of the soul: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

It is obvious that Paul in this verse uses neither the word *prison* (*phylake*) nor the idea that the body is a prison of the soul. As a matter of fact, nowhere in Scripture does Paul write of the body in terms of a prison. In all likelihood, Paul in Romans 7:24 used the word *body* metaphorically.

Another verse critics sometimes appeal to in this connection[8] is Romans 8:23: "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." If anything, this verse *disproves* the claim that Paul was a Platonist, since the redemption that Paul awaits is the glory that will follow his *bodily* resurrection. No self-respecting Platonist would ever teach a doctrine of bodily resurrection. Basic to Platonism is the belief that death brings humans to a complete and total deliverance from everything physical and material.

Almost every author who used to claim that Paul was influenced by Platonism referred to the apostle's repeated use of the word *flesh* in contexts associating it with evil. If Paul really taught that the soul is good and the body is evil, then the case for his alleged dependence on Platonism might begin to make some sense.[9] The important question here, however, concerns what Paul meant by the word *flesh*. Philosopher Gordon Clark warns against a careless reading of Paul that would make "flesh" mean body. Instead, Clark notes, "a little attention to Paul's remarks makes it clear that he means, not body, but the sinful human nature inherited from Adam." [10] Theologian J. Gresham Machen -- who wrote during the period when this view was most accepted -- elaborated on the real significance of Paul's use of the term *flesh*:

The Pauline use of the term "flesh" to denote that in which evil resides can apparently find no real parallel whatever in pagan usage....At first sight there might seem to be a parallel between the Pauline doctrine of the flesh and the Greek doctrine of the evil of matter, which appears...in Plato and in his successors. But the parallel breaks down upon closer examination. According to Plato, the body is evil because it is material; it is the prison-house of the soul. Nothing could really be more remote from the thought of Paul. According to Paul, the connection of soul and body is entirely normal, and the soul apart from the body is in a condition of nakedness....there is in Paul no doctrine of the inherent evil of matter.[11]

Paul's condemnation of "flesh" as evil, then, has absolutely no reference to the human body. He uses the term *sarx* or flesh in these contexts to refer to a psychological and spiritual defect that leads every human to place self ahead of the Creator. The New International Version (NIV) makes this clear by translating *sarx* as "sinful nature." For instance, Romans 7:5, a verse often used as support for the claim that Paul regarded matter as evil, reads: "For when we were controlled by the sinful nature [*sarx*], the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death." None of the texts in which Paul uses *sarx* in its ethical sense can support the claim that he was a Platonic dualist.

The claim that Paul believed matter is evil is also contradicted by his belief that the ultimate destiny of redeemed human beings is an endless life in a resurrected *body*, not the disembodied existence of an immortal soul, as Plato taught. Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:12-58) is clearly incompatible with a belief in the inherent wickedness of matter.

Efforts to find an evil matter versus good spirit dualism in Paul also stumble over the fact that he believed in evil spirits (Eph. 6:12). The additional fact that God pronounced His creation good (Gen. 1:31) also demonstrates how far removed dualism is from the teaching of the Old and New Testaments.

As for the claim that Paul advocated a radical asceticism that included the intentional harming of his body,[12] the fact is that Paul wrote the New Testament's strongest attacks *against* asceticism (e.g., Col. 2:16-23). Gordon Clark correctly observes that Paul was "not motivated by a desire to free a divine soul from a bodily tomb, much less by the idea that pain is good and pleasure evil. Rather, Paul was engaged in a race, to win which required him to lay aside every weight as well as the sin which so easily besets. Willing to suffer stonings and stripes for the name of Christ, he never practiced self-flagellation." [13]

We must conclude that the authors who claimed Paul was influenced by Platonism and the college and seminary professors who passed these theories along to their students were, at the least, guilty of sloppy research and shoddy thinking. It is easy to suspect that their primary motivation was a desire to find anything that might appear to discredit the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures.

INFLUENCED BY STOICISM?

Stoicism was the most important philosophical influence on cultured people during the first century A.D. Stoic philosophers were materialists, pantheists, and fatalists: they believed that everything that exists is physical or corporeal in nature and that every existing thing is ultimately traceable back to one ultimate universal stuff that is divine. They thought that God and the world were related in a way that allowed the world to be described as the body of God and God to be described as the soul of the world. Unlike the God of Judaism and Christianity who is an eternal, almighty, all-knowing, loving, spiritual *Person*, the Stoic God was impersonal and hence incapable of knowledge, love, or providential acts. The Stoic fatalism is seen in their belief that everything that happens occurs by necessity.

The major contribution of the Stoic philosophers was the development of an ethical system that would help the Stoic live a meaningful life in a fatalistic universe. To find good and evil, Stoics taught, we must turn away from whatever happens of necessity in our world and look within. Personal virtue or vice resides in our attitudes, in the way we react to the things that happen to us. The key word in the Stoic ethic is *apathy*. Everything that happens to a human being is fixed by that person's fate. But most humans resist their destiny, when in fact nothing could have been done that would have altered the course of nature. Our duty in life, then, is simply to accept what happens; it is to resign ourselves to our unavoidable destiny. This will be reflected in our apathy to all that is around us, including family and property. The truly virtuous person will eliminate all passion and emotion from his (or her) life until he reaches the point that nothing troubles or bothers him. Once humans learn that they are slaves to their fate, the secret of the only good life open to them requires them to eliminate all emotion from their lives and accept whatever fate sends their way.

The fact that the Stoics often described this attitude of resignation as "accepting the will of God" is no doubt responsible for the confusion between their teaching and the New Testament's emphasis upon doing God's will. But the ideas behind the Stoic and Christian phrases are completely different! When a Stoic talked about the will of God, he meant nothing more than submission to the unavoidable fatalism of an impersonal, uncaring, unknowing, and unloving Nature. But when Christians talk about accepting the will of God, they mean the chosen plan of a loving, knowing, personal deity.

Decades ago, it was fashionable in some circles to claim that the apostle Paul was influenced by Stoicism. As late as 1970, Columbia University philosopher John Herman Randall, Jr., attributed the strong social emphasis of Paul's moral philosophy to Stoicism.[14] Paul's stress upon inward motives as over against the outward act has been said to evidence a Stoic influence.[15] There was a time when some claimed that a relationship existed between Paul and the Stoic thinker Seneca who was an official in Nero's government during the apostle's time in Rome.[16] And there can be no question that Paul quoted from a Stoic writer in his famous sermon on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17:28).

Paul's quoting from a Stoic writer proves nothing, of course. As an educated man speaking to Stoics, it was both good rhetoric and a way to gain the attention of his audience. Though Paul and Seneca were in Rome at the same time, there is no evidence of any personal contact and plenty of evidence that their respective systems of thought were alien to each other. When properly understood, Seneca's Stoic ethic is repulsive to a Christian like Paul. It is totally devoid of genuine human emotion and compassion; there is no place for love, pity, or contrition. It lacks any intrinsic tie to repentance, conversion, and faith in God. Even if Paul did use Stoic images and language, he gave the words a new and higher meaning and significance. In any comparison between the thinking of Paul and Stoicism, it is the differences and conflicts that stand out.

Two other instances of alleged Stoic influence remain to be considered. The first concerns the Stoic's use of the Greek word *logos* as a technical term. It is this same term that John uses throughout the first fourteen verses of his Gospel as a name for Jesus Christ. Since the immediate source for the New Testament use of *logos* is usually said to be the Jewish philosopher Philo, whose system was a synthesis of Platonism and Stoicism, I will postpone comment on this point until the next section. The second instance of alleged Stoic influence concerns the belief of early Stoics (300-200 B.C.) that the world would eventually be destroyed by fire. This led some critics to charge that Peter's teaching in 2 Peter 3 that God will end the world by destroying it by fire echoes the Stoic doctrine of a universal conflagration.

Unfortunately for such critics, their theory falls apart once one notices the significant differences between the Stoic belief and Peter's teaching. For one thing, the Stoic conflagration was an eternally repeated event that had nothing to do with the conscious purposes of a personal God. As philosopher Gordon Clark explains, "The conflagration in II Peter is a sudden catastrophe like the flood. But the Stoic conflagration is a slow process that is going on now; it takes a long time, during which the elements change into fire bit by bit. The Stoic process is a natural process in the most ordinary sense of the word [that is, it is simply the ordinary outworking of the order of nature]; but Peter speaks of it as the result of the word or fiat of the Lord." [17] Furthermore, the Stoic conflagration is part of a pantheistic system while the conflagration described by Peter is the divine judgment of a holy and personal God upon sin.

As if these differences were not enough, the Stoic fire endlessly repeats itself. After each conflagration, the world begins anew and duplicates exactly the same course of events of the previous cycle. The history of the world, in this Stoic view, repeats itself an infinite number of times. Contrast this with Peter's view that the world is destroyed by fire only once, like the flood of Noah's time.

Perhaps the most decisive objection to the claim of a Stoic influence in 2 Peter is the fact that major Stoic writers had completely abandoned this doctrine by the middle of the first century A.D. The critic would have us believe that the writer of 2 Peter was influenced by a Stoic doctrine that Stoic thinkers had completely repudiated. It is little wonder that most scholars abandoned theories about a Stoic influence upon the New Testament decades

ago. This leaves us with the third and last of our possible philosophic influences on the New Testament, the first century system of the Jewish thinker, Philo.

INFLUENCED BY PHILO?

At the beginning of the Christian era, Alexandria, Egypt -- an important center of the Jewish Dispersion -- had become the chief center of Hellenistic thought. The large colony of Jews who claimed Alexandria as their home became Hellenized in both language and culture. While still observing their Jewish faith, they translated their Scriptures into the Greek language (the Septuagint). This tended to increase their cultural isolation from their Hebrew roots because they now had even less incentive to remain fluent in the Hebrew language. Given the intellectual interests of the Alexandrian Jews, it was only natural that the arrival of such philosophical systems as Platonism and Stoicism in Alexandria would eventually affect them.

The greatest of the Alexandrian Jewish intellectuals was Philo Judeaus, who lived from about 25 B.C. to about A.D. 50. Philo's work illustrates many of the most important elements of the synthesis of Platonism and Stoicism that came to dominate Hellenistic philosophy during and after his lifetime. He is the best example of how intellectual Jews of the Dispersion, isolated from Palestine and their native culture, allowed Hellenistic influences to shape their theology and philosophy.[18]

Philo has become famous for his use of the term *logos*. [19] It is impossible, however, to find any clear or consistent use of the word in his many writings. For example, he used the word to refer to Plato's ideal world of the forms, [20] to the mind of God, and to a principle that existed somewhere between the realms of God and creation. At other times, he applied *logos* to any of several mediators between God and man, such as the angels, Moses, Abraham, and even the Jewish high priest. But putting aside his lack of clarity and consistency, his use of *logos* has raised questions about a possible influence of Alexandrian Judaism on such New Testament writings as John's Gospel and the Book of Hebrews.

Sixty years ago, the view that the writer of the fourth Gospel was influenced by Philo's use of *logos* was something of an official doctrine in certain circles. [21] With few exceptions, however, the drift of scholarship has been away from Philo as a source for John's Logos doctrine. But as happens so often, news of this change in scholarly opinion was slow in reaching some. And so, John Herman Randall, Jr., wrote in 1970 that "in his Prologue about the Word, the *Logos*, [John] is adopting Philo Judaeus' earlier Platonization of the Hebraic tradition." [22] And in his history of philosophy textbook that is still widely used, even in some evangelical colleges, W. T. Jones claims that the "mysticism of the Fourth Gospel was grounded in the Platonism of Hellenistic Alexandria." [23]

Most contemporary New Testament scholars see no need to postulate a conscious relationship between Philo (or Alexandrian Judaism) and the New Testament use of *logos*. They point out that alongside the philosophical and Philonic views of *logos*, there

were two similar but independent notions in the Judaism of the time. One of these was a pre-Christian Jewish speculation about a personified Wisdom that appears in Proverbs 8:22-26.[24] Other scholars advance a different theory that sees a connection between the New Testament use of *logos* and such Old Testament expressions as "The Word of God" and "The Word of the Lord." In many Old Testament passages, such expressions suggest an independent existence and personification of the Word of God.[25]

These two lines of thought may have merit and the reader is encouraged to examine them more fully. However, for a number of years I have been recommending a different approach to the problem, one that recognizes a possible link between the implicit Logos-Christology[26] of the Book of Hebrews and the Prologue to John's Gospel.

In Chapter 6 of my book, *The Gospel and the Greeks*, I explore a number of fascinating connections between the author of the Book of Hebrews (whom I take to be Apollos) and Alexandrian Judaism. I point to indications that the author of Hebrews may have been an Alexandrian Jew trained in Philo's philosophy prior to his Christian conversion. His purpose in writing Hebrews was to warn other members of his community of converted Hellenistic Jews against an apostasy that would result in their rejecting Christ and returning to their former beliefs. In the course of his message, the writer (Apollos?) argues that since Christ is a better Logos (or mediator) than any of the mediators available to them in their former beliefs,[27] a return to the inferior mediators of their past would make no sense.

If the argument in my book is correct, then several interesting possibilities open up. For one thing, the author of Hebrews (whoever he may be) deserves the title of the first Christian philosopher, since he was clearly trained in the details of Alexandrian philosophy. But the writer of Hebrews does not use this philosophical background to introduce Alexandrian philosophy into Christian thinking; rather he uses Christian thinking to reject his former views. Furthermore, this reading of Hebrews points to the existence of a Christian community that had a highly developed Logos Christology. But their application of the concept of *logos* to Jesus Christ did not amount to an introduction of pagan thinking into Christianity. On the contrary, their Christian use of Logos was developed in conscious opposition to every relevant aspect of Philo's philosophy. Once this possibility is recognized, the proper source of John's use of *logos* in John 1:1-14 may reflect his own contact with the thought of this community of converted Hellenistic Jews.

Wholly apart from my own speculation on this matter, Philo's Logos could not possibly function as a direct influence on the biblical concept of Logos.[28] (1) Philo's Logos-Mediator was a metaphysical abstraction while the Logos of the New Testament is a specific, individual, historical person. Philo's Logos is not a person or messiah or savior but a cosmic principle, postulated to solve various philosophical problems. (2) Given Philo's commitment to Platonism and its disparagement of the body as a tomb of the soul, Philo could never have believed in anything like the Incarnation. Philo's God could never make direct contact with matter. But the Jesus described in Hebrews not only becomes man but participates in a full range of all that is human, including temptation to sin. Philo would never have tolerated such thinking. (3) Philo's Logos could never be described as

the Book of Hebrews pictures Jesus: suffering, being tempted to sin, and dying. (4) The repeated stress in Hebrews of Jesus' compassionate concern for His brethren (i.e., Christians) is incompatible with Philo's view of the emotions. Philo was influenced by the Stoic disparagement of emotion, and it is clear that he views the attainment of apathy (freedom from passion, emotion, and affection) as a much more important achievement than sympathy and compassion.

Readers may pursue these matters more fully in the works cited in the sidebar ("Suggested Reading"), and in the hundreds of works cited in the bibliographies in those books. The purpose of this article has been merely to introduce the reader to the fact that over the past century, various writers have attempted to undermine the authority of the New Testament by affirming that some of its teachings were borrowed from pagan philosophical systems of the day. A careful study of this issue reveals this claim to be false. Perhaps the most serious question still remaining is what we should think of the scholarship of authors and professors who continue to make these long-discredited claims.

SUGGESTED READING

A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon, 1963).

Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1989).

Ronald Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992).

Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

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NOTES

1 An essential Christian belief is one which, if false, would falsify the historic Christian faith. For example, if either the incarnation or the atonement or the resurrection of Jesus should turn out to be false, the Christian faith as it has been known from its inception would be false.

2 See Edwin A. Burt, *Types of Religious Philosophy*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1951), 35-36.

3 See W. T. Jones, *The Medieval Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), Chapters One and Two.

4 See Thomas W. Africa, *The Ancient World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 460. See also Thomas W. Africa, *The Immense Majesty: A History of Rome and the Roman Empire* (New York: Crowell, 1974), 340-42.

5 In its most narrow sense, the adjective "Hellenistic" is applied to the period of history between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. and the Roman conquest of the last major vestige of Alexander's empire, the Egypt of Cleopatra in 30 B.C. But in a broader sense, the term refers to the whole culture of the Roman Empire. While Rome achieved military and political supremacy throughout the Mediterranean world, it adopted the culture of the Hellenistic world that preceded Rome's rise to power.

6 See Ronald H. Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992).

7 For more on this, see Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity, 1989), 210-17.

8 See George Holley Gilbert, *Greek Thought in the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 85-86.

9 See William Fairweather, *Jesus and the Greeks* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 290.

10 Clark, 192.

11 J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 275-76.

12 See Gilbert, 86-87.

13 Clark, 193.

14 John Herman Randall, Jr., *Hellenistic Ways of Deliverance and the Making of the Christian Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 155.

15 Fairweather, 296.

16 See J. B. Lightfoot, "St. Paul and Seneca," in J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (1913; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), 270-333. Lightfoot argues against the possibility of a Stoic influence in this old essay. His polemic serves as an example of the importance once attributed to such views.

17 Clark, 191.

18 For more details, see Clark, 195-210 and Nash, Chapters 5-6.

19 The Greek word *logos* was a technical term in several ancient philosophical systems. Its philosophic usage goes back to Heraclitus (about 500 B.C.). It was then used by the Stoics, several hundred years later, some of whom influenced Philo.

20 For an explanation of Plato's theory of the forms, see Nash, Chapter 2.

21 Typical of these older works is G. H. C. MacGregor and A. C. Purdy, *Jew and Greek* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1937), 337ff.

22 Randall, 157.

23 Jones, 52.

24 For more on this, see Nash, 84-86.

25 See Nash, 86-88 and James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 218.

26 When I say that the Logos-Christology of Hebrews is implicit, I am really making two points: (1) the Christology of Hebrews relates Jesus Christ to a Logos-concept that does have affinities to things the writer could have learned from Philo; (2) but since the term Logos is not actually applied to Jesus in Hebrews, it is implicit in the sense that it must be derived from a careful examination of the author's language. That is, a number of very special Greek words that Philo applied to his Logos are used by the writer of Hebrews to describe Jesus. See Chapter 6 of my *Gospel and the Greeks*.

27 To restate a point made earlier, Philo applied the term *logos* to all of the following: the angels, Moses, Abraham, and the Levitical high priest. It should be noted that the author of Hebrews argues that Jesus is better than each of these.

28 The points that follow are perfectly consistent with my theory that Christian Hellenists advanced their view of the Logos in conscious opposition to Philo's system.

SUFISM AND THE PARADOX OF SELF

By Sheikha Fatima Fleur Nassery Bonnin

Bismillaah ir Rahmaan ir Rahiim
In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate

THE PATH OF SUFISM

Allah (swt) uses many different ways of awakening people from the sleep of this world and attracting them to Him. Upon awakening, people begin searching and become travellers of the path (*salek*). As they start their journey towards God, their thoughts and feelings shift. They begin to behave and live differently in varying degrees. This change is necessary for a person to be considered a traveller of the path. Why the change? They are now beginning to distinguish between the 'reality' that they have always known and the Reality that truly is. They start to realise and understand that the purpose of this life's journey is not what they had thought and that the journey of life, in fact, encompasses greater depth and meaning than they had ever imagined. The innermost part of their self responds strongly to this realisation and the outer mechanics of the person therefore shifts.

There are various spiritual paths that attract people but, sooner or later, all these little roads lead to one main road and unless one travels the distance to this grand highway, one will not get far. To travel on this highway, one must disable and break down the self, removing the self (*nafs*) from its position of king and ruler, and making it the slave. While the terms used may differ, all the mystical paths are in agreement on this fundamental aspect. In Buddhism, they speak of suffering and killing the ego; in Sufism, they speak of servanthood of the *nafs* to Allah (swt). This also marks the separation between the real traveller and the pseudo traveller.

The vast treasury of Sufi teaching, poetry and literature, points out this fundamental and uncompromising stage of spiritual unfoldment. In Sufism particularly, this highway is well sign-posted and can be followed if sincerity governs the heart. This road is marked with many teachers and once one surrenders himself to be taught and becomes a *salek*, he or she is well on the road to God discovery. Guided by his teacher (*murshid*), the *salek* follows and obeys the *murshid*, whose job is to prevent the *salek* from falling into the trap of its self (*nafs*). The self uses every trick and manipulation to get the traveller off the road that will ultimately lead to the self's demise. Its tools include man's mind, emotions and belief systems - a dangerous and powerful array of weaponry. One must be most aware and equipped to defy the attempts of the *nafs*.

THE PARADOX OF SELF

The teachings tell us two seemingly contradictory things about the self. In the first instance, the self is the most dangerous trap in the path to God. It is the biggest obstacle, it is vile, it is beastly. It is only interested in the fulfilment of its animalistic and selfish desires. It is a veil to the Truth and Reality. It makes you believe things that are not true and makes you like things that are not good for you. It is difficult to recognise this because you have always lived this way and you are surrounded by people who live similarly. So, pay attention! These are the characteristics of Satan as described in the Quran. For example in Surah 15:39-40, Satan says:

“O my sustainer! Since Thou hast thwarted me, I shall indeed make (all that is evil) on earth seem goodly to them, and shall most certainly beguile them into grievous error – save such of them as are truly Thy servants.”

At the same time, Sufism points to the other aspect of self, the high station of the self. Man is created in the image of God and is the height of creation. God created other creations for the sake of human beings and made man the master over other creations. He created everything for man and created man for Himself. He blew His spirit into man and gave man the ability to rise above angels. He did all of this so that man could know Him, worship Him and love Him.

There appears to be a paradox here and one may get confused or fall into the trap of taking himself to be the higher self without wanting to acknowledge the lower, animal self. It is important to recognise both aspects of self, the satan and the angel, the shadow and the light, the ignorance and the consciousness. Within man are both potentialities. In the heart of man is the treasure of knowing his Creator, but he is sent to this world of distraction through attraction to temporal pleasure. The part of the self that is in absolute darkness becomes consumed with this temporal pleasure and material engagement. Becoming totally conscious of self and preoccupied with the material world, man does not pause to look inside himself to find the treasure within his heart. The treasure of knowing his Creator marks the highest aspect of the self. This is the Self that is God-conscious, rather than self-conscious.

The purpose of man’s creation is to become close to God. In order to reach this destination of knowing his Creator, the traveller must travel a road of war with his ego until it is brought into submission. This is only possible by bringing the ego self to a place of servanthood. But modern man’s ego or self has a big problem with the idea of servanthood. The irony is that man is in the grip of his demanding self and a slave to the material world, but he is not aware of it. Modern society promotes ‘individuality’, which in reality is ‘slavery’ to materiality, yet ignores and/or shuns servanthood to God, which is the true purpose of creation. It is only through servanthood to God that man can actually be freed from servanthood to the material life. One cannot be a servant of God and a servant to oneself at the same time. All the Prophets have pointed this out to us.

Prophet Jesus (pbuh) says in the Gospel of Thomas:

“A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows, and a servant cannot serve two masters.”

Rumi, from his treasure box of Masnavi, brings out pearls and forms verses urging man to recognise both aspects of the self. He explains how this ‘donkey’ (or self) perpetually runs to the pasture for grazing and self-satisfaction, forcing you to continually run after him, unless you learn to break him in, mount him, and become his master. It is then that the ‘donkey’ becomes your transcended Self, the vehicle to take you to the Beloved.

*“Sell the donkey ears (these worldly ears) and buy another ear
since the worldly ears cannot receive secret words of God”*

and

*“The way to become a king is through servanthood
when you submit to be a slave of the Beloved, you become the beloved”*

Rumi

The ego self uses everything for its own benefit, including truth, justice, fairness and even God. It even worships God to get something in return. This is why the self needs to be dismantled.

*“A true believer and an infidel both say ‘God’
but there is a difference between the two*

*The beggar (infidel) says ‘God’ for the sake of bread
the true believer says ‘God’ in his very soul”*

Rumi

In Sufism, dismantling and fighting the ego self is an essential part of the work. The degree of a man’s success depends on the degree of the man’s sincerity of effort. We are being warned that the most important work of the salek is the difficult task of subduing the authority of the nafs, as it is our most dangerous enemy. One metaphor used to describe how one must deal with the self is:

Imprisoning it - killing it - burning it - and scattering its ashes.

Servanthood imprisons the self. Abstaining from passion kills it. Love of God burns it. Gnosis scatters the ashes of the self, eliminating all of its traces.

*“Until one hair strand of your being you, remains
the business of vanity and self-praise, remains*

*You said, ‘I broke the idol of my mind, therefore I am free’
this idol ‘that you are free from your mind’, still remains”*

Rumi

The make up of the ego self is in stark contrast to serenity and peace, because peace and serenity are states that can only be experienced as a result of closeness to God (*taqarob*). The self requires constant movement and turmoil. If events and problems in life are not enough to keep the system going, it will create more. Therefore, one is in a constant state of busyness of the mind, of inner chatter, of existing in the past or future and in turmoil in order not to be present. All of these are constructs of the personality to fog and blur one’s vision to what lies beneath - like waves on the surface of the ocean preventing one from seeing the depth of the water. One exists in this fallacy of distraction until one day, by the Grace of God, one wakes up just a little and realises the untruth of life’s predicament. When one makes the effort to quieten the mind and to negate the demands of the nafs then, little by little, one purifies the state of the self. Only when the self is transmuted is

one able to experience serenity and peace and it is in that station that one can hear with the inner ear, the voice of his Creator.

Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) says:

“If you did not talk too much and if there were no turmoil in your heart, you could see what I see and hear what I hear.”

The paradox of self is that man has two aspects of the self in him, one hidden and one apparent. He needs to break away from the one to get to the other. If he spends his life busy with the little self, which is considered his lowest level of being, then that will be his predicament in this life and in the hereafter. It is man’s task in this life to break away from his habitual behaviour and his immediate gratification in order to become worthy of what he has been created for. If he breaks through the illusion of identifying with his self as the only reality and if he gets to know his self from his Self, then he moves ahead on the highway towards the Beloved.

Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) says:

“He who knows his self knows his Lord.”

Prophet Jesus (pbuh) says:

“One who knows all, but is lacking in oneself, is utterly lacking.”

He also says:

“Whoever has found oneself, for that person the world is not worthy.”

*“You know the price of every merchandise,
but you are ignorant of knowing the value of your self”*

Rumi

In the Quran, this theme has been addressed many times by the Creator. For instance in Surah Al Asr, Allah (swt) says:

“Verily man is in loss (in his trades). Except the ones who attain to faith and do good work.”

Imam Ali (a.s.) says:

“It is a losing trade if you believe that this world is worthy of you.”

In all the above quotes, the message is that when man sells his self to the goods of this life, he is a loser because what he is selling is far more precious than what he is buying.

The irony is that one does not know his own value and is not in touch with his Self. All he knows is the little self. Yet at the same time, there is no shortage of signs, teachings, prophets, saints and teachers from Allah (swt), to point out the truth, and the way to it.

Rumi remarks in the story of Moses and Pharaoh:

*“Don’t look at that staff (Moses’ staff) and think of it as a piece of wood
look at what is in it that could part the sea of Ahmar”*

In a similar teaching, Prophet Jesus (pbuh) says:

“If two make peace with each other in a single house, they will say to the mountain, ‘Move from here,’ and it will move.”

*“Nothing can kill the nafs like the shadow of the master
hold tight to his skirt for he is a good killer of your self*

*Your lower self is after material affairs
how long will you trade in unworthy affairs, give them up*

*Someone who says ‘I am thinking to deny my lower self’
is still captive to the lower self*

*And he who says, ‘God is merciful and kind’
is also being manipulated by that wretched self”*

Rumi, Masnavi, II/2528, 2601-2, 3086-7
Translated by Fleur Nassery Bonnin

You can say very sincerely that you will control your selfish ego but it is not easy. Therefore, you need a sheikh to help you because your carnal desires will continue to trick you. In many cases you may think that God is Forgiving and Merciful and that He will forgive your sins. This idea is also put into your heart by your ego, which is in the command of Satan. Without doubt, God is Forgiving but there is a limit to that because He is Just at the same time. *“We shall set up scales of justice for the day of judgment, so that not a single soul will be dealt with unjustly”* Quran 21:47 and *“God did not save angels who sinned”* Bible 2 Peter 2:4. God is unlikely to place those who sacrifice their lower self for the love of God in the same scale with those who depend on God’s Mercy without deserving it.

From "The Essence of Rumi's Masnavi"
Commentary by Prof. Erkan Turkmen

PEACE AND THE INNER JIHAD

By Sheikha Fatima Fleur Nassery Bonnin

Bismillaah ir Rahmaan ir Rahiim

In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate

The Meaning of Peace

As we experience and witness the turmoil, unrest, war and devastation in the world, the absence of peace and the need for peaceful living becomes abundantly clear. But in order to have peace in the world, we need to have peace in our communities, and in order to have peace in our communities, we need to have peaceful people in those communities. Societies reflect the state of the people within that society. Peace cannot exist in a society unless the individuals within that society change and experience peace within themselves.

Our current political environment is derived from the idea of peace as a product of war; that is, there appears to be a justification for war as a means of achieving peace. This mentality not only necessitates the questioning of its logic, but also the questioning of its effectiveness. The world news, as being broadcasted through our television sets and newspapers, testifies to the fact that this widely accepted doctrine does not work, and in fact, will never work. On a fundamental level, **it is a mistake to conceive of peace as the absence of war.** This type of peace is merely the result of negotiations and peace treaties between factions and/or nations, in an effort to ward off war and unrest. This shallow perception of peace serves only as a mental exercise, derived from assemblies of men enforcing and implementing positions of power. The end result is marked by win-lose situations and delivers only temporary solutions to looming dissatisfactions and potential uprisings. The point has been lost.

Peace is a Spiritual State

For a person to be at peace, he needs to go beyond his pre-occupations with the ego-driven self and move towards the virtues. He needs to transform his ego-personality which is the hub of all his conflicts and negative attributes and shed his associated jealousy, selfishness, greed, anger, lust etc by transcending to a higher level, where the demanding ego is no longer the dominating force. This is the meaning of the internal jihad, and this process is by no means an easy one, but indeed a necessary one.

It is reported that during the early formation of Islam, when the army of Islam returned from a huge battle with the enemy, the Prophet of Islam, peace and blessing be upon him, said:

“You have returned from a smaller jihad (battle), and now it is incumbent upon you to perform your greater jihad.”

When the astonished people asked what could be a greater jihad than the one they had returned from, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said:
“The battle with ones nafs (ego-personality).”

This Hadith (saying of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him) emphasises two fundamentally important issues. The first, points to the difficult task of our internal jihad and in doing so, prepares us for it. The second, establishes the necessity of the battle we must wage against our nafs (our ego-personality). The Prophet (pbuh) is letting us know that victory in the outer jihad is not enough for mankind to live in peace and harmony. It only provides the necessary space to do our most important work which is the jihad against our nafs.

The words of the prophets, (particularly those words that have been recorded and whose authenticity are undisputed), afford us and future generations the keys to unlocking the doors to our inner and outer truth and reality. We need to contemplate them, understand them, be guided by them and most importantly put them into practice.

The Human Predicament

Human beings are in a difficult predicament in this journey of life. The soul comes into this life given a cloak of personality, shrouding his God-consciousness. Therefore he sees himself only as his ego-personality and is blindly ruled by it. He has only a short period of life on earth to fight and overcome this domination so that he may know his Creator in spite of all the ego-attachments and distractions. It is a challenging task, but this task is what we have been created for. However we are not left entirely on our own and are not without help. God sends us prophets, scriptures, saints and guides, not to mention events that shape our lives and provide us with lessons to be learned.

Denial of Our Spiritual Aspect

When God is taken out of the equation of ‘man and God’, man is then left on his own, and therefore becomes conscious of his self instead of being conscious of God. This marks the breeding ground for ego development. Life then becomes the pursuit and fulfillment of ego desires, and truth and reality become subservient to ego domination. This is in opposition to spiritual unfoldment. The spiritual aspect is where one can be in peace and harmony. The ego aspect is where one is in conflict and disharmony. Therefore an ego-dominated society is obviously filled with conflicts and disharmony. In order to function in such a state, it would be necessary to be forgetful and in denial of our spiritual aspect. This is what we see today in our secular society.

In order to live in a state of denial about one’s spirituality and consciousness of God, the secular life must create material distractions and engagements. This means that any secular society requires upheaval and unrest in order for its dysfunction to function. There are constant issues to be resolved, needs to be met, greeds to be fulfilled and the

illusory state of inner peace remains out of reach. Most modern societies not only support and promote this mentality, which has become a way of life, but these societies also teach people to become skilled and creative participants. People's talents, intellects and abilities are used in order to sustain this theatrical version of reality. The better one is at it, the more successful and respected one becomes in the eyes of such a society.

At a certain point, one cannot even distinguish truth and reality in and amongst the lies and justifications being presented as truth. This is what we are facing in the world today. From the perspective of modernity, it is engaging, challenging and exciting. From the perspective of the Truth and God-consciousness, peace and harmony, it is disastrous. And it keeps getting worse, because the trend of making the unreal appear real, forever gathers momentum.

“While those who are determined in denying the truth harboured a stubborn disdain of ignorance in their hearts – Allah bestowed from on high His inner peace upon His apostle and the believers and bound them to the spirit of God-consciousness, for they were most worthy of this (divine gift) and deserved it well.” Quran 48:26

Man and the Truth

Man's relationship to the truth, especially in our modern society, is worthy of reflection. Al Haqq, one of the Names (attributes) of Allah (swt) means the Truth, the Reality. While Al Haqq, the Truth with capital “T” means the ultimate truth, the only truth and the only reality, man's version of the truth is different and so is his perceived reality within that truth. Truth has become personalised or individualised, which allows it to continually change according to the perspective and benefit of the individual. Therefore it can easily be twisted, politicised and nationalised. The universality of the truth is thus lost and substituted by the individual's personal or communal truth. This creates a situation in which no two people or two communities can experience the same version of truth because neither is the reflection of the Truth. For instance these days the Palestinian's truth is different from the Israeli's truth and America's truth is different from that of the Middle East.

In addition, being conscious of the Truth (which is the result of being God-conscious), mandates certain ways of life and certain moral conducts such as following God's laws (Shariah), which protect all humanity equally since God is the God of all humanity. Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

“And say: ‘Truth has arrived, and falsehood perished: For falsehood is bound to perish.’ We sent down in the Quran that which is a healing and mercy to those who believe: To the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.”

Quran 17:81-82

The Purpose of Life – to Know and Love God

In Sufism, the purpose of life is described in a Hadith Qudsi (when God speaks to the prophets) regarding the question of creation. Allah (swt) says:

“I was a hidden treasure and I loved that I be known, so I created the creation so that I can be known.”

The purpose of our life, the goal of coming into this world is to know God (Irfan), in spite of all the smoke screens, veils and distractions - the most powerful of which lies in the veil of one's self.

It is always very difficult to fight one's ego-self. In fact according to Sufi teaching if it is not difficult, one is not doing the real work. What makes the struggle against the ego possible is the desire to know and love God, since He has placed this desire in the heart of mankind, whether man knows it or not. When this desire is moved from the state of potentiality to expression in life, one is considered in Sufism, a traveller (salik), on the journey to God-consciousness.

The soul comes to this world for the purpose of moving through the various tests and obstacles set in his way, and insha'llah, (with the will of God), he will fend off temptations and not stray too far from the path, remaining focused on the true purpose of his journey, and his eventual return to a state of unity with God. Allah (swt) points this out repeatedly throughout the Quran, for example:

“To Him is our return.” 2:156

“Unto Him you will return.” 2:245

To fulfil the purpose of life we need to turn to the spiritual teachings of our religions and harness the inner meanings of the teachings of our prophets. While the outer dimension of religion is concerned with salvation from the fire of hell, or with securing a place in paradise, the inner dimension of religion is concerned with knowing God and loving God, because being God-conscious (taqwa) and being present with God (hozour), is the highest level of perfection of the soul. It is in utilising the inner dimensions of our religions, that we face the possibility of transforming our ego domination and achieving peace and tranquillity, both internally and therefore externally. It is for this reason that the Prophet Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon him, conveyed a message relevant for any time and any place. The inner jihad is the most fundamental challenge for man, and it is a challenge that must be endured by man.

And to those who are on the path of fulfilling the ego desire instead of the inner jihad, Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

“And who could be more astray than he who follows his own desires without any guidance from Allah? Verily, Allah does not grace with His guidance people who are given to their wrong-doing.” 28:50

And to those who endure the inner jihad and squirm free of the grip of their nafs, Allah (swt) says:

“O’ you the nafs that has attained inner peace – return unto thy Sustainer, well-pleased and pleasing Him.” 89:27-28

The Return to God-consciousness

The human being is designed for the return to the state of God-consciousness. To reach such a station and proximity to God, one needs to be steadfast and not be side tracked by distractions in his pursuit.

Jesus, peace and blessings be upon him, says in the Gospel of Thomas in verse 8:

“Humankind is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisherman discovered a fine large fish. He threw all the little fish back into the sea and with no difficulty chose the large fish. Whoever has ears to hear should hear.”

Jesus, peace and blessings be upon him, also says in John 3:3:

“Unless a man is born a second time, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Mullah Sadra, the revered Persian Sufi master of the 17th century, explains the above saying as:

The first birth is from the womb of a woman, the second birth is from the womb of the ego-senses.

To be born again requires the transformation of the ego-personality and according to the Islamic and Sufi teaching, breaking free from the commanding self (al-nafs al-ammara), which is the general state of human beings, passing through the state of the accusing self (al-nafs al-lawwama) and then reaching the state of the self at peace (al nafs al-mutmainna).

This is the true state of being and it is only possible by discarding layers of one’s ego identity and one’s preoccupation with the ego senses. When one starts confronting any aspect of one’s personality-fixation and begins to dig beneath the surface, one will eventually find God-consciousness.

Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

“We shall show them Our signs, in the universe and within themselves so they know that this is The Reality (Al Haqq).” 41:53

The Way to Peace

The absence of God-consciousness prevents one from following God's laws, and therefore prevents His protection of the earth and its inhabitants. God has made it clear to us through the teachings of His prophets, that there will be no inner peace as long as one forgets God and follows one's own ego.

“Be not like those who forgot Allah and He made them to forget their own souls! Such are those who are wrong doers (having wasted their spiritual potential). Not equal are the companions of the fire and the companions of the garden. It is the companions of the garden who will achieve peace and felicity.”

Quran 59:19-20

We can now reformulate our equation to propose that an absence of God-consciousness results in war, and that peace, rather than being the absence of war, is the state of God-consciousness.

The philosopher exhausted himself with thinking (figuring out)
let him run on, (in vain) since his back is turned toward the treasure

Let him run on, for the more he keeps running
the farther away does he become from the object of his desire

Rumi, Masnavi, VI:2356-7

SURRENDER

By Sheikha Fatima Fleur Nassery Bonnin

*Bismillaah ir Rahmaan ir Rahiim
In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate*

It is important to be clear about to whom we surrender, what we surrender and how we surrender.

Ordinarily we surrender to our ego. It is so automatic that most of the time we don't even notice it. Once some knowledge has been gained and progress made, the first sign of being a true traveller of the path (*salek*) appears with a fundamental shift. This shift is about constantly trying to surrender to God instead of surrendering to the demands and desires of the ego-personality or 'nafs'.

We must ask ourselves, what are we surrendering? It is not our wealth, the ones we love, nor our possessions. God has no desire for those things. We are surrendering our ego-personality (*nafs*), because it is the very instrument that forms the obstacle in getting close to God, and God's desire is for us to get close to Him and to know Him.

Then the question remains, how do we surrender to God? We must surrender the instruments of the ego, which are our mind, our emotions and our desires. Our ego-personality has dominated because of these instruments, or rather these weapons. Imagine, that within us is an enemy who has controlled our psyche, armed with these weapons, therefore the only way to fight him and subdue him, is by taking away those weapons. However this is not an easy task since we have come to believe that the personality is us, and that we are the personality. A certain degree of awakening is required in order to realise that there is more to us, and that the personality is only an outer veil covering the inner or essential self. Yet we have formed attachments to this structure and we identify that as our identity. Adding to the problem is the manipulative nature of the ego. This makes us, (to borrow the Sufi idiom), fall almost every time that we want to mount the donkey of the nafs and pull its reins, only to find that the next minute we are walking behind the donkey in the direction it wants to go. The ego has had a full run of us and has become a formidable force that will not give up easily. This internal struggle against one's nafs was described by the Prophet (pbuh) as the greater Jihad (war) - greater than the wars in the battlefield.

The journey of life is about wearing the cloak of the personality in order to cover our true self and become self conscious, while being given the chance to discard the cloak and return to the state of Divine consciousness. This is what we have been created for. The most important requirements on our part are to have sincerity and faith. If we have that, then the help from the unseen as well as help in the form of a guide or teacher will appear.

The human dilemma appears to be that the human soul is caught between the Divine/angelic forces, and the ego/animal forces. When the force of the ego pulls us down, the lower forces seek to bring about disorder and disharmony within us and in our life in order to keep us down and gain control. On the other hand if the soul moves into the higher realm, the lower forces don't have as much access and control over us, and we now receive help from that realm, (unless we slip and have to fight our way back again). This is one of the reasons that in Sufism there is a lot of emphasis on spending time around sincere seekers and staying away from people who are ego driven. Because, according to the law of "like attracts like", it would be easy to get attracted and slip.

To ascend to the higher realm we need to surrender our self. To surrender our self, we must surrender our thoughts, emotions and desires. Ironically, by surrendering, we will be able to receive and respond to whatever God sends our way without the distortions of the ego-personality.

I was talking with my Sheikh on the phone the other day and he said, “I don’t think, I only do what is put in front of me”. My inner ear heard the inner meaning of this statement and I experienced its transcending effect. Imagine, doing and responding to what God puts in front of us without being trapped in one’s emotions and thoughts. As soon as one allows the mind, emotion or desire to get in, different possibilities and judgements appear and one is taken out of the unity, and is thrown into the realm of multiplicity and fragmentation of the personality.

Prophet Jesus (pbuh) said God is always with us if we can surrender ourselves to Him and if we can love Him more than anything else, more than ourselves.

God consciousness has already been put in the heart of every child of Adam. When we surrender the self, then God's Will moves through us and our actions will become His actions. All we need to do is to surrender our belief of self-sovereignty and otherness. This is the real meaning of sacrifice - sacrificing the pseudo-self in order to reach the Divine Self. What keeps us from that union is the “me-ness” placed in between.

Speaking of this reality, Hafez the Persian Sufi poet says:
“ you are your own veil, Hafez, get out of the way”.

God is with us all the time. If He were not with us we would not even be able to stand on our feet nor take a step. In the Quran Allah (swt) says “I am closer to you than your jugular vein”. So He is always close and present. But we are not present with Him. We are busy with ourselves through our thoughts, emotions and desires. Even when we are hoping to get close to him, by hoping and thinking and desiring we get further away from Him. We can not be mindful of Him if we are mindful of ourselves. When we think or desire, we are in the element of “self”, and the harder we try to get close the further away we become.

* * * * *

*The philosopher exhausted himself with thinking (figuring out)
let him run on, (in vain) since his back is turned toward the treasure*

*Let him run on, for the more he keeps running
the farther away does he become from the object of his desire*

*The (Divine) King said “those who have striven for Us”
He did not say, “those who have striven away from Us”*

“WHAT IS TASAWWUF (SUFISM)?”

By A. A. Godlas

What is Tasawwuf?

What is Tasawwuf? Good character and awareness of God.
That’s all Tasawwuf is. And nothing more.

What is Tasawwuf? Love and affection.
It is the cure for hatred and vengeance. And nothing more.

What is Tasawwuf? The heart attaining tranquility—
which is the root of religion. And nothing more.

What is Tasawwuf? Concentrating your mind,
which is the religion of Ahmad (pbuh). And nothing more.

What is Tasawwuf? Contemplation that travels to the Divine throne.
It is a far-seeing gaze. And nothing more.

Tasawwuf is keeping one’s distance from imagination and supposition.
Tasawwuf is found in certainty. And nothing more.

Surrendering one’s soul to the care of the inviolability of religion;
this is Tasawwuf. And nothing more.

Tasawwuf is the path of faith and affirmation of unity;
this is the incorruptible religion. And nothing more.

Tasawwuf is the smooth and illuminated path.
It is the way to the most exalted paradise. And nothing more.

I have heard that the ecstasy of the wearers of wool
comes from finding the taste of religion. And nothing more.

Tasawwuf is nothing but *shari’at*.
It is just this clear road. And nothing more.

An Anonymous Persian Poem –
Translated by A. A. Godlas

A Commentary on “What Is Tasawwuf?”

By directly addressing the nature of Tasawwuf, this anonymous Persian poem, “What is Tasawwuf?” contains a number of essential concepts that are helpful in gaining an understanding of Tasawwuf. Direct statements about the nature of Tasawwuf (also known as Sufism) are an important aspect of Sufi literature. The renowned scholar Abu Nu‘aym al-Asbahani (Isfahani) (d. 430/1038) included one-hundred and thirty-four such assertions (often in rhymed prose) in his encyclopaedic biographical collection, the *Hilyat al-awliya’*. The great English scholar of Sufism, Nicholson, collected and translated seventy-eight of these sayings. Most recently, Tamar Frank has devoted an article to studying Abu Nu‘aym’s sayings of this kind. The poem that is the object of this study, in answering the question “What is Tasawwuf?” makes a number of pithy assertions about the central concepts of Tasawwuf by means of its technical vocabulary. Consequently, in this article we have sought to explain those concepts that may not be obvious even to the educated reader. In explaining these terms, we have relied mainly upon authoritative Islamic sources such as the Qur’an, hadith, and highly regarded Sufi authors.

Good character (*akhlaq*)

The word *akhlaq*, translated here as “good character,” is at best an inexact translation denoting virtuous behaviour that is an outgrowth of spiritual refinement. Hujwiri (d. ca. 465/1072), informed us that Abu al-Hasan al-Nuri (d. 295/907-8) stated, “Tasawwuf is not composed of practices (*rusum*) and sciences (*‘ulum*), but it is *akhlaq*.” Hujwiri explained that what Nuri meant was that *akhlaq* should not be thought of as simply good comportment or good character in an ordinary sense. *Akhlaq* as used by Sufis consists of virtuous behaviour that derives from the fact that the inner being of the Sufi has become cleansed and his or her heart has become purified. How such a Sufi behaves, then, is not so much the product of effort as it is the cresting of a wave, the origins of which is God. Hujwiri, in explaining Nuri’s remark went on to say,

If it [Tasawwuf] consisted of practices, it could be acquired by effort (*mujahadat*), and if it consisted of sciences, it could be gained by instruction (*ta’allum*); but it is *akhlaq* and it is not acquired until you demand from yourself the requirements (*hukm*) of *akhlaq*, conform your actions to them, and do justice to them. The distinction between practices (*rusum*) and *akhlaq* is this, that practices are contrived (*bi-takalluf*) actions proceeding from particular motives (*asbab*), such that their “outer form” (*zahir*) is at variance with their “inner truth” (*batin*); they are actions devoid of essence (*ma’na*). *Akhlaq*, on the other hand, are non-contrived praiseworthy actions not proceeding from particular motives. Their outer form is in harmony with their inner truth; they are actions devoid of pretension.

Awareness of God (*ihsan*)

The phrase “awareness of God,” is my translation of the word *ihsan*, which literally means “doing what is beautiful.” I have rendered it as “awareness of God” in view of the sound hadith in which the angel Gabriel asked the Prophet (pbuh), “What is *ihsan*?” He replied, “*Ihsan* is that you should worship God as if you see Him; and if you do not see Him, [you should know that] He sees you.” The concept of *ihsan*, with particular attention to its Qur’anic roots, occupies an entire chapter in what is arguably the best book in English on basic Islamic concepts, Murata and Chittick’s *Vision of Islam*.

The first Sufi to compose a compendium on Tasawwuf, Sarraj (d. 378/988-89), linked *ihsan* to “vigilant awareness” (*muraqaba*). He stated, “Vigilant awareness is for a servant who indeed knows and is certain that Allah is aware of and knows what is in his heart (*qalb*) and consciousness (*damir*). So he stays vigilantly aware of despicable thoughts that [would otherwise] preoccupy the heart and keep it from remembering his Master. Qushayri (d. 465/1072), like Sarraj, saw *ihsan* to be related to “vigilant awareness” (*muraqaba*). Specifically, he referred to the aspect of *ihsan* mentioned in the part of the hadith, “If you do not see him [know] that indeed he sees you” as alluding to “vigilant awareness” because “vigilant awareness” “is the servant’s knowledge of the Lord’s constant awareness of him.”

Love (*ishq*)

The lexicographer Jawhari (d. 453/1061), a contemporary of Qushayri defined *ishq*, literally, as “being excessive in love (*al-hubb*). While the Qur’an speaks of love using a variety of words, it does not use the word *ishq* or any words derived from it. Nevertheless, we do find a derivative of *ishq* being used in the hadith. Ghazali (d. 505/1111) noted a hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) spoke of “intense love” (*ishq*): The Messenger of God (pbuh) stated, “Whoever feels intense love, is virtuous, keeps his love hidden, and then dies, he will indeed die as a martyr.”

In a strikingly ecstatic passage in his *Alchemy of Happiness* (*Kimiya-yi sa’adat*), al-Ghazali considers *ishq* as that which arises in the fourth and final stage of practicing the remembrance of God (*dhikr*). This fourth stage occurs when

the object of the remembrance dominates the heart (and that object is God-Haqq – not the remembrance)... This is the result of one-pointed love (*mahabbat-i mufrad*), which is called “intense love” (*ishq*). The heart of the lover who is burning with love (*ashiq-i garmraw*) is always with the Beloved (*ma’shuq*). It might even occur that on account of the intense degree of preoccupation of the heart with the Beloved, the name of the Beloved may be forgotten. When one becomes so drowned and forgets one’s self and everything – except God (Haqq) –one reaches the beginning of the path of Tasawwuf. Sufis call this condition “passing away” (*fana*) and “not existing” (*nisti*); meaning that as a result of the remembrance of

God, everything has become non-existent; and such a person also has become non-existent, namely the one who has forgotten his or her self.

Mawlana Rumi (d. 672/1273), in his collection of ecstatic poetry, the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi*, exclaims in praise,

This love is so fine, this love that we have is so fine, O God!
So exquisite, so good, and so beautiful, O God!

Zihi ‘ishq zihī ‘ishq, kah ma rast khudaya,
Chi naghz ast u chi khub ast chi zibast khudaya.

While Divine Love might appear to some to be completely distinct from human love, for many Sufis such as Ahmad al-Ghazali (d. 520/1126), Ruzbihan (d. 606/1209), Ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638/1240), Rumi, and ‘Iraqi (d. 688/1289), there was a continuum from human love to Divine love that the aspiring lover of God could follow. By learning how to love through love of a person, the sincere Sufi could – in principle – transform his or her love of a person into love of Allah. The contemporary scholars Chittick and Wilson, in the introduction to their translation of ‘Iraqi’s *Lama’at*, discussed this relationship of human love and Divine love. Speaking of ‘Iraqi’s understanding of love, they stated, “There is no irreducible dichotomy between divine and human love... There is a gradation from the love of forms, which is “apparent love” (*‘ishq-i majazi*) to the love of God, which alone is ‘real love’ (*‘ishq-i haqiqi*). The lower form of love can be, and for the Sufi is, the ladder to Divine Love.”

Affection (*mahabba*)

The word *mahabba* is derived from the word *hubb*, both of which commonly mean love and affection. In the Qur’an, both words occur, although *hubb* is more common. The verbal form of these words, however, is used numerous times in the Qur’an. Two *ayas* involving love that Sufis frequently quote are “God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him” [Q 5:54], and “Say, if you love God, follow me [namely, the Prophet (pbuh)]; God will love you” [Q 3:31]. A hadith qudsi in which *mahabba* is mentioned was included in the highly regarded Muwatta of Imam Malik (d. 179/795) on the authority of Abu Idris al-Khawlani (d. 80/699-700). He transmitted the following narrative, which contains this hadith qudsi as transmitted by Mu’adh ibn Jabal (d. 18/639):

“Indeed, I heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) saying, ‘God said, “My love (*mahabbati*) necessarily belongs to those who love one another (*mutahabbina*) for My sake, sit together for My sake, visit one another for My sake, and give generously to one another for My sake.”’ ”

From the Qur’anic examples that we have cited, in addition to this hadith, it should be clear that *mahabba* (affection and love) is an important Islamic principle. In Sufi literature, along with an emphasis on the terms *‘ishq* (passionate love), we also often see the terms *hubb* and *mahabba* (affectionate love).

The Heart Attaining Tranquility (*itminan-i qalb*)

On six occasions the Qur'an links together the roots of the words *itminan* and *qalb*. In particular, one *aya* that is frequently cited by Sufis is in *surat* al-Ra'd, "Know that hearts find peace through the remembrance of God" [Q 13:28]. The emphasis in Tasawwuf on the practice of the remembrance of God is directly linked with the Qur'anic assertion that hearts become tranquil and find peace by means of remembering and meditating on God. A certain shaykh quoted in the Qur'anic commentaries of Sulami and Ruzbihan said, "Hearts find peace in it [the remembrance of God], because they did not find other than God to be a place for intimacy (*uns*) and comfort (*raha*)." Another shaykh quoted by both Sulami and Baqli stated, "The hearts of the folk of gnosis only find peace through God and only are tranquil through Him, because their hearts are the place where He looks (*mahal nazarihi*). Thus, Sufis, as lovers of God, only find peace in their hearts through God and the remembrance of God.

Concentrating Your Mind (*jam'-i khatir*)

The Sufi technical term *jam'* that I have translated by the word "concentration" is more literally translated as "the state of being gathered" or "collected," sometimes even being rendered as "union." It is often used in contrast to the term *tafriqa* (separation). Concerning them Qushayri wrote, "Affirming created existence (*khalq*) comes about through 'separation;' and affirming God (Haqq) derives from 'concentration' or 'gatheredness'. The servant must have both 'concentration' and 'separation.' Whoever has no 'separation' has no servanthood; and whoever has no 'concentration,' has no gnosis (*ma'rifa*)." Thus "concentrating one's mind," as we find in the poem, is more than simply the kind of concentration that one uses in one's day to day activities in the world. "Concentrating one's mind" for the folk of Tasawwuf implies the transcendental knowledge of God that is called gnosis (*ma'rifa*).

The Religion of Ahmad (*din-i Ahmad*) (pbuh)

The religion of Ahmad (pbuh) is none other than Islam, since Ahmad (pbuh) is one of the names of the Prophet (pbuh), as confirmed in both the Qur'an and hadith. In *surat* al-Saff we read, "...Jesus, the son of Mary, said: O children of Israel, Indeed I am the messenger of God sent to you to confirm the truth of what is present of the Torah and to convey to you glad tidings of a Divine messenger who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad" [Q 61:6]. Both Bukhari and Muslim, in their authoritative collections of hadith, reported that the Prophet (pbuh) stated, "I am Muhammad and I am Ahmad; and I am the effacer (*mahi*) who effaces disbelief. And I am the gatherer (*hashir*), who will gather people behind me [on the day of resurrection]; and I am the final one (*'aqib*) [after whom there will be no other prophets].

Contemplation (*fikr*)

Contemplation (*fikr* or *tafakkur*) is an important aspect of the methodology of Islam in general and Tasawwuf in particular. In both the Qur'an and the sunna, people are

instructed by God to contemplate. In *surat* al-Nahl, God states, “And we have revealed to you this [revelation as a] reminder (*al-dhikr*), so you will make clear for humankind what has been revealed to them and so that they will contemplate [Q 16:44]. Similarly, in *surat* Al ‘Imran, we read, “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed signs for all who possess [awakened] hearts, those who remember Allah when they stand, sit, and lie down and contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth” [Q 3:190-91]. One hadith that clearly expresses the significance of contemplation in the sunna was cited by Ghazali, “An hour’s worth of contemplation is better than a year’s worth of worship.” Contemplation is so important in the Qur’an, sunna, and Tasawwuf that Ghazali devoted an entire “book” (*kitab*) in his *Revival of the Religious Sciences* to it.

Certainty (*yaqin*)

The classical Sufi doctrine of certainty involved three degrees: the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqin*), the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqin*), and the reality of certainty (*haqq al-yaqin*). Hujwiri (d. ca. 465/1072) discussed them in the following manner:

“By *‘ilm al-yaqin* the Sufis mean knowledge of (religious) practice (*mu’amalat*) in this world according to the Divine commandments; by *‘ayn al-yaqin* they mean knowledge of the state of dying (*naz’*) and the time of departure from this world; and by *haqq al-yaqin* they mean the unveiling (*kashf*) of the vision (of God) that will be revealed in Paradise, and of its nature. Therefore, *‘ilm al-yaqin* is the rank of religious scholars (*‘ulama’*) on account of their correct observance of the divine commands, and *‘ayn al-yaqin* is the station of gnostics (*maqam-i ‘arifan*) on account of their readiness for death, and *haqq al-yaqin* is the annihilation-point of lovers (*fana’gah-i dustan*), on account of their rejection of all ‘existent beings and things’ (*mawjudat*)”

In these three degrees of certainty, one clearly sees a hierarchy of states of consciousness, one which corresponds to a three-fold hierarchy of human identity: the scholars, the gnostics, and at the highest degree, the lovers.

According to a later Sufi, Najm al-Din Razi (d. 654/1256), “certainty” arises when one strives to become aware of the spiritual world, while living in accordance with shari’a. If one simply tries to use one’s rational mind, one will fall into mere philosophy and unbelief. The key to certainty is the practice of shari’a, which leads to the awareness that everything is a manifestation of an attribute of God. In the following passage, Razi discusses the nature of certainty:

But [in contrast to the mere philosopher and the heretic] ...the possessor of true felicity nourish[es] the seed of the spirit in accordance with the law of Shari’at until all his senses attain perfection. He will then perceive, through his outer and inner senses, all the three hundred and sixty thousand realms that constitute the material and spiritual worlds (*mulk va*

malakut)...He sees every atom in each of these worlds to be a manifestation of one of the divine attributes containing within it one of God's signs; he removes the veil from the face of the manifestations, and the beauty of God's signs is displayed to him. [As the poet Abu al-'Atahiya stated,]

In every thing is a sign (*aya*) of His
pointing to the fact that He is One (*ahad*).

This is the threshold of the world of certainty (*iqan*)...Then the pure essence of God may be known in its unity, and the attributes (*sifat*) of divinity may be contemplated with the eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqin*).

Razi makes it very clear: in order to follow the path that leads to certainty and the awareness of the very "essence of God," one must discipline and perfect one's senses by means of shari'a, and one must be aware that there is nothing in existence that does not derive from an attribute of God.

The Most Exalted Paradise (*khuld-i barin*)

Khuld is one of the many terms in Islamic languages for paradise, which can be spoken of as consisting of various degrees. The highest degree of paradise is sometimes referred to as *khuld-i barin*. Some writers of Sufi literature – such as the author of the poem about which we are remarking – have seen Tasawwuf as a path to the highest degree of paradise, a path that is more certain than that offered by Islam in general, since Tasawwuf is more demanding and rigorous, going beyond the minimum degree of conformity to God's will required in Islam. Other Sufi writers have used terms for paradise as metaphors alluding to aspects of Tasawwuf or to experiences encountered on the Sufi path. In this way, Sufis bring paradise into this life or, conversely, they raise up to paradise an aspect of this life. An example of such a metaphorical usage is expressed by the Persian poet Hafiz, who has written perhaps the best known couplet using the term "the most exalted paradise" (*khuld-i barin*):

Rawda-yi khuld-i barin khalvat-i darvishanast
Maya-yi muhtashimi khalvat-i darvishanast

The garden of the most exalted paradise is the retreat of solitude of the dervish.

The substance of magnificence is the retreat of solitude of the dervish.

Ecstasy and "finding" (*wajd*)

Literally, the word *wajd* means "finding," but for the Sufis it also means a moment of ecstasy in which one experiences an unveiling – and hence a "finding" - of some aspect of God's reality. Ruzbihan (d. 606/1209) defined *wajd* as, "The heart's perceiving the sweetness of contact with the light of "eternality before time" (*azaliyat*), the purity of

witnessing, and the delight of the [Divine] address. *Wajd* is often portrayed as the intermediary stage of a three-stage process consisting of *tawajud*, *wajd*, and *wujud*. Qushayri defines *tawajud* as “willfully seeking to have *wajd*; one in this state does not actually possess true *wajd*.” Concerning *wajd* itself, Qushayri wrote, “*Wajd* is that which encounters your heart, entering [it and coming] over you, without will or effort on your part.” Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri stated, “For twenty years I have gone between *wajd* (ecstatic finding) and *faqd* (loss). Namely, when I find my Lord, I lose my heart; and when I find my heart, I lose my Lord.” Qushayri defined the third stage, *wujud*, as being that which occurs “after one progresses beyond *wajd*,” [it is truly realized only] “after the cessation of human qualities (*khumud al-bashariya*), because human qualities cannot remain present during the manifestation of the sovereignty of the Truth (*sultan al-haqiqah*).” A succinct summary of each of these three stages was expressed by Qushayri’s shaykh and father-in-law, Abu ‘Ali al-Daqqaq: “*Tawajud* necessitates the rebuking of the servant; *wajd* necessitates the drowning of the servant; and *wujud* necessitates the annihilation of the servant.” Hence, as one advances from *tawajud* to *wajd* and *wujud*, one experiences a progressive dissolution of one’s egocentricity and a surrendering of one’s identification with one’s self.

Wearers of Wool (*suf pushan*)

In Persian the literal meaning of the word *sufi* would be translated as “*suf push*” (wearer of wool). Hence the phrase in the poem “wearer of wool” is synonymous with Sufi. It is generally agreed that the first Sufis were pious, ascetic Muslims who were called Sufis because they wore clothes of coarse wool (*suf*) rather than more refined garments. Some scholars have pointed to a Christian influence upon this practice. Nevertheless, these early Sufi ascetics were following the example of the Prophet (pbuh), who (as reported by Ibn Sa’d [d. 230/845] through reliable transmitters) was known to wear woollen garments. Moreover, the great hadith scholar Bayhaqi (d. 458/1066), in his *Shu’ab al-iman*, includes numerous reports about the virtues of wearing *suf*. In one report the Prophet (pbuh) states “You should wear clothes of wool (*suf*). [In so doing,] you will find the sweetness of faith in your hearts.” In spite of the criticism leveled against this and other reports that the Prophet (pbuh) wore wool, the *isnad* of Ibn Sa’d’s report mentioned above was not criticised and appears to be flawless. Hence in wearing wool the Sufis were not departing from the record of the sunna of the Prophet (pbuh).

Taste (*dhawq*)

Generally, one’s spiritual proclivity or capacity is referred to by the term “taste” (*dhawq*). More specifically, Qushayri (d. 465/1072) hierarchically defined *dhawq* (tasting) along with *shurb* (drinking), and a less commonly used term *riyy* (being quenched). He stated,

These terms denote the fruits of ‘theophany’ (*tajalli*), the results of unveilings (*kushufat*), and the appearances of inrushes (*waridat*) that they [meaning the Sufis] experience. The first of these is ‘tasting,’ then, ‘drinking,’ and then ‘being quenched.’ One who is characterized by *dhawq* (tasting) tries to be intoxicated (*mutasakir*). One who is characterized by

shurb (drinking) is intoxicated (*sakran*). And one who is characterized by *riyy* (being quenched) is sober (*sah*).

The sense of the term “taste” in the poem “What is Tasawwuf?” seems to have both the general meaning and the more specifically Sufi sense as noted by Qushayri. The general meaning is conveyed in the expressions the “taste for religion,” where the sense is that the Sufis’ “appreciation” for religion is the basis for their ecstasy. The more specific meaning of which Qushayri speaks is alluded to in the poet’s linking together these two hierarchical states of consciousness (“taste” and ecstasy”). The poet states that “ecstasy” is derived from “taste,” implying that Sufi ecstasy only comes about after a firm foundation in the appreciation of and commitment to following the religion (namely Islam). Hence the poet says, “I have heard that the ecstasy of the wearers of wool (*suf*) comes from finding the taste for religion.

Tasawwuf is nothing but *shari’at*

A problem that arises in the final couplet of “What is Tasawwuf?” is that in equating Tasawwuf and shari’a, the poet brings up and then resolves an apparent tension between Tasawwuf and shari’a. Such a tension, however, exists only to the degree that one defines these two terms as being mutually exclusive. While various extremists persist in excluding one from the other, we do have many inclusive statements - such as that of the poet of “What is Tasawwuf?” – in which Tasawwuf and shari’a are interwoven, similarly defined, or equated. Qushayri (d. 465/1074), for example, defined “shari’a” as “assiduous observance of servanthood.” Defining Tasawwuf in a comparable fashion, Abu al-Hasan al-Shudhili (d. 656/1258) stated: “Tasawwuf is training the self (*nafs*) through servanthood and subjecting it to the commands (*ahkam*) of Lordship.”

Supporting the close relationship between Tasawwuf and shari’a, the Sufi Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. 260/874) asserted that observing the shari’a was a touchstone for judging a person’s spiritual degree: “Were you to see a man who performs miracles such that he ascends into the air, do not be deceived by him. Instead, observe how well he is following the Divine commands, abstaining from what is prohibited, keeping within the limits set by God, and observing the shari’a.” Similarly, Abu al-Husayn al-Warraq (d. before 320/932), asserted the futility of trying to reach God without conforming one’s actions to shari’a and the sunna: “A servant will only reach Allah through Allah and by being in harmony with his loved one [the Prophet (pbuh)] through his laws (*shari’a*). And whoever believes that he can follow a path without emulating (*al-iqtida*) [the Prophet (pbuh)] will become lost, on account of imagining that he is being guided.” Undoubtedly, for all but a minority of Sufis throughout history, carefully observing the shari’a has been a crucial and on-going component of their spiritual practice.

One way of understanding the interrelationship of Tasawwuf and shari’a was expressed by the Kubrawi Sufi, Najm al-Din Razi (d. 654/1256). Using the term *tariqa* (path) to denote Tasawwuf – as Sufis commonly do – he clarified its relationship to shari’a: “The shari’at has an outer (*zahiri*) and an inner (*batini*) aspect. Its outer aspect consists of bodily deeds... The inner aspect of the shari’at consists of deeds of the heart (*qalbi*), of

the inner mystery (*sirri*), and of the spirit (*ruhi*) and is called the *tariqat*.” Hence, for Razi, the *tariqa* (or Tasawwuf) is not separate from shari’a, it is, rather, its inner dimension. In summary, it should be clear, then, that in spite of extremist views that see Tasawwuf and shari’a as mutually exclusive, the author of “What is Tasawwuf?” – like most Sufis – bridges the false dichotomy between Tasawwuf and shari’a.

Conclusion

The poem “What is Tasawwuf?” provides answers to a question that has perplexed people since the term first began to be used, over 1200 years ago. Its answers to this question involve technical terms referring to many of the key concepts of Tasawwuf (or Sufism, as it is commonly called today). In this commentary we have not discussed the more obvious phrases and answers expressed by the poet, phrases such as “faith” (*iman*) and “the affirmation of unity” (*tawhid*). The terms that we have addressed are the following: good character (*akhlaq*), awareness of God (*ihsan*), love (*ishq*), affection (*mahabba*), the heart attaining tranquillity (*itminan-i qalb*), concentrating one’s mind (*jam’i khatir*), the religion of Ahmad (*din-i Ahmad*) (pbuh), contemplation (*fikr*), certainty (*yaqin*), the most exalted paradise (*khuld-i barin*), ecstasy (*wajd*), wearers of wool (*suf pushan*), taste (*dhawq*), and the close relationship between Tasawwuf and shari’a. From this study, it should be evident that there are numerous dimensions of Tasawwuf, including actions in the world, consciousness of God, spiritual states and practices, and shari’a. And nothing more – nor less.

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TEST OF THE HARDSHIP

By Sheikha Fatima Fleur Nassery Bonnin

Bismillaah ir Rahmaan ir Rahiim

In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate

With so much unrest in the world and fighting between the nations, it is important that we recognise the misuse of religion (whether deliberate or unconscious) as a means of propagating conflict and violence. One wonders if those who are involved or causing such devastating actions or policies, have ever properly understood their respective scriptures and their teachings. As a Muslim, I need to be more critical of my own people since we have the book of Allah (swt) from which “nothing has been left out”, nor has it

been contaminated by the hand of man. But alas, like most religious scripture, the Quran is being read by many Muslims at an exoteric level, and as a result it is often misunderstood and misused.

From the time of the Prophet (pbuh) until now, the reliable sources and commentators of the Quran have said that most of the ayaat in the Quran, whilst they have an exoteric meaning which would mainly relate to the events and the needs of that time, also have an esoteric meaning that relates to all generations. The Prophet (pbuh) is quoted as having said the Quran is wrapped in seven layers of meaning. This is inherent in the nature of scripture, and therefore all other scriptures from Allah (swt) would also have layers of both exoteric and esoteric meaning. However for the purpose of this article, regardless of what other religious groups have done or continue to do with their scriptures, as Muslims our focus needs to be to keep our own house in order and make an effort to understand the meaning and the teaching of the Quran so that we might act accordingly.

There are many references in the Quran about how very few people will use their intellect to properly understand. For example: *“in this, there are lessons for those who can understand”, “there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see”, “if only they could understand”, “we detail Our signs for people who understand” or “in all this there is indeed a reminder to those who are endowed with insight”. (12:111, 3:13, 26:113, 6:98, 39:21)*

With so many references in the Quran it would be absolutely to our detriment not to reflect on this and try to get the messages that our Creator who has created us and our psyche, our perception and our blindness, has given us using parables and examples in order to show us the Truth and the way to the Truth.

“A blessed divine writ which we have sent down so that men may ponder over its messages, and that those who are endowed with insight may take them to heart”. 38:29

Let us start from the base of - *“Allah created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the Truth. Behold, in this there is a message for those who believe” 29:44*

Without delving too deeply into this verse and at an accessible level, this is to say that in every aspect of the creation and within every step and stage (since things often are in stages), there is no haphazardness or accidental cause and effect, but rather, a deliberate process and conclusion in accordance with His Will and His Plan which is the Reality and the Truth (Haqq).

“Unto every one of you have We appointed a law and way of life. And if Allah had so willed, He could surely have made you one single community; (but He willed it otherwise) in order to test you by means of that which He has vouchsafed unto you. So surpass one another in doing good deeds! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all the differences in which you were engaged in dispute.” 5:48

We are told that we are meant to have different laws and ways of life which result in different religions and that is according to the Plan and Will of Allah (swt) and in accordance with the Truth.

“Unto every community We appointed (different) ways of worship, which they ought to observe. Hence do not let them dispute with you on the matter, but do call them unto your Lord: for, behold, you are on a straight guidance.”

“And if they argue with you, say (only) ‘Allah knows best what you are doing’”
22:67-68

“Do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation other than in a most kindly manner – except those of them who did wrong and are oppressors – and say ‘we believe in that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to you; for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves.’”
29:46

Is this how the differences in the religions are being handled these days? Allah (swt) says do not argue with them unless you enter into a discussion in a kindly manner. Since God’s teaching is essentially the same in all religions, it is unfortunate to see that many people from other religions who hold powerful positions in the west have abused their power through politics and the use of the media to propagate ignorant ideas full of hatred against other faiths. But the hypocrisy that some politicians have exhibited by hijacking ‘the religions’, whilst posing as religious people, or “doing the right thing”, does not give anyone an excuse to disobey God. Christian scripture also reflects these sentiments of tolerance. Jesus (pbuh) passed on these instructions from God, as the most important rules - the first and second commandments: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”* and *“Love your neighbour as your self”*. Mark 12:30-31

We need to reflect on the reason that God, the Creator, with full knowledge of what is to come, during the time of each prophet has instructed us to accept and be kind and courteous to people of other religions. These instructions obviously equally apply for differences within the same religion. Within Islam, Sunnis and Shia’s who have a history of undermining each other, must take into consideration what Allah (swt) has instructed in terms of the right action in how to treat each other regarding their differences. Of course the same holds for examples of animosity within Christianity and Judaism, but as I mentioned earlier, we Muslims as the people of the last religion, with our access to the Quran, have no excuse. The mentality that only one religion is right, only one sect is right, is a losing position in the eyes of God, the Creator of all.

The Tradition has it that when *“owe yalbesakum shai’an”* in Sura 6, ayah 65 descended upon the Prophet (pbuh), he got up and made ablution and stood for prayer. Then he made supplication and asked Allah (swt) not to send any suffering from above and not from beneath and asked Allah (swt) not to allow the Muslim community to become divided into different branches and not to fight amongst themselves. At this point Gabriel (a.s.) appeared to him and gave him the good news that his first two requests had been

accepted, but not the last two requests. Then the Prophet (pbuh) said, O Gabriel, if it is ordained that my ummah (Muslim community) fight each other, then there will be nothing left of the ummah. So he started praying for it again and at this point ayah 2 of Surah 29 Al- Ankabut (The Spider) descended, followed by ayah 3:

“Do people think that on their (mere) saying ‘we have attained to faith’, they will be left to themselves and not tested with hardship?”

“Whereas We indeed tested those who lived before them. Allah will surely bring to light those who are true in their faith as He will bring to light also the liars by putting them into the test of hardship.”

The commentary about the above ayaat (there are similar verses in the Quran) says that there is no way out of this hardship testing “fetneh”, since the community (ummah) of the prophets need to be tested after the departure of the prophets, so that the truthful ones will be distinguished from the liars. After all, there will not be any “vahye” (revelation) coming down in order to help distinguish the ones that lie from the truthful ones. Therefore what would be left is the struggle and the fighting until the day of judgement.

Let us reflect on what it is that Allah (swt) is teaching us through all the above. He has sent different prophets and knows there are going to be different religions with different sects in this world. He has clearly said that if He wanted to create only one community He would have done so. In fact even without the ayaat, the fact that these different religions and beliefs exist is evidence that it is according to His Will, unless some would rather think that it slipped out of Allah’s control and now they have to make it right. Astaghfer Allah!

Allah (swt) is teaching us how to be tolerant of other people’s beliefs and ways of life that are different than ours. This is the teaching of God to all the religions. In Christianity it goes even further than acceptance and not arguing, by the instruction of “turning the other cheek”. Then why is it that we do not seem to be doing that?

We need to look for the answer in the self protective mechanism of the ego which needs to be right in order to feel good. This is where the seemingly righteous act or a religious duty could often be a cover up for self righteousness of the ego (nafs), to the point of disobeying God no matter how we rationalise it. Isn’t that what Satan did? Satan also had a reason for disobeying Allah (swt) and not prostrating to Adam, most probably a valid reason in his way of thinking. Allah (swt) has told us the story of Satan and Adam in order that we take heed and use the teaching in our life. The underpinning belief of man in his arrogance is that his belief is right. Even if his belief is in conflict with the instructions of God and the prophets, he still goes ahead and rationalises his actions. There are many examples of this which are beyond the scope of this discourse.

We are living in difficult times of public backlash against Muslims in the western countries with the media driving the fanning of the fire of hatred and intolerance. Today it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a Christian clergyman who appears

on television condemning Muslims and other religions and stating that the only people that go to heaven are Christians, and the Muslim extremist.

Allah (swt) has clearly told us that the hardship, turmoil and struggle are a part of this life in order that the real believer who tells the truth about his being a servant is distinguished from the one who only says so. Let me repeat the verse:

“Do people think that on their (mere) saying ‘we have attained to faith’, they will be left to themselves and not tested with hardship?”

“Whereas We indeed tested those who lived before them. Allah will surely bring to light those who are true in their faith as He will bring to light also the liars by putting them into the test of hardship”.

In case some people think that Allah (swt) did not know the situation that we are facing these days – Astaghfer Allah – I would like to mention another verse:

“Say: it is He alone who has the power to send down upon you suffering from above you and from beneath your feet, or to confound you with mutual discord and let you taste the affliction of one another.

See how We explain the signs by various forms, so that they may understand” . 6:65

This ayah clearly illustrates the situation in the western countries between Muslim and non Muslims since September 11. Yet Allah (swt) wants us not to resort to fighting and violence. He wants that we human beings rise above the selfishness, self righteousness, and self protective behaviour to a level of **real submission**. It is not enough to just say that Islam means submission.

“Do people think that on their (mere) saying ‘we have attained to faith’, they will be left to themselves and not tested with hardship?”

Such a level of submission is the sign of having attained true faith. This submission and having attained true faith is the outcome of the realisation and total trust that Allah (swt) has created the world in Truth (Haqq). He does not need our agreement but wants our submission to this Reality. It is in that submission that we realise the unity of existence and the Tawhid. This cannot happen while we fight one another.

“So surpass one another in doing good deeds!!”

And it is precisely because of the fact that there are always going to be people who hurt other people that Jesus (pbuh) instructed us to turn the other cheek.

If our Creator tells us that He has created other religions and different ways of life and worshipping on purpose, and wants us to live accordingly with respect and acceptance and even surpassing one another in so doing, and we (the People of the Book) keep doing the opposite of that, overtly or covertly, what does that say about our submission to our Lord and our true faith?

Sufis have always known that unless people struggle with their ego-personality (nafs), they are always prey for misunderstanding of their religion and not able to rise above the

temptation and seduction of the ego-personality. These are the veils that are ordained for man in order to break out of them before the end of his life. The level of the submission that Allah (swt) is requiring from us will not happen unless we go from the outer level of understanding the religion and scripture to the inner, while constantly fighting the ego, which the Prophet (pbuh) stated as – “The Greatest Struggle”. Maybe then by the Rahmat of Allah (swt) the transformation of the nafs takes place. It is a long journey but it is the purpose of the journey of life.

May Allah (swt) help us and include us on the path of obedience and submission to Him.

THE THEATRE OF LIFE

By Sheikha Fatima Fleur Nassery Bonnin

Bismillaah ir Rahmaan ir Rahiim

In the name of Allah, The Merciful, The Compassionate

One of the signs of awakening in this life from the deep sleep of unconsciousness is to be able to see (perceive) the inner meanings of things, not just the outer. Life is full of various levels of inner meanings and messages, clues and hints according to the level of the person’s spiritual unfoldment. There are many ayat in the Quran and ahadith to confirm this phenomenon. This is where the term “blind” has been used in the Quran, alluding to people who in spite of having eyes, yet cannot see. Indeed they see the forms and the exoteric aspects of things but do not see the esoteric meaning within.

Allah (swt) points to this repeatedly in various verses in the Holy Book, usually after a story, parable or symbolism:

“in this there are lessons for those who can understand” or “there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see” or “if only they could understand” or “if only you could see” or “we detail Our signs for people who understand”.

But somehow, although we are looking right at them, the majority of these signs are missed. They go right over our heads and we see only the outermost aspect of them, for good reason since our heads are not the apparatus for the perception of these things. We are told that all the signs/ayat of Allah are in two books; the book of the Holy Quran, and the book of the cosmos - life and creation. Both require certain purity of heart and inner sight in order to be given the permission to perceive the inner meanings and signs. We are clearly told with regards to the Quran that only the cleansed or pure ones (*motaharoun*) will be able to touch this (Quran 56:79). The “cleansed” or “pure ones” have generally been taken for their outer meaning of having been physically cleansed and having had ablution. While that holds, yet there is more to it. It alludes to the state of inner purity, the purity of heart. If all that was meant was outer cleanliness and ablution, why then would we witness from time to time, that people who have not prepared themselves that way, still gain access and are able to touch the Quran? When we consider

that Allah's word is the Truth and there cannot be an exception to it, then when we see these exceptions it should highlight the discrepancy between our understanding and the real meaning of the Words.

If we understand that "to touch" means being touched by the faculty of intellect and perceiving the inner messages; and we understand the "pure ones" as those who possess an inner purity and sincerity in their heart, then there will not be any exception. The fact that the Quran can be touched by the ritually unclean is further proof of the esoteric meaning of the verse.

The purpose of these signs is the realisation of the purpose of our life in this human body, which is God-consciousness, in spite of the forgetfulness that has been placed in human beings, and in spite of distractions we experience, some of which provide very strong attractions that constantly pull us in the opposite direction. This purpose has been revealed in a famous Hadith Qudsi, where Allah (swt) explains the purpose of the creation by saying:

"I was a hidden treasure and I loved that I be known, so I created the creation so that I can be known".

It is no wonder that His creation and the life of human beings are encoded with clues towards knowing Him. But that potentiality does not reach fruition for everybody. One needs to have a sincere longing and desire for his Creator and put on the walking shoes and set forth on the journey in order to be accepted as a traveller on the path to God, "salek". In modern times we see a lot of people putting on their walking shoes but all they do is keep jogging. This walk is a different walk and in reality shoes are not necessary and are allegorical. As Allah (swt) said to Moses:

"Take off your sandals", since he did not need them there.

In Sufism, we are told that there is nothing in this world whose source is not in the unseen. Therefore wherever we look lies a reminder, for those who can see.

"Wherever you look is the face of Allah" (2:115)

In looking at birth, at childhood and dependency, at growing up, at relationship with parents, at becoming self sufficient and independent, at using our will and putting it in action, at love relationships and at work and making a living; as I am reflecting on the list, I am reminded of at least one ayah in the Quran that applies to each stage and/or category, teaching us the right versus wrong behaviour, guiding us to the straight path and therefore to Him.

"How many a sign is there in the heavens and on earth which they pass by, and on which they turn their backs!" (12:105)

One then must question why it is that with so many reminders, so many people remain asleep and only see things for their outer form, and in one dimension. My response is that the inner eyes do not open until one has done some degree of internal Jihad against one's ego-personality (nafs). The potentiality is there in everyone – man is made in the image of God – to reach a degree of perfection in his attributes, but he has been sent to the lowest of the low. This lowest of the low has been interpreted as being sent down to earth, again while that holds it has more inner meanings; for the lowest level of man is taking himself as a self sufficient and independent reality, while living as a slave to his ego. This man sets out to respond to every whim of his wants and desires, and reacts poorly to any lack of satisfaction. This is the condition of a normal man in the state of “al-nafs al-ammara”, with imperfect (naghis) attributes, and therefore constantly seeking for perfection (takamol) from being imperfect. In his seeking for perfection (the Source), he has no choice and it is ontological, but he keeps looking in the wrong places and all he gets is a temporary satisfaction which does not last, until with Allah's Mercy, a wake up call comes. Then the question is whether he wakes up or not, and if he wakes up, whether he stays awake or goes back to sleep.

Every night we go to sleep and dream about various things that seem so real to the point that we even exhibit physical reaction and experience strong emotions to it just like in waking hours. But generally that does not force us to stop and think that if the dreams are not real, then to what extent do these experiences show us what else that we may think is real may in fact not be real and be an illusion just like the dreams. One needs to ponder that there is an “I” in the dream while the other “I” is sleeping in bed. A veil covers our eyes as soon as we wake up. The thicker veil is the role we play in the theatre of life. No doubt the understanding of the dream person would be helpful to the understanding of the role we play in the theatre of life.

“He is the Creator of heaven and earth and whatever is in between them”.

It is important to note that Allah who has created everything, has also created the art of theatre through us. The stage for our performance starts before we are born but becomes more apparent from birth and throughout our life. We play a role along with other people as in any production on the stage. There are stories, plots, emotions, good people and bad people interacting. The more it elicits emotion out of us, the more we are absorbed in the story. If you imagine an actor on the stage, he takes the identity of his role as real in order to do the job and we in the audience join him and share his version of reality during the time in the theatre. However the actor on the stage has the chance of remembering his real self during the intermissions or breaks. But we human beings are engaged in a one act show and during this act which is our entire life, our breaks are very subtle reminders and hints of Reality.

If we were not so preoccupied with ourselves and our emotions and thoughts, there might be a space for some realisations through the subtle hints of this theatrical reality. The events of our lives are like the props for the stage where the story and the plot is acted out with others. As Rumi says every brick that makes up the world is made of illusion.

Our Creator says in the Quran:

"The life of this world is nothing but a play, whereas, behold, the life in the hereafter is indeed the only (true) life: if they but knew this!" (29:64)

These creations are supposed to be a reminder alluding to higher purpose, but we human beings, in our state of "zulum and jahul", keep using them for different purposes; entertainment, self satisfaction and forgetfulness of the Real. This is how we contaminate the goodness of life. We celebrate the actors performances, give them awards without ever thinking if there is any message for us - as nothing in this life is meant to be just for play without a higher purpose.

Imam Ali (a.s.) says in Nahjul Balagha:

"They have not taken lessons from things which are full of lessons, but they have taken them from far off places." (Sermon 221)

Rumi says:

"You see the world according to the measure of your eye" and then goes on saying "the Arifs (gnostics) possess a 'surmeh' (black powder make-up used on the eyelid), go and seek it. So that your eye of stream river may become an ocean." (Book 5:1905-7)

He is alluding that Arifs having done the required inner purification, are given the reward of seeing the inner reality of things, (which is an act of Beauty).

In the story of Moses and his staff, Allah tells Moses to throw his staff down and it turns into a serpent moving rapidly, and then tells him:

"Take hold of it, and fear not; We shall restore it to its former state." (20:21)

In this story, first Allah sets the stage by asking "what is this in your right hand O Moses?" and Moses responds:

"It is my staff; I lean on it; and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep; and other uses have I for it." (20:17-18)

There have been different interpretations of this verse such as Allah wanting to hear Moses speak or that Allah is testing him.

These verses are pointing to the esoteric and mystical reality. It means that as long as man only sees the outer form of things he will only see the staff. But things in life inherently carry other and deeper dimensions and uses. The miracle is the transformation to perceive the inner dimension of things.

The fear referred to is the fear of letting go of the familiar form and touching (perceiving)

beyond the form. We then are being assured in this story not to be afraid since after the transformation we are still able to see the form.

We need to pay attention to every word in the Quran and not get carried away with the story, because the story covers the esoteric teaching since the stories are meant to be the apparent (zahir) and the teachings hidden (batin). We know by reading the above that something more mystical is happening since Allah is aware of everything and knows what the staff is and what usage it has. He is the creator of the staff. It is for the benefit of us that He takes us through all the apparent and exoteric usage of the staff that has been enumerated, and then to the esoteric. If we realise this, then we are likely to reflect and wonder how many other things are there that we keep missing and taking the apparent meaning as the only reality.

May Allah help us to recognise the theatre of life and may He grant us to stay awake to our real self.

Beginnings of a Muslim - Christian Discussion

Note: A variety of issues are touched on in the discussion between a Muslim and Christian in the short correspondence dialogue recorded below. Names have been removed; original format and content are retained. This is in order that visitors to our site may develop something of a feel for the convictions, presuppositions and perspective of the biblical Christian worldview, as well as an understanding of Muslim thought and belief as seen in friendly, open and honest exchange. The articles and links listed on the main page give detailed and thorough responses to questions raised here.

LETTER FROM A MUSLIM READER:

As-salam wa alaikum christian brothers.....i have seen your interesting refutations of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)....i was interested in the evidence of Hasrat Isa (Jesus) (peace be upon him) and his crucifixion....you took many sources and quotes from the once Bible.....just to let you know.....i am a muslim scholar myself....u can call me muslim brother i guess....i live in *****, *****.....anyways...in 1993 over 100 Christian scholars got together in Tunis, Tunisia to critically analyze the Bible. It was discovered that 80% of the Bible was not the word of God, but written by the "disciples" of Prophet Jesus (pbuh)....20% was true as they were stories about the Israelites etc. You have to agree that the bible has been changed.....the Holy Qu'ran has not been changed and I have seen attempts and sometimes to some almost convincing

attempts that the Quran is changed. However....i will explain that some other time as you do not want a long article.

Now, you call Luke, Matthew, John, Mark etc. as disciples of Christ...however these men lived over 100-150 years after Christ...how are they disciples...how can their written work in the bible called valid and the word of God? I would like to know an answer...I have been told at a World religion conferences by Christian scholars and priests that they were rightly guided by God, so they put the wisdom and the word of God given by Jesus (pbuh) himself in the Bible.

Muhammad (pbuh) also had disciples who lived, ate and died next to him.....did they go and write stuff down in the Quran and say it was the word of god? The caliphs of Islam (Hasrat Abu Bakr, Umer, Uthman and Ali) also were disciples of Muhammad (pbuh), they were rightly guided as they rightly guided Islam...were they writing stuff down in the Quran? NO.I find it hard to believe that the Bible is the true word of God.....Now I would really like to address one last point to defend my religion of Islam.....Christians insist that Muhammad (pbuh) wrote the Quran down by hand.....Muhammad (pbuh) (u should know this) was illiterate, he could not write or read...he was an uneducated man...the Quran has been said to be written in such beautiful poetry and laugage that no one can compare to it..could Muhammad write this? NO.....it is the word of God almighty... as no human could write or even perceive such writing

I suggest you read the biography of Muhammad (pbuh) by a non-muslim man by the name of, MARTIN LINGS, its is called MUHAMMAD, HIS LIFE BASED ON THE EARLIEST SOURCES.....you truly need to understand Muhammad (pbuh) before you attack and refute Islam and the prophet muhammad (pbuh)....sorry...this letter was a bit tooo long..but please read it and write back...thanx a lot...allah bless you..

wasalam *****

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE:

As-salam wa alaikum *****

I have read Martin Lings book -- Muhammad His Life -- and found it an interesting book on Islam. It is not written so much from a critical scholarly perspective as some other works, but as I remember it, it does certainly contain some good information nonetheless. I find it interesting that you would quote Lings work, as there are many Muslims, namely orthodox Sunnis who would have a real problem with Lings as a result of the fact that he is a practicing Sufi. You did state incorrectly that he is not a Muslim, unless of course you do not regard Sufis as Muslims; which would be understandable as many Muslims regard Sufism as something of an abberation in Islam. In his work on Sufism, Martin Lings quotes and agrees with both Persian and Indian Sufi saints who stated that Islam is one with Hinduism. Do you believe that as well? Lings also in his adherence to Sufism is

uncritical of methods of Quranic interpretation which many would question; especially from an orthodox Sunni perspective; the Shia would as well of course.

I do understand much about Muhammad, having read the Quran and much of the Sunni hadith; Bukhari, Muslim, etc..., and am fairly well acquainted with Islam having also spent a portion of my times in the Middle East.. it is interesting that you mention the caliphs and the formation of the Quran in contrast to that of the Bible. We believe that God inspired His prophets and apostles, indeed working in them by the power of His Spirit guiding them in all truth as they wrote as He commanded and led them.

There is a preponderous weight of evidence in textual support for the validity of the New Testament record; the dates you ascribe to the disciples and writers are among the far latest ascribed by even the most liberal of scholarship. You have to realize that as you would realize that not all that goes under the name "Islam" is what you would claim truly Islamic; so not everything that goes on under the name of "Christianity" is Christian. There are liberal Muslim scholars who seriously criticize the authenticity of the hadith and believe it is invalid as a source of authority; of course you would reject this as then the majority of the practice of Islam loses its foundation and grounds; (interesting it is to note here that your criticism of the Bible easily can be turned on itself with the hadith; my friend these things were written by people who heard them from others who heard them from others and so on; the validity and security of isnad is by its own right shaky at best.) You of course I imagine would have problems with the liberal Muslim scholars who support criticizing the hadith. In the same way there are scholars who claim themselves under the name of Christianity whereas they operate from presuppositions of belief which are directly opposed to the heart of Christian faith. There are many able Christian scholars who hold to the Bible as the infallible and inerrant Word of God; I am but one of them.

The fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity is not only the difference between the Bible vs the Quran and hadith; but it is a profound difference of worldviews as expressed by them. The Bible teaches that God is perfectly holy, perfectly just, and that man is sinful. The Bible describes the state of sinful man saying that before the holy God of all creation

There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable There is none who does good, no not one. Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit The poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3

The Bible shows Jesus himself said to be angry with one's brother without cause is indeed a great sin in the sight of God; to call him a fool is to be in danger of hellfire; to look at a

woman with lust is to commit adultery with her in one's heart (Matt.5). And indeed Jesus is the one who will return on the clouds of heaven as the Judge of each and every person.

The Bible is clear about the sin of man -- and goes to the heart of the issue; it does not rest in outward spirituality as a way to try to appease and seek the mercy of God; no it realizes that every man at heart is sinful; though they may be as a great saint or imam outwardly, there remain sins of wrong motives, sins of the mind.. In order to stand before the holiness of God atonement is needed; forgiveness and mercy; this God has provided in Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life (even Muhammad was a sinner) and who paid the debt for the wrong of whoever will trust in Him; for He is the Son of God, as He so clearly said so many times. That was why the Jews hated Him and said He was a blasphemer (Matt.26:63-65).

The Bible clearly addresses this reality of sin, and describes it accurately; whereas the Quran does not. That is one of the problems of Islam -- it lacks the deep spirituality and the morality of Christianity as revealed in God's Word the Bible. Time and again I have seen there is no deep spiritual peace in Islam either; I know that my sins have been forgiven, and out of thankfulness for this great blessing I am called by God, in His Word to live a holy life to His glory. This gives me peace and confidence and joy, even in trials or afflictions. It gives me reason for real morality from the heart; to stand up for truth and righteousness, even in the midst of a corrupt society. But in Islam there was/is no peace; there is striving by the pillars and the sayings, but no one can ever be certain that Allah will actually be merciful to them! And indeed there are many who as well simply do the pillars and then live the rest of their lives as they please, greedily amassing wealth, while paying their little zakat; looking down on and despising others; lying, lusting, following after the corrupt culture of America, etc... Yet one can do these things while practicing the pillars of Islam and be an outwardly good Muslim -- even more than that having supposedly fulfilled most of Allahs guidelines for life; and then simply living in the hope that Allah is most merciful! It does not work, it does not match -- either one who realizes his sinfulness strives in continual fear and unknown -- realizing that as they strive to be perfect they still sin; or they minimize their sin and stop worrying about it and just do the five!

From the Bible we know God cannot be satisfied by our deeds -- for there is always yet failing and sins, even among those who are most diligent in holiness; the reality and pervasiveness of sin is simply not addressed by Islam; which is a disasterous problem as how then will they ever stand before God, before Jesus in the judgement! And then especially after they have rejected the very words Jesus spoke Himself, and have sought all their lives to deny the role God gave Him!

God, who is so merciful and compassionate has sent Jesus Christ, His Son, so that we can be reconciled to Him, for in Jesus the holiness and righteousness of God are met together with His mercy and compassion; for in Jesus Christ the penalty for sin has been paid for, for any who would trust in Him. That is why my shahada is now "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, my Lord and Saviour!"

God bless you, *****

Beyond both this World and the Hereafter

Not only do many Sufis turn their attention away from thoughts of reaching Paradise in the Hereafter, but they consider such thinking (as well as thinking of achieving fulfillment through this material world) to be an obstacle on the Path to God. In this vein, the Naqshbandi Sufi Wa'iz Kashifi comments on the Qur'anic verses 2:219-20 (219) And God makes clear to you his messages, so that you might reflect (220) on this world and the Hereafter...

[Abu 'Abd al-Rahman] al-Sulami (may God's mercy be upon him) stated, "Reflecting on this world and the Hereafter" is that one should know that they are highway robbers (who block the road)."

The Messenger of God [Muhammad] (may God send blessings and peace upon him) said, "This world is forbidden to the folk of the Hereafter; the Hereafter is forbidden to the folk of this world; and both worlds are forbidden to the folk of God."

couplet:

This world and the Hereafter are veils to the lover.
How can desire for them ever be right for the lover?!

From Wa'iz-i Kashifi's Persian commentary on the Qur'an, *Mavahib-i 'aliya* (vol. 1, p. 80).

The Case Against Christianity

A Summary Critique

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"Book Reviews" (a column from the Christian Research Journal, Spring 1993, page 49)
by Stephen E. Parrish, Douglas Groothuis and David A. Reed.

The Case Against Christianity
Michael Martin (Temple University Press, 1991)

Boston University philosopher Michael Martin holds that previous attacks on Christianity have been disappointing because they have not been systematic. In *The Case Against Christianity* Martin tries to remedy the deficiency with a critique that is both comprehensive and deep.

According to the atheistic magazine *Free Inquiry* (Winter 1991/92, p. 50), "in contrast to many books of the genre, Martin has a grasp of much of what is going on in biblical studies, which enables him to argue on the territory of his opponents." Thus, "Christian theologians and philosophers must at least try to respond to [Martin]...if they wish to be taken seriously by their peers." If the atheists are willing to stand behind this work, then Christians should be willing to accept their challenge -- hence this critique.

Martin does not attack belief in the existence of God here; he did that in a previous book.[1] The doctrines he attempts to refute are those of the Apostles', Nicene-Chalcedonian, and Athanasian creeds. He also attacks the doctrine of Jesus as the model of ethical behavior. In short, what he attacks is orthodox Christianity. Martin claims that "I am not so naive as to suppose that the arguments set forth here will induce many people to give up their Christian beliefs. My claim is that in the light of my discussion rational people should give up these beliefs" (p. 5). It is my contention that, on the contrary, Martin fails to fulfill his purpose. To demonstrate this, I will critique some of his primary arguments.

THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS

Martin's first important point deals with the historicity of Jesus. He follows the thesis of G. A. Wells, a British professor of German, who maintains that it is probable that Jesus never existed. The bulk of their argument rests on the "silence" of Paul, who -- they maintain -- is surprisingly reticent about the life and teachings of Jesus.

Martin bases his main argument on this silence and puts forth the Negative Evidence Principle (NEP). He explains: "A person is justified in believing that p [i.e., a specific proposition] is false if (1) all the available evidence used to support the view that p is true is shown to be inadequate and (2) is the sort of claim such that if p were true, there would be available evidence that would be adequate to support the view that p is true and (3) the area where evidence would appear, if there were any, has been comprehensively examined" (p. 46).

One problem with this principle lies in point (2). This states, roughly, that in some cases, if p is true there should be adequate evidence to support belief in it. The problem here is that it is often very difficult to say a priori *what kind of* and *how much* evidence there should be if p is in fact true.

To give an example: Martin argues that Josephus mentioned Jesus at most once, and that even this mention is doubtful. He claims that if Jesus were a well-known public figure He should have been mentioned more than that, and "thus NEP applies" (p. 49). There are at least two problems with this. First, a strong case can be made that Josephus mentioned Jesus twice.[2] Second, even if Josephus did mention Jesus only once, this would not be that surprising. As R. T. France observes, "John the Baptist, who was in many ways a figure similar to Jesus,...is mentioned only once, at a similar length, even though Josephus presents him as a significant figure, of sufficient political importance to be executed as a potential leader of revolt." [3]

Further, the name "Christian" is used only once in Josephus, in a passage that Martin and Wells reject. As France points out, then, "Those who suspect the historicity of the Jesus of the Gospels on the grounds that there are so few early non-Christian references to him, must surely, by the same argument, be even more skeptical as to whether the Christian church existed in the first century. But not even George Wells wishes to deny this! As has been so often noted, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." [4]

The point is, it is very hard to say what writers -- especially *ancient* writers -- "should" have written about. One gets the impression that Martin thinks that every time an early Christian wrote something, he or she should have included a summary of Jesus' life and Christian doctrine.

Paul's silence can be overstated. It should be pointed out that Paul was writing to individuals who already knew much about Jesus. Further, he was concerned "not to retell the Gospel story but to elaborate on key theological and ethical matters and to counter opposition which he faced in various places." [5] Further, Paul is not entirely silent on the historical Jesus; he mentions historical details in Romans 1:3 and 15:3, 8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 and 15:4-8; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 1:19, 2:9, 3:1, 3:16, and 4:4; Philippians 2:6-8; and 1 Thessalonians 2:15. And Jesus' teachings are quoted or alluded to in other places. [6]

Martin also charges that the Gospels were written very late and contain errors. In response, France says the "attempt to disprove the historical existence of Jesus altogether can only be sustained by opting for the latest dates for the gospels which any New Testament scholars will countenance...it is interesting to observe that the lateness of the date proposed is often in proportion to the degree of a scholar's skepticism as to their historical value; the cynic might wonder which comes first!" [7]

The fact is that if the Gospels were written earlier than Martin says they were, his thesis collapses. And there are good reasons for preferring earlier dates. [8] For example, Luke's Gospel was probably written before Acts (which was also authored by Luke), and yet Acts should probably be dated before A.D. 63. [9] As for claims of the Gospels being contradictory, one should consult the responses given by evangelical scholars. One place Martin claims there are contradictions is in the resurrection accounts, or at least that they can be made consistent only with the aid of implausible hypotheses (p. 81). Yet John Wenham argues cogently that they are in fact consistent and plausible. [10] Regarding the

issue of non-Christian references for Jesus, Murray J. Harris argues persuasively that such testimony to Jesus exists.[11]

THE RESURRECTION

The next Christian belief Martin assaults is the Resurrection. There is no space here to deal with all the points he makes, but the following comments illustrate problems with a few of his arguments:

(1) Martin states that we do not have eyewitness testimony to the post-resurrection appearances, except for Paul (pp. 81-82). A strong case can be made, however, that some of the Gospels *do* have eyewitness accounts.[12]

(2) Martin is hyperskeptical of Paul and the other New Testament writers, constantly suggesting that their motives and honesty are suspect (e.g., p. 83). By his standard most historical writings would be ruled out; after all, anyone's motives can be questioned by those who don't accept their beliefs. Paul and the other Christian writers showed their sincerity by suffering and even dying for their beliefs.

(3) Martin says the fact that Paul was converted from strong opposition to Christianity to one of its major proponents is of no evidential value (p. 19). Paul, he affirms, was not a true skeptic, since before his conversion he already was a devout monotheist. He notes that Muhammad, on the other hand, was converted from polytheism to monotheism -- a compelling conversion. But Martin fails to note that Muhammad was troubled by the polytheistic beliefs of his time; he was not a fervent supporter of them. On the other hand, Paul may not have been a skeptic in *Martin's* sense, but he was intensely (indeed, violently) skeptical of Christianity! The conversion of Paul deserves an explanation which Martin does not provide.

(4) Martin misunderstands Christian apologist Gary Habermas regarding the story of Jesus' appearance to the 500, cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:6 (p. 90). He implies that Habermas is embarrassed by the story and is trying to hide it. Yet Habermas firmly believes in the story of the 500 and thinks that it is good evidence for the Resurrection, although not the strongest evidence.[13]

(5) Virtually all scholars agree that 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 is part of an early creed that was formulated within a few years of Jesus' death and resurrection. Martin basically ignores this evidence. Yet this passage puts the evidence for the Resurrection within a few years of the event.[14]

(6) Then there is the matter of the second coming of Christ. Martin says that Jesus taught that He would return from heaven in the lifetime of the generation He was teaching (pp. 116-17). There are several ways to respond to this. Matthew 16:28 may well refer to the Transfiguration; Luke 21:32 and Mark 13:30 may be speaking of the generation that sees

the signs Jesus speaks of, rather than the generation of Jesus' time.[15] An alternative explanation is the preterist view, which holds that the Second Coming *did* take place in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem; this "coming" was the coming of Jesus *in judgment* rather than His return in glory at the end of the age.[16] Other answers are available.

(7) Martin berates Habermas for holding that naturalistic explanations of the Resurrection fail, yet he offers none of his own (pp. 93-96). All he offers is some speculation of what could have happened with no sustained argument. By failing to present a detailed case for examination he has not presented a viable alternative to the orthodox explanation.

THE INCARNATION

Martin's next attack is against the Incarnation. Here his main fire is directed against the incarnation theory of Thomas Morris.[17] Morris's theory may be summarized as follows: Jesus is a person with two minds, one divine and one human. Morris proposes this theory in order to account for the biblical data of Jesus both being omniscient and limited in knowledge. There is no contradiction here, says Morris, because Jesus' divine mind was omniscient while His human mind was limited. Martin argues that this view is incoherent (pp. 136-37). His line of reasoning is that even if Jesus has two minds, He is still one person, and thus would know everything that both of His minds know. Therefore, Martin states, Jesus the person would still be both omniscient and nonomniscient, which is contradictory.

Martin's critique misses the point. Granted that Jesus with His divine mind would be omniscient, still He would only know things *through* one of His minds or the other. In other words, Jesus would be limited in knowledge when operating through His human mind. This explains why He often appears to be limited in knowledge; acting as a human being, He limited Himself to what a human being would know.

Martin argues against this kind of theory by bringing up another problem, that the Jesus of the Gospels does not seem to be omnipotent (pp. 139-40). He considers the argument that the reason that Jesus did not *act* as if He were omnipotent is that He did not *know* He was omnipotent (p. 140). Martin then demolishes the idea that someone could be omnipotent and remain ignorant of that fact (pp. 140-41). Therefore, Martin concludes that the Incarnation is an incoherent doctrine.

This whole argument is beside the point. Christians should not maintain that Jesus was ignorant of His divine omnipotent power, just that He chose for the most part not to use it. That is, Jesus as a human knew that His divine nature was omnipotent and omniscient, but in order to be a man He chose not to exercise this power most of the time. Usually He acted within the limitations of a man, using only His human powers. The times that He did exercise it was to show forth His divine omnipotent power.

Martin's arguments about what an omnipotent being would do are quite irrelevant. How would we know a priori what an omnipotent being would do? Just because an omnipotent

being has infinite power, it hardly follows that he would choose only to perform actions that require infinite power.

In any event, Martin seems to think that we believe Jesus to be omnipotent because of the actions He performed. Rather, the way Christians argue to Jesus' omnipotence is that (1) Jesus claimed to be God incarnate (e.g., John 8:58); (2) He validated this claim by rising from the dead; (3) God is omnipotent; (4) therefore Jesus is omnipotent. This method of reasoning is relevant to other of Martin's arguments, such as on the Virgin Birth (pp. 105-15).[18]

In the remaining chapters Martin continues his attacks with sections on Christian ethics, salvation by faith, the Divine Command theory, and the Atonement. Unfortunately, there is no space here to respond. Let me just say that here, as in the earlier chapters, Martin's arguments are seriously flawed. There is no lack of arguments to critique; for the Christian apologist, his book represents what in military jargon might be called a "target-rich environment." It is encouraging if this is the best that the atheists can do.

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7 France, 101.

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11 Murray J. Harris, "References to Jesus in Early Classical Authors," in *Gospel Perspectives: The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1984), 343-68.

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13 As told to me by Dr. Habermas in a personal conversation. For a defense of the appearance to the 500, see William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 57-63.

14 Gary Habermas, "Affirmative Statement," *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* ed. Terry Miethe (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 23.

15 Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 326-27. See also D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 507.

16 See, e.g., J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971).

17 Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

18 One final criticism that I will make is Martin's comment on page 122n5. Martin claims there is a contradiction between Jesus being born in a manger and the wise men visiting Him in a house. The answer is that Jesus was born in a manger, and then the family later moved into a house, where the wise men visited. The Bible doesn't say the wise men visited the night Jesus was born. Good grief!

Comments on Commentators:

Abrogations, Allegations, and Alterations in Islam

Razi, Baidawi, Jelaleine, Tabari, Abu l-Aliya, Ibn Juraij, Ibn Abbas, al-Suddi, Ibn Zai names, names, names. And not exactly household names either but perhaps they should be. The men who answered to these names have all helped to shape the face of Islam. The foregoing is a partial list of the great Muslim commentators some of them pioneers in the science, and others the giants of Eastern intellect from the middle ages. This paper provides a brief look at the process of commentary, and sketches the development of commentary over the centuries. In it, I argue that commentators who are alert to the theological and apologetic implications of Qur'anic commentary, maintain unorthodox or inconsistent views to justify a type of pragmatic exegesis.

Comments on Commentators

Any treatment of commentary in the sacred writings of any religion can be a tedious one. To establish credibility particularly with the Muslim fetish for reliable isnad[1] one may not simply make vague references to schools of thought' to validate a point. Particularly when trying to document pragmatic changes in theology and hermeneutics, one is forced to be precise. Yet such a work often becomes a mere catalogue of names and doctrines, and has the interest level and literary worth of a grocery list. To avoid this pitfall I will do what any charitable researcher would do choose a few commentators that are fair representatives of different view points, and with the aid of reams and reams of endnotes consign the remaining savants to the back pages of the paper. A similar tactic will be used to illustrate the differing expositions of the Qur'an. Two issues are used as case studies in commentary: (1) the doctrine of abrogation, and (2) allegations of suppression or alteration of previous revelations.[2] Both play a central role either in commenting, or in understanding the Qur'an itself.

Abrogation in the Qur'an and History

The first thing that becomes obvious when examining the doctrine of abrogation, is the fact that no one seems to agree on the doctrine of abrogation. The doctrine is difficult, multi faceted, and just setting up the scene will occupy the bulk of our discussion.

At least twenty lines of thought regarding abrogation are found in legal and exegetical literature.[3] This makes the task of determining whether modern commentators are unorthodox in their comments a more arduous task.[4] From the time of the companions

of Muhammad[5] to the present day there has been disagreement over which verses[6] teach abrogation,[7] what types of verse can be abrogated, and which verses are abrogated (if abrogation is allowed).[8] Others question how many verses abrogate or are abrogating - ranging anywhere from 5 to 248 verses[9] and whether the Sunnah can abrogate the Qur'an and vice versa.[10]

In spite of this variance in thought, all agree that this doctrine is all but trivial. This must be stressed. Western scholars and some Muslim apologists find the concept of 'missing' verses,[11] and contradictions resolved by 'abrogation,' too convenient and irreconcilable with an unchangeable, inspired book by God.[12] But they are not alone in seeing its significance. Traditional Muslims also deem the doctrine to be an important one.

Ibn Salama once stated that "anyone who engages in the scientific study of the Qur'an without having mastered the doctrine of abrogation is 'deficient'.[13] The Caliph's views on abrogation, though in the context of ultra-orthodox conservatism, are fitting.[14] If one does *not* know which verses are abrogated if one cannot know what is 'current', and what has 'expired', than one cannot truly say that one *knows* any doctrine from the Qur'an - as the very verse we may be depending on for some truth may have previously been cancelled. This cannot be grasped simply by listening to a knowledgeable Muslim read the Qur'an, as the abrogated portions are not left out in the reading or recitation.[15]

Now there are no simple three step resolutions to the difficulties of abrogation or anything of the sort. But as this paper is about the Qur'an, and Ibn Salama *has* informed us (and it is a commonly held position) that if one does not understand abrogation, then one cannot understand the Qur'an - one must at least *address* it. So we will, for the duration of this paper, propose that to properly understand the Qur'an, one must either (a) master the principles used in determining what verses are abrogated, or (b) have a knowledge of all the verses potentially affected by the doctrine, and not build any doctrine on those verses. Our first option is by far the most difficult as the doctrine of abrogation depends heavily (according to most commentators) on chronology - and the Qur'an is not arranged in chronological order.[16] The second option simply requires a good memory - though it does leave us with some uncertainty regarding some points of law - and the infamous 'sword-verse' leaves both the Muslim uncertain (and the non-Muslim uneasy) about how the People of the Book are to be treated.[17] But it is at least feasible, and we will follow it by avoiding claims about Islam based on these verses.

Now after painting a rather gloomy picture of Islam's scholastic landscape, I am pleased to announce that it is still possible to pick out four main perspectives on abrogation perspectives typified by four schools of thought, and which reveal the definite trend towards a conveniently untraditional, and pragmatic type of exegesis amongst Muslim apologists. Representing medieval Islam and the rational, non-traditional Muslims, we have the famous Fakhr al-Din al-razi (d. 1209);[18] for the modern Muslims and apologists we have Abdullah Yusuf Ali (d.[19]); in the Western corner we have William Montgomery Watt;[20] and for the traditionalists and the ancients, we join the majority of Muslim scholars in relying heavily on Abu Ja'Far Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923)

and the companion of Muhammad, Abd Allah Ibn Abbas (d. 688).[21] And now for the doctrine. . .

Whatever message WE abrogate or cause to be forgotten, WE bring one better than that or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that ALLAH has the power to do all that HE wills? - 2:106.[22]

Since the earliest times in Islam, three main forms of abrogation have been distinguished, and are common to every text on the subject. Faruq Sherif delineates them for us:

The authorities distinguish three kinds of abrogation: (1) where both the written word and the content are eliminated (as in reported cases where a recorded verse is said to have disappeared mysteriously and its substance to have faded from memory;[23] (2) where the written word somehow vanished but the content remained in force (a once-existing verse ordering the punishment for adultery by lapidation is believed to have disappeared, but the commandment has been maintained by tradition); (3) where a still-existing verse is in effect repealed or modified by the introduction of a new text (all references in the commentaries to the doctrine of abrogation fall into this category).[24]

As Sherif has parenthetically noted, traditionally commentators have paid very little attention to the first two brands of abrogation. Both the missing-word-and-content brand of abrogation and the missing-word type of abrogation are not popular dinner party topics amongst the *ulama*. Important as they are, this paper focuses on the last type of abrogation, and a distinction made within that category, for it is significant on its own right.

Tabari informs in his commentary that already by his time there are disagreements on whether abrogation applies to matters of law, matters of fact,[25] or both Abu-Muslim being the only commentator to hold that there is *no* abrogation in the law, but rather that abrogation refers to the earlier Scriptures. Later, we find out from Razi that the issues of contention are basically the same in his time, though Razi has acknowledged the 'lost verse' of the Qur'an. He also informs us that Abu Muslim is still alone in his view of abrogation - over three centuries later. Then, after Razi, something happens. The number of verses which are deemed abrogated begins to dwindle, and dwindle dramatically.

While the non-Muslim scholar, such as Watt, maintains that the Qur'an teaches abrogation (largely in accord with the majority of Muslim commentators on this point), the modern Muslim diverges radically from the early commentators. Shah Walli Allah (d. 1762) reduces the number of abrogated verses from an excess of 200 down to five.[26] Yusuf Ali is more radical yet. While he holds that there *may* be some laws abrogated (playing down the millennia of commentators that did not doubt the fact),[27] he informs us that *most*, if not *all* references dealing with abrogation have to do with the Bible.[28]

The trend is very interesting. One author suggest that the commentators became aware of the significance of abrogation, and were thus moved to minimize it:

There also appears to have been a reaction, among certain scholars, to the wholesale application of the naskh doctrine to verses of the Qur'an. Sensitive, perhaps, to theological considerations. . . .[29]

It is also important to note the almost universal agreement on the existence of abrogation up to the time of Razi and even today, there are few Muslim or non-Muslim scholars who will go as far as Abu Muslim in denying abrogation. Watt doesn't deny it. He simply looks at the text and informs the world that it teaches abrogation.[30] When one enters this century and sees the commentary of Yusuf Ali, one sees his conscious awareness of his predecessors - and his conscious rejection of their opinions. He marginalizes historic Islam, in his attempts to defend against historic Christianity and Judaism. One sees Yusuf Ali making statements such as "Commentators usually understand. . . . But. . ."[31] or "I am sorry that I cannot follow that opinion. . . "[32] etc.

Where Razi, Watt and Ibn Abbas[33] accept 16:101-102 as teaching abrogation, Ali somehow relates that it refers to Biblical corruption. He says the same for 2:102, but adds that "some commentators" apply it to the Qur'an. Now one can grant that Yusuf Ali may be correct in this novel interpretation - but honesty requires him to tell his readers that in thirteen centuries, there has been *one* commentator who did *not* see the verse as having direct reference to the Qur'an. Here are his words:

The word which I have translated by the word "revelations" is *Ayat*. See n. 15. It is not only used for verses of the Qur'an, but in a general sense for Allah's revelations, as in ii. 39 and for other Signs of Allah in history or nature, or miracles, as in 11. 61. It has even been used for human signs and tokens of wonder, as for example, monuments or landmarks built by the ancient people of 'Ad (xxvi. 128). What is the meaning here? If we take it in a general sense, it means that Allah's Message from age to age is always the same, but that its form may differ according to the needs and exigencies of the time. That form was different as given to Moses and then to Jesus and then to Muhammad. *Some commentators apply it also to the Ayat of the Qur'an*. There is nothing derogatory in this if we believe in progressive revelation. In iii. 7 we are told distinctly about the Qur'an, that some of its verses are clear (and of established meaning), and others are not entirely clear, and it is mischievous to treat the verses that are not entirely clear and to follow them (literally). *On the other hand, it is absurd to treat such a verse as ii. 115 as if it were abrogated by ii. 144 about the Qibla*[emphasis added].[34]

The manner in which Ali ends his comment is also of great significance. Again, while he may be correct in his opinion that 2:144 does not abrogate 2:115, it is unacceptable for him to scoff at the tradition and depict it as some absurd view of a fringe scholar - while great men like Razi and Baidawi disagree with him. In fact, Yusuf Ali's entire, and quite

original treatment of the whole issue of 'clear' and 'unclear' verses is worthy of note and is reprinted in the appendix.

But though Yusuf Ali is in a way original' when compared to historical Islam, he is not completely *alone* in new interpretations. He is representative of a movement of commentators who have novel turns on historic doctrines. And their variance from orthodoxy in terms of abrogation is slight in comparison to their views of former Revelations.

Allegations of Alterations: What do the Commentators say?

Mustansir Mir informs his readers, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, that abrogation really refers to the Qur'an abrogating previous scriptures: "the word *naskh* in 2:106 refers to the abrogation, by means of the Qur'an, of injunctions found in earlier scriptures." [35]

His position is shared by Yusuf Ali, but Ali goes one step further. He does not only try to resolve the contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an by reference to abrogation but holds that the Biblical text is 'corrupted' or 'altered'. He believes that 2:101, 174; 3:187; 5:14, 47; 6:91; 11:110; 16:101-102 and 62:5 all teach that the Biblical text is corrupted. On the other hand, he sees 2:75; 3:70-71; 5:13, 44 and 6:20 as revealing that the Jews and Christians suppressed the truths of their Scriptures. There are few reasons why the assertions of Ali and the definition of Mir are problematic.

The first thing one must note, is the difference between Ali and other commentators. Ali often sees a verse teaching Biblical corruption where other commentators see either (1) no reference to the topic, (2) suppression or concealment of the truth, or (3) poor exegesis of the Bible or Qur'an. This is interesting, but not the biggest problem. There are, after all, other times where he finds reference to mere suppression (5:44), or nothing at all (2:42), where others hold that there has been *some kind* of corruption. [36] Watt never once agrees with him, holding that the corruption interpretation' of verses are a later development. [37] He has this to say about it:

This is one of the verses on which is based the later Islamic doctrine that Jews and Christians have 'corrupted' their scriptures. The Qur'an itself, however, does not assert any general corruption, but seems to speak only of playing with words in a blasphemous way, and also of concealing verses, such as those alleged by Muslims to be prophecies of the coming of Muhammad. [38]

The closing sentence of Watt's comments on Surah 2 verse 75 indirectly sums up our problem: the Qur'an does not teach Biblical *corruption*, but *suppression*. This is the problem. Razi agrees, [39] and in reference to Biblical corruption tells us that

this cannot be accepted by the learned, for both Tourat and Gospel had been handed down in widespread and unbroken succession, which rendered that out of the question. The meaning, well known amongst them

to bear on the mission of the Prophet, and introduced false explanations which diverted their true meaning as revealed by God, or in other words, hid it.[40]

Now Yusuf Ali will no doubt stoutly stand by his interpretation of these texts. He may even try and enlist the support of the great Ibn Abbas for Biblical 'alterations'. He will tell us that the Companion of the prophet taught that there was Biblical corruption - who could be a better authority as to what the Prophet was saying? But what exactly *do* Ibn Abbas and the other greats have to say about this? Thankfully, Razi cites Ibn Abbas in his comments on 2:170:

Ibn Abbas tells us that this text was revealed in respect of Kab Ibn Ashraf and other leading Jews, who were in the habit of receiving offerings from their followers. When the Prophet appeared, they feared the loss of these gifts, and *so they concealed the prophecies regarding him and his dispensation*; he also considers that the "hiding" consisted in altering . . . the Tourat and the Gospel [emphasis added].[41]

This point is of monumental import. *If* the Qur'an teaches Biblical corruption, it teaches us that the Bible is corrupted precisely where it speaks about Muhammad. The commentators, particularly those who knew the prophet best, are very much in agreement about this - and it puts Yusuf Ali in an awkward spot. Yusuf Ali wants to argue that the Bible is corrupted. And he wants the support of history. He wants to say that the Bible is corrupted almost beyond recognition - but there are a few verses that are still intact: the verse that speak about Muhammad (to the surprise of Jews and Christians) are still authentic prophecies of Muhammad and his coming.[42] But this is *precisely* the opposite position from what the other commentators take.

Ali may make vague references to commentators, and tell us that they too maintain that the Scriptures are altered - but in the final analysis, they hold to a position diametrically opposed to his own. Simply put, Islam's current apologists have found themselves denying historic Islam, to defend it.

Final Thoughts

Both Muslims and non-Muslims are sure to find a study of the commentators a very interesting one - but not a study without its problems. We have really, to be hopelessly reductionistic, two separate understandings of each doctrine. Leaving Montgomery Watt out of the picture, we have Yusuf Ali's doctrines, and we have the traditional doctrines. If one is to remain a Muslim and a *thinking* one, he has to make a choice. Is the Muslim to follow orthodoxy? Is he to follow the hallowed traditions of ancient Islam, the words of the Companions, the logic of Razi - or the apologist? The apologist is dealing with today's challenge to Islam - but has adopted an eclectic approach to history and commentary. An approach which, in the final analysis, is very different than that of the great Muslim savants of history. The ancients refused to say that the Bible was an almost unrecognizable remnant of a former message of Allah. *They* espoused abrogation and

suppression of Scripture to deal with the contradictions between the two books. Our apologist friend will not accept that approach. He feels he *cannot* accept that approach after he has read the Bible. The two books have little in common. So he tells us that the original inspired word of Allah who promised that *his* word cannot be corrupted[43] - is corrupted. An unchanging God with a changing Message.

The Muslim has to reject the defences of the past, the defences of the present, or, simply put, reject Islam. Yusuf Ali wants to keep all three. He thinks he can reconcile the problem he thinks he *has* reconciled the problem. I say he *hasn't* reconciled the problem. And I say he *can't*.

End Notes:

1. Chain of transmission - one of the main criteria for determining the authority of an ancient transmission.
2. This paper, though approaching some issues dealt within my previous paper, does deal with a different aspect of alleged Biblical corruption. The previous dealt with the logical problems in holding to Biblical corruption. This one deals the trends in commentating regarding Biblical corruption.
3. "Abu Ubaid's [introduction to his commentary] provides ample illustrations of the complex and confused state of the Muslim discussions on *naskh*." Burton, John. *Kal-nasikh wa-l-mansukh*. (Cambridge: Trustees of the "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial" Trust, 1987), 57.
4. Fazlur Rahman tells us that "it is quite true to say that whatever views Muslims have wanted to project and advocate have taken the form of Quranic commentaries." From the plethora of commentaries to choose from, and their widely diverging views on many issues, I must agree that this seems to be the case. *Islam* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 41. Helmut Gatje tells us that some later commentators dealt with these conflicting alternatives by not dealing with them at all: "the contradictions resolve themselves in part by the fact that differing interpretations are accepted alongside each other as admissible and correct." *The Qur'an and its Exegesis* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 32. This may account for why so many do hold to baffling contradictions.
5. Powers, David S. "The Exegetical Genre *nasikh al-Qur'an wa mansukhuhu*." In *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran*, Andrew Rippin, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 119.
6. Powers has this helpful note: "To speak of abrogated and abrogating 'verses' of the Quran frequently distorts the abrogation phenomenon, for in a great many instances, only part of a verse, and sometimes only a word, is either abrogated or abrogates." Powers, 128.
7. Powers, for example tells us that "The commentators and legalists find Quranic sanction for the doctrine of abrogation in four verses...2/106...22/52...53/19...22/52. The more conservative Faruq Sherif, only cites two - 2:100 and 16:103. *A Guide to the Contents of the Quran* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), p. 38. These verses appear as 2:102 and 16:99-100 in Yusuf Ali's translation. For the remainder of the paper, I will indicate the numbering in accordance with Yusuf Ali by a lower case 'y' following the verse (eg. 2:100y).
8. Ibn Salama maintains that those who say that the Qur'an does not contain abrogating or abrogated verses "have deviated from the truth and by virtue of their lying have turned away from God." Powers, 127. The important thing to note here, is that some *do* reject abrogation and are considered by this orthodox savant to be heretics. Most Muslim scholars do accept abrogation. Abu Muslim, Zamakhshari and his follower (to a

large degree) Razi, Baidawi, Jelalein, Tabari, the famed Ibn Abbas, Abu Hanifa, Ghazzali, Ibn Arabi, ash-Shabi, an-Nakhi, Qatada and ath-Thauri - to name a few - all accepted abrogation as orthodox, though differing on every conceivable aspect of abrogation.

9. Al-Farisi has the highest total with 248 verses, and Shah Wali Allah the lowest with 5 verses. Powers, 122-123.

10. Razi, in opposition to Shafei and in agreement with the Hanifa school, holds that the Sunnah can cancel the Qur'an and vice versa. William Muir. *The Beacon of Truth* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1894), pp. 59, 62. Baidawi concurs with Razi on this point. (Gatje, op. cit. p. 59). He focuses on the phrase "equal to it" in 2:102y, and maintains that this does not mean that a Quranic verse can only be replaced by another Quranic verse - he argues that God revealed the Sunnah also, and knows when to bring in a more useful law. The debate on this issue focuses in on the laws regarding adultery found in 4:14y, a tradition of Muhammad, and 24:2y. Imam Mohamad M. Algalaiene informed me in an interview that there was no need to invoke the doctrine of abrogation here, and that there was no place where the Sunnah could abrogate the Qur'an - holding a position similar to that of Shafei.

Sherif tells us that "Islamic theology and jurisprudence give the widest scope to the doctrine of abrogation. One commentary (Kashf-al-Asrar in commenting on verse II.100) says: "The orthodox view is that abrogation applies to both the Quran and to tradition. Thus the Qur'an abrogates the Qur'an, tradition abrogates the Qur'an, tradition abrogates tradition, and the Qur'an abrogates tradition. All this is firmly established and is recognized by jurisprudence." Sherif, 40.

I also found this helpful piece by Abu Ubaid:

An alleged instance of the naskh of the Qur'an by the Sunna:

The *fuqaha* were unanimous that the Islamic penalty for adultery was death by stoning. The task of the *usuli* was to trace the individual *hukm* of the *Fiqh* to its ultimate source. In Abu Ubaid's day, the *usulis* traced this penalty to the Sunna, as he is content to report approvingly [ff. 89a-90b].

Comparing the *Fiqh* penalty with the Qur'an, which lays down a flogging penalty for sexual misconduct [Q 24,2] Abu Ubaid's informants, reporting from Ibn Abbas and especially from Ubadah b. al-Samit, [both considered to be Companions] asserted that, as opposed to the Qur'an, the Sunna had made a distinction between fornication and adultery, applying appropriate penalties in each case. The author accepts the reports with no discussion whatever, and without the least hint any dissent or disagreement among earlier or contemporary *usulis* on the question. He accepts without demur that this is one ascertained instance of the *naskh* of the Qur'an by the Sunna. In this, his attitude is the same as that of the older *imams*, Malik [d.179/795] and Abu Hanifa [d.141/758]. (Burton, 24).

11. "The words 'cast into oblivion' suggest that some verses from what was revealed have not been retained in the present Qur'an, but from the nature of the case there can be little certainty about this." Watt, 26.

12. In defence of abrogation, Tabataba'i tells us that "in the Qur'an, the abrogating verses mark the end of the validity of the abrogated verses because their heed and effect was of a temporary or limited nature. In time the new law appears and announces the end of the validity of the earlier law. Considering that the Qur'an was revealed over a period of twenty-three years in ever-changing circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine the necessity of such laws." Tabatabai, 45. Also support can apparently be found according to Rodwell, in the Talmud where, he tells us, the doctrine of abrogation is also expounded by the Jewish doctors. Rodwell, J.M., trans. *The Koran*. 2nd ed. (London: J.M. Dint and Sons Ltd., 1953), 349. But Cragg points out: "If and when the relevance is legal or administrative, one may readily see how circumstances would make early directives obsolete and new ones imperative, though there remains the problem of the 'eternity' of the whole." Cragg, 146. I also find it interesting to note that verses needed abrogation over a mere 22 year period, due to changes. As the modern world has changed considerably more in the last 13 centuries than it has in those two decades, the doctrine leaves room for Islamic

modernists to perform some exegetical feats of their own. An allowance for a changing Word of God, results in a very shallow Word of God.

13. Ibn Salama relates the following story: "It has been related about the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib... that one day he entered the Friday mosque in Kufa, where he saw a young man known as 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Dabb, a follower of the Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. The people had gathered around him to ask questions, but he was mixing commands with prohibitions, and permissions with restrictions. 'Ali asked him, 'Can you distinguish between the abrogating and abrogated verses?' He replied, 'No.' Then 'Ali said, 'You destroy yourself and you destroy others. Of whom are you the father?' He said, 'I am the father of Yahya.' 'Ali said, 'You are only talking to increase your reputation!' And he grabbed his ear and twisted it. Then he said, 'Do not tell stories in our mosque ever again.'" Powers, 124.

14. The Caliph sees this unlearned man as committing some sacrilege, a travesty of tradition. I too see the importance of understanding abrogation - though for very different reasons.

15. Imam Mohamad M. Algalaiene informed me in an interview that abrogation is too trivial and rare to worry about when reading the Qur'an. The abrogated verses are to be read with the unabrogated.

16. David Powers tells us, in reference to chronology in abrogation, that "if the Qur'an does sanction the doctrine of *naskh* in the sense of the replacement of one legal ruling by another, it nevertheless remains the case that the overwhelming majority of pairs of abrogated and abrogating verses are not identified as either 'abrogated' or 'abrogating'. Hence, it becomes essential to determine the relative chronology of the two verses because, if one mistakes the abrogating verse for the abrogated, Muslims would be adhering to a legal ruling that has been suppressed, and at the same time they would be neglecting a ruling that has been commanded. It is for this reason that the literary genre *al-nasikh wa'l-mansukh* developed hand-in-hand with the *asbab al-nuzul* on the one hand, and the *usul al-fiqh* on the other." Powers, 119.

"Despite the fact that the pattern had been violated over a hundred times, later authors continued to make reference to it. Fakr al-Din al-Razi (d.607/1210) cites the phenomenon of *tartib* as one of his grounds for the contention that 2/240 was not abrogated by 2/234. 'The abrogating verse should be revealed after the abrogated one. If it was revealed subsequently, then it is preferable that it should also be read subsequently, because this arrangement is better. As for the abrogating verse being read before the abrogated one, even if this were permissible in general, still, it is considered to be a poor arrangement, and the word of God must be free from such defects, to the extent possible. Since Q.2/240 is recited after 2/234, it is preferable that it not be considered to have been abrogated by it."

"Thus, in the midst of the seeming 'disorderliness' of the Qur'an there emerges a conscious, deliberate, and rational pattern according to which a small body of verses are supposed to have been arranged. This phenomenon, which has not previously been recognized, must somehow be reconciled with the various theories that have been advanced to explain the collection of the Qur'an." Powers, 135.

Gatje adds: "Although neither a uniformly objective nor a chronological point of view served as a criterion in the arrangement of the material in the 'Uthmanic Qur'an, the Muslims, too, raised questions concerning the dates and order of the revelations. Not only because it is not unimportant for the understanding of the individual revelations to know when and under what circumstances they occurred, but also because of the Quranic doctrine that certain verses can be abrogated by others, a motive existed for research into the relative chronology. Given the variety of situations and the inner development of many of Muhammad's views, there occurred in the Qur'an rulings on various subjects which deviated from each other or even contradicted one another. Now, if one believes that such deviations are inconsistent with the perfection of holy revelation, this problem could be resolved by assuming from the start that a proclaimed decision is made only for a specific period or situation, and that it may be later expanded, refined, or even rescinded by another decision. The application of this principle could not have been so much a problem for Muhammad himself as for the later Muslims who in retrospect had to determine the chronological sequence in order to determine which parts of the revelation were abrogating (*nasikh*) and which abrogated (*mansukh*)." Gatje, 27.

As Andrew Rippin tells us, in the final analysis, "the question remained of how to know which verses were

abrogated and which were still in force." Rippin, 13. And this is not easy to decide with the lack of Quranic chronology.

17. "The distinction of abrogating the greatest number of verses in the Qur'an belongs to Q.9/5, known in Arabic as *ayat al-sayf* ('the sword verse'), which abrogated no less than 124 other verses. This verse which commands the believers to 'slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them and confine them, and lie in wait at every place of ambush', abrogates every other verse in the Qur'an which commands or implies anything less than a total offensive against the non-believers.

Remarkably, the sword verse, which abrogated no fewer than 124 other verses, is itself considered to be abrogated by the conditional clause with which it concludes: 'But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then let them go their way; God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.' Small wonder, then, that Ibn al'Ata iqi refers to the sword verse as one of the marvels (*'aja'ib*) of the Quran!" Powers, David S. "The Exegetical Genre *nasikh al-Qur'an was mansukhuhu*." in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, Andrew Rippin, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 130-131. Zamakshari, for one, agrees.

18. I had no access to Razi's work, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* but I did find his comments reprinted in full (the one passage that is abridged is identified as such) on the relevant verses in William Muir's *The Beacon of Truth* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1894), and Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters, Vol. I*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984). Muir, though a Christian, has a view of the integrity of the Quran that would make any Muslim apologist very happy (see *The Life of Mahomet* Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1988. pp.vii-xxvii). This work will not be referred to for the rest of the paper. All references to Muir will be to *The Beacon*.

19. Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. *The Holy Qur'an: English Translations of the meanings and Commentary* Revised and Edited By The Presidency of Islamic Researchers, IFTA, and Call and Guidance. (King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, ND).

20. Watt is, I believe a very charitable choice. He is often cited in Muslim apologetic literature for his favorable comments towards Islam - eg. *What They Say About Islam* (Chicago: The Institute of Islamic Information and Education, III and E, WAMY pamphlet). In this paper, I use Watt's commentary: *Companion to the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1994).

21. Al-Tabari, Abu ja'far Muhammad B. Jarir. *The Commentary on the Qur'an, Volume 1* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1987). This is an abridgement of Tabari's massive *Tasfir* (lit. "The Commentary"). Tabari is invaluable for listing all the comments of all known commentators up to his day, and for his meticulous *isnad*. Helmut Gatje informs us that "Traditional exegesis found a high point, and at the same time a certain finality, in the activity of Abu ja'far Muhammad B. Jarir Al-Tabari" - *The Qur'an and its Exegesis* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).

22. The other key text is 16:101-102: "And when WE bring one Sign in place of another - and ALLAH knows best the object of what HE reveals - they say, 'Thou art but a fabricator,' Nay, but most of them know not. Say, 'The Spirit of holiness has brought it down from thy Lord with truth, that HE may strengthen in faith those who believe and as a guidance and glad tidings for Muslims.'"

23. "A further reference made to abrogation is made in the Qur'an where it states that Allah abrogates the interpolations of Satan into the utterances of Prophets (XXII.51). It is generally believed that reference is made here to the words pronounced by the Prophet when, in the course of reciting Surah LIII, he said (following verses 19 and 20) that the three female idols of Arab paganism were acceptable to Allah as intercessors." Sherif, 39.

24. Sherif, 39.

25. "According to the orthodox view, abrogation only applies to regulations and not statements which are subject to the criterion of truth" - such as the opinion of Zamakhshari for example. Gatje, 267, n.43.
26. Powers, 123. Walli Allah was more political activist than commentator, but seems to have grasped the apologetic importance of almost four percent of the verses in the Qur'an being in some way affected by abrogation.
27. 2:106, n.107.
28. Yusuf Ali, 2:106, n.107.
29. Powers, 123.
30. Watt, 26.
31. 3:7, n. 347.
32. 2:144, n.148.
33. Along with Baidawi and Jelalain. Muir, 59-60.
34. 2:106, n.107.
35. Sceptical as I am, I feel that it is only fair to cite Muir's full position and his defence of it as it isn't very long:

That 2:106 refers to the abrogation of injunctions found in pre-Islamic scriptures is made very clear by the immediately preceding verse ("Those from among the People of the Book [q.v.] who have disbelieved and do not want, nor do the Idolaters, that any good be sent to you from the Lord. God, however, singles out for His mercy whomever He likes; God is extremely bounteous"), and by the concluding words of 2:106 itself ("Do you not know that it is God to Whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth?"). Thus, to the criticism made by the People of the Book - that it is inexplicable that the Qur'an, presented as a revealed book, should abrogate the injunctions of a previously revealed book, the Bible - 2:106 responds by saying that, in abrogating some of the Biblical injunctions, the Qur'an offers others that are either better than them or at least comparable to them, the concluding part of 2:106 adding by the way of comment by God, Who is Almighty, has the power to do everything (see also 2:107). The context of 2:106 becomes even more clear when 2:104 - 121 are read as an integrated unit.

Besides "that which We abrogate" (*naskh*, another expression in the verse needs attention: "that which We cause to be forgotten" (*insa'*). *Insa'*, the Qur'an seems to suggest, takes place in accordance with a certain law of God (see *Sunnah of God*), namely that those who seek misguidance are misguided by God. In other words, if a people neglects the verses of God, then God causes it to forget those verses. For practical purposes, *insa'* may be subsumed under *naskh*... Abrogation of Qur'anic Injunctions.

Although the word *naskh* in 2:106 refers to the abrogation, by means of the Qur'an, of injunctions found in earlier scriptures, Qur'anic injunctions themselves may be abrogated, as has happened in a few cases. An example of this abrogation is 24:2, which abrogates the punishment of adultery stated in 4:15-16. A study of the Qur'an shows, first that only a limited number of Qur'anic verses have been abrogated, and, second, that the abrogation pertains to legal and practical matters only, and not to matters of doctrine and belief. Mir, Mustansir. *Dictionary of Qur'anic Terms and Concepts* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), 5-6.

36. Without any particular order, here is a summary of current and ancient apologists and commentators on Biblical corruption and suppression. All verses have been renumbered to coincide with Yusuf Ali's text. Esposito sees corruption in 5:15, Yusuf Ali has already been covered, Razi sees suppression in 2:42, 75, 101, 174; 3:70, 78; 5:44, 47; 6:20 and maybe in 3:187 and 4:46. Baidawi sees suppression in 2:42 and 2:75, and corruption in 2:174. Jelalaine sees suppression in 2:42, 101; 5:44 and corruption and suppression in 3:187. Tabari sees suppression in 2:42 as does Abu l-Aliya, Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Watt, and Ibn Zaid, while Ibn Juraij and Al Suddi do not seem to. Tabari holds that there is corruption revealed in verse 75 of Surah 2. Mujahid, Ibn Zaid, Al-Rabi, and Muhammad Ishaq agree with him. Zamakhshari alone sees corruption in 5:44, a parallel passage to 2:42 where again, no one else finds signs of corruption.

37. Watt, William Montgomery. *Companion to the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1994), 22. Watt says the proper interpretation should be 'tampered with.'

38. Watt, 22.

39. Mahmoud M. Ayoub in his commentary on the Quran tells us that Razi also comments that *if* the Torah was corrupted at the time of Moses, then nothing about Muhammad would be altered, and if it was corrupted at the time of Muhammad, than that which speaks of Muhammad would be altered. He says that "the literal sense of the Quran does not indicate what they altered." His apparent neutrality here is interesting, given his other comments. *The House of 'Imran* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 121. Razi does waver, interestingly enough, on 3:187 and 4:46 (see Muir, 87-88). But if we understand him to be advocating textual corruption, then we have a baffling case with a clear contradiction.

40. Muir, 82.

41. Muir, 82.

42. Except for the odd verse that refers to Muhammad, we are told, is 'partially corrupted.'

43. Surah 41:42 says in part that "No falsehood can approach [the Quran] from before or behind it." We are told that "there is none that can alter the Words (and Decrees) of Allah..." (Surah 3:34) and "...none can change His Words..." (Surah 18:27)

Appendix: Clear and Unclear

This appendix is essentially a collection of quotes on the muhkamat and the mutashabihat the clear and the unclear. "The muhkamat (literally, "firm ones") are said to be those verses which present self-evident truths, incontestable ethical norms, and established principles of truth, justice, and good conduct. The mutashabihat (literally, "ambiguous ones") are verses which speak of a realm of existence that is beyond our ken (e.g. the hereafter [q.v.], paradise [see heaven], and hell [q.v.], using such modes of speech as similes, metaphors, and similitudes."

Tabataba tells us that "The muhkam and those verses which are explicit, clear and immediate in their message and, therefore, incapable of being misinterpreted; the mutashabih verses are not of this nature. It is the duty of every firm believer to believe in and act according to the verses, which are muhkam.

"It is also his duty to believe in the verses which are mutashabih, but he must abstain from acting on them; this injunction is based on the premise that only those whose heart is corrupt and whose belief is false follow the implicit, mutashabih, verses, fabricating interpretations and, thereby deceiving common people."

"Tabari characterizes the clear and decisive' verses as those which are decisive in their clarity and comprehensiveness, and whose proofs and arguments are incontrovertibly established for the things they are meant to affirm or deny: lawful and unlawful things (halal and haram), promise and threat (wa'd and wa'id), rewards and punishments, commands and prohibitions, narratives and parables (qisas and amthal), admonitions and lessons, and the like.' Tabari interprets the phrase mother of the Book' to mean the foundation (asl) of the Book.' He argues that such verses are the foundation of the Book, which contains the fundamentals of the faith: its obligations (fara'id), bounds (hudud), as well as all that which human creatures require in the affairs of their religion, and all the obligations which God has laid upon them both in this life and the next. God called these verses the mother of the Book' because they constitute the major part of the Qur'an, and because they are the final resort for the people of the Qur'an in times of need' (Tabari, VI, p. 170). Tabari's interpretation of this phrase has already been discussed (see "Titles of Surat al-Fatihah" in vol. I)

"Tabari then reports the disagreements among tafsir masters as to which verses can be considered clear and decisive,' and which multivalent.' According to some early authorities, the clear and decisive verses are those which are to be followed. They are the abrogating verses, or those whose precepts are firm and unchangeable. Multivalent verses are those which are not to be followed, they are abrogated verses.'

"Tabari further reports that Ibn 'Abbas is said to have specifically identified certain verses as belonging to either category. Among the clear and decisive verses are 6:151-153 and 17:23-39. It is further related that he asserted that the clear and decisive verses are the Qur'an's abrogating verses, its sanctions and prohibitions, its bounds and obligations, and all that which may be believed in and followed. As for the multivalent verses, they are those which are abrogated, those whose meaning might be made clearer by construing a phrase as belonging to either the context before or after it (muqaddam and mu'akhkhar), its parables and oaths, and all that which must be believed in but not followed.'

"This view is also reported on the authority of a number of the Prophet's Companions, as well as Qatadah, al-Rabi'b. Anas, and al-Dahhak."

Imam Mohamad M. Algalaiene informed me in an interview that it is "Better not to think of God we are to weak. We should think of creation and the signs of God." In reference to 3:7, he held that a "Hadith explains this verse. The Prophet doesn't allow us to go so deeply." "Yet, intelligible as this posture is, it can hardly be denied that the development of faith also requires and engages the liveliness of soul which allegory suits and to which metaphor ministers. These are inseparable from the nature of revelation itself. In so far as a scripture is a cypher, it fails to disclose. To say: 'We believe and go no further' is to qualify belief itself. The very authority of omniscience to which faith defers needs minds for its ally. Its very use of language means that it supposes those minds to be active. No text can have adequate readers, however reverent, if they are not also partners with it in an active apprehension."

Interestingly, Ali thinks of the scope of the clear' as far beyond the law, and into the deepest areas of the Qur'an he holds that the very foundation of the book must be clear:

This passage gives us an important clue to the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. Broadly speaking it may be divided into two portions, not given separately, but intermingled: viz (1) the nucleus or foundation of the Book, literally "the mother of the Book". (2) the part which is not entirely clear. It is very fascinating to take up the latter, and exercise our ingenuity about its meaning, but it refers to such profound matters that are beyond human language and though people of wisdom may get some light from it, no one should be dogmatic, as the final meaning is know to Allah alone. The Commentators usually understand the verses "of established meaning" (muhkam) to refer to the categorical orders of the Shari at (or the Law,), which are plain to everyone's understanding. But perhaps the meaning is wider: the "mother of the Book" must include the very foundation on which all Law rests, the essence of Allah's Message, as distinguished from the various parables, allegories, and ordinances.

In summary, "The Qur'an contains many verses which describe the essential characteristics of the Holy Book. It is an earthly copy of a heavenly original (The Reserved Tablet: LXXXV.22); it is a Revelation sent down through the angel Gabriel; it is in pure Arabic, free from crookedness; it is expressed in a clear, inimitable language; God has made it easy to understand. This last characteristic is given such prominence that the verse in which it is expressed (We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember') is repeated four times in the form of a refrain in Sura LIV. The description of the Qur'an as the Book that makes all things clear' is repeated at least seven times. (XV.1, XXVI.2, 195, XXVII.2, XXXVI.69, XLIII.1.).

"Here arises a substantial difficulty. There are several passages in the Qur'an which fall clearly into the category of the allegorical. As examples one might point to: the parable of the Light of God contained in verse XXIV.35; verse XXXIII.72 concerning God's offer of the Trust' to the heaven, the earth and the mountain, their refusal and Man's assumption of the Trust;' the mysterious journey undertaken by Moses, his meeting with a sage endowed with divine knowledge and all the incidents arising in the course of the journey, such as the coming to life of the dead fish which was to serve as a meal (related in Sura XVIII). Such obviously allegorical themes invite serious reflection in order to make their meaning clear, but as no help can be obtained from the apparent sense of the relevant words, one is inevitably led to search for a hidden meaning but such search might, following the strict letter of the Qur'an, be held to fall within the prohibition expressed in verse III.5. Indeed, on a narrow interpretation of the terms of the Qur'an, it could be maintained that not only the exegesis of allegorical texts, but even the explanation of ordinary passages of the Holy Book pertains exclusively to God. In verse LXXXV.17 God, warning the Prophet as to how the verses of the Qur'an should be recited, affirms that He Himself will determine the manner of their recitation, and ends by saying: It is for us to collect them and to explain them.

"However, as a study of the numerous classical commentaries on the Qur'an will show, the arguments outlined above have not in fact stood in the way of adopting important interpretations in respect of difficult, including metaphorical passages of the Qur'an. . . . Attention may here be drawn to the fact that certain terms in the Qur'an have been held by some to have an allegorical' and by others in precise' meaning. The first group have not hesitated [sic] to interpret them, and their opponents, while disagreeing with the interpretation, have not condemned it as conflicting with verse III.5."

It appears that Yusuf Ali belongs to the first group. Whether his exposition of Surah 3 verse 7 violates Surah 3 verse 7, is a question that will probably be ignored.

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Interview:

Nasikh, Mansukh, Muhkamat & Mutashabihat in the Qur'an: An interview with Imam Mohamad M. Algalaiene. London, Ontario. March 19, 1996.

A Christian Response to the Creed of Islam

The Christian's Qibla is the Cross (Heb 12:2)
 The Christian's Hajj is to gain Heaven (Phil 1:21)
 His Zakat is himself (2 Cor 8:5)
 His Hadith is the martyrs gone before (Eph 4:14)
 His Shariah is the law of love (1Cor 9:21)
 His Talaq is a separation from the world (Gal 2:20)
 His Salat is to pray without ceasing (Phil 4:6)
 His Wujud is to remain unspotted from the world (Eph 5:26)
 His Halal is to do the will of the Father (Jn4:34)

His Haram is to flee youthful lust (2Tim 2:22)
His Umma is the body of Christ (Rom 5:15)
His Shahada is Jesus the Lord (Rev 17:14)
His Tijara is worthless (Phil 3:7,8)
His Dawah is to be a witness (2 Cor 5:18-21)

"I was a hidden treasure and I loved that I be known,
so I created the creation so that I can be known."

Hadith Qudsi

"He who knows his self, knows his Lord"

Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Enneagram

The Enneagram is an ancient Sufi system, which has recently been used to describe nine personality types. This 'Enneagram of the personality' maps psychological aspects and traits of the ego, exemplifying its emotional, habitual and character fixations.

Depending on its sensitivities, every soul develops a particular personality. These sensitivities are shaped and nurtured by the early family environment and other such factors. The result is the development of the personality or ego, with all of its components. For some time, modern psychology has held the view that if a family environment were perfect, fixations of the personality would not develop. This theory however, holds little realistic bearing. All people, regardless of background or upbringing, develop fixations along with their personalities. It is in exploring this issue that we begin to ask ourselves questions like: 'Why is a particular soul placed in that particular family environment which propels the soul to develop a particular personality?' and more importantly, 'What is the real purpose of the journey of life?'

The Enneagram offers two levels for interpreting and understanding the personality. The first allows for recognition and classification. The second and most profound function of the Enneagram takes us beyond the personality to the realm of the essence of the self. As such, the Enneagram is a model of consciousness that reveals the existence of the personality as a veil to essential self.

"God made the creatures as veils. He who knows them as such is led back to Him, but he who takes them as real is barred from His presence"

Ibn al-Arabi

Through Sufism, the Enneagram can become the vehicle, freeing us from the confines of the personality and delivering us to the realm of the Real. The ego fixations (habitual patterns of emotional reactions) of the nine personality types function as veils, obstructing us from experiencing Reality. However, by observing and purifying the ego, we can endeavour to free ourselves of the entrapment of the mind and the thoughts of the personality. Thus the Enneagram, as a means for self-observation and study, can play an important role, guiding us to spiritual unfoldment and God-consciousness.

"The creations of God are only signs of the existence of God. They are not the Reality. The only Reality is the Real. They were created in order that man could understand the ultimate Reality that lies hidden within God's signs. You will be able to reach Him only if you go beyond the signs."

Bawa Muhaiydeen

In the Quran, the story of Adam and Eve subtly reveals the journey of mankind. The temptation of the ego, (represented as Satan), is indicated in the following verse:

"And thus he led them on with deluding thoughts"

Quran 7:22

The moment Adam and Eve eat the fruit from the tree, they become conscious of their nakedness. In other words they become self-conscious, as opposed to their previous state of God-consciousness.

Then, God the All Knowing, with full knowledge of what will happen, sends Adam and Eve down to earth to stay for a while (the duration of each persons life), and gives them (us) this key;

"O children of Adam, indeed We have bestowed upon you from high, garments to cover your nakedness, and as a thing of beauty, but the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all."

Quran 7:26

In the Enneagram, we begin to clearly see the cloak of the personality, which covers God-consciousness. The work of Sufism is to remove this cloak and, God willing, become a God-conscious person again. In this state, we do not live through the

confinement of the personality, but are present with the one true Reality, fulfilling the purpose of this life.

The Story of the Blacksmith

"There was a blacksmith who was unjustly imprisoned and who miraculously escaped. Many years later when he was asked how he had escaped, he said that when he was in prison his wife, who was a weaver, had woven the design of the lock to his prison cell into his prayer rug. Realising that the prayer rug contained the design of his cell's lock, he made a deal with his jailer to get some tools to make some small artefacts, which the jailer then sold, for a profit. Meanwhile he also used the tools to make a key and one day he made his escape." (From Idries Shah)

God has already given us the key as has been said before. Man's role is to realise that he is in the prison of the personality, and to understand the design of his particular cell.

"Sufism is the spiritual way or 'Tariqah' to free man from the prison of multiplicity, to cure him from hypocrisy and to make him whole, for it is only in being whole that man can become holy"

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Fleur Nassery Bonnin has developed a comprehensive and in-depth study program
Spiritual Development through the Enneagram - A Study of Self
which focuses on bringing the use of the Enneagram back to its origins of Sufism for
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Hadith Authenticity:

A Survey of Perspectives

Many non-Muslims, including those who study Islam at an introductory university level, have absolutely no concept of the importance of hadith in Islam. It is also perhaps safe to assume that many Muslims themselves do not fully grasp the fundamental importance of the hadith as a basis for the religion of Islam, and more particularly as a basis for the shari'a, or Islamic law. This essay will seek to both outline the importance of the hadith within Islam, and also try to present a survey of the various views on the authenticity of the hadith, both within Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship.

In order to understand the importance of the hadith it is essential to first know what the hadith is. Simply put, the hadith are collected traditions about the *sunna*¹ of Muhammad. Thus they are composed of sayings attributed to Muhammad, as well as the actions of Muhammad in various situations, both of which are held to serve as examples and guidelines for Muslim belief and practice.²

According to Muslims, the hadith is almost equal in importance to the Quran. Dr. Mazhar U. Kazi, in the introduction to his *A Treasury of Ahadith* states that "all the sayings, sermons, and utterances of the Prophet were.. divinely inspired. In Arabic these are known as ahadith (singular: hadith)."³ Dr. Kazi goes on to say that "all of the actions and deeds of the Prophet were also divinely inspired."⁴ Dr. Kazi summarizes his view on the traditions with clarity:

The sunnah and ahadith are not to be taken as the wise sayings of sages and philosophers or the verdicts of rulers and leaders. One should believe with full conviction that the words and actions of the Prophet represent the will of Allah, and thus one has to follow and obey them in each and every circumstance of life.⁵

Another Muslim scholar, John L. Esposito, in his work, *Islam - The Straight Path* states that,

Quranic principles and values were concretized and

Reference Notes:

¹The term *sunna* refers to the specific actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

²Alfred Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam* (New York: Books For Libraries, A Division of Arno Press, 1980), 10 - 11.

³Mazhar U. Kazi, *A Treasury of Ahadith* (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1992), 1-2.

⁴Kazi, 2.

⁵Kazi, 2.

⁶John L. Esposito, *Islam - The Straight Path* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), 80.

⁷Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 1990), 75.

⁸Esposito, 81.

⁹Kazi, 8-9.

¹⁰Kazi, 11.

¹¹Kazi, 12. For the criteria used in evaluation of

interpreted by the second and complementary source of law, the Sunna of the Prophet, the normative model behaviour of Muhammad. The importance of the Sunna is rooted in such Quranic injunctions as "obey God and obey the Messenger... If you should quarrel over anything refer it to God and the Messenger" (4:59) and "In God's messenger you have a fine model for anyone whose hope is in God and the Last Day" (33:21). Belief that Muhammad was inspired by God to act wisely, in accordance with God's will, led to the acceptance of his example, or Sunna, as supplement to the Quran, and thus, a material or textual source of the law.⁶

The sunna, as embodied in the hadith is not to be underestimated or minimized as a material or textual source of the law. Though supplementary to the Quran, the hadith's central importance rests on the fact that it forms the basis for Islamic law, as the scholar Andrew Rippin clearly states:

The focal point of the law in .. Islam is the sunna, the concept of the practice of Muhammad, as embodied in the hadith and transmitted faithfully by Muhammad's followers through the succeeding generations down to the present. The sunna presents, for the individual Muslim, the picture of the perfect way of life, in imitation of the precedent of Muhammad who was the perfect embodiment of the will of God.⁷

Thus, in Islam the hadith are the recorded traditions of the divinely inspired actions of Muhammad. Yet, further study compels one to face the fact that there are some complexities involved in the use of the hadith as a basis for Islamic law and practice.

Difficulties appear to arise when the transmission and preservation of the hadith are considered. As John L. Esposito states, "by the ninth century, the number of traditions had mushroomed into the hundreds of thousands. They included pious fabrications by those who believed that their practices were in conformity with Islam and forgeries by factions involved in political and theological disputes."⁸ However, according to Dr. Kazi, Islamic scholars have answered these problems as,

Each hadith was scrutinized and tested for its authenticity and recorded only if it proved to be

authenticity of hadith, as explained by Dr. Kazi, see [Appendix A](#).

¹²A point which I believe clearly shows a skewed perspective of Christianity, as for Christians both belief and practice of belief are of fundamental importance.

¹³Islamic law.

¹⁴These verses, it must be noted, are usually only related to the areas mentioned - in most cases they fail to give specific prescriptions for either religious practice or law.

¹⁵The Bible, which the Christian holds as the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God, is, in contrast, a book of law - containing all that is necessary for belief and practice. Here is where one can learn how to be perfect in all areas of life, before the sight of Almighty God.

¹⁶Maulana Muhammad Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* (London: Curzon Press, 1988), 22.

¹⁷Ali, 22.

¹⁸Abdullah bin 'Umar was one of the *sahabah*, or a companion of Muhammad, and was highly respected as such.

¹⁹Often translated as 'destiny', 'fate', 'divine predestination', or 'divine

reliable... These scholars [Ibn Jurayj, Imam Malik, Sufyan ath-Thawri, Hammad bin Salamah, 'Abdullah bin Mubarak, Imam al-Awza'i] made significant contributions to 'ilm al-hadith and laid down solid foundations for the evaluation of ahadith. Consequently, a lot of inauthentic ahadith that had crept into the masses were discarded, and at the same time, reliable ahadith were widely disseminated.⁹

According to Dr. Kazi, especially the works of al-Bukhari and Muslim are considered to be reliable and are termed correct.¹⁰ Dr. Kazi states that "all that was humanly possible for ensuring the authenticity of the ahadith was completed by the third century Hijrah... no other religion, nation, party or even small group of people can parallel what the early Muslims did to ensure the authenticity of ahadith and the sunna."¹¹

The concern of Dr. Kazi to ensure that Muslims believe the hadith are authentic as the divinely inspired words and actions of Muhammad, is quite understandable. This is especially clear when one once again considers the role of the hadith in Islam. Muslims are often quick to argue that in Islam, in contrast to Christianity, practice is of primary importance.¹² 'What to do' is central in Islam, and thus the *shari'a*¹³ (rather than theology), is the 'queen of the sciences.' And, the Muslim will say, 'divine' revelation is the source of the shari'a. However, the Quran, though seen as the primary source of revelation, has no more than ten percent of its verses devoted to legal issues. There are only six hundred verses relating to prayer and ritual and some eighty verses relating to crime and punishment and inheritance laws.¹⁴ Thus it can be simply stated that the Quran is not a book of law.¹⁵ The basis of Islamic law or shari'a is, however, to be found in the hadith - giving the hadith a fundamental importance in the religion of Islam.

Questions about the authenticity of hadith begin to arise when one consults Maulana Muhammad Ali's *A Manual of Hadith* - a highly respected compendium of the Bukhari collection. In the second chapter which covers the topics of *iman* (faith) and *islam* (submission) a hadith is related in which Muhammad defines what faith is.¹⁶ In one of Bukhari's hadith, as relayed by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet states that,

Faith is that thou believe in Allah and His angels
and in meeting with Him and (in) His messengers

determination.' Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press, 1992), 200.

²⁰Ali, 22.

²¹Ali, 22.

²²If what was attributed to 'Umar was unreliable in this instance, one would wonder how Bukhari could be sure that other hadith attributed to 'Umar were reliable.

²³Rippin, vol. 2, 70. A heavy reliance on Rippin's work is necessary in this section as I could not find any other scholars who dealt with the issue of Muslim critiques of the hadith.

²⁴Rippin, 72.

²⁵Rippin, 73.

²⁶Rippin, 74.

²⁷Rippin, 74.

²⁸It is interesting to note that the commentator Yusuf Ali translates the Arabic *zina* into the English word 'fornication' (Sura 24:2-3), though he admits in a note that the term zina applies to both adultery and fornication. Thus according to the Quran one would understand that the penalty for both adultery and fornication is 100 lashes as the verse clearly states. Ali (undoubtedly aware of

and that thou believe in being raised to life (after death).¹⁷

Ali discloses that the same hadith is relayed by 'Umar,¹⁸ though 'Umar's version was rejected by Bukhari as it states that the Prophet, instead of saying "in meeting with Him", said "that thou believe in *qadar*¹⁹, in the good of it and the evil of it."²⁰ According to Ali this is because "the belief in *qadar* is evidently a doctrine of later growth and it is perhaps on the account of this flaw that Bukhari does not accept the version attributed to 'Umar."²¹ Yet, Bukhari does continue to use 'Umar as a source of authentic hadith throughout his collection.²²

Situations such as this one found in Bukhari's work, have created questions in the minds of many scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Andrew Rippin, in his work *Muslims - Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, states that,

Some Muslims picked up on this and used these sorts of doubt about the veracity of the material to attack the authority of the sunna. This was primarily an Egyptian phenomenon; the criticism of the sunna as a whole, however, has much earlier roots, especially in India, where the problem was attacked in more of a theological manner than a historical one.²³

Rippin goes on to present an interesting survey of some of the Muslim leaders and scholars who have either admitted to the weakness of the hadith, or been openly critical of it.

Ghulam Ahmad Parvez, born in 1903, in East Punjab, India, was one of the first Muslim critics of the hadith.²⁴ Parvez realized that hadith had been treated as a divinely inspired source in Islam, and "the *shari'a*, the path of life which Muslims follow, was as a result of the status given to the *sunna* as a source of revealed knowledge, fundamentally wrong."²⁵ Parvez argued that "the Quran contains no ruling saying that *hadith* must be followed" contending that the word *hikma* in the Quran (2:129) was meant in the general sense of 'wisdom', and that the verse "*Whatever the messenger gives you, take; whatever he forbids you, give over*" (59:7) referred to the distribution of loot after battle.²⁶ Parvez also noted that "Hadith reports occasionally contradict the Qur'an; for example the punishment for adultery is 100 lashes in the Qur'an but stoning in the hadith."^{27,28} Another point of Parvez's argument was that "Muhammad was an ordinary man according to Qur'an *sura* 18

the problem here) attempts to qualify the Quranic verse by stating that "although zina covers both fornication and adultery, **in the opinion of Muslim jurists**, the punishment laid down here applies only to un-married persons. As for married persons, their punishment, according to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace be upon him), is stoning to death." *The Holy Quran* (Al-Madinah, Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1981), 1002. It is quite evident that an appeal to the authority of the jurists (fallible men) is being used in order to attempt to gloss over this blatant contradiction.

²⁹Rippin, 74.

³⁰Rippin, 74.

³¹Rippin, 77.

³²Rippin, 78.

³³Rippin, 78.

³⁴Rippin, 78-79. It is interesting to note that a result of his views, aside from the banning of his book, was that Dr. Kassim Ahmad was declared to be an 'enemy of Islam.'

³⁵Ignaz Goldhizer, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)* vol. 2 (London: George Allen & Unwin

verse 100, and that he could have erred."²⁹ All in all Parvez was convinced that "the unreliability of *hadith* transmission .. undermines its validity."³⁰ This was a serious argument, as the Muslim leader Mawdudi realized, being concerned that "the position Parvez argued vis-a-vis the hadith reports, especially where it raises issues concerning their historical value, would eventually be applied to the Quran, and Islam would crumble as a result."³¹

Another Muslim scholar, Dr. Kassim Ahmad, of Malaysia, authored a work entitled *Hadith - A Reevaluation*, which was "banned by the Malaysian Home Ministry on 8 July 1986, in order to 'safeguard the interests of the people and the country'."³² The work rejected hadith as a basis for theology and law, and stated that "the hadith are 'sectarian, anti-science, anti-reason and anti-women'."³³ Rippin states that,

According to available summaries of the book, he [Ahmad] poses four main questions:

1. Did Muhammad bring one or two books?
2. Why did the hadith take 250-350 years to be compiled and why do Sunnis have different collections from Shi'ites?
3. What factors led to the emergence of the hadith?
4. What is the connection between the hadith and the decline and backwardness of Islam?³⁴

Clearly, even in Muslim circles there is skepticism about the authenticity of the hadith collections. Yet, to this point, it is the Western scholars of Islam who have presented the most searching critique of the hadith collections.

Ignaz Goldhizer was perhaps the first serious Western critic of the authenticity of hadith, and it is his work that has formed much of the basis for further scholarship. Goldhizer begins with a history and definition of the sunna - a concept which he states was in existence among the Arab communities long before the arrival of Islam. Goldhizer states,

There was no need for Muslims to invent this concept and its practical significance; they were already current among the old pagans of the

Ltd., 1971), 25-26.

³⁶In Arabic: *wa-sharru'l-umuri muhdathatuha wa-kullu muhdathatin bid'atin dalalatin wa-kullu dalalatin fi'l-nari*. Goldhizer, 34-35.

³⁷*Bid'a* has been formulated by the scholar Al-Shafi'i as having the possibility of being good or objectionable, the distinction being made where "an innovation which contradicts the Koran, a sunna, an *athar*, or *ijma*, is a heretical *bid'a*." Goldhizer, 36. Of course even with this distinction made there are numerous hadith (ie. punishment for adultery) which can be seen as falling into the category of being objectionable, even by Muslim standards.

³⁸**Abd al-Malik** (716-794 A.D.) is also known as **Malik b. Anas**, his full name being 'Abd Allah Malik b. Anas. He was one of the four great jurists of Islam, and acted as a major collector of hadith. Anas is used frequently as a source of authentic hadith in Bukhari's collection. Netton, 159; Kazi, 9.

³⁹Goldhizer, 45. Goldhizer cites his reference for this material as being Al-Ya'qubi, II, p. 311; Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani, p.

Jahiliyya. For them sunna was all that corresponded to the traditions of the Arabs and the customs and habits of their ancestors, and in this sense the word was still used in Islamic times by those Arab communities which had been only very little affected by Muslim religion. Under Islam the content of the old concept and the meaning of the word that corresponded to it underwent a change. To the pious followers of Muhammad sunna meant all that could be shown to have been the practices of the Prophet and his earliest followers. The Muslim community was supposed to honour and obey the new sunna in the same way as the pagan Arabs revered the sunna of their ancestors.³⁵

Bid'a or innovation was viewed to be the opposite of ***sunna***. Goldhizer recounts a hadith (Al-Nasa'i, I, p.143) of the Prophet which says, "Verily the most truthful communication is the Book of Allah, the best guidance is from Muhammad, and the worst of all things are innovations; every innovation is heresy, every heresy is error, and every error leads to hell."³⁶ Yet, as Goldhizer soon shows, there is great evidence to show that much of the ahadith is either inauthentic, or incapable of being proven authentic, and thus to all appearances it is both innovation from a theological perspective,³⁷ and lacking of any proof of authenticity from an objective historical perspective.

One example of the fabrication of hadith is that done by the Ummayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik,³⁸ who is considered to be an important and sound scholar of the collection of hadith. Goldhizer explains,

When the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik wished to stop the pilgrimages to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival 'Abd Allah b. Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijaz to pay him homage, he had recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious hajj to the Qubbat al-Sakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that obligatory circumambulation (tawaf) could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Ka'ba ordained in Islamic law. The pious theologian al-Zuhri was given the task of justifying this politically motivated reform of religious life by making up and spreading a saying traced back to the Prophet,

95, 3; Ibn Maja, p. 102.

⁴⁰Goldhizer, 55. What is perhaps even more shocking is that, as Goldhizer demonstrates,

"The pious Muslims made no secret of this. A reading of some of the older critics of the tradition or of the spreaders of traditions themselves will easily show what was the prevailing opinion regarding the authenticity of sayings and teachings handed on from pious men."

An example to prove this point as given by Goldhizer:

"The possibilities which the Muslims admit themselves in this field are evident from a tradition in which the authorities seem to give away the secret quite unconsciously: 'The Prophet,' it says in a tradition in al-Bukhari, 'gave the order to kill all dogs except hunting and sheep-dogs.' 'Umar's son was told that 'Abu Hurayra also hands down the words: 'but with the exception of sheepdogs as well.' 'Umar's son says to this: 'Abu Hurayra owns cornfields,' ie. he has a vested interest in handing down the order with the addition that farm dogs should be spared as well. This remark is characteristic of the doubt about the good faith of the

according to which there are three mosques to which people may take pilgrimages: those in Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. .. An addition which, apparently, belonged to its original form but was later neglected by leveling orthodoxy in this and related sayings: 'and a prayer in the Bayt al-Maqdis of Jerusalem is better than a thousand prayers in other holy places,' i.e. even Mecca or Medina. Later, too, 'Abd al-Malik is quoted when the pilgrimage to Jerusalem is to be equated with that to Mecca...³⁹

Goldhizer boldly sums up the massive evidence for the "tendentious fabrications of traditions during the first century of Islam" with the statement that,

..it is a matter for psychologists to find and analyze the motives of the soul which made such forgeries acceptable to pious minds as morally justified means of furthering a cause... The most favourable explanation which one can give of these phenomena is presumably to assume that the support of a new doctrine .. with the authority of Muhammad was the form in which it was thought good to express the high religious justification of that doctrine. The end sanctified the means.⁴⁰

Of course the fabrication of ahadith, and their lack of authenticity has often left orthodox Muslim scholars in a difficult position, as Goldhizer states,

'Ali b. Sulayman al-Bajama 'wi, a theologian who in recent times has taken great pains in his commentaries on the six canonical works on tradition, says: 'One of the strangest things that has ever happened to me was this: when I recited one of the traditional sayings according to which scholars are told not to mingle with the sultans, one of my listeners said: "How could the Prophet had said this, since there were no sultans in his days?" This poor man did not know the tradition that the apostle of God predicted with prophetic insight everything that is going to happen until the hour of resurrection.'⁴¹

Another noted Western scholar who delves into the study of the

transmitters that existed even from the earliest period of the formation of tradition."

Goldhizer, 56.

⁴¹Goldhizer, 143.

⁴²G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim tradition - Studies in chronology, provenance and authorship of early hadith* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) See introduction for preliminary critique of hadith scholarship.

⁴³Juynboll, 71.

⁴⁴Juynboll, 142.

⁴⁵Juynboll, 144. It is important to note that this is the same Anas ('Abd al-Malik) dealt with earlier in the paper.

⁴⁶Juynboll, 145. Juynboll goes on to say, "...this seemingly easy way of putting *isnads* together resulted in veritable armies of alleged pupils of Anas, whose doubtful historicity, and hence whose supposedly doubtful trustworthiness, necessitated often the patching up of certain *isnads* with almost anonymous (read: fictitious) people whose names inspired confidence, such as the Thabits [a name often inserted into otherwise rickety *isnads* in order to make them appear

authenticity of hadith is G.H.A Juynboll, whose work *Muslim tradition - Studies in chronology, provenance and authorship of early hadith* is a powerful critique of not only the authenticity of hadith, but also of scholarly works which have attempted to support notions of the authenticity of hadith.⁴² Juynboll's criticism of the 'authenticity' of hadith are numerous and well researched. In criticizing the *isnad*'s he quite bluntly states that,

... I am skeptical as to whether we will ever be able to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that what we have in the way of 'sound prophetic traditions' is indeed just what it purports to be.⁴³

Juynboll uses an effective case study approach in his critique of the *isnad*. One example is the "so-called 'golden chain' (*silsilat adh-dhahab*): Malik - Nafi - 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar - Prophet." Juynboll also brings serious questions to bear on "the case of Anas."⁴⁵ He states that,

... Anas' advanced age - according to the most authoritative reports he died in 93/711 when he was allegedly one hundred and three - appeared especially convenient for those *isnad* forgers who were loath to go to a lot of trouble concocting complicated *isnads* and simply listed a rather late Successor who allegedly had it from Anas who allegedly had it from the prophet... Indeed, Anas has become such a crucial figure in *isnads* that he is one of the most important Companions, whose alleged activities caused other, most probably unhistorical, people with his name to into existence. The ensuing confusion, inevitable as we have learned .. makes the reliability of any *isnad* featuring Anas suspect under the best of circumstances.⁴⁶

A thorough study, Juynboll's work presents what is perhaps the most articulate and documented critique of the notion of the 'authenticity' of hadith, to this day.

Clearly, the evidence to refute any notions of solid historical authenticity of hadith reports is overwhelming. Severe theological and historical problems exist, and are blatantly evident even in Bukhari's collection of hadith - which is considered to be "most reliable and [is] termed '*sahih*' (correct)."⁴⁷ The authenticity of hadith transmitted by men such as Anas b. Malik and Abu Hurayra

reliable]."

In his discussion of 'the dependable Thabit', Juynboll refers to the work *Kitab al-majruhin* of the early hadith scholar Ibn Hibban al-Busti. Juynboll points out that, "In [al-Busti's work] while discussing how the transmission of traditions can go wrong at the hands of certain transmitters, he mentions the category of those who, though moved by pious considerations, do not pay proper heed to the established rules of transmission and ascribe *mursal isnads* to the prophet and complete interrupted *isnads* with the necessary links. Sometimes they take dictums of Hasan al-Basri and provide them with *isnads* via **Anas b. Malik** to the prophet, something which would make such an *isnad* sound if this practice escaped notice and were not properly exposed. As an example of transmitters who were not averse to this practice Ibn Hibban mentions among others Aban b. Abi 'Ayyash (d. 138/755). Juynboll, 143-144.

⁴⁷Kazi, 11.

⁴⁸In Appendix B, the work of one present-day Shiite scholar is dealt with briefly. Due to constraints on the length of the paper, numerous other examples and

is extremely dubious. Contradictions between the hadith and the Quran remain unsolved. The evidence is all too compelling - even without examining the enormous disparities between the traditions of the various [sects of Islam](#).⁴⁸

points have been left out.

⁴⁹Rippin, 75.

The evidence presents a shattering blow to the religion of Islam, as the shari'a, rather than being rooted in the "words and actions of the Prophet [representing] the will of Allah," is merely built on the tradition of men. The problem of the hadith may carry other serious ramifications well, as "Fazlur Rahman points out.. 'the historical validity of the Koran itself is vouchsafed only by the tradition.'"⁴⁹ However, (and perhaps not surprisingly, when these consequences are considered) orthodox Muslim scholarship has, to this point, chosen largely to ignore the issue...

Appendix A

Cannons for the Evaluation of Ahadith¹

A *hadith* consists of two parts: its text, called *matn*, and its chain of narrators, called *isnad*. Comprehensive and strict criteria were separately developed for the evaluation of *matn* and *isnad*. The former is regarded as the internal test of *ahadith*, and the latter is considered the external test. A *hadith* was accepted as authentic and recorded into text only when it met both of these criteria independently.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Isnad

The unblemished and undisputed character of the narrator, called *rawi*, was the most important consideration for the acceptance of a *hadith*. As stated earlier, a new branch of '*ilm al-hadith*' known as *asma' ar-rijal* was developed to evaluate the credibility of narrators. The following are a few of the criteria utilized for this purpose:

1. The name, nickname, title, parentage and occupation of the narrator should be known.
2. The original narrator should have stated that he heard the hadith directly from the Prophet.
3. If a narrator referred his hadith to another narrator, the two should have lived in the same period and have had the possibility of meeting each other.
4. At the time of hearing and transmitting the hadith, the narrator should have been physically and mentally

Reference Note:

¹ Kazi, 12-14. All information in this appendix has been taken from Kazi's work and shows the orthodox Muslim view of the criteria used to 'authenticate' hadith. However, as I argue in this paper, this is a system of guidelines which numerous scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have clearly shown to be seriously inadequate - if not an complete farce, as these standards are broken on numerous occasions in even the 'best' collections of hadith. This of

- capable of understanding and remembering it.
5. The narrator should have been known as a pious and virtuous person.
 6. The narrator should not have been accused of having lied, given false evidence or committed a crime.
 7. The narrator should not have spoken against other reliable people.
 8. The narrator's religious beliefs and practices should have been known to be correct.
 9. The narrator should not have carried out and practiced peculiar religious beliefs of his own.

course makes the authenticity of the hadith dubious at best - a situation with serious ramifications for the Islamic *sharia*, and the religion of Islam as a whole.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Matn

1. The text should have been stated in plain and simple language.
2. A text in non-Arabic or couched in indecent language was rejected.
3. A text prescribing heavy punishment for minor sins or exceptionally large reward for small virtues was rejected.
4. A text which referred to actions that should have been commonly known and practiced by others but were not known and practiced was rejected.
5. A text contrary to the basic teachings of the Qur'an was rejected.
6. A text contrary to other *ahadith* was rejected.
7. A text contrary to basic reason, logic and the known principles of human society was rejected.
8. A text inconsistent with historical facts was rejected.
9. Extreme care was taken to ensure the text was the original narration of the Prophet and not the sense of what the narrator heard. The meaning of the *hadith* was accepted only when the narrator was well known for his piety and integrity of character.
10. A text derogatory to the Prophet, members of his family or his companions was rejected.
11. A text by an obscure narrator which was not known during the age of *sahabah* [the Prophet's companions] or the *tabi'een* [those who inherited the knowledge of the *sahabah*] was rejected.

Along with these generally accepted criteria, each scholar then developed and practiced his own set of specific criteria to further ensure the authenticity of each hadith. For instance, Imam al-Bukhari would not accept a hadith unless it clearly stated that narrator A had

heard it from narrator B. He would not accept the general statement that A narrated through B. On this basis he did not accept a single hadith narrated through 'Uthman, even though Hasan al-Basri always stayed very close to 'Ali. Additionally, it is stated that Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal practiced each hadith before recording it in his Musnad [book or collection of hadith].

Appendix B

A Shiite Perspective on Hadith

I have included this brief quote, as, in defense of the Quran, Allamah Tabataba'i, a highly respected present-day Shiite scholar, attacks the authenticity of the hadith as a whole - and in so doing refutes the use of the 'standards' listed by Kazi in Appendix A (as I have done in my paper). Tabataba'i does so with reference to two of the great Sunni jurists: Ibn Hanbal (who himself was a hadith collector), and al-Shafi'i. This quote once again reflects the enormity of the dilemma Islam finds itself in, as to accept the hadith as divinely binding and inspired is to ignore the objective historical evidence to the contrary, and to admit the fabrication of the hadith is to admit that the essential basis of Islam is merely the tradition of men.

"Careful examination of the chains of transmission of the traditions leaves one in doubt as to the extent of the deceitful additions and false testimonies. Many conflicting traditions can be traced to one companion or follower and many traditions, which are complete fabrications, may be found amongst this body of narrations.

Thus reasons for the revelation of a particular verse, including the abrogating and abrogated verses [in the Quran], do not seem to accord with the actual order of the verses. No more than one or two of the traditions are found to be acceptable when submitted to such an examination.

It is for this reason that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who himself was born before this generation of narrators, said, "Three things have no sound base: military virtues, bloody battles and the traditions pertaining to Qur'anic commentary." Imam al-Shafi'i relates that only about one hundred traditions from Ibn 'Abbas¹ have been

Reference Notes:

¹Ibn 'Abbas (619-688A.D.) Name often borne by 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas, a much revered Muslim exegete. Netton, 110.

²Allamah Sayyid M.H. Tabataba'i, *The Qur'an in Islam* (London: Curzon Press, 1987), 47.

confirmed as valid."²

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The Interior Life in Islam

Seyyed Hossein Nasr
Vol. III, Nos. 2 & 3

"O thou soul which are at peace, return unto thy Lord, with gladness that is thine in Him and His in thee. Enter thou among My slaves. Enter thou My Paradise." (Quran - LXXXIX; 27-30 (trans. by M. Lings.)

The function of religion is to bestow order upon human life and to establish an "outward" harmony upon whose basis man can return inwardly to his Origin by means of the journey toward the "interior" direction. This universal function is especially true of Islam, this last religion of humanity, which is at once a Divine injunction to establish order in human society and within the human soul and at the same time to make possible the interior life, to prepare the soul to return unto its Lord and enter the Paradise which is none other than the Divine Beatitude. God is at once the First (*al-awwal*) and the Last (*al-akhir*), the Outward (*al-zahir*) and the Inward (*al-batin*). [1] By function of His outwardness He creates a world of separation and otherness and through His inwardness He brings men back to their Origin. Religion is the means whereby this journey is made possible, and it recapitulates in its structure the creation itself which issues from God and returns unto Him. Religion consists of a dimension which is outward and another which, upon the basis of this outwardness, leads to the inward. These dimensions of the Islamic revelation are called the *Shariah* (the Sacred Law), the *Tariqah* (the Path) and the *Haqiqah* (the Truth), [2] or from another point of view they correspond to *islam*, *iman*, and *ihsan*, or "surrender", "faith" and "virtue".[3]

Although the whole of the Quranic revelation is called "*islam*", from the perspective in question here it can be said that not all those who follow the tradition on the level of *islam* are *mu'mins*, namely those who possess *iman*, nor do all those who are *mu'mins* possess *ihsan*, which is at once virtue and beauty and by function of which man is able to penetrate into the inner meaning of religion. The Islamic revelation is meant for all human beings destined to follow this tradition. But not all men are meant to follow the interior path. It is enough for a man to have lived according to the *Shariah* and in surrender (*islam*) to the Divine Will to die in grace and to enter into Paradise. But there are those who yearn for the Divine here and now and whose love for God and propensity for the contemplation of the Divine Realities (*al-haqaiq*) compel them to seek the path of inwardness. The revelation also provides a path for such men, for men who through their *iman* and *ihsan* "return unto their Lord with gladness" while still walking upon the earth.

While the concrete embodiment of the Divine Will, which is the *Shariah*, is called the exoteric dimension in the sense of governing all of man's outward life as well as his body and psyche, the spiritual path, which leads beyond the usual understanding of the "soul" as a separated and forgetful substance in the state which Christians call the "fallen state", is called the esoteric dimension. In Sunni Islam, this dimension is almost completely

identified with Sufism (*tasawwuf*) while in Shi'ism, in addition to Sufism, the esoteric and the exoteric are intermingled within the general structure of the religious doctrines and practices themselves.[4] And even within Sunnism, there is an intermediate region between the exoteric and the esoteric, a world of religious practice and doctrines which while not strictly speaking esoteric are like the reflection of the inner teachings of Sufism within the whole community and a foretaste of its riches. In fact, many of the prayer manuals which occupy such a position in the Sunni world, such as the *Dalail al- khayrat*, were written by Sufi masters, while in the Shi'ite world, the prayers almost all of which, such as the *al-Sahifah al-sajjadiyyah* of the fourth Imam Zayn al- Abidin, were written by esoteric authors, partake of both an esoteric and an exoteric character.[5] Occasionally, there has even been the penetration of one domain upon another, such as the sayings of many of the Imams which have appeared in Sufi writings and even of some Sufi writings which have penetrated into certain Shi'ite prayers identified with some of the Imams.[6]

Prayers such as those of Khwajah 'Abdallah Ansari, the great saint of Herat contained in his *Supplications (Munajat)* are at once the deepest yearning of the heart for the Ineffable and the Infinite and common devotional prayers chanted by many of the devout in the community and thus belonging to the intermediate level alluded to above:

I live only to do Thy will,
My lips move only in praise of Thee
O Lord, whoever becometh aware of Thee
Casteth out all else other than Thee.
O Lord, give me a heart
That I may pour it out in Thanksgiving
Give me life
That I may spend it
In working for the salvation of the world.
O Lord, give me understanding
That I stray not from the path
Give me light
To avoid pitfalls.
O Lord, give me eyes
Which see nothing but Thy glory.
Give me a mind
That finds delight in Thy service.
Give me a soul
Drunk in the wine of Thy wisdom.[7]

In the same way that the dimension of inwardness is inward in relation to the outward and the outward is necessary as the basis and point of departure for the journey toward the inward, so is the experience of the Divinity as imminent dependent upon the awareness of the Divinity as transcendent. No man has the right to approach the Imminent without surrendering himself to the Transcendent, and it is only in possessing faith in the Transcendent that man is able to experience the Imminent. Or from another point of view, it is only in accepting the *Shari'ah* that man is able to travel upon the Path (*tariqah*) and

finally to reach the Truth (*haqiqah*) which lies at the heart of all things and yet is beyond all determination and limitation.

To interiorize life itself and to become aware of the inward dimension, man must have recourse to rites whose very nature it is to cast a sacred form upon the waves of the ocean of multiplicity in order to save man and bring him back to the shores of Unity. The major rites or pillars (*arkan*) of Islam, namely the daily prayers (*salat*), fasting (*sawm*), the pilgrimage (*hajj*), the religious tax (*zakat*) and holy war (*jihad*), are all means of sanctifying man's terrestrial life and enabling him to live and to die as a central being destined for beatitude. But these rites themselves are not limited to their outer forms. Rather they possess inward dimensions and levels of meaning which man can reach in function of the degree of his faith (*iman*) and the intensity and quality of his virtue or inner beauty (*ihsan*).

The daily prayers (*salat* in Arabic, *namaz* in Persian, Turkish and Urdu) are the most fundamental rites of Islam, preceded by the ablutions and the call to prayers (*adhan*), both of which contain the profoundest symbolic significance. The form of these prayers is derived directly from the sunnah of the Holy Prophet and the daily prayers are considered as the most important of religious deeds for as the Prophet has said, "The first of his deeds for which a man will be taken into account on the day of resurrection will be his prayer. If it is sound he will be saved and successful, but if it is unsound he will be unfortunate and miserable. If any deficiency is found in his obligatory prayer the Lord who is blessed and exalted will issue instructions to consider whether His servant has said any voluntary prayers so that what is lacking in the obligatory prayer may be made up by it. Then the rest of his actions will be treated in the same fashion." [8] The *salat* punctuates man's daily existence, determines its rhythm, provides a refuge in the storm of life and protects man from sin. Its performance is obligatory and its imprint upon Islamic society and the soul of the individual Muslim fundamental beyond description.

Yet, the meaning of the prayers are not to be understood solely through the study of their external form or their impact upon Islamic society, as fundamental as those may be. By virtue of the degree of man's *ihsan*, and also by virtue of the grace (*barakah*) contained within the sacred forms of the prayers, man is able to attain inwardness through the very external forms of the prayers. He is able to return, thanks to the words and movements which are themselves the echoes of the inner states of the Holy Prophet, back to the state of perfect servitude (*ubudiyyah*) and nearness to the Divine (*qurb*) which characterize the inner journey of the Holy Prophet as the Universal Man (*al-insan al-kamil*) to the Divine Presence on that nocturnal ascent (*al-miraj*), which is at once the inner reality of the prayers and the prototype [9] of spiritual realization in Islam. [10]

Not only do the canonical prayers possess an interior dimension, but they also serve as the basis for other forms of prayer which become ever more inward as man progresses upon the spiritual path leading finally to the "prayer of the heart", the invocation (*dhikr*) in which the invoker, invocation and the invoked become united, and through which man returns to the Center, to the Origin which is pure Inwardness. [11] The interior life of Islam is based most of all upon the power of prayer and the grace issuing from the sacred

language of Arabic in which various prayers are performed. Prayer itself is the holy barque which leads man from the world of outwardness and separation to that of union and interiority, becoming ultimately unified with the center of the heart and the rhythm which determines human life itself.

The same process of interiorization takes place as far as the other central rites or pillars of Islam are concerned. Fasting is incumbent upon all Muslims who are capable of it during the holy month of Ramadan, a month full of blessings when according to the well-known hadith "the gates of heaven are opened".^[12] But the outward observation of its rules, while necessary, is one thing and the full realization of its meaning is another. Fasting means not only abstention from eating, drinking and passions during daylight but above all the realization of the ultimate independence of man's being from the external world and his dependence upon the spiritual reality which resides within him. Fasting is, therefore, at once a means of purification and interiorization complementing the prayers. In fact, it is itself a form of prayer.

The same truth holds true of the other rites. The pilgrimage or *hajj* is outwardly the journey towards the house of God in Mecca and inwardly circumambulation around the Ka'bah of the heart which is also the house of God. Moreover, the outward *hajj* is the means and support for that inner journey to the Center which is at once nowhere and everywhere and which is the goal of every wayfaring and journeying. The *zakat* or religious tax is likewise not only the "purifying" of one's wealth through the act of charity which helps the poor, but also the giving of oneself and the realization of the truth that by virtue of the Divine origin of all things, and not because of some form of sentimental humanitarianism,^[13] the other or the neighbour *is* myself. *Zakat*, therefore, is, in addition to a means of preserving social equilibrium, a way of self-purification and interiorization, of creating awareness of one's inner nature shown from artificial attachment to all that externalizes and dissipates.

Finally, the holy war or *jihad* is not simply the defense or extension of the Islamic borders which has taken place only during certain episodes of Islamic history, but the constant inner war against all that veils man from the Truth and destroys his inner equilibrium. The greater holy war (*al-jihad al-akbar*) as this inner battle has been called, by the Holy Prophet, is, like the "unseen warfare" of Orthodox spirituality, the very means of opening the royal path to the center of the heart. It is the battle which must of necessity be carried out to open the door to the way of inwardness. Without this greater *jihad* man's externalizing and centrifugal tendencies cannot be reversed and the precious jewels contained in the treasury of the heart cannot be attained. The *jihad*, like the prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and religious tax, while a pillar of Islam and a foundation of Islamic society, is also a means toward the attainment of the inner chamber and an indispensable means for the pursuit of the inner life in its Islamic form.

An understanding of the interior life in Islam would be incomplete without reference to the imprint of the Divine Beauty upon both art and nature. Islamic art, although dealing with world of forms, is, like all genuine sacred art, a gate towards the inner life. Islam is based primarily on intelligence and considers beauty as the necessary complement of any

authentic manifestation of the Truth. In fact beauty is the inward dimension of goodness and leads to that Reality which is the origin of both beauty and goodness. It is not accidental that in Arabic moral goodness or virtue and beauty are both called *husn*. Islamic art, far from being an accidental aspect of Islam and its spiritual life, is essential to all authentic expressions of Islamic spirituality and the gate towards the inner world. From the chanting of the Holy Quran, which is the most central expression of the Islamic revelation and sacred art *par excellence*, to calligraphy and architecture which are the "embodiments" in the worlds of form and space of the Divine Word, the sacred art of Islam has always played and continues to play a fundamental role in the interiorization of man's life.[\[14\]](#) The same could of course be said of traditional music (*sama`*) and poetry which have issued from Sufism and which are like nets cast into the world of multiplicity to bring men back to the inner courtyard of the Beloved. [\[15\]](#)

Likewise, nature and its grand phenomena such as the shining of the Sun and the Moon, the seasonal cycles, the mountains and the streams, are, in the Islamic perspective, means for the contemplation of the spiritual realities. They are signs (*ayat*) of God and although themselves forms in the external world, mirrors of a reality which is at once inward and transcendent. Nature is not separated from grace but is a participant in the Quranic revelation. In fact in Islamic sources, it is called the "macrocosmic revelation". Virgin nature is the testament of God and gives the lie to all forms of pretentious naturalism, rationalism, skepticism and agnosticism, these maladies from which the modern world suffers so grievously. It is only in the artificial ugliness of the modern urban setting, created by modern man to forget God, that such ailments of the mind and the soul appear as real and the Divine Truth as unreal. Modern skeptical philosophies are the products of those living in urban centers and not of men who have been born and who have lived in the bosom of nature and in awareness of His macrocosmic revelation.[\[16\]](#) In Islamic spirituality, nature acts as an important and in some cases indispensable means for recollection and as an aid towards the attainment of inwardness. Many Muslim saints have echoed over the ages the words of the Egyptian Sufi Dhu'l-nun who said:

"O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of waters or the song of birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity and a proof of Thy Incomparableness that Thou art the All-prevailing, the All-knowing, the All-wise, the All-just, the All-true, and that in Thee is neither overthrow nor ignorance nor folly nor injustice nor lying. O God, I acknowledge Thee in the proof of Thy handiwork and the evidence of Thy acts: grant me, O God, to seek Thy Satisfaction with my satisfaction and the Delight of a Father in His child, remembering Thee in my love for Thee, with serene tranquility and firm resolve." [\[17\]](#)

St. Francis of Assisi would surely have joined this chorus in the praise of the Lord through the reflection of His Beauty and Wisdom in His Creation.

The goal of the inward life in Islam is to reach the Divine as both the Transcendent and the Imminent. It is to gain a vision of God as the Reality beyond all determination and at the same time of the world as "plunged in God". It is to see God everywhere.[\[18\]](#) The

inward dimension is the key for the understanding of metaphysics and traditional cosmology as well as for the penetration into the essential meaning of religion and of all religions, for at the heart of every authentic religion lies the one Truth which resides also at the heart of all things and most of all of man. There are of course differences of perspective and of form. In Christianity, it is the person of Christ who saves and who washes away the dross of separation and externalization. In Islam, such a function is performed by the supreme expression of the Truth Itself, by the *Shahadah*, *La ilaha ill'Allah*. To take refuge in it is to be saved from the debilitating effect of externalization and "objectivization" and to be brought back to the Center, through the inward dimension. [19]

It is not for all men to follow the interior life. As already mentioned, it is sufficient for a Muslim to live according to the Shari'ah to enter paradise after death and to follow the interior path after the end of his terrestrial journey. But for those who seek the Divine Center while still walking on earth and who have already died and become resurrected; in this life the interior path opens before them at a point which is here and a time which is now.

"It is related that one night Shaykh Bayazid went outside the city and found everything wrapped in deep silence, free from the clamour of men. The moon was shedding her radiance upon the world and by her light made night as brilliant as the day. Stars innumerable shone like jewels in the heavens above, each pursuing its appointed task. For a long time the Shaykh made his way across the open country and found no movement therein, nor saw a single soul. Deeply moved by this he cried: "O Lord, my heart is stirred within me by this Thy Court displayed in all its splendour and sublimity, yet none are found here to give Thee the adoring worship which is thy due. Why should this be, O Lord? Then the hidden voice of God spoke to him: "O thou who art bewildered in the Way, know that the King does not grant admission to every passer-by. So exalted is the Majesty of His Court that not every beggar can be admitted thereto. When the Splendour of My Glory sheds abroad its radiance from this My sanctuary, the heedless and those who are wrapped in the sleep of indolence are repelled thereby. Those who are worthy of admittance to this Court wait for long years, until one in a thousand of them wins entrance thereto." [20]

No religion would be complete without providing the path for the "one in a thousand". Islam as an integral tradition and the last plenary message of Heaven to the present humanity has preserved to this day the possibility of following the interior life, a life which, although actualized fully only by the few, has cast its light and spread its perfume over all authentic manifestations of the Islamic tradition.

Notes:

1. See F. Schuon, *Dimensions of Islam*, trans. P. Townsend, London, 1969, chapter 2.
2. See S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, London, 1966, chapter 1, 3 and 4 (trans. into Italian by D. Venturi as *Ideali e realita dell' Islam*, Milan, 1974).

3. See F. Schuon, "Iman, Islam, Insan", in his *L'Oeil du coeur*, Paris, 1974, pp. 91-94, where the relation of this division to the tripartite division of the Islamic tradition into *Shari'ah*, *Tariqah* and *Haqiqah* is also explained.
4. Concerning Shi'ism see Allamah Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans. by S. H. Nasr, New York and London, 1975.
5. On Muslim prayers from both Sunni and Shi'ite sources and dealing mostly with this "intermediate" domain of religious life, between external religious acts and the "prayer of the heart", see C. E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions, A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use*, London, 1961.
6. For a rather remarkable instance of this second category dealing with a Prayer written by Ibn 'Ata'allah al-Iskandari in a famous Shi'ite prayer attributed to Imam Husayn the third Shi'ite Imam, see W. Chittick, "A Shadhili Presence in Shi'ite Islam?", *Sophia Perennis* (Journal of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy), vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 97-100.
7. Quoted in M. Smith, *The Sufi Path of Love, An Anthology of Sufism*, London, 1954, p. 82.
8. *Mishkat al-masabih*, trans. with explanatory notes by J. Robson, Lahore, 1972, p.278.
9. The external movements of the prayers are said, by traditional Islamic authorities to be reflections in the world of form, movement, time and space of the states experienced by the Holy Prophet during his nocturnal ascension.
10. Concerning the symbolism and inner meaning of the details of the movements actions and words of the prayers as reflecting in the teachings of one of the greatest of the Sufi masters of the recent period see M Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, London, 1971, pp.176 ff. As for the inner meaning of the prayers as seen by a Shi'ite theosopher and saint see Hajji Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, *Asrar al-hikam*, Tehran, 1380, pp. 456 ff.
11. Jami has said, "Oh, happy man whose heart has been illuminated by invocation in the shade of which the carnal soul has been vanquished, the thought of multiplicity chased away, the invoker transmuted into invocation and the invocation transmuted into the Invoked." Quoted in F. Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, trans D. M. Matheson, London, 1976, p. 123.
12. *Mishkat al-masabih*, vol. II, p. 417, where many hadiths of this kind are accounted.
13. In modern times, few virtues have been as externalized, depleted of their spiritual significance and even made into a channel for demonic rather than celestial forces as charity whose modern, secularized understanding in the West is the direct caricature and parody of the authentic Christian conception of this cardinal virtue. See F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, trans. D. M. Matheson, London 1953, pp. 171 ff.
14. Considering the spiritual principles of Islamic art see T. Burckhardt, *The Art of Islam*, trans. P. Hobson, London, 1976; and his *Sacred Art, East and West*, trans Lord Northbourne, London, 1967, chapter IV, also S. H. Nasr, *Sacred Art in Persian Culture*, London, 1976.
15. Concerning the spiritual and interiorizing effect of music in Sufism see J. Nourbakhsh "Sama'", *Sophia Perennis*, vol. III no. 1, Spring 1977, S. H Nasr

- "Islam and Music", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Winter, 1976, pp. 37-45. (italian trans. as "L'Islam e la musica secondo Ruzbahan Bagli, Santo Patrono di Sciraz," *Conoscenza Religiosa*, vol. 4, 1976, pp. 373 ff.
16. Concerning the Islamic and traditional view of nature and its contrast with the modern view see S. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, New York, 1970 (Italian trans. as *Scienza e civiltà nel' Islam*, trans. L. Sosio, Milan, 1977), Nasr, *Man and Nature*, London, 1976 (Italian translation as *L'uomo e la natura*, trans. G. Spina, Milan, 1977); Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, London, 1977, Nasr, *Islamic Science - An Illustrated Study*, London, 1976, also Th. Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends*, New York 1973 and Roszak, *Unfinished Animal*, New York, 1975. "Les vertus qui par leu; natupe meme temoignent de la Verite, possedent elles aussi une qualite interiorisante dans la mesure ou elles sont fondamentales, il en va de mem des etres et des choses qui transmettent des messages de l'eternelle Beaute; d'ou la puissance d'interiorisation propre a la nature vierge, a l'harmonie des creatures, a l'art sacre, a la musique. La sensation esthetique-nous l'avons fait remarquer bien des fois-possede en soi une qualite ascendante- elle provoque dans l'ame contemplative directement ou indirectement, un ressouvenir des divines essences." F. Schuon 'La religion du coeur", *Sophia Perennis*, vol. III, no. 1, Spring, 1977.
 17. A. J. Arbery, *Sufism*, London, 1950, p. 52-53.
 18. See F. Schuon, "Seeing God Everywhere", in his *Gnosis, Divine Wisdom*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, London, 1959, pp. 106 ff.
 19. See S. H. Nasr, "Contemporary Western Man, between the rim and the axis" in his *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, London, 1976, pp. 3 ff.
 20. From 'Attar quoted in M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, London, 1950, pp. 26-27.

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[Was the New Testament Influenced By Pagan Philosophy?](#)

[Was the New Testament Influenced By Pagan Religions?](#)

[Are the New Testament Gospels Corrupted? A Critique of the Jesus Seminar](#)

[The Case Against Christianity: A Summary Critique](#)

[Christianity Compared to Islam and Other Religions](#)

Questions, Comments, and Dialogue:

We welcome your questions, comments, and discussion of our webpage, as well as any questions you may have about Christianity. Simply click on the button below to write us a letter. We look forward to hearing from you.



Write us here!

Some resources pertaining to our response to Islam are listed below. They include the Bible and Bible resources, and numerous links to other sites which discuss Christianity and Islam, as well as other topics from a variety of perspectives. Your questions, comments, and dialogue about these resources and sites are also welcomed. Thank you for visiting our web page. We wish you God's blessings as you study and think about these things.

The Bible and Bible Resources:

[The Holy Bible - in English](#)

[The Holy Bible - in Arabic](#)

Simply put, a sermon is an explanation and application of a portion of the Word of God. We encourage you to read through, or listen to, some of the sermons listed under the links below.

[Sermon](#)

[More Sermons..](#)

[Library of Christian Books, Bible Commentaries, and Study Aids](#)

[The Lord's Prayer in Arabic](#)

Links to Other Sites:

The following sites include part of an excellent collection maintained by Jochen Katz. We encourage you to explore his indepth resources on topics pertaining to Christianity and Islam. Other links to sites relating to a Christian perspective on Islam are also featured here:

[Answering Islam](#)

["Why I am a Christian.." - testimonies of former Muslims](#)

[The Muslim-Christian Debate Website](#)

The following pages and sites document some of the persecution of Christians in the Islamic world. While Islam claims to be a religion of fairness and tolerance in the West, the reality in Islamic nations is often sadly far from that. In many cases the persecution is primarily religious in nature, rather than political.

[An Open Letter to Muslims: September, 2001](#)

[Bahawalpur, Pakistan: October, 2001](#)

[South Sudan: June, 2001](#)

[Sana'a, Yemen: July, 2000](#)

[Ambon, Indonesia: January, 2000](#)

[Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: January, 2000](#)

[Al Kosheh, Egypt: January, 2000](#)

[Voice of the Martyrs](#) (more current situations of persecution)

[International Christian Concern](#) (more current situations of persecution)

For resources on Christianity, and the study of various other cultures, religions, and philosophies see:

[Archaeology and the Bible](#)

[Watchman Fellowship](#)

[Institute for Christian Leadership](#)

[Southern California Center for Christian Studies](#)

[Reformed Internet Ministries](#)

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Does the Bible say Jesus is God?

Note to our readers: to view any of the Bible passages listed below, simply click on the word [Bible](#), and one will be opened for you in a new browser window.

Part I: An Outline of the New Testament Testimony to the Deity of Christ

This outline does not purport to be in any sense an exhaustive analysis of the NT witness to Christ's deity. Rather it is a sketch of one approach - a rather traditional approach - to this theme. Other complementary or supplementary approaches abound, such as the creative treatment of Jesus' implicit claim to deity in his parables by P. B. Payne or R. T. France's documentation from the Synoptic Gospels of Jesus' assumption of the role of Yahweh (Jesus and the Old Testament p.150-59). For a brief discussion of the NT verses that seem, at first sight, to call Jesus' divinity into question, see R. E. Brown, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?" (Reflections 6-10).

A. Implicit Christology

1. Divine functions performed by Jesus:

a. In relation to the universe:

- (1) Creator (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
- (2) Sustainer (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)
- (3) Author of life (John 1:4; Acts 3:15)
- (4) Ruler (Matt. 28:18; Rom. 14:9; Rev. 1:6)

b. In relation to human beings:

- (1) Healing the sick (Mark 1:32-34; Acts 3:6; 10:38)
- (2) Teaching authoritatively (Mark 1:21-22; 13:31)
- (3) Forgiving sins (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 24:47; Acts 6:31; Col. 3:13)
- (4) Granting salvation or imparting eternal life (Acts 4: 12; Rom. 10:12-14)
- (5) Dispensing the Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:17, 33)
- (6) Raising the dead (Luke 7:11-17; John 5:21; 6:40)
- (7) Exercising judgment (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:19-29; Acts 10:42; 1 Cor. 4:4-6)

2. Divine status claimed by or accorded to Jesus:

a. In relation to his Father:

- (1) Possessor of divine attributes (John 1:4; 10:30; 21:17; Eph. 4:10; Col. 1:19; 2:9)
- (2) Eternally existent (John 1:1; 8:58; 12:41; 17:5; 1 Cor. 10:4; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 11:26; 13:8; Jude 5)
- (3) Equal in dignity (Matt. 28:19; John 5:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 22:13; cf. 21:6)
- (4) Perfect revealer (John 1:18; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1-3)
- (5) Embodiment of truth (John 1:9, 14; 6:32; 14:6; Rev. 3:7,14)
- (6) Joint possessor of the kingdom (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15), churches (Rom. 16:16), Spirit (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19), temple (Rev. 21:2), divine name (Matt 28:19; cf. Rev. 14:1), and throne (Rev. 22:1, 3)

b. In relation to human beings:

- (1) Recipient of praise (Mat 21:16-16; Eph. 6:19; 1 Tim. 1:12; Rev. 5:8-14)
- (2) Recipient of prayer (Acts 1:24; 7:59-60; 9:10-17,21; 22:16,19; 1 Cor. 1:2; 16:22; 2 Cor. 12:8)
- (3) Object of saving faith (John 14:1; Acts 10:43; 16:31; Rom. 10:8-13)

(4) Object of worship (Matt 14:33; 28:9,17; John 5:23; 20:28; Phil 2:10-11; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:8-12)

(5) Joint source of blessing (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:16)

(6) Object of doxologies (2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:5b-6; 5:13)

B. Explicit Christology

1. Old Testament passages referring to Yahweh applied to Jesus:

a. Character of Yahweh

(Exod. 3:14 and Isa 43:11 alluded to in John 8:68; Ps. 101:27-28 LXX 1MT 102:28-291 quoted in Heb. 1:11-12; Isa 44:6 alluded to in Rev. 1:17)

b. Holiness of Yahweh

(Isa 8:12-13 [cf. 29:23] quoted in 1 Pet.3:14-15)

c. Descriptions of Yahweh

(Ezek. 43:2 and Dan. 10:6-6 alluded to in Rev. 1:13-16)

d. Worship of Yahweh

(Isa 45:23 alluded to in Phil. 2:10-11; Deut. 32:43 LXX and Ps. 96:7 LXX [MT 97:7] quoted in Heb. 1:6)

e. Work of Yahweh in creation

(Ps. 101:26 LXX [MT 102:27] quoted in Heb. 1:10)

f. Salvation of Yahweh

(Joel 2:32 [MT 3:5] quoted in Rom. 10:13; cf. Acts 2:21; Isa 40:3 quoted in Matt. 3:3)

g. Trustworthiness of Yahweh

(Isa 28:16 quoted in Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6)

h. Judgment of Yahweh

(Isa 6:10 alluded to in John 12:41; Isa 8:14 quoted in Rom. 9:33 and 1 Pet. 2:8)

i. Triumph of Yahweh

(Ps. 68:18 [MT v. 19] quoted in Eph. 4:8)

2. Divine titles claimed by or applied to Jesus:

a. Son of Man (Matt. 16:28; 24:30; Mark 8:38; 14:62-64; Acts 7:56)

b. Son of God (Matt.11:27; Mark 15:39; John 1:18; Rom. 1:4; Gal.4:4; Heb. 1:2)

c. Messiah (Matt. 16:16; Mark 14:61; John 20:31)

d. Lord (Mark 12:36-37; John 20:28; Rom. 10:9, 1 Cor. 8:6-6; 12:3; 16:22; Phil. 2:11; 1 Pet. 2:3; 3:15)

e. Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13; cf. 1:8; 21:6, of the Lord God)

f. God (John 1:1,18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1)

Material above is taken from Murray J. Harris, Jesus as God, Baker Book House, 1992, ISBN 0-8010-4370-0

Part II: A Scriptural Glossary of the Names, Titles and Attributes Demonstrating That

Jesus and Yahweh Are One

"There is one God" - I Corinthians 8:6

Note to our readers: to view any of the Bible passages listed below as proof texts showing that Jesus and Yahweh (God) are One, simply click on the word [Bible](#), and one will be opened for you in a new browser window. The chart below is but a partial listing of relevant passages.

Description	As Used of God	As Used of Jesus
YHWH (I AM)	Exodus 3:14 Deuteronomy 32:39 Isaiah 43:10	John 8:24 John 8:58 John 18:4-6
God	Genesis 1:1 Deuteronomy 6:4 Psalm 45:6,7	Isaiah 7:14, 9:16 John 1:1,14; 20:28 Romans 9:5 Titus 2:13 Hebrews 1:8 2 Peter 1:1
Alpha and Omega (First and Last)	Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12 Revelation 1:8	Revelation 1:17,18 Revelation 2:8 Revelation 22:12-16
Lord	Isaiah 45:23	Matthew 12:8 Acts 7:59,60; 10:36 Romans 10:12 I Corinthians 2:8; 12:3 Philippians 2:10,11
Saviour	Isaiah 43:3,11 Isaiah 63:8 Luke 1:47 I Timothy 4:10	Matthew 1:21 Luke 2:11 John 1:29 John 4:42 Titus 2:13

		Hebrews 5:9
King	Psalm 95:3 Isaiah 43:15 I Timothy 6:14-16	Revelation 17:14 Revelation 19:16
Judge	Genesis 18:25 Psalm 50:4,6 Psalm 96:13 Romans 14:10	John 5:22 2 Corinthians 5:10 2 Timothy 4:1
Light	2 Samuel 22:29 Psalm 27:1 Isaiah 42:6	John 1:4,9 John 3:19 John 8:12 John 9:5
Rock	Deuteronomy 32:3,4 2 Samuel 22:32 Psalm 89:26	Romans 9:33 I Corinthians 10:3,4 I Peter 2:4-8
Redeemer	Psalm 130:7,8 Isaiah 48:17 Isaiah 54:5 Isaiah 63:9	Acts 20:28 Ephesians 1:7 Hebrews 9:12
Our Righteousness	Isaiah 45:24	Jeremiah 23:6 Romans 3:21-22
Husband	Isaiah 54:5 Hosea 2:16	Matthew 25:1 Mark 2:18,19 (bridegroom) II Corinthians 11:2 Ephesians 5:25-32 Revelation 21:2,9
Shepherd	Genesis 49:24 Psalm 23:1 Psalm 80:1 Ezekiel 34:11-12,22	John 10:11,16 Hebrews 13:20 I Peter 2:25 I Peter 5:4
Creator	Genesis 1:1 Job 33:4 Psalm 95:5,6 Psalm 102:25,26 Isaiah 40:28	John 1:2,3,10 Colossians 1:15-18 Hebrews 1:1-3,10
Giver of Life	Genesis 2:7 Deuteronomy 32:39 I Samuel 2:6 Psalm 36:9	John 5:21 John 10:28 John 11:25
Forgiver of Sin	Exodus 34:6-7 Nehemiah 9:17 Daniel 9:9	Mark 2:1-12 Acts 26:18 Colossians 2:13

	Jonah 4:2	Colossians 3:13
Lord our Healer	Exodus 15:26	Acts 9:34
Omnipresent	Psalm 139:7-12 Proverbs 15:3	Matthew 18:20 Matthew 28:20 Ephesians 3:17; 4:10
Omniscient	I Kings 8:39 Jeremiah 17:9,10,16	Matthew 11:27 Luke 5:4-6 John 2:25 John 16:30 John 21:17 Acts 1:24
Omnipotent	Isaiah 40:10-31, 18 Isaiah 45:5-13	Matthew 28:18 Mark 1:29-34 John 10:18 Jude 24
Eternal	Genesis 1:1 Psalm 102:26,27 Habakkuk 3:6	John 6:62 John 8:58 John 16:28 Isaiah 9:6 Micah 5:2
Immutable (unchanging)	Isaiah 49:9,16 Malachi 3:6 James 1:17	Hebrews 13:8
Receiver of Worship	Matthew 4:10 John 4:24 Revelation 5:14 Revelation 7:11; 11:16	Matthew 14:33 Matthew 28:9 John 9:38 Philippians 2:10,11 Hebrews 1:6

The above chart is taken from pages 62-64 of the book:

Jesus - A Biblical Defense of His Deity by Josh McDowell and Bart Larson, Here's Life Publishers, (c) 1983, ISBN 0-86605-114-7

The Seventy Four 'Scholars':

Who Does the Jesus Seminar Really Speak For?

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"The Seventy-Four 'Scholars': Who Does the Jesus Seminar Really Speak For?" (an article from the Book Reviews column from the Christian Research Journal, Fall 1994, page 32) by Craig L. Blomberg.

The Editor-in-Chief of the Christian Research Journal is Elliot Miller.

A Summary Critique

A major new work of scholarship is raising eyebrows in many quarters: *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (Macmillan, 1993)[1] This is the product of six years of extensive consultation by a group of scholars known as the Jesus Seminar (hereafter JS), who have set out to determine the authentic words of Jesus. The result is a book that (1) provides a fresh, colloquial, and at times racy translation of the *five* gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, *and* the noncanonical Gospel of Thomas); (2) colors every saying attributed to Jesus in these Gospels as either red, pink, gray, or black (*red* means Jesus said it; *pink* means it's close to what He said; *gray* means He didn't say it in this form but there are echoes of His teaching in it; and *black* means the saying didn't come from Him at all); and (3) provides passage-by-passage commentary explaining the JS's rationale for its decisions. As the book jacket and popular press releases emphasize, only *20 percent* of all the sayings of Jesus are colored red or pink and a good number of these come from Thomas!

What is going on here? Has there been some revolutionary new find that seriously discredits Christianity? No, not at all. The truth is that the JS is an *anachronism* -- a throwback to nineteenth-century quests for the historical Jesus, and not even representative of mainstream contemporary New Testament scholarship.

WHAT IS THE JESUS SEMINAR?

The JS is the brainchild of well-known New Testament scholar and Greek grammarian, Robert Funk -- for many years a professor at the University of Montana. Desiring to write a book on the historical Jesus as long ago as the 1970s, Funk wanted to incorporate reflections that represented a scholarly "consensus." He came up with the idea of

assembling a team of scholars that would vote on each saying of Jesus to create a new kind of red-letter edition of the Gospels -- with only those sayings that *really* go back to Jesus colored red. In time the idea evolved into four different colors, since historical assessments involve varying degrees of probability.

As many as 200 scholars participated in the JS over the years, but the final group dwindled to 74. People dropped out for various reasons. Some expressed discomfort with how the most radical fringes of New Testament scholarship were disproportionately represented on the JS. Others voiced disagreement with Funk's propagandistic purposes of popularizing scholarship in a way designed explicitly to undermine conservative Christian credibility.[2]

The final "Fellows" of the JS, as they are called, fall roughly into three categories. Fourteen of them are among the leading names in the field, including a few who have published major works on the historical Jesus in recent years (e.g., John Dominic Crossan of DePaul University and Marcus Borg of Oregon State). Two of these 14 are sympathetic to many evangelical concerns: Bruce Chilton (of Bard College, New York) and Ramsey Michaels (of Southwest Missouri State).

Roughly another 20 are names recognizable to New Testament scholars who keep abreast of their field, even if they are not as widely published. These, too, include several who have written important recent works on the Jesus-tradition, particularly in regard to various noncanonical gospels (e.g., Marvin Meyer of Chapman University and Karen King of Occidental College).

The remaining 40 -- more than half of the JS -- are relative unknowns; most have published at best two or three journal articles, while several are recent Ph.D.s whose dissertations were on some theme of the Gospels. A computer-search of the ATLA and OCLC databases of published books and articles[3] turned up no entries relevant to New Testament studies whatsoever for a full 18 of the Fellows.

Overall, the Jesus Seminar is composed of Protestants, Catholics, and atheists, professors at universities and seminaries, one pastor, three members of the Westar Institute in California which sponsored the project, one filmmaker, and three others whose current occupations are entirely unidentified. Of the 74 there are three women and two Jews. Thirty-six, almost half, have a degree from or currently teach at one of three schools -- Harvard, Claremont, or Vanderbilt -- universities with some of the most liberal departments of New Testament studies anywhere. Only a handful come from outside North America; European scholarship is almost entirely unrepresented. Among the less well-known names are two or three additional evangelical sympathizers, but it is clear they were consistently outvoted by the "far left."

WHAT DID THE JESUS SEMINAR CONCLUDE?

The Five Gospels uses more black ink for the sayings of Jesus than red, pink, and gray put together. Only 15 sayings of Jesus are colored red -- and then not always in all the

different versions in which they appear in the various Gospel parallels. The red sayings are all short, pithy "aphorisms" (unconventional proverb-like sayings) such as, "turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5:39; Luke 6:29), "congratulations, you poor" (Luke 6:20; Thomas 54), and "love your enemies" (Luke 6:27; Matt. 5:44)[4] -- or parables (particularly the more subversive ones) such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35), the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-8a), and the Vineyard Laborers (Matt. 20:1-15). The only saying that appears in more than two Gospels that was colored red each time was, "Pay to the emperor what belongs to the emperor and God what belongs to God" (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25; Thomas 100:2). This was also the only saying in the entire Gospel of Mark to be colored red.

Pink sayings are much more plentiful; an appendix lists 75. But again they are almost entirely limited to short, unconventional utterances such as one might expect from an Oriental sage or cryptic guru. Most of these come from sayings paralleled either in Matthew and Luke or in one of those Gospels plus Thomas. The gray sayings are not indexed but appear about twice as often as the pink. Indeed, the commentary explains that much of the gray matter came very close to being pink in the voting. At times over half of the Fellows voted red or pink, but the remaining black vote resulted in a gray "compromise." Somewhat more than half of all the teaching attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, however, remains black, including virtually everything in the Gospel of John.

Sometimes longer passages are subdivided into various colors. For example, in Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), "Our Father" is red. "Your name be revered," "impose your imperial rule," "provide us with the bread we need for the day," and "forgive our debts to the extent that we have forgiven those in debt to us" are all pink. "And please don't subject us to test after test" is gray, while "in the heavens," "enact your will on earth as you have in heaven," and "but rescue us from the evil one" are all black. In other instances, even though the commentary notes that the Fellows found one part of a passage much more likely to be authentic than another, the text is not subdivided but all colored pink (red plus gray) or gray (pink plus black) -- for example, the parable of the wedding banquet (Matt. 22:1-14). No explanation is ever given for this inconsistency.

EVALUATING THE JESUS SEMINAR'S WORK

The Golden Rule ("Treat people in ways you want them to treat you") gets only a gray coloring by the JS because it is potentially self-centered. The real Jesus, we are told, would more likely have said something like, "Treat people in the way they want to be treated." Unfortunately, the JS did not apply this more "noble" approach to the Jesus of the Gospels. But even by the logic of the more "inferior" version of Matthew 7:12, it seems reasonable to apply the same method of color-coding to the work of these Fellows that they used on the five Gospels.

We shall therefore organize our critique under three headings: (1) *red* or *pink* material -- that is, where almost all scholars would agree that the JS is probably correct in their presuppositions, methods, and conclusions; (2) *gray* material -- that is, where the JS's approach reflects views widely held in nonevangelical scholarship but suspect

nevertheless; and (3) *black* material -- that is, where the JS is out of sync even with the majority of nonevangelical New Testament scholarship. The percentages of material that fall into each category correspond roughly to the percentages of the various colors of ink that the JS itself employed!

Red or Pink Matter: Where the Jesus Seminar Speaks for Most Scholars

No doubt at least 20 percent and perhaps a little more of what the JS concludes is legitimate. Evangelical scholars widely agree with critics of other persuasions that it is appropriate to employ historical methods in analyzing the Gospel traditions. Christianity is a religion that makes uniquely historical claims. If a majority of the canonical Gospels' portraits of Jesus were unhistorical, the theological claims of our faith could not stand. The type of apologetics that requires belief as a presupposition for discussion fails to convince any but the already converted. So it is entirely appropriate to employ criteria of historical analysis that believers and unbelievers can share and see if the Bible can withstand such scrutiny.

In that light, we can agree with the JS and virtually all other modern scholars that the Gospels are a complex product of tradition and redaction. That is to say, the teachings of Jesus were not written down when He first spoke them but were passed along by word of mouth over a period of decades. In that process of oral tradition, they were paraphrased, abbreviated, combined together in small collections, applied to a wide variety of situations in the early church, and ultimately put in the form in which we now find them by the writers of the Gospels themselves. However, we believe that all of this took place under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, and through His inspiration the writers accurately reported exactly what He wanted them to represent of the life and teachings of Jesus.

These writers functioned as "redactors" -- that is, editors -- choosing which teachings of Jesus they wanted to include, in what order, and in keeping with the distinctive theological purposes they considered most crucial for the Christian communities to which they were writing. Mark was probably the first Gospel written. Matthew and Luke each drew on Mark as well as probably on "Q" (from the German *Quelle*, meaning "source") -- a hypothesized document composed primarily of teachings of Jesus (which explains why Matthew and Luke have a lot of material in common not found in Mark, but almost always limited to Jesus' sayings). John, however, wrote later and more independently, accounting for the greater differences between his Gospel and the previous three "synoptic" Gospels.

This process of oral tradition plus written editorial activity accounts for why virtually any saying of Jesus of any length that is found in more than one Gospel does not appear word-for-word in exactly the same form. So also does the fact that Jesus spoke in Aramaic but the Gospels were written in Greek. Literal translation from one language to another inevitably breaks down at numerous points. The ancient world, moreover, had no symbol for quotation marks and no conviction that a verbatim account of someone's speech was any more or less valuable than an accurate paraphrase. Missing, too, was any

concept that *detached* objectivity was somehow a virtue for writers of history (although there *was* a concern for reporting facts faithfully and accurately [Luke 1:1-4]). What point was there in telling the stories of the teachings and actions of great individuals if not to learn something from their examples?

So we need have no objection in principle to the idea that some of Jesus' teachings are fairly literal translations of His actual words (red) and that others are more paraphrastic in nature (pink). We can even accept some of the JS's reasons for coloring a saying gray, as, for example, when it believes that the words of a saying reflect a mixture of Jesus' wording and the later Gospel writer's favorite vocabulary, *so long as the essence of the teaching is faithful to Jesus' original intent*. (In many instances, however, gray for the JS means that they find some part of a saying objectionable and not consistent with Jesus' original speech.)

Gray Matter: Where the Jesus Seminar Speaks Mostly for Liberal Scholars

There are at least 10 important areas in which the JS adopts assumptions and perspectives that are widely held in nonevangelical scholarship but which need to be challenged. Those assumptions include: (1) The authors of the four canonical Gospels are not Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as traditionally believed. (2) None of these four Gospels were written before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (3) The oral tradition of Jesus' sayings was quite fluid. Simple teachings were often greatly expanded, embellished, and distorted in the process. (4) Various people in the early church, including the Gospel writers themselves, felt free to invent sayings of Jesus that had little or no basis in what He actually taught. (5) If a saying can be demonstrated to promote later Christian causes, it could not have originated with Jesus. (6) The historicity of John's gospel is extremely suspect. (7) Historical analysis cannot admit the supernatural as an explanation for an event. Therefore, Jesus' words after His resurrection -- like His earlier predictions about His death, resurrection, and return -- cannot be authentic. (8) Jesus never explained His parables and aphorisms. All concluding words of explanation, especially allegorical interpretations of parables and metaphors, are thus inauthentic. (9) Jesus never directly declared who He was. All such "self-referential" material (in which Jesus says, "I am..." or, "I have come to...") is therefore also inauthentic. (10) The burden of proof rests on any particular scholar who would claim authenticity for a particular saying of Jesus and not on the skeptic.

Space obviously precludes a detailed response to each of these 10 claims. But we can at least sketch out the broad contours of a reply.

(1) The external evidence (i.e., the testimony of the early church) uniformly attributes authorship of the first three Gospels to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is not likely that the church would have ascribed two of these three Gospels to men who were not among the original twelve apostles (Mark and Luke), and the other one to the notorious ex-tax-collector (Matthew), unless there was strong reason for believing them to be the original

authors. Modern-day objections to these ancient traditions have all been adequately answered in a variety of published works.[5]

(2) The same external evidence suggests that Matthew and Mark should be dated at least as early as the 60s. Internal evidence places Luke in that time frame as well, since his second volume, the Book of Acts, ends abruptly with Paul awaiting the outcome of his appeal to the emperor in Rome. The best explanation of that abrupt ending remains the assumption that Luke was writing while Paul was still in house-arrest and hence no later than A.D. 62. Early Christian tradition, on the other hand, puts John's gospel in the 90s but usually attributes it to John the apostle, one of Jesus' closest followers, so that here we have reputable eyewitness testimony.

In each case, the four Gospels were most probably written by people in a position to know and accurately preserve Jesus' teaching -- Matthew and John because they had personally accompanied Jesus; Luke because he had talked with eyewitnesses and engaged in careful historical research (Luke 1:1-4); and Mark (again according to the church fathers) because he had ministered together with Peter in Rome (cf. also 1 Pet. 5:13).[6]

(3) Careful studies of ancient Jewish culture and surrounding nations demonstrate that oral traditions held sacred were preserved with remarkable care. The New Testament world was an oral culture, producing prodigious feats of memory. Rabbis at times had memorized the entire Scriptures (our Old Testament). Such abilities did not preclude the freedom to retell stories with all kinds of minor variation in detail so long as the point of each story or teaching was left intact. The alleged tendency of traditions to develop from simple to complex has been repeatedly refuted; if anything, there was a slight tendency to abbreviate more lengthy narratives.[7]

(4) There is not a single piece of hard data demonstrating that early Christians felt free to create out of whole cloth sayings of Jesus which He never spoke. The most common way this assumption has been defended is by the idea of prophecy: New Testament prophets spoke in the name of the risen Lord and their words were allegedly later intermingled with those of the historical Jesus. But while such practices may have occurred with other gods or historical figures in nearby cultures, every reference to the words of Christian prophets inside and outside the New Testament canon makes it clear that they were not confused with the words of the earthly Jesus.[8]

(5) Although it is widely believed that theological motives impugn historicity, such a belief rests on a patently false dichotomy. As already noted, ancient history was not written according to today's standards of scholarly detachment. If sayings of Jesus relevant to the later church must be discounted, then so must the words of the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius, and the Jewish historian Josephus, when they help to promote Roman or Jewish causes. In such cases, we would be left with almost total agnosticism about ancient history, a conclusion few scholars are prepared to promote.

The fallacy, of course, is to imagine that telling a story for a purpose, even in service of a cause one believes in passionately, necessarily forces one to distort history. In our modern era, some of the most reliable reporters of the Nazi Holocaust were Jews passionately committed to seeing such genocide never repeated. In this case, it is the appalling later revisionism of those who claimed the Holocaust never happened that has distorted history, not the testimony of those passionately caught up in the events of the time.[9]

(6) John is quite different than the Synoptics, but that does not make him any less historical. Precisely because he is largely independent of them, he has chosen to focus on different aspects of Jesus' teaching and career. Interestingly, John actually has more references to time and place -- including details about first-century Palestine that have been strikingly corroborated by archeology -- than do the Synoptics. I have elsewhere written in greater detail about the differences among the four Gospels (and the more general question of the historical reliability of the Gospels) and I refer the reader to that more extensive discussion.[10]

(7) Antisupernaturalism is historically reductionistic (i.e., overly limiting what may have actually happened) and philosophically untenable. The historian may not personally be convinced by the testimony of Jesus' disciples that they saw Him alive again after His death. But that gives him or her no right to color all sayings of the resurrected Jesus black (i.e., in Matthew 28, Luke 24, and John 20--21). This the JS did on the highly debatable grounds that "words ascribed to Jesus after his death are not subject to historical verification."

Since numerous credible eyewitnesses reported *seeing* and *hearing* Jesus on several occasions, historical verification is not really the problem. The problem rather is that *no* evidence for a resurrection will be satisfactory if one has concluded *a priori* that miracles cannot happen. But such a position is not based in historical research but rather in philosophical bias. Thus it provides no good basis for rejecting the words of the resurrected Christ.

(8) Almost all rabbinic parables (of which over 2,000 have been preserved) have some kind of allegorical explanation. It is hard to believe, therefore, that Jesus the Jew did not give some kind of indication as to what His more pithy and controversial teachings meant. Indeed, the whole parable-allegory dichotomy is another false one, and again I must refer the reader to my book-length discussion of the matter for further detail.[11]

(9) It is inherently improbable that Jesus (or any other sage) would never talk about Himself in the first person. The real reason behind this claim is that many modern scholars are reluctant to believe that Jesus made the specific claims for Himself which the Gospels say He did. Often this is because they would then have to come to grips with His claims *upon their lives* -- demands that they are not prepared to accept (e.g., "I am the way, and I am truth, and I am life....No one gets to the Father unless it is through me" -- John 14:6).[12]

(10) Applying the "believer's burden of proof" criterion to historical inquiry in general would leave us with virtually no secure knowledge of anything in the ancient world. It is flatly contrary to the approach of ancient historians more generally, who assume that if writers prove trustworthy where they can be tested, they are given the benefit of the doubt where they cannot be tested. Repeatedly the Gospel writers have proved themselves reliable in this respect, so the burden of proof should fall squarely on the skeptics' shoulders.

Black Matter: Where the Jesus Seminar Speaks for Few Scholars

Perhaps the most striking feature of *The Five Gospels* is how out of touch it is even with mainline scholarship. In fact, a major movement among New Testament critics has generated what has been dubbed "the third quest" for the historical Jesus. This quest has been far more optimistic than its predecessors in claiming that substantial amounts of material about what Jesus said and did can be recovered from the canonical Gospels. Indeed, two of the major contributors to this quest -- James Charlesworth of Princeton and E. P. Sanders of Duke -- agree that "the dominant view today seems to be that we can know pretty well what Jesus was out to accomplish, that we can know a lot about what he said, and that those two things make sense within the world of first-century Judaism." [13]

It is this final clause that the JS virtually ignores. Their Jesus does not make sense in the world of Judaism. Indeed, every time Jesus looks too much like other Jewish teachers of His day, His words are discounted as inauthentic for that very reason. The JS's Jesus resembles a Greco-Roman philosopher; a cynic sage; an itinerant speaker who never refers to Scripture, who never speaks more than one short parable on any occasion, who engages in no extended dialogues or controversies with the religious leaders of His world.

The one historical fact that almost everybody agrees on -- that Jesus was crucified -- finds no adequate explanation in the Jesus that is left after the JS excises 80 percent of His teachings. As leading Catholic scholar John Meier puts it in his much more representative, recent work on the historical Jesus, "A tweedy poetaster who spent his time spinning out parables and Japanese koans, a literary aesthete who toyed with 1st-century deconstructionism, or a bland Jesus who simply told people to look at the lilies of the field -- such a Jesus would threaten no one, just as the university professors who create him threaten no one." [14]

On the other hand, the JS is far *more* optimistic than most scholars about the possibility of unearthing reliable, independent, presynoptic traditions in the Gospel of Thomas. Their dating of Thomas to about A.D. 50 is at least one century earlier than anything the external evidence (or the majority of scholars) supports. This noncanonical, apocryphal document is a collection of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus. About one-third of them are clearly Gnostic in nature; about one-third are quite similar to short aphorisms and parables of Jesus in the canonical Gospels; and about one-third contain otherwise unknown teachings ascribed to Jesus that are not demonstrably unorthodox but which could lend themselves to Gnostic interpretations.

Many scholars have often wondered if a few sayings of Jesus in Thomas might reflect independent, authentic traditions not previously known. But most scholars believe a majority of the sayings reflect a later stage of the tradition, when a concern for special wisdom and elitist knowledge outstripped the concerns of the original Jesus.[15]

The JS implausibly inverts this sequence. Instead of an apocalyptic Jesus teaching about a future kingdom that is now at hand -- heralding the arrival of a messianic age and fulfilling the hopes of the children of Israel, as twentieth-century scholarship has predominantly stressed -- the Fellows' Jesus speaks only of a present, timeless kingdom and merely offers wise advice about how to live at peace in a hostile world. Any hint of apocalyptic is assigned to a secondary stage of the tradition.

This Jesus is more Gnostic -- concerned primarily to impart true knowledge -- than anything orthodox Christianity has ever accepted. Today we might call it "New Age." But given the JS's stated goal of discrediting orthodox Christianity and going beyond mainstream scholarship (despite their repeated claims that they represent a consensus), this conclusion should not be surprising.[16]

There are numerous other ways in which the JS is idiosyncratic even among nonevangelical scholars. We have room merely to list ten of them here; the implausibility of most of the following positions should be obvious. (1) The JS's methodology is highly reductionistic: no teaching that cannot be separated from the narrative in which it is embedded (i.e., which could not have circulated by itself in the oral tradition) can be authentic. (2) No teaching that is neither a parable nor an aphorism can be authentic. (3) Anything with parallels in the "common lore" of the day is suspect; somebody else probably falsely attributed it to Jesus. (4) Jesus said nothing, however implicitly, to suggest a messianic consciousness (not even a merely human messianic consciousness). (5) Hence, Jesus never used the title "Son of man," even though this passes all other criteria of authenticity with flying colors as the most distinctive and characteristic way in which Jesus spoke about Himself. (6) Almost all of the passion narrative sayings are colored black, since Jesus spoke nothing about His death or its significance. (7) Jesus never taught anything about final judgment or threatened people with God's wrath. (8) He never debated with anybody, never preached sermons, never compared His teaching with what was found in the Law. (9) Our current Gospels are relatively arbitrary in the order in which they arrange Jesus' teachings. (10) Nevertheless, other historical sources from antiquity are quoted (e.g., Josephus on Jesus son of Ananias and on Eleazar the exorcist) as if they can be trusted implicitly. And in one place, based on no allegedly historical information of any kind -- inside or outside the canon -- the Fellows "regard it as probable that [Jesus] had a special relationship with at least one woman, Mary of Magdala," so that they doubt Jesus was celibate![17]

THE FALSE CLAIM OF A CONSENSUS

The JS claims to represent a consensus of "critical" scholars -- that is, scholars whose conclusions are not already predetermined by religious confessions. In claiming such a consensus they are highly misleading. Adela Yarbro Collins, a leading New Testament

scholar at the University of Chicago, wryly noted in a recent meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature that at some of the proceedings of the JS, two of its leaders would get together and, whenever they would agree on an opinion, they would announce to the rest: "There is a consensus among scholars...!"

We have noted above numerous ways in which the JS reflects the "radical fringe" of critical scholarship and generally does not include the most established scholars of a more moderate perspective. Once it is admitted that evangelical scholars can also be "critical" and not allow their beliefs to predetermine their historical conclusions (an admission the JS is unwilling to make), it becomes clear that the JS's claims to represent consensus views on more than a small percentage of the issues they address are simply false.

REFERENCE NOTES

1 Ed. Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover.

2 See Robert W. Funk and Mahlon H. Smith, *The Gospel of Mark: Red-Letter Edition* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1991), xvi-xvii.

3 The January 1993 CD-ROM of the American Theological Library Association indexes all articles in journals or multi-author works listed in *Religion Index One and Two*, a standard index of articles in the field. The On-Line Computer Library Center (OCLC) is the comprehensive database of books available for interlibrary loan in North America, including all major theological libraries.

4 All translations of gospel portions come from the JS's "Scholars, Version," not least to give the reader a feel for the nature of that translation.

5 Conveniently summarized, e.g., in the relevant sections of textbooks such as D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

6 See Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 599-622; idem, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1026-45; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1989), 308-410; Leon Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 45-92.

7 By far the most important study of these features of the oral tradition is Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1981), unfortunately never translated into English. See his "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Henry Wansbrough (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 185-216. See also Kenneth E. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991), 34-54; and

Leslie R. Keylock, "Bultmann's Law of Increasing Distinctness," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 193-210.

8 See David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979); and David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

9 One of the best discussions of how a gospel can be *both* history *and* theology remains I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970, rev. 1989).

10 Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987).

11 Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

12 Cf., e.g., the candid admissions of Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 245-58. Mack was not one of the final Fellows of the JS but his writing closely reflects their distinctive approach to Jesus.

13 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 2; quoted by James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 205.

14 John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 177.

15 The two most detailed studies defending this conclusion are both in German: Wolfgang Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen* (Berlin: Tüpelmann, 1964); and Michael Fieger, *Das Thomasevangelium: Einleitung, Kommentar und Systematik* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1991). More briefly, but in English, cf. Christopher M. Tuckett, "Thomas and the Synoptics," *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988), 132-57; and Meier, 123-39.

16 Funk's agenda becomes obvious when he expresses disappointment that the JS colored only a handful of unparalleled sayings in Thomas pink. He is obviously not wanting to reflect an existing consensus but to move beyond it to bold, new historical judgments. See especially *Five Gospels*, 524-25.

17 *Ibid.*, 221.

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GREATER & LESSER JIHAD

Compiled by Abu Fadl - Translated by Br. Khalid Saifullah

The evidence used as proof for establishing that Jihad against the desires and Shaitaan is Jihad Akbar, are weak if not false Hadith

A man asked the Prophet: What is Jihad? He (s.a.w) replied: "To fight against the disbelievers when you meet them (on the battlefield)." The man asked: "What kind of Jihad is the highest?" He (s.a.w) replied: "The person who is killed whilst spilling the last of his blood"

It is not only the disbelievers that the Mujahid must contend against on the battlefield but he must fight against his desires which always call him towards evil

It has been said that the opinion of many Muslims regarding Jihad is that it is of two sorts, namely, Jihad Akbar (greater) and Jihad Asghar (lesser). Jihad Akbar meaning Jihad against the desires and Shaitaan whilst Jihad Asghar is against the disbelievers on the battlefield.

The reasons given for the above, in regards to Jihad against the desires and Shaitaan as being Jihad Akbar, are as follows:

- Its field of struggle is unlimited;
- It is timeless and boundless;
- This struggle is hard because its essence is man against himself;
- The enemy is unseen and cannot be detected by the five senses,

Whilst the case given for Jihad against the disbelievers is not as long, not as extensive and not as difficult as struggling against the desires. As a result of that, Jihad against the disbelievers on the battlefield is regarded as Jihad Asghar (the smaller or lesser Jihad). That therefore is the opinion of many Muslims.

The classification of Jihad, such as that given above, is based upon a Hadith which states that at the time Rasulullah (s.a.w) returned home from the field of warfare he said: "We have all returned from Jihad Asghar to Jihad Akbar." Some companions asked: "What is Jihad Akbar Rasulullah?" He replied: "Jihad against the desires."

That therefore is the proof for the case proposed by many people.

Al 'Iraqy in Takhriju AHadithil Ihya' states: "The mentioned Hadith is related by Imam Baihaqi with a da'if Sanad (weak chain of narrators) from Jabir" [Risalah Jihad, Hasan al-Banna].

Apart from the Hadith related by Imam Baihaqi there is also a Hadith related by Al-Khatib Al-Baghadadi from Jabir, which states: "the Prophet (s.a.w), at the time he returned from a battle said: 'We have all just returned to the best of places, and you have returned from Jihad Asghar (the lesser Jihad) to strive in Jihad Akbar (the greater Jihad)'. The companions asked: 'What is Jihad Akbar Rasulullaah?' He answered: 'The Jihad of someone against his desires'." [Tarikh al Baghadadi 13/493]

It turns out that this Hadith is weak because within its Sanad there is a narrator by the name of Khalaf bin Muhammad bin Ismail al Khiyam who according to Al-Hakim: "His Hadiths are unreliable." And Abu Ya'la al Khalili says: "He often adulterates, is very weak and narrates unknown Hadith." [Mashariul 'Ashwaq ila Masuril 'Ushshaq 1/31]

Al-Hakim and Ibnu Abi Zur'ah state: "We often write statements from Khalaf bin Muhammad bin Ismail only as an example, and we remove ourselves of responsibility from him." [Mizanul I'tidal 1/662]

FALSE

And even more doubtful than that, there is within the Sanad of this Hadith a narrator by the name of Yahya bin Al Ula Al Bajili who according to Imam Ahmad is a known Kadhdhaab -liar-, and forger of Hadith. Also, Amru bin Ali, An Nasai and Daruqutni state: "His Hadith are renounced." Ibnu Adi states: "His Hadith are false." [Refer: Tahdhibut Tahdhib 11/261-262]

Ibnu Taimiyyah states: "There is a Hadith related by a group of people which states that the Prophet (s.a.w) said after the battle of Tabuk: 'We have returned from Jihad Asghar to Jihad Akbar'. This hadith has no source, nobody whomsoever in the field of Islamic Knowledge has narrated it. Jihad against the disbelievers is the most noble of actions, and moreover it is the most important action for the sake of mankind." [Refer: Al Furqan baina Auliyair Rahman wa Auliyaisy Shaitaan, matter 44-45].

Furthermore, besides the two stated weak Hadiths, there is the statement of a Tabi'i by the name of Ibrahim bin Abi Ablah to people who had returned from battle, which states: "You have returned from Jihad Asghar so is the Jihad Akbar you intend to do Jihad ul qalbi (Jihad of the heart)?" "refer: Siyaru A'laamin Nubala 6/325]

Daruqutni states that Ibrahim bin Abi Ablah himself is believable but the chain of transmission is broken. [Siyaru A'laamin Nubala 6/324]. As a result of that, the statement above cannot be attributed to Ibrahim bin Abi Ablah unless the chain of transmission is authentic. And were we to establish that his statement is really valid, we must understand that he was a normal human being who may have occasionally said something imperfect. He was not infallible.

The Highest Level

On the basis of the above statements we can conclude by saying, that the evidence used as proof or the basis for establishing that Jihad against disbelievers on the battlefield is Jihad Asghar and Jihad against the desires and Shaitaan is Jihad Akbar, are weak if not false Hadith. Besides that the stated Daliil (evidence) are in opposition to Sahih Hadith, such as the ones below:

Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim [Hadith No. 4636] from Abu Hurairah (r.a.a), who said: The Prophet (s.a.w) was asked: "O Rasulullaah! What deed could be an equivalent of Jihad Fi Sabilillaah?" He answered: "You do not have the strength to do that deed." The narrator said: They repeated the question twice or thrice. Every time he answered: "You do not have the strength to do it." When the question was asked for the third time, he said: "One who goes out for Jihad is like a person who keeps fasts, stands in prayer (constantly), (obeying) Allah's (behests contained in) the Aayah (of the Qur'an), and does not exhibit any lassitude in fasting and praying until the Mujahid returns from Jihad Fi Sabilillaah."

There is also a Hadith narrated by Bukhari [Volume 4, Hadith 44] from Abu hurairah (r.a.a) , who said: A man came to Allah's Messenger (s.a.w) and said, "Guide me to such a deed as equals Jihad (in reward)." He replied, "I do not find such a deed." Then he added, "Can you, while the Mujahid has gone for Jihad, enter your mosque to perform Salat without cease and observe Saum without breaking it?" The man said, "But who can do that?".

Hadith narrated by Al-Hakim with a Sahih Sanad from Muaz bin Anas (r.a.a) who said: A woman once came to the Prophet (s.a.w) and asked: "O Rasulullaah! My husband has departed for war and usually if he prays I follow him in his Salat and I follow him in all his acts of worship. Because of that inform me of an act which can equal his until he returns." He (s.a.w.) said to her: "Are you able to stand without sitting, perform Saum without breaking it and Dhikr until your husband returns?" She replied: "I am not strong enough, o Rasulullaah." So he (s.a.w) said to her: "By Allah in whose hand I am, even if you were strong enough it would surely not attain one tenth of your husbands deeds." [Narrated by Hakim in Al Mustadrak 2/73. Sahih Sanad agreed upon by Az Zahabi].

From the three Hadith above we can clearly state that Jihad Fi Sabilillaah is the highest act, and there is no other act to equal it. Is it likely that an act described as the highest act would be labeled Jihad Asghar, the small Jihad or the lesser Jihad?

Not War

Possibly there are people who maintain that the meaning of Jihad in the Hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim does not mean war or not exactly war. Perhaps there are those who are of that opinion.

As strong proof that the word Jihad in the above mentioned Hadith cannot mean anything else except war, there is the Hadith narrated by Al-Hakim earlier. Within that Hadith are the words: "My husband has departed for war..." It is impossible for the word Ghaaziyan in the above Hadith to mean anything except war, no matter which way it is analysed. Also it is impossible that it would be Ghazwatul Fikri (war of the mind).

A man asked Rasulullaah (s.a.w): "..and what is Jihad?" He (s.a.w) replied: "You fight against the disbelievers when you meet them (on the battlefield)." He asked again: "What kind of Jihad is the highest?" He (s.a.w) replied: "The person who is killed whilst spilling the last of his blood." [Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad 4/114 - Hadith sahih. Al Haithami states: "Narrators upheld it." Majmauz Zawaid 1/59].

Thus, from the Hadith of Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim earlier we can clearly see that the one who is called Mujahid Fi Sabilillaah is that person who maintains prayers and fasting without a break, as well as recites the Qur'an for the time that the Mujahid are on Jihad.

Is there a person capable of doing this? Of course not, as explained by Rasulullaah (s.a.w). And supposing there was a person who is capable of maintaining 'Mujahadatun Nafsi' (Jihad against the desires) in the hardest and most difficult way. Indeed the activities of the body during Salat and the reading of the Qur'an embrace external acts, not acts of the heart, not intrinsic acts. But what if, at the time of these external acts, the heart isn't against the desires? It is impossible for someone to be able to truthfully perform this without being against their desires, never mind taking into account the performance of Salat, Saum and the reading of the Qur'an continuously.

Because of that, we see that in Imam Nawawi's Book of Jihad, there are Hadith concerning external as well as internal acts of Sunnah such as, Salat at night which embraces brushing off laziness, standing, bowing and prostrating for a long time; and other acts including fighting until wounded and dying as a martyr. [Riyadh us Salihin, Book of Jihad].

So if perhaps there is a person capable of performing Mujahadatun Nafsi, that is at the highest level - Salat, Saum and reading the Qur'an non-stop for as long as some other person goes to war and until he returns- then he is equal to the Mujahid. Is anyone capable of that? Are there not people called Mujahid who go on Jihad Fi Sabilillaah for months, even years?

Is it proper or right therefore to maintain that Mujahadatun Nafsi away from the battlefield is 'Al Jihadul Akbar' whilst Jihad against the disbelievers is called 'Al Jihadul Asghar'?

Inner And Outer Enemies

Within Mujahadatun Nafsi away from the battlefield, those who follow this are only faced with one enemy, namely, the unseen enemy: desire and Shaitaan. Whereas in Jihad Fi Sabilillaah, Jihad is waged against enemies on the battlefield, those who follow this are

faced with more than one enemy, namely, the unseen enemy and the seen enemy: the disbelievers and the Munafiquun (hypocrites).

It is not only the disbelievers that the Mujahid must contend against on the battlefield but he must fight against his desires which always call him towards evil. His desires can call on him in various ways to desert the field of battle such as by fear, doubt, hardship and sadness.

The Mujahid continuously fights with his desires which always yearn to be fulfilled. Yet he only faces being far away from his wife and children, eating strange food, sleeping on the ground instead of in his bed, and many other trials which are not in accordance with his desires.

Allah Says: *"Jihad is ordained for you though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know."* Thus there is the question of Shaitaan, who always fights against those who perform Jihad. And at times such as these, Shaitaan firmly establishes himself together with his friends, namely, the disbelievers: *"Those who believe, fight in the Cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve, fight in the cause of Taaghoot. So fight you against the friends of Shaitaan; ever feeble indeed is the plot of Shaitaan."*

And the way in which Shaitaan fights against the Mujahid is amongst others by inflaming the passions of the disbelievers and the Mushrikuun to fight against the Muslims, and by weakening the resolve of the Muslims or Mujahid so that they feel reluctant and scared to fight against the disbelievers: *"And (remember) when Shaitaan made their (evil) deeds seem fair to them and said, "No one of mankind can overcome you this Day and verily, I am your neighbour..."*

Ibnu Abbas (r.a.a) stated: "In the battle of Badr, Iblis came and carried their banner together with the army and group of Shaitaan. He came in the form of a man from the Bani Mudlaj by the name of Suraqah bin Malik bin Ju'shum, and said to the Mushrikuun: "None of mankind is able to defeat you this day, and I am your protector."

So at the time those men assembled, Rasulullaah (s.a.w) gathered a handful of dust and threw it into the faces of the Mushrikuun which forced them to retreat. When Jibra'il came, Iblis saw him and released his grip on the Mushrikuun and ran away together with his followers. Those who had been in his grip called out: "O Suraqah! You agreed to protect us." Iblis answered: "Indeed I see what you do not see and I am scared of Allah, and Allah is hard in His punishment." [Hadith mauqaf narrated by Ibnu Jarir at Tabari].

Furthermore, the way in which Shaitaan weakens the resolve of those who perform Jihad can be found in a Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad: Sabrah bin Al Faqih states: I heard Rasulullaah (s.a.w) say: "Indeed Shaitaan waits to deter mankind.....so Shaitaan waits in the way of Jihad. He says to the person who intends Jihad: "Do you want to perform Jihad, when Jihad destroys the soul and finishes off your wealth? Do you want to fight,

when you can be killed, your wife can remarry and your wealth divided?"... [Musnad Ahmad 3/483. Isnad hasan].

Based on the above explanations, we can surmise that the strength of desire and that of Shaitaan to be fought against in the field of Jihad by the Mujahid is far superior and more aggressive than that faced by those outside the field of Jihad.

In other words: Mujahadatun Nafsi in the field of Jihad is much harder than Mujahadatun Nafsi in some other place. So is it more appropriate that Jihad against the disbelievers, which in its essence cannot be separated from Mujahadatun Nafsi, be regarded as Jihad Asghar whilst Mujahadatun Nafsi outside the field of Jihad, where the enemy is only the unseen, be regarded as Jihad Akbar?

Abu Hurairah narrated: "A companion passed by a valley wherein was a well with refreshing water which surprised him. After he said: 'Supposing I removed myself from the company of people and I lived in this place (for the purpose of 'ibaadah) but I couldn't do that until I received permission from Rasulullaah (s.a.w). Would that be the most eminent thing to do towards Rasulullaah (s.a.w)?' The Prophet (s.a.w) said: 'Don't do that, because the existence of one from amongst you Fi Sabilillaah is more eminent than Salat made at home for 70 years. Don't you want to receive forgiveness from Allah and for Him to allow you into Jannah? Ughzoo Fii Sabilillaah (wage war in the way of Allah), whoever fights in the way of Allah for as long as it takes a camel to recover from one milking to the next, surely Jannah is obligatory for him.'" [Narrated by Tirmidhi and he said: Hadith hasan, Baihaqi and Al-Hakim said: Sahih according to Muslim's methods].

In the last Hadith there is a very clear authoritative quotation which abrogates the supposition of those people concerning Jihad Akbar. Because indeed the Sahabah who related this Hadith asked permission from Rasulullaah (s.a.w) in order to perform Jihad against the desires by distancing himself from other people but the Prophet (s.a.w) did not give him permission to do so and moreover forbade him and pointed out to him something far more eminent than that.

Then in that Hadith also there exists an important point which should be received and noticed, namely: "In truth, the Mujahid Fi Sabilillaah is included amongst those who receive glad tidings about Jannah whether they are killed or not killed, because of what our messenger said: "Whoever fights Fi Sabilillaah even for a brief time (the time between the two milkings of a camel) Jannah is assured for them."

With all of these explanations it proves that to interpret Jihad Akbar as being the Jihad against desire and Shaitaan, whilst Jihad Asghar is the Jihad against the disbelievers is invalid, since by saying otherwise it invalidates the meaning of the Sanad of those Hadith which invalidate it. Wallahu a'alam.

Allah: Just and Merciful?

Note: A variety of issues are touched on in the discussion between a Muslim and a Christian in the correspondence dialogue recorded below. At heart it is a comparison not only of specific beliefs, or of the validity of texts, but of the entire worldviews: the Christian versus the Islamic worldview. The discussion centres on the attributes of Allah as described in the Quran, versus the attributes of the God of the Bible. Also included is discussion on the nature of sin, and its punishment. Thus this discussion gives a comparative view of the internal coherence of each world and life view. These are matters of eternal consequence, not only for the writers, but also for you the reader. There can only be one truth, only one way, as God has clearly revealed in the Bible. (We do not hesitate to let our Christian world-and-life view shine through at all parts of our website!) Names and e-mail addresses have been removed; original format and content are retained.

COMMENT FROM A MUSLIM READER:

The Koran wrong? [re: your website]

...because of its contradictions with earlier revelation (cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

The earlier revelation not in its original form.

OUR RESPONSE

Thank you for your thoughts and short comment. The text which you mention from Deuteronomy 13:1-5 I would argue in contrast is indeed an excellent text to refute the Quran, and especially Muhammad's concept of Allah, which does not at all match the revelation of the Old and New Testaments (Torah and Injil). Clearly the "later revelation" which claims to be based on the earlier stands in clear contradiction! Galatians 1:8-12, written near two thousand years after the Deuteronomy passage (and some 600 years prior to Muhammad's arrival on the scene in south central Arabia), by the inspiration and guidance of God, gives very much the same statement, showing the unity and truth of the Holy Scriptures:

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed... I make known to you brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is

not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This can be applied most clearly to Muhammad's receiving of "revelation" from the angel..

In denying the person and work of Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, God Incarnate, the Quran and hadith end up denying either the holy justice of God, or minimizing the sinfulness of man, along with denying God's revelation of Himself and His salvation.

Apart from the person and work of Jesus Christ there is no hope of resolving these two:

- (1) God's perfect, unchanging, transcendent holiness and righteous justice,
- (2) and the pervasive sinfulness of every human heart.

All men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Whatever the law of God says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in [God's] sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The righteousness of God is revealed and given through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. (Romans 3:19-26)

As Christians, by God's compassionate goodness, we know that we are sinful, that we, just as all others, do not deserve God's kindness. We know that we have fallen far short of His Holy standards for our lives. In Jesus Christ we have forgiveness and mercy, and full assurance that we are forgiven - by the goodness of God. "Ask and you shall receive." Matthew 7. Living out of the goodness and love of God, by His forgiving sacrifice in Jesus Christ, we then strive to walk in holiness and purity according to His law and commandments.

The law of God has two purposes: to show us our sinfulness and need of forgiveness and mercy, which we due to our sin can never earn by good works! And then as we receive the gift of forgiveness, the law is our guide for living as we seek to live lives of thankful obedience and submission to the gracious, just, and most holy God of all creation.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

Shortly: Your 'assumption' is that your whole bible is the truth..

OUR REPLY:

True enough, that certainly is my presupposition, and my faith, and I believe it is the position which is logically coherent and forms the only coherent world and life view. I am quite happy as well to explain and defend that.

Your assumption in contrast is that the Quran and Islam supersede the Bible, and that they form a coherent worldview. However this fails on several categories -- the assumption that the Quran is the truth, the revelation of God, and is not corrupted while the Scriptures (which "form its basis/roots") which are its historical antecedent are; internal contradictions and problems rife within the Quran and hadith as bodies of writings which make truth claims; and the lack of a consistent world and life view within Islam.

The fact is we each have presuppositions, and faith as everyone in this world does. What is the true test is which presuppositions, faith and truth claims are indeed true and consistent internally and as they are applied to worldview. God is true and righteous altogether. He is unchanging and does not lie. The fact that our universe has laws, order, logic, is a reflection of who God is. So also our thinking and life is to be patterned and ordered after His revealed will to us.

I would be interested in hearing cogent arguments for Islam as a faith and worldview.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

The truth can't be proven by sweet and soothing words.

OUR REPLY:

Truth as truth will not contradict itself. It will form a harmonious basis for logic, science, and law, and all of life. If truth cannot be conveyed and shown in words and propositions, you have mere folly and emptiness. Sound and fury signifying nothing.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

Yes, and some of the dogmas in the world today still strive on using words, soothing words....

OUR REPLY:

Indeed some words are soothing and empty; some transient and ultimately meaningless as a vapor; some claiming truth but being folly leading to a harsh reality; but the Word of the Lord endures forever; convicting and terrible, sharper than any two-edged sword, searching and deep, awesome and transcendent, humbling man the created and exalting God the Creator.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

but the Word of the Lord endures forever; convicting and

..'claimed' to be the word the Lord.

OUR REPLY:

"Find those who say, "We are Christians": Because amongst these are Men devoted to learning. And men who have renounced The world, and they Are not arrogant." Sura 5:82

"If thou wert in doubt As to what We have revealed unto thee then ask those who have been reading The Book [the Bible] before thee..." Sura 10:94

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

Yes 'claimed'....

"Find those who say, "We are Christians": Because amongst these are Men devoted to learning. And men who have renounced The world, and they Are not arrogant." Sura 5:82

Those were the true 'nasara' certainly not the current 'christians'. Again, it is very easy 'to claim' for something....

"If thou wert in doubt As to what We have revealed unto thee then ask those who have been reading The Book [the Bible] before thee..." Sura 10:94

The Book... which book? Certainly it is not the current Bible.

OUR REPLY:

"it is very easy 'to claim' for something..."

as you have done.. to defend and explain is of course another matter.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

Yes it applies to both of us and to anybody for that matter, since we are talking about so many people's fate here.

It is people like us who should be more responsible. Millions of people's fate are at stake. It feels good when you can come up with 'convincing' and (again) 'soothing' argument and talk... talk like salvation etc. It feels good when you think you have 'win' the 'war'.

But, please..... Be frank at least with our own selves. Listen to your heart, your own deepest feeling. Am I in the truth? Or are we just looking for excuses, looking for arguments to suit certain dogma? Dogma passed on for generations?....

It is us who will get the most of the blame if we misguide the people.

OUR REPLY:

Eternal life or eternal punishment.. many souls are certainly at stake -- indeed each and every one in this world; that is why there is urgency in seeking to know and defend the truth, and to understand what is really the revelation and will of God. To claim that salvation in Christ is mere soothing talk is a claim, but one you have not backed up in any way; a claim which is false. Indeed the Word of God, the Bible, says there is no other way, no other hope of being saved from the just wrath of God against sin. Sin is pervasive, and taints your heart and motives, just as it does mine. God is perfectly holy and just; He will bring perfect justice to bear on all of mankind, every individual -- He knows all of the secrets of men. He will not compromise righteous judgement in compassion and mercy -- no, but He has made a way where the two meet together in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the sinless One. You however claim that there is another way; you have the soothing talk of man simply following the five pillars, and earning his way by good deeds. But there is none righteous, no not one; all have sinned and fall short of God's holy requirements. We must be holy, and righteous indeed in all our actions, in all our thoughts, but we cannot as sinful men meet God's just and holy standard. That is where and how we see His great grace, mercy and compassion in Jesus Christ; the sacrifice, the penalty we rightly deserve has been paid, for those who would humble themselves before Him, confess their sins, and seek to live holy lives of repentance, thankfulness, and worship to God for His goodness.

"But, please..... Be frank at least with our own selves. Listen to your heart, your own deepest feeling. Am I in the truth? Or are we just looking for excuses, looking for arguments to suit certain dogma? Dogma passed on for generations?...."

Are we? Are you? Am I? Those are good questions to ask; to think and pray about; to earnestly study, to wrestle with, for indeed it is a matter of eternal consequence. Your dogma has indeed been passed on since the 6th century AD... Mine since God spoke and created all things. The Bible says that if you do not repent of sin, and believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ, you will be justly condemned to face the wrath of God in Hell for all eternity. As I believe and am convicted of these things in heart and soul, for me to do anything less than to seek to share this truth with others would be at the least shameful sin against God's undeserved goodness to me, and selfishness to those whose very eternal state is at stake. We will both stand before God, there is no doubt of that. You at present hope to do so on the basis of your own works; I know my own works and know my sin, and know that there is no hope for me, but God's great and good grace and love in Jesus.

It is us who will get the most of the blame if we misguide the people.

Perhaps in your belief the most blame; those who misguide from the truth of God's revealed Word will however suffer the anger and judgement of God who has so abundantly made Himself and His requirements and call for our hearts and lives clear in His Word, and in Jesus Christ.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

You at present hope to do so on the basis of your own works; I know my own works and know my sin, and know that there is no hope for me, but God's great and good grace and love in Jesus.

Not just in Jesus (Isa) but in everybody in all His creations. And there is always hope in everyone including Isa, including you including me Isa was not and will not be responsible for anybody else's sin. Every body is responsible for his own deed.

OUR REPLY:

Isa was not and will not be responsible for anybody else's sin. Every body is responsible for his own deed.

Yes, we are each completely responsible for our own deeds. Jesus was never "responsible" for our sins, but He freely took upon Himself the just judgement of God, the punishment for the sins of the people of God. That is God's goodness and mercy --

freely giving His Son, and His Son freely offering to take the place of sinful men, of all those who would trust in Him. Our responsibility to submit to God and His revelation of forgiveness in Jesus is never done away with, nor is our responsibility to live according to His holy law - His requirements for our lives.

And there is always hope in everyone...

There is always hope in God's goodness and mercy, while we live in this world, while we are yet in the land of the opportunity of receiving salvation and forgiveness. But if you think there is hope in your own deeds and actions, apart from God and His grace in Jesus Christ, you are sadly and fearfully wrong. There is, and can only be one true way to God.. it is not by works but by faith in Jesus, this faith will then be proved and shown in a life of righteousness and holy thankfulness for God's mercy in Jesus, and in reliance on that mercy.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

Yes, we are each completely responsible for our own deeds. Jesus was never "responsible" for our sins, but He freely took upon Himself the just judgement of God, the punishment for the sins of the people of God. That is God's goodness and mercy -- freely giving His Son, and His Son freely offering to take the place of sinful men, of all those who would trust in Him.

No. God is able to forgive without giving anybody or anything. Simple.

OUR REPLY:

That is quite a claim; soothing words indeed.. in fact far more soothing than the Word of the God who will not allow any sin to go unpunished; than a God who is perfectly holy and just, than a God who knows all the secrets of men, who will judge every thought and every motive, and who requires justice and truth in every detail. Than the God who will give just judgement for every sin, just punishment for every sin. Far more soothing than the God who "is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:29

It is true the Allah of Islam does give -- he gives up righteousness and truth by simply ignoring man's sin, if they have a slight edge of good works more than bad. Islam compromises the very being of God, His character and revelation, His holiness, purity and justice; and fails to recognize the pervasivity and depth of man's sin and sinful character before God.

The God of Scripture, of the Old and New Testaments, of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and apostles, instituted and required blood payment for sin;

teaching the severity of sin, and pointing to the promise -- the promise of One who would be the Redeemer, the Messiah, the Lamb of atonement for the sins of the people. All of the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, points to the coming of Jesus Christ, to His person and work.

The Quran claims to stand on the foundation of the Torah and Injil, but constitutes a complete and radical paradigm shift away from the truth of God's revelation. Allah is claimed to be forgiving in the final judgement, if you have more good in your life than bad. You seek to soothe yourself, and Islam seeks to soothe you, by imagining that you are good enough to make yourself right before God. However the reality is, apart from those who are in Christ Jesus, none will stand in the judgement, but all others will be condemned to eternal punishment. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

"For the wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus."
Romans 6:23

"The righteous God tests the hearts and minds... God is a just judge." Psalm 7:9-11

"And He [Jesus] said, What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile a man." Mark 7:20-23

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement... whoever says "you fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire..."

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart..." Matthew 5:21..28

"My blood .. is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:28

Many of the Jews as well did not believe the words of Jesus. "He [Jesus] said to them, You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." John 8:23

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

He is just. Therefore he punishes who committed sin accordingly.

OUR REPLY:

True. But then how can you hope to stand before God in the judgement on the basis of your own deeds, with the thought that if you have enough "good" God will simply ignore the bad? Especially when you consider how even the best of the good deeds are tainted with motives of selfishness, pride, greed, etc. And considering how often there is anger, lust, covetousness.. God is not concerned with the mere external act, but with our hearts and minds.

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

He is just. Therefore He does not have to send anybody (including Isa) to 'pay' for the sin of the people.

OUR REPLY:

In a message dated 07/31/2000 9:13:29PM, you write:

He is just. Therefore He does not have to send anybody (including Isa) to 'pay' for the sin of the people.

In a message dated 07/26/2000 7:54:37PM, you write:

He is just. Therefore he punishes who committed sin accordingly.

Taking those two statements together, who then is going to pay for your sins?

COMMENT FROM MUSLIM READER:

He is also merciful He can forgive. He can forgive without sacrificing anybody. Without being unjust to anybody. But first and foremost everybody is accountable to his own doing.

OUR REPLY:

You wrote:

1.He is just. Therefore He does not have to send anybody (including Isa) to 'pay' for the sin of the people.

2.He is just. Therefore he punishes who committed sin accordingly.

My question was: Taking those two statements together, who then is going to pay for your sins?

You wrote:

3.He is also merciful He can forgive. He can forgive without sacrificing anybody. Without being unjust to anybody. But first and foremost everybody is accountable to his own doing.

Here in these three statements you gave, you show the fundamental nature of the god you serve. Allah you claim:

1.(a) Is just.

(b) Therefore he punishes those who sin accordingly.

Then you claim:

2.(a) He is just.

(b) Therefore he does not have to send anybody to pay for anyone else's sin.

Now taking these two statements together, the logical implication is that Allah will, and must, because he is just, punish individuals for their sin. But you see here is where we differ, and where you have a serious problem. Allah as you describe him first (1) is just; as he would be if he punished every sin accordingly; and indeed he can maintain his justice (2) without sending another to pay for anyone else's sin, and simply let them pay for it themselves. However if he is infinitely holy, infinitely just, and *unchanging in his attributes* -- that is unable to compromise any one attribute of his being against another - - then if he has not sent any substitute to pay for your sin, the clear follow through is that you must pay for all of your sins yourself. If God is infinitely holy, then each sin is a mockery of that infinite holiness, and is worthy of infinite punishment. You then must bear his justice and infinite wrath against your sins against him. Now however you claim (3) that Allah is merciful, that he can forgive, simply by saying "I forgive". However if this is true then Allah's mercy is simply a negation of his justice. Allah's justice and mercy then are not infinite, true, and unchanging, pervasive, and harmonious attributes of his being; rather they are attributes like those of a man: conflicting, partial, incomplete, and changing. Allah is not infinitely just and righteous. He is not completely just and righteous in all things, in all his being, for he ignores justice and righteousness in order to be what you claim is merciful. Thus Allah in some cases ignores sin. He then is not holy,

righteous and good. The clear reality is that the Allah of Islamic theology is a changing being, not one who is unchanging and who always remains true to himself.

Numbers 23:19 (Torah)

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Malachi 3:6

"For I am Jehovah, I change not;"

This clearly shows why the Triune God of the Bible can only be the One True God. In the Trinity alone can God maintain perfect, full, and unchanging justice toward sin. The Triune God alone is unchanging in His attributes. He alone always remains true to who He is. He is infinitely holy, and so Jesus His Son is the only one who as God Incarnate, could take upon Himself our nature and bear the full and infinite wrath and punishment due to us. Jesus being God, could bear the infinite justice of God. Jesus being God, could walk a life of perfect holiness -- perfect to the very standard of God Himself -- perfect in every motive, in every desire. Jesus being God, as God, could freely offer to bear our punishment, to be our substitute, to take upon Himself our humanity. And so only a Triune God can truly forgive man's sin; only the Triune God can make a way of salvation and remain perfectly just and holy at the same time.

Allah in contrast is changeable in his character and attributes. He is not infinitely and unchangingly just. He is not infinitely and unchangingly holy. He ignores justice. He ignores truth. He compromises truth as a man compromises truth. The Allah of the Quran in fact appears to be like a man, or the idea of a man, rather than the self-revelation of God. Allah cannot be God, and is not God. Indeed your own teachings say that Allah is the great makkar -- the great deceiver. You do not serve God of all creation, but another.. and you remain in your sin, before the wrath of the One True God, who is infinite in perfection, unchanging in holiness, in justice, and who will not allow any sin to go unpunished.

"The wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ."

The Bible teaches that men are hard of heart in their sin, in their worship of false gods, in their rebellion against God's perfect revelation of His holiness. Man has always desired to create a god of his own imaginations rather than to follow the true God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. I pray that you will see and understand, that the grace of God has been revealed in His Word, in Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the light.

The Gospel (Injil):

John 1:1-14

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name..."

John 1:29

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me."

John 3:13-21

Jesus said "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practising evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Islam and Orthodoxy:

A Critique of Muslim Apologetics

There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:7-8

Only thirty years after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to warn the churches of Galatia of variant doctrines of "other Gospels." The warning was not superfluous. By the seventh century A.D., much of the church was dominated by an unbiblical papal system, and its accompanying unbiblical doctrines. Throughout the Middle East the Gnostic cultists promulgated counterfeit scriptures containing a counterfeit gospel, a counterfeit Christ, and a counterfeit God. It was in this world, that the religion of Islam was born.

In 610 A.D. Muhammad ibn Abdullah reported that the angel Gabriel visited him with commands to preach religious and social reforms. While meditating on Mt. Hira, he received the first of many revelations which would eventually develop into the Quran and the second largest religion on earth. Needless to say, not everyone was or is overjoyed about this. Like every other religion, Islam had its detractors from its very birth and like every other religion, Islam has its defenders. This paper is a summary critique of some common Muslim defences, and the orthodoxy of those defences with regard to the Quran. I argue that in their zeal to defend their faith, Muslims sometimes deny fundamental Quranic teachings.

The Qualifiers

It rarely makes for dazzling prose to begin one's monograph with qualifiers yet I think qualifiers are necessary. So, since I want great prose and qualifiers, you'll find them in Appendix A. Now, some content. . .

The Arguments

Christian apologist William Lane Craig opened a recent book with an interesting statement: "Probably no chapter in the history of the cosmological argument is as significant or as universally ignored as that of the Arabic theologians and philosophers....the contribution of these Islamic thinkers is virtually ignored in western anthologies and books on the subject." [1] I think Lane is correct but what Lane says about the cosmological arguments can safely be said of all Muslim apologists and their arguments: they are virtually universally ignored. This silence, however, is not a result of any reluctance on the part of Muslims to argue for their cause. Muslim apologists have long been obeying the Quranic directive to "Invite (all) to the way of the Lord with

wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in the ways that are best and most gracious." [2] On this invitation, I will turn my attention to the intellectual defences of Islam.

Seven arguments dominate the Muslim literature used in the defence of Islam and its scriptures: (1) The beauty of the Quran, (2) Scientific details revealed in the Quran, (3) Quranic inerrancy, (4) the spread of Islam, which ties in with (5) fulfilled prophecy, (6) the Miracle of Quranic composition, and (7) the preservation of the Quran. Obviously a summary critique such as this cannot treat all seven to any proper analysis nor does it need to. I am only focusing on those arguments which I hold to be unorthodox in the light of the Quran. And I see the first [3], fourth [4], fifth [5], sixth [6], and the last argument [7] are all "problem free" in *this* regard. The remainder of the paper is dedicated to an examination of the two arguments which are left.

Science in the Quran

One of the main advocates of the miraculous revelation of scientific facts in the Quran' position is Maurice Bucaille. In his popular polemic, *The Bible, The Quran and Science* [8], Bucaille enumerates and expounds selected Biblical and Quranic texts that have relevance to creation, astronomy, the earth, the 'animal and vegetable kingdoms' and human reproduction. Over two thirds of Bucaille's "objective study of the texts" [9] constitutes an assault on the Bible and its alleged scientific errors. [10][11]

Important as that is, *this* paper is focusing on the claims regarding the *Quran* and its relation to science. Bucaille opens our discussion with some biographical pontifications:

I had to stop and ask myself: If a man was the author of the Qur'an, how could he have written facts in the Seventh century A.D. that today are shown to be in keeping with modern scientific knowledge?...What human explanation can there be to this observation? In my opinion there is no explanation; there is no special reason why an inhabitant of the Arabian Peninsula should...have had scientific knowledge on certain subjects that was ten centuries ahead of our own. [12]

In their monograph on embryology, the Islamic Information & Da'wah Centre International people answer Dr. Bucaille's rhetorical question:

All of this go to show that the Qur'an could not have been the product of the mind of Muhammad...or any other human being living in the 7th century. How could he access information that will not be discovered until the 18th-20th century? How could he or anyone else study the human embryo in its very early stages without using a microscope? Impossible. But then the Qur'an must be from God as it claims. [13]

Other Muslim publications espouse the same position: incredible scientific facts are revealed in the Quran centuries before they were discovered by scientists and this is a

sure sign of divine revelation.[14] Bucaille maintains that there are no discrepancies between the Quran and genuine science.[15][16] In spite of this impressive list, there remains a problem inherent in the "scientific argument" a problem epitomized in these verses.

Maurice Bucaille introduces the problem for us in his "Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms" section with a very revealing paragraph:

It will become clear that numerous translations of these passages in the Quran, made by men of letters, must be deemed inaccurate by the scientist. The same holds true for commentaries made by those who do not possess the scientific knowledge necessary for an understanding of the text.[17]

The significance of his hermeneutical principle is profound. He argues explicitly here and elsewhere[18], that scientific phraseology must be used in translating the Quran *even though the literal text suggests something else*. He acknowledges that older and contemporary commentators and Arabic scholars disagree with the rendering that he advocates. Bucaille blatantly advocates a type of *eisigisis* over the orthodox method of exegesis. This is a prevailing problem wherever a translator is first and foremost a scientist, or an apologist, and forces their reading on the text. It is no wonder then that one finds scientific details in some translations of the Quran. First our scientist describes or translates a text using scientific language, then he stands back in amazement, surprised at the striking parallels he has found.[19]

In spite of this crippling defect, one may still accept these parallels. I am willing to grant that if the Quran revealed detailed scientific facts to the seventh century Arabians, we have something which did not originate with man. Both Bucaille and Keith Moore draw very concise interpretations from very vague references. Phrases such as "...could refer to..."[20] and "...Is it possible..."[21] are prevalent in their literature. And, I might add, necessarily so. It is also worth noting that there are 'unscientific' passages in the Quran that are dismissed as folklore, or allegorized.[22] And no passage is any *more* specific in scientific detail than the writings of Euclid, for example, the atomists or the Pythagoreans.

It must be noted that even if this unorthodox method of translating the Quran was allowable, we are still only left with *Bucaille's* conclusion not the conclusion found in the paper on Dr. Moore. Bucaille states that "All of this go to show that the Qur'an could not have been the product of the mind of Muhammad....or any other human being living in the 7th century." I agree. If detailed evidence were seen, we could safely conclude that Muhammad did not write it. But *logically* speaking, that only tells us that the Quran would be the product of some superhuman intelligence and that does not lead one to conclude that the information is from *God*. The Quran speaks of jinns, angels, and a deceiver named Satan. All have been around for many centuries, learning and observing. All have super human intelligence and interestingly, Muhammad had plaguing doubts at

first that it *was* Satan deceiving him. Certainly, this is not compatible with orthodox Islam but then again, neither is the hermeneutic that give us the "scientific revelation".

Quranic Inerrancy

Key to any understanding of the Quranic position on inerrancy is, of course, a knowledge of the claims which the Quran makes for itself. And the claim which it makes for itself is very clear: "Will they not then meditate upon the Quran? Had it been from other than Allah they would have found therein much discrepancy" (4:82).[23] Surah 41:42 says in part that "No falsehood can approach [the Quran] from before or behind it." Muslims understand by these texts that "Here God challenges people to find an error in the Quran. If it contains errors then it cannot be from God." [24] Muslims allow for error in *interpretation*, but not error in *content*. [25] With this in mind, we take up the challenge, and look for error not playing on the wording of any text, but on its content.

There are two kinds of inaccuracies which are usually brought up by scholars critiquing the Quran: 'internal' and 'external' contradictions withing the text, and incongruencies and anachronisms between the quran and earlier documents. There are a number of examples of apparent contradictions within the Quran. Aside from the type mentioned in note 22 of this paper, we also see simple things like the discrepancy between six and eight day creation accounts, [26] the creation of man out of water or clay [27] etc. However there are possible interpretations that can deal with these problems, and therefore I will not spend any time on them.

The majority of alleged errors occur in the area of history. Those familiar with the culture and education of seventh century Arabians notice that there tends to be massive "time compression" in the narration of events. The *content* of stories was regarded as more important than the *chronology* of the accounts. In Surah 28:35-42 for example, we see Pharaoh commanding Haman (a Persian ruler born about a thousand years later) [28] to build a tower that closely resembles the Biblical account of the tower of Babal (which was erected hundreds of years before) all in the time of Moses.

The standard method of analyzing historical documents is to accept the older documents as authoritative, unless there is strong evidence of corruption. This brings us to the heart of the issue. When compared with the ancient writings of the Bible, Josephus, and Biblical Archaeology, there are vast areas of disagreement - see Appendix B for some examples. The standard method for Muslim apologists - understandably - has been to deny the accuracy of these ancient texts, and to assert the reliability of the newer text - the Quran. Generally the Muslim apologists appeal to the "higher criticism" which was very much in vogue (in the last century), [29] pseudo-scholastic groups such as the Jesus Seminar, [30] and the generic nobody-really-believes-the-Bible-is-accurate-anymore type arguments. [31] The object of this paper is not to critique the validity of this manoeuvre as a tool of historical analysis. Rather, I raise a more fundamental question for Muslims. Can a Muslim hold that the Bible [32] is corrupted - *and* still hold an orthodox interpretation of the Quran? I say you can not - and the reason is simple.

The Quran is very clear about a number of facts. Allow me to list them. Fact one: God's Word cannot contain err, and cannot change. Allah is said to preserve the Quran in Surah 15:9; 41:41-42;[33] 85:21-22; 56:77-78[34] and later the words of Allah are said to be *unalterable*: "there is none that can alter the Words (and Decrees) of Allah..."[35] and "...none can change His Words..."[36] Let's stop here for a moment. *If* the Quran is true, then what Allah inspires cannot change, and cannot be corrupted. So we ask the obvious question: are the Torah and the Gospels said to be inspired? Any Muslim who knows the Quran, knows the answer.

Surah 3:3 tells us that Allah "...sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, Confirming what went before it; And he sent down the Torah and the Gospels." Typical of every mention of the Torah and the Gospels, there is no word about textual corruption. Surahs 3:7, 21, 23, 48, 84, 65, 93, 184, 199; 4:44, 51, 136; 5:15, 43-49, 57-59, 66-69, 113; 6:91, 154; 10:37; 11:17; 16:43; 17:2; 20:133; 21:7, 33; 23:49; 26:196; 32:23; 41:42-45; 46:10-12; 54:43; 57:27; 80:11-16; and 87:18-19 all *confirm*, rather than *repudiate* the Torah and Gospels.[37] Surah 5:43-49 for example starts off with a revealing passage:

But why do they come to thee for decision, when they have Torah before them? Therein is the plain command of Allah; yet even after that they would turn away.

It is plain that the author of the Quran believed the text of the Torah was fine in the seventh century. The same fact is echoed in the following verses, while verses 66, and 68-69 make it crystal clear that the problem with the Jews was their refusal to "stand fast by the Torah, The Gospel, and all the revelation[38] that has come to you from the Lord.[39]" Verse fifteen records that they "pass over" the truths of Allah. The Quran commands the Jews to remedy their misunderstandings by a study of the Torah: "Bring ye the Torah and study it, if ye be men of truth."[40] Further evidence of the integrity of the text is found in Surahs 16:43; 21:7; and 46:10, 12 where Muhammad's detractors are told to "ask of those who possess the Message"[41] as a confirmation of the Quran. This point cannot be overstressed, but I will stop short of flogging it to death.

For a Muslim to be in accordance with the Quran in his *theology*, he cannot maintain that the Torah and the Scriptures are corrupted - unless the corruption took place *after* the Quran was written. Muslims must make a distinction between ignorance of, and rebellion against the Quran and the Bible, and *corruption* of the Quran and Bible. Already in the days of Muhammad, there was "a section who distort the Book with their tongues,"[42] - when it comes to the Quran, Muslims are quick to point out that *false teaching* is not to be equated with *textual corruption*. A consistent interpretation of the Quran requires that the texts used to support textual corruption in the Bible[43] must be treated in the same way.

The Muslim is not given a pleasant choice either way. The one fork in the road leads to historical inaccuracies between revelations - the three books that the Quran says are inspired by God. The other allows a Muslim to account for the differences between the revelations - but it leaves him with an equally serious dilemma. It gives him a Quran

which says the Word of God is uncorrupted, yet Muslims are belying that revelation in their zeal to defend that revelation. It leaves the Muslim with a god that cannot preserve his word from interpolations and errors.[44] Furthermore, the apologist who holds to the corruption of *previous* inspiration is left without a theological court of appeal when *he* is faced with allegations of textual corruption within the *Quran* itself. And there are such allegations. He can't announce that God's revelation is incorruptible - for he defends that revelation by maintaining that God's Word *was* corrupted. Clearly, this argument is *not* in accordance with the Quran. Clearly, it is not orthodox.

This short paper has only concentrated on two out of seven arguments the two unorthodox ones. The 'scientific proofs' require an unorthodox *translation* of the Quran and the 'corruption' position on inerrancy requires an unorthodox *treatment* of the Quran. If Muslims wish to defend an orthodox faith honestly, they need to reconsider one argument - and forget the other. Does this critique offer solutions for these problems? No. I simply don't think there are any.

End Notes:

1. Craig, William Lane. *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979), p. 1.
2. The Presidency of Islamic Researchers, IFTA, Call and Guidance: Eds. *The Holy Quran: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex). Surah 16:125. Hereafter, quotes from this version of the Quran will be parenthetically inserted within the text following the verse(s) cited - without additional notation.
3. The alleged unsurpassable beauty and uniqueness of the Quran is an argument made within the Quran in Surah 52:34, 10:37, 38 and 17:88. The matter is highly subjective from the eyes of a non-Muslim who has read the Quran. And I question whether the beauty or uniqueness of a work lends credence to its inspiration - one need only think of Homer's works, or some of the plays of Shakespeare. Beauty would be expected of an inspired book, but comparisons of beauty are difficult to make.
4. The amazing spread of Islam was an argument which I did not pursue for a simple reason: Islam has suffered major declines since its formation. If growth is a sign of the truth of Islam, then shrinkage would be falsification. Rather than have the absurdity of a religious system which is alternately true and false, I simply dismiss the argument as weak. I should also note that those who point to the recent growth in numbers of Muslims often neglect mentioning that, like Roman Catholics, most Muslims are "born into the faith" by the virtue of having Muslim parents. The majority of the growth in the Muslim world is to be found in the fact that Muslim countries are, to a large extent, third world countries with high birth rates. Even much of the growth in North America is due to less restrictive immigration policies which resulted in more Muslims migrating to Canada and the US.
5. See Appendix C.
6. I do not critique this argument as Muslims themselves are not in agreement on whether Muhammad was literate or not. The debate focuses on whether the words "unlettered" (7:157, 158) and "unlearned" refer to illiteracy or an unfamiliarity with the Biblical text. The same labels are used to describe others in 3:20 and 62:2. Those who maintain Muhammad was very likely literate sometimes refer to 62:2 where Muhammad is sent to the "unlettered," but the focus is on him teaching from the Quran, not encouraging literacy. This interpretation seems to be driven from the difficulty of imagining how a successful and intelligent

businessman was able to build a trading empire without being able to read. Those who maintain that he could not read, usually cite 29:48 (see note 34) and hold that this is a major argument for the truth of the Quran. I agree with both. Surah 29:48 seems very clear that Muhammad could not read, yet I agree it is hard to believe that he built up his caravan business as an illiterate man. If he was truly illiterate, the caravan business seems to be the greatest feat of the two - the Quran could simply have been dictated to a follower. And there is substantial evidence that it was. I conclude however that the Quran does teach his illiteracy.

7. I found this interesting quote: "We have no quarrel with the Islamic position that since the Recension of Uthman that Quran has remained intact. However, because of the destruction of all deviant copies no one can know with any certainty if the present Quran is exactly the same as what Muhammad gave them. Bevan Jones in his work *The People of the Mosque*, succinctly answers the Muslim argument for the alleged miraculous preservation of the Quran: 'But while it may be that no other work has remained for twelve centuries with so pure a text, it is probably equally true that no other has suffered so drastic a purging.'" Found in Gudel, Joseph P. "To Every Muslim an Answer," *Forward*, Winter 1986, p.22.

8. Bucaille, Maurice. *The Bible, The Quran, and Science: The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, trans.: Alastair D. Pannell and Maurice Bucaille. (Tripoli: The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamarihiyah, 1987).

9. The publisher's opinion, found note on the rear flyleaf of the cover.

10. I found it humorous that the very scholars which Bucaille cites to support his criticisms of the Bible are equally critical of the Quran. Also defective is his habit of equating Catholicism with Christianity.

11. The only fallacy of significant proportions which is not related directly to science in the Quran is that of *ignoratio elenchi* - he assumes that the refutation of his opponents position gives his own validity. The only exception to this logical fallacy is found where the negation of the opponent's position logically implies not *only* a contradiction - but one's own position. This is only possible in certain situations where there are only two positions. In the case of Islam and Christianity this is obviously not the case. The limited scope and specific design of this paper precludes, of course, any assessment of the legitimacy of Bucaille's claims regarding Christianity and the Bible.

12. Op. cit. p. 129.

13. *Scientific Accuracy of the Quran Amazes University of Toronto Professor: The Quran and the Study of Embryology*, (Toronto: Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre International).

14. Ally, Shabir. *Common Questions People ask About Islam*, (Toronto: Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre International, 1994). p. 16; and *The Quran, The Holy Book of God*, (Ottawa: The Council of Muslim Communities of Canada, 1982).

15. The words which the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to write to Timothy are very applicable to this topic: "...Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." I Timothy 6:17.

16. The 'special' wonder is the truths about human development. Both Bucaille and Keith Moore from U of T cite Surahs 2:223, 22:5, 23:12-16, 32:8, 39:6, 53:45-46, 75:37, 76:2; Bucaille alone cites 2:222, 8:32, 16:4, 32:9, 35:11, 40:67, 71:14, 75:38-39; 77:20-21, 82:6-8, 86:6-7, 96:1-2, and Moore mentions 39:6. I do not assume that this list is exhaustive.

17. Bucaille, p. 197.

18. Ibid. p. 212, 215 etc.

19. Fallacy first brought to my attention in Ronald Nash's "Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions?" *Christian Research Journal*, Winter (1994), 13.

20. *Scientific Accuracy of the Quran Amazes University of Toronto Professor: The Quran and the Study of Embryology*, (Toronto: Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre International).

21. Bucaille, p. 164.

22. Surah 2:65 and 7:163-166, see Ali's note 79; 21:30 see note 2691 - text cites formation *from* water (reminiscent of the ancient Greek, Thales) not a *preponderance* of water; see the Golden calf in 20:90-100 actually mooing. See Ali's note. Note also the descriptions of sun and moon, etc. in 35:13, 36:38, and 39:5 etc. Any of these texts can easily be interpreted in an *unscientific* way with Newtonian or Relativity theory in astronomy.

23. Words such as "claim" are not meant in the loaded sense, and are used by Muslims themselves. Please keep in mind when reading this section that this is meant to be a constructive critique, and I am simply pointing out an unorthodox defence here.

24. *Why God's Book Cannot Contain Error* (Toronto: Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre International). See also Basit Ahmad, *The Integrity of the Quranic Text*, Bucaille's work, and almost every other Muslim book, missive or pamphlet that touches on the subject of the Quran.

25. This point is very important. The Quran is held to be error free, but not necessarily simple in all areas. Surah 3:7 tells us in part that "in it are verses, basic or fundamental, clear; they are the foundation of the Book: others are not entirely clear. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is not entirely clear. Seeking discord, and searching for its interpretation, but no one knows its true meaning except for Allah." The rest of the verse informs us that the men of knowledge will accept the Message as true in spite of their inability to understand it. Ali's note informs us that "commentators usually understand the verses of established meaning to refer to the categorical orders of the law. He personally says that the meaning may be wider, advocating that the mother or the foundation of the book "must include the very foundation on which the law rests, the essence of Allah's Message..." Note 347. It is obvious that if we are to limit our understanding of the Quran to the law, then this part of the paper dealing with the infallibility of the Quran is a waste of time - for then no one can know if this book is true. With Ali, I hold that it is key to our understanding of even the law, to know that things such as inspiration can be understood, and that the mysteries refer to the absolute transcendence of Allah and the anthropomorphisms found in verses like 2:115 - or the predestination question in light of 35:8 and 18:29.

26. Six days in Surah 10:3, 7:54, 11:7, 25:59 etc. compared with 2+2+4 days in 4:9-12. This of course is not a contradiction if one advocates that each day is an epoch as Ali does in note 1031.

27. Man is sometimes described as being created from water or alternatively from clay: 38:76.

28. Haman was the right hand man to Ahasueras - not Pharaoh.

29. It is interesting to note that Yusuf Ali, in his two appendices on alleged Biblical corruption cites a number of scholars. I noticed the famed scholar, Sir Frederick Kenyon, cited as an authority twice. So I looked up a number of his works and found that he supported the authenticity of scriptures, first century dating of the New Testament, argues that the Gospel of John is written by John (p.25) and is, humanly speaking, the most reliable of the four gospels. *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*. cf. *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts: A history of the Text and its Translations*, and *The Text of the Greek Bible*. It is also interesting to note that Muslims who appeal to "higher criticism" (which Kenyon rejects) in their attack on

the Bible, reject similar analysis of the Quran. Also humorous to note, are the logical binds that apologists are left with. Ali, for example, cites a passage in Genesis to demonstrate that a passage in Genesis is corrupted.

30. In addition to holding dated theories of textual criticism, the Jesus Seminar is not exactly filled with scholars: see Blomberg, Craig L. "[The Seventy Four 'Scholars': Who Does The Jesus Seminar Really Speak For?](#)" *Christian Research Journal*, (Christian Research Institute: Fall, 1994), p. 34.

31. Ahmed Deedat even went so far as to hand out copies of *Awake!* - the popular magazine of the door-knocking "Jehovah's Witnesses" cult (erroneously labelling them as "Christian")! *What the Bible Says About Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him)*, (Internet Production) note 15 - the first one. He has two "note 15's". Others cite liberal or neo-Orthodox productions such as the New American Bible - a Roman Catholic version: *The Bible and the Quran Compared: Part 1 - Word of Man or Word of God?*. A similar tactic is used in *World Religions: A Comparative Study - Some Forgotten Sayings of Jesus*. Again, most sources quoted are Roman Catholic.

32. Specifically the Torah, Gospels and Psalms. The Psalms may be less obvious, but 4:163, 5:78 and 21:105 all seem to support their inclusion as Scripture for Muslims.

33. See *Why God's Word Cannot Contain Error* (Toronto: Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre International).

34. Basit Ahmad, *The Integrity of the Quranic Text*.

35. Surah 3:34.

36. Surah 18:27.

37. Often the texts are referred to as "inspired."

38. The Quran may even teach in Surah 4:163 that the books of Job, Jonah and the Proverbs are inspired; 5:78 and 21:105 the Psalms, and 5:113 gives further support to the book of Proverbs. This passage could be referring to the revelation of nature or parts of the Quran which were in existence at the time it was written.

39. Surah 5:68.

40. Surah 3:93.

41. Surah 21:7.

42. Surah 3:76.

43. Surahs 2:59, 79, 174; 11:110; 6:91 and 5:44. Texts by apologists like Yusuf Ali support biblical corruption in their translation and in their notes. Translations by "non-apologists" however do not support this mode of translation. For example, 11:110 says that "differences arose therein" while others say "regarding it" - yet the context and the remainder of the verse show that the problem was obedience to the text - not the text itself. Even in the popular 6:91, Muhammad is reminding the Jews that the Torah they *tried* to hide and forget still taught them many things - things which could only have come from God. It must be noted again, that *if* these texts do teach the corruption of previous revelation, then the Quran asserts a very problematic contradiction.

44. We are also left a little puzzled as to why Muhammad would direct his opponents back to the Torah, Gospels and the "people of the book" for confirmation of truth - surely a prophet of Allah would be aware of the textual defects and instead warn his followers not to be deceived by the texts.

Appendix A

Some Qualifiers

This paper argues a point which requires a considerable degree of care, tact, honesty and a few other rare virtues. Hence, the qualifiers - three of them.

The first comment I feel obliged to make, is something which I hope will be evidence itself throughout the paper: I am writing a constructive critique. I maintain that Muslim apologists have made errors in their arguments, and this essay is a small contribution towards pointing them out. It can be brushed aside as anti-Islamic rhetoric, and nothing will be gained. Or, they can be seriously considered, and solutions, if there are any, can be sought out, and defective arguments remedied.

The second qualifier is about Muslim apologetics itself, and my methodology. With the many factions and divisions within Islam regarding doctrine and practice, it would not be surprising to find many differing defences for the many differing doctrines. In my research on Muslim apologetics, I found exactly this—many different defences—in fact, even conflicting defences. To avoid critiquing some radical fringe, or freelancing apologist of Islam, I limit myself to examining the most popular arguments which are shared by many Muslims, from many different schools of thought.

Lastly, I also have tried to avoid erroneous criticisms by reading the entire Quran, comparing relevant difficult passages between eight different translations, and referring to commentaries where possible. This paper does not extract allegorical or esoteric interpretations of the texts referred to. I assume the perspicuity of the majority of the Quran, and hold that the best interpreter of the Quran is the Quran itself. I allow the text to speak for itself, and where I disagree with Abdullah Yusuf Ali's comments, I provide reasons. In Christianity, if someone has a differencing opinion, we allow the Bible to be the judge as God's Word, and avoid appealing to the authority of scholars to settle disputes as scholars can be wrong, and often differ with each other. There is a common and very simple saying when someone espouses an unheard of, or otherwise dubious position: "Chapter and verse?" I apply the same hermeneutic to the Quran, as Muslims hold it to be the very word of Allah. It is my prayer that any error in exegesis will not be a result of carelessness.

Appendix B

Some Chronology and History Problems

This short list of anachronisms and inaccuracies is a compilation of verses found in my reading of the Quran, and in supplementary readings. A similar list is found under [Problems in the Quran?](#) Interestingly, Yusuf Ali's notes often drew attention to problems I missed in my own reading. They are listed in no particular order.

"Muhammad supposed Imran or Amran to be the father of the Virgin Mary (Sura [cix.] lxvi. 12)-Mary and Elizabeth to be sisters; who, with Jesus, John, and Zacharias, make up the family of Imran. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Muhammad is guilty of the anachronism of confounding Miriam with the Virgin Mary. On the other hand is the difficulty of conceiving that as the sequence of time and fact is observed with tolerable accuracy in regard to the main features of Jewish and Christian History, he should have fallen into so serious an error, or have so inadvertently adopted, as Mr. Muir supposes, the phraseology of his Jewish informants (amongst whom the only well-known Mary (Mirian) was the daughter of Imran and the sister of Moses) as to have overlooked the discrepancy in their respective dates. But it is possible that Muhammad believed, as some Muslim writers assert, that Miriam's soul and body were miraculously preserved till the time of Jesus in order to become Mary his mother. Certainly the Talmudists fabled that the Angel of Death and the worm of corruption had no power over Mirian."

Surah 20:90-100 records a Samaritan helping the Israelites build the golden calf. The Samaritans only came into existence after about 600 B.C. when Israel and Judah were taken into captivity. Not the time of the Exodus.

Commentators understand that Surah 18:89-98 refers to Alexander the Great. The passage records that he was a devout Muslim and lived to a ripe old age—history records that he was a polytheist and died young.

In Surah 11:42-43 "Noah's (unnamed) son is said to have refused to take refuge in the ark while the flood waters were rising, and despite his father's plea, chose rather to flee to a mountaintop, from which he was swept away by a wave. (Gen 6-7 indicates that Noah had only three sons, and that they all entered the ark. Gen. 10 gives the line of descendants from each."

Surah 12:11-20. records that "Joseph did not go seeking his brother up at Dothan (As Gen 37 records), but rather the brothers, having already plotted his death, persuaded Jacob to let him go with them simply for fun and sport. Having gotten him into their power, they put him down into a well with water in it (rather than a dry pit). Nor was it they who sold him to the passing merchantmen, but rather a chance wayfarer who had come to the well to draw water. He sold the boy to the merchants "for a few dirhams" (rather than the substantial price of twenty shekels of silver, as Gen. 37:28 states.)"

Contrast Surah 26:55-60 with Exodus 1:9 and Surah 2:57,61 with Exodus and Numbers. The Quran records that "During the exodus, the Israelites became tired of manna and demanded vegetables from the soil. After scolding them, Moses said, Get down to Egypt, for you shall have what you asked.' They proceeded to do so: 'And they returned with wrath from God.' Ancient history is very clear that "while discontented Israelites spoke of returning to Egypt, none of them actually did so. . . .In this connection, it is stated v. 61: They disbelieved the signs of God, and slew the Prophets unjustly; this, for they rebelled and transgressed.'" The Bible records no prophets being killed prior to Moses.

Appendix C

Some Problems with Prophecy

History is replete with examples of men claiming to be prophets. Generally they have promoted conflicting and erroneous doctrines and proclamations. The result, from earliest times has been a real mess. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 gives us the litmus test for judging true and false prophets:

And if thou say in thine heart, "how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Since God spoke these words, many prophets have come. And the test has been applied many times. From the ancient prophets of Baal, to the more modern Bab, Bahauallah, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, 'Rev.' Moon and the current 'Christian' prophecy pundits—all have three things in common. (1) All promise success for their followers, (2) those who claim to be prophets all maintain that their coming was foretold in the Bible, and all have made miscellaneous prophecies about the future, which have not come to pass. This short appendix will only focus on the first two types of prophecy. And very briefly.

The success of Islam's expansion has already been given a brief treatment in note four of this paper. The only thing that I want to add here, is a point on pragmatism. Every man with any kind of intelligence invariably predicts the success of his followers for one good reason—he can't lose. Simply put, if the prophecy comes true, and the religion or cult survives and grows, the prophecy is touted as proof of his success. If the prophecy ends up failing, "then we never hear of his promises because they, along with his movement, are forgotten."

How about Biblical prophecy regarding Muhammad? Muslims usually cite Surah 7:157 as clear Quranic support for such a prophecy: "Those who follow the Apostle, the

unlettered Prophet, Whom they find mentioned in their own Scriptures, in the Torah and the Gospel..." This of course presents a profound problem for Muslim apologists.

As has been documented earlier in this paper, Muslim apologists maintain that the Bible is corrupted. Typical of those advocating corruption, there is no specific reference to what portions, percentage or degree the text is corrupted. This leaves them in an awkward position when they do want to cite Scripture to support their claims. If Muslim apologists accept the arguments of "higher criticism" to support the alleged corruption of the Biblical text, then they must provide justification for the integrity and purity of any text that they do cite.

The absurdities and arbitrary assertions which inevitably result without such a governing principle can be seen in Maulana Ataullah Kaleem's *Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) In The Bible*. After announcing that John 16:7 teaches us that the "Comforter" is Muhammad, he uses this text to demonstrate textual corruption in John 14:26 where the Comforter is clearly identified as the Holy Ghost. And in the very verse used as proof that Muhammad was mentioned—John 16:7—Muslim apologists maintain that there has to be corruption. No one informs us what would motivate first century Christians to remove a reference to a man named Ahmed of whom they had never heard.

Leaving this problem aside, we will examine the other key texts used in support of their position—all which can be accounted by any serious student of the Bible with very little difficulty. Before listing them, I will reduce their number. The many references to verses outside of the Torah and Gospels are of no value to an orthodox Muslim apologist, as the Quran says specifically that the passage will be found in the Torah or Gospels. This leaves us with Genesis 21:13 & 18, Matthew 5:17-18, 21:43-46 and Mark 8:27-30 in conjunction with Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Deuteronomy 33:2; and the passages relying on textual corruption in John.

The passages in John are too trivial a point to dwell on—it would be more consistent and logical to say the text is missing than to rely on a corrupted text for support. In spite of the in-depth articles written on the two passages in Deuteronomy, all make a significant error which destroys their position. the Deuteronomy 33:2 passage reads as follows:

And he said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them;
he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of
saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

Muslims argue that this is a prophecy regarding the march of Muhammad and ten thousand of his men on Mecca. There is very simple problem with this. The entire context of the passage and the tense of the verb clearly reveals that this is a record of something which has past—as in history, not prophecy. Whatever commentators say about the passage, they always understand it to be what it plainly is, and that, is history. One can of course maintain that the verb tenses, grammar and context are all corrupted. But then the apologist must be asked where the evidence is for such detailed knowledge of the corruption, and furthermore, why the passage is cited if it's in such "rough shape."

Deuteronomy 18: 15-19 presents similar problems for those who would like it to speak of Muhammad. It reads as follows:

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Typically the apologist follows the pattern of Ahmed Deedat who catalogues alleged dissimilarities between Jesus and Moses, and similarities between Moses and Muhammad. It must be noted at the outset, that a degree of similarity and dissimilarity can always be found between any two people.

For example, both Jean Chretien (the Prime Minister of Canada) and I have the same father in Noah, both grew up in Canada, both have some similarities in religious heritage, both drive cars, both went to university, both have been active in politics, etc. etc. In spite of this there are numerous dissimilarities. I need not list them. What must be key to our brief discussion, are two things: major similarities, and fulfilment of this passage.

Let's discuss the second one first. Looking to verse 15, is Muhammad from their midst—of their brethren? The answer is simple. In spite of appeals to Genesis, where it is clear that Muslims and Jews had the same father in Abraham, the immediate context makes it very clear that the "brethren" are Jews. In the previous chapter (17:15) the Jews are given the rules on Kingship, and are told that the King was to be of their brethren, and not a stranger. History makes it clear that God himself appointed the first three kings—Jews—as were all the rest. No Muslims ever reigned over Israel.

Muslims say that Christ was not a lawgiver—Jesus said he was: John 13:34. Deedat holds that Christ didn't claim to be a prophet—Jesus said he was: Luke 13:33. Jesus also spoke words which His Father gave Him: John 12:49. Like Moses, he was Jewish; left great wealth to deliver Israel; both left Egypt to minister to their people; he was literate; worked miracles; and spoke directly to God. This last is a key characteristic of Moses—specifically mentioned in Scripture as his great distinguishing mark:

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.

Yes, there were similarities between Moses and other prophets. But the Scriptures make it clear that Jesus was ultimately the best expositor of Scripture, and that his rebuke of the Jews was legitimate:

Do not think that I will accuse, you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? - John 5:45-47

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"Hate Begotten of Hate"

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"Hate Begotten of Hate" (Part Four in a series on Islam from Forward magazine [which became the Christian Research Journal], Fall, 1986, page 9) by Joseph P. Gudel and Larry Duckworth.

"I looked over Jordan, what did I see, coming for to carry me home? A band of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home." (old

Negro spiritual) "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." (1 Cor. 15:19)

The Christian belief in an afterlife with Christ has been a source of strength and hope for millions of people from the first century to the present. All Christians have longed for the day when there will be no more death, no more shedding of tears, when sorrow and pain have passed away, and when we no longer see "through a glass darkly" but are with Jesus face to face. As the apostle Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

But Christianity is not simply an other-worldly hope with no thoughts of the present. The apostle Paul went on to declare: "Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (v.23). Thus the Christian faith is concerned with both our life here and with our eternal life with God after our work here has been completed.

In America a movement has arisen challenging Christianity; indeed, arising largely because of the church's failure to meet the "this-worldly" needs of some of the poorest in this land. It is a religion solely interested in the affairs of this life and the physical betterment of its people. It is a faith based on racism and hate which expects that all of its enemies will soon be destroyed, and that its members will then rule the world. And it is rapidly gaining an ear among many of the afflicted and downtrodden in this country who have waited too long to see justice and equality become a reality for them; who have often heard that "all men are created equal" but have rarely seen this principle applied. Its name is the Nation of Islam and its leader is Minister Louis Farrakhan.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To understand and evaluate "black Islam" we must consider its historical roots and theology. In addition, we must also be cognizant of the social, psychological and spiritual needs which gave rise to it.

The years 1917-1930 were exceedingly trying for American blacks. During those years the Ku Klux Klan was in its heyday, beatings and lynchings of blacks were tragically common, race riots were proliferating and "Jim Crow" laws were widespread. The black servicemen who returned to America after World War I found that they frequently had been treated better in European countries than they were in their own home.

In the summer of 1930 a man identifying himself as Wallace Fard Muhammad appeared in Detroit. He proclaimed that

he had come from the holy city of Mecca, with a mission to teach blacks the truth about whites. He instructed blacks to prepare for the battle of Armageddon, which he interpreted to mean the final confrontation between blacks and whites.[1]

He rapidly gained a following and "established the first Temple of Islam during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when blacks were vulnerable to any philosophy that provided hope." [2] The foundation of his theology was that "Allah is God, the white man is the devil and the so-called Negroes are the Asiatic Black people, the cream of the planet earth." [3]

Between 1930-33 Fard recruited 8,000 followers among Detroit blacks. The most important of the new members was Elijah Poole, an unemployed auto worker.

Elijah Muhammad

Poole, born on October 7, 1898, in Sandersville, Georgia, was one of a Baptist minister/sharecropper's thirteen children. He "learned only the bare rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic before he had to go to the fields to help his family earn a living." [4] He worked in Sandersville and in Macon, Georgia, until 1923 when he, his wife, Clara, and their two children moved to Detroit. From 1923 to 1929 he worked for the Chevrolet Auto Plant in Detroit until the Great Depression caused his family to go on relief for two years.

Poole, given the name "Karriem" at his initiation into the group, rose rapidly in the organization and was renamed "Elijah Muhammad" by Fard. He was subsequently chosen by Fard to be the Chief Minister of his "Nation of Islam."

In about June of 1934 Fard "vanished as mysteriously as he had arrived." [5] Elijah Muhammad, succeeding Fard as the leader, would rule and mold the Nation of Islam for the next 41 years. Before continuing with their history it is necessary at this point to understand just what Elijah Muhammad's doctrine was.

Theology/Ideology

From the beginning Elijah Muhammad had a very simple explanation for Fard's disappearance: "We believe that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930 -- the long awaited 'Messiah' of the Christians and the 'Mahdi' of the Muslims." [6] His disappearance was due to the fact that he had ascended back into heaven and would return at Armageddon to proclaim the total victory of the black man over the white man. In addition, the sole "Messenger of Allah" was Elijah Muhammad himself: "He (Allah) has made me a door. If you get out, you will come by me, and if you reject me, you will not go. I have been given the keys to heaven." [7]

It needs to be noted that any resemblance between the theology of Elijah Muhammad and that of orthodox Islam is purely coincidental. Orthodox Islam has repeatedly denounced The Nation of Islam's theology for its denial of an afterlife, its deification of Wallace Fard, its racism and hatred, etc. [8]

The main reason for the phenomenal growth and success of Muhammad's group was not his theology per se, but his appeal to the hurt and despair of the black man. C. Eric

Lincoln, in his classic work *The Black Muslims in America*, declared that many blacks readily accepted Elijah Muhammad's message because he had "given them a new sense of dignity, a conviction that they are more than the equals of the white man and are destined to rule the earth." [9]

Muhammad's approach to building the self-esteem of the black man was two-pronged. First, the blacks in this country need to become one -- "love and unity of self and kind" is the key to their "salvation." [10] But this could not be accomplished unless the white man let the blacks separate and have their own country. [11]

The second prong of Muhammad's appeal to the blacks consisted in highlighting the hate and racism they had suffered at the hands of the white man. The result of this was a hate begotten of hate. All of the black man's problems could be traced to one single enemy, the "blue-eyed white devil":

The entire creation of Allah (God) is of peace, not including the devils who are not the creation of Allah (God) but a race created by an enemy (Yakub) of Allah....These enemies of Allah (God) are known at the present as the white race or European race. [12]

The late Louis Lomax, one of the foremost black journalists in this country and the first black newsman to appear on television (in 1959), believed that

The Black Muslims [13] have but one message: The white man is by nature evil, a snake who is incapable of doing right, a devil who is soon to be destroyed. Therefore, the black man, who is by nature divine and good, must separate from the white man as soon as possible, lest he share the white man's hour of total destruction. [14]

A corollary to this teaching is that Christianity, the "white man's" religion, is also their enemy. Elijah Muhammad made this all too clear:

We called on the God that you said was the right one for a long time. For a hundred years we have been calling on your God and the Son, both. I am sure today that (sic) God and his Son that you are presenting to us have been for white people, surely they were not friends of ours. He never heard us. He must have been off somewhere in conversation over your future and did not have time to hear our prayers....Never any more will you fool us to bow and pray to a dead Jesus. [15]

There is no hope for us in Christianity; it is a religion organized by the enemies (the white race) of the Black Nation to enslave us to the white race's rule. [16]

Malcolm X

Probably the most significant event to occur in the Nation of Islam's history during this period was the 1947 conversion of Malcolm Little, a black inmate in the maximum-security prison at Concord, Massachusetts. He would become known to the American people as Malcolm X.[17]

Due to lack of space it is not possible to detail the tremendous role Malcolm X had in the growth of the Nation of Islam. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that he could be considered the St. Paul of this movement. From 1952, when he was released from prison, until his break with Elijah Muhammad in 1964, the membership of the Nation of Islam skyrocketed as a result of Malcolm's missionary efforts. During this period Malcolm "helped to establish most of the one hundred Temples in the United States." [18]

In March of 1964 Malcolm announced that he was leaving the Nation of Islam. The reasons were twofold. First, Malcolm's faith in Elijah Muhammad had been shaken after Elijah confirmed to him that paternity charges brought against him by two former secretaries were true.[19] And second, Malcolm began to see that the theology they espoused was not true to Islamic teachings. On February 21, 1965, less than a year after he had left the Nation of Islam, he was shot to death by three black men while giving a public lecture at the Audubon Ballroom in New York City.

Wallace Deen Muhammad

Over the next ten years the Nation of Islam continued to grow, albeit not nearly as rapidly as before. Then on February 25, 1975, after a month's protracted illness, Elijah Muhammad died of congestive heart failure at Chicago's Mercy Hospital. The next day, at the annual Savior's Day Rally (which commemorates the birth of Master Fard Muhammad), Elijah's seventh child, Wallace (Warith) Deen Muhammad, was named to succeed his father as the new leader of the Nation of Islam.

The announcement that Elijah's son Wallace was to be the new leader sent shock waves throughout the Nation of Islam. Most members believed that Louis Farrakhan, minister of the Harlem temple, would be the new leader. Another reason the members were shocked was because Wallace had been excommunicated from the group by his father on at least three different occasions. The main reason for his excommunications was that he rejected the apotheosis or deification of Fard. Why then was Wallace Deen chosen? Allegedly, Wallace Fard had prophesied that Elijah's seventh child would be a son that would head the Nation of Islam. Farrakhan emphatically backed Wallace: "The Honorable Elijah Muhammad's passing is the will of God. His son is the will of God." [20]

Within months major changes occurred. Wallace had been an extremely close friend of Malcolm X, both before and after Malcolm's break with his father, Elijah Muhammad. Consequently Wallace was deeply influenced by Malcolm's acceptance of true Islam

shortly before his death. This influence is seen in the changes Wallace soon brought about in the Nation of Islam.

One of the first changes was to rename the group the World Community of Al-Islam in the West, thus attempting to identify more with worldwide Islam. They would later change their name again; they are now known as the American Muslim Mission.

However, such cosmetic changes were not Wallace's main concern. He immediately began to root out some of the main tenets of the old Nation of Islam. He denounced the belief that Fard was an incarnation of God, a teaching which is anathema to orthodox Muslims (see Part One of this series, "Islam's Worldwide Revival," Forward, Fall 1985). Likewise, "doctrines defining God as black and dismissing whites as devils" were changed "with the explanation that the former ideas were necessary transitional beliefs because of the brain-washing the blacks underwent as slaves." [21] Indeed, whites were now permitted to join their group. Since 1975 the movement has been accepted by orthodox Muslims as legitimately Islamic and one within the fold of Islam. [22]

In 1978 Wallace resigned as the spiritual leader of "chief Imam" of the organization in order to be an ambassador-at-large, speaking in their behalf domestically and internationally. [23] He decentralized its leadership into a 17-member council with six regional imams serving one-year terms, who have equal power in national matters, but complete power in their own regions.

Although no official membership rolls are kept, it is estimated that the American Muslim Mission currently has about 100,000 members.

LOUIS ABDUL FARRAKHAN

Until the national presidential primaries in 1984, few Americans had ever heard of Louis Farrakhan. He was hardly a nationally known personality such as were his predecessors Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. He wasn't particularly powerful, politically or socially. Nor was his group of followers nearly as large as those loyal to Wallace Deen Muhammad.

It was during Jesse Jackson's run for the Democratic party's presidential nomination that Farrakhan became an overnight sensation. The reason was simple: Farrakhan, one of Jackson's staunchest and most visible supporters, was outspoken in his demagoguery and racism. Jerry Eddings, writing in New York City's widely respected black community paper *The Amsterdam News*, succinctly sums up Farrakhan's appeal for so many blacks:

[Farrakhan] expresses the anger they feel about still being on the bottom layer of society....he is a Black man who speaks his mind without fear, and even if they don't believe everything he says, they see a need for more

Black men and women who speak without fear about the inequities of life in predominantly white America.[24]

Who is this man Louis Farrakhan and what does he believe? Is he a dangerous demagogue or a fearless spokesman for black America?

Biography

Farrakhan was born Louis Eugene Walcott in New York in 1933. He was raised in a tough Boston neighborhood, learning first-hand of the economic plight most blacks faced. He dropped out of Winston-Salem Teachers College after two years of study and began what appeared to be a promising career as a singer. He was known as "Calypso Gene" and was fairly successful as a nightclub entertainer.

In 1955 his life was changed after a meeting with Malcolm X. Following his recruitment to the Nation of Islam he served under Malcolm at the Harlem mosque for nine months. Subsequently he was asked to direct the Boston mosque.

Farrakhan stayed at this position until Malcolm's assassination in 1965. After Malcolm's death he became the minister of Harlem's Mosque #7, the largest and most influential mosque outside of Chicago. In addition, he was recognized as the "National Spokesman for the Honorable Elijah Muhammad," a title he still retains today.

As noted earlier, he remained under Wallace Deen Muhammad's leadership after Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975. However, as Wallace began to conform the organization (the present American Muslim Mission) to orthodox Islam, Farrakhan rebelled. He left the group in December of 1977 and formed his own reorganized Nation of Islam, returning to the old teachings of Elijah Muhammad. So, while the American Muslim Mission has organizational continuity with Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam, the doctrine and spirit of the old Nation of Islam continue only in Farrakhan's splinter group, which bears its name.

Ideology

The ideology of the Nation of Islam under Farrakhan is almost indistinguishable from what it was under Elijah Muhammad. Their monthly paper, _The Final Call,_ reprints numerous articles of Elijah's writings and speeches. They also reprint Elijah's Muslim program ("What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe") on the back page of each issue of the paper.

Farrakhan has initiated a few changes of his own, though. One tenet of Elijah which is not called for anymore is the establishment of a separate state for the blacks. Instead, the blacks should separate economically, that is, only buy from and sell to each other.

Another change is the date of their annual Savior's Day celebration. Instead of celebrating it on the anniversary of Fard's birthday (Feb. 26) he has moved it to Elijah Muhammad's birthday (Oct. 7).

The other basic beliefs promulgated by Elijah Muhammad have remained (e.g., the bitter hatred of Christianity, the belief that the blacks and not the Jews are God's "chosen race," the denial of a literal resurrection and afterlife, the belief in the deity of Wallace Fard, the blaming of the white man for each and every evil that the black man experiences, etc).

Interestingly, Farrakhan continually tries to portray himself publicly as a very moderate person. He has even suggested that the Nation of Islam is really no longer a racist group: "We have long ago left the language of white devils behind. It was a language that was necessary for that time in our development." [25] As we will see, this is anything but the case.

Finally, there are two other new tenets brought forth by Farrakhan worth noting. The first is that there is one exception to the denial of a literal resurrection of the dead. As the last page of *The Final Call* declares in caps beneath a picture of Elijah Muhammad, "HE LIVES." Farrakhan writes:

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I am here to declare, is risen. The Jesus you have been seeking and waiting for His return has been in your midst for 40 years, "but you knew not who He was." A Holy One was working among us, and it is only now, after He is gone, that we realize who He was. [26]

It should come as no shock after the revelation that the one and only messenger for the black man is none other than Louis Farrakhan himself, the "Honorable Elijah Muhammad's National Spokesman."

I, Farrakhan, have no power to give life. However, the voice of Elijah Muhammad coming through me is giving life to the entire Nation [of Islam]. I warn you that when you turn me down and refuse this truth, you are turning down the Lord, the Savior, the Messiah, and the Deliverer that you seek. This Deliverer is the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. [27]

Social Message

The heart of Louis Farrakhan's attraction for blacks is the social/economic message he preaches. He has instilled in them a pride and self-esteem which they have often lacked. He has told them that they are not responsible for the state in which they find themselves, and seemingly offers them a way out of it.

Last year Farrakhan made an extensive speaking tour of cities and universities across the nation. The banner under which he spoke bore the message: "POWER AT LAST, FOREVER! MINISTER FARRAKHAN CALLS THE ENTIRE BLACK NATION TO

ECONOMIC REBIRTH." His message was one of self-help: "You must get up from the foot of your masters and say 'I am a free man.' It is time for black people to come out from under white authority and stop thinking like you are an inferior person." [28]

The economic separatism Farrakhan preaches is centered around POWER, an acronym for People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth. The first stage of POWER has been in the process of development for over a year: its goal is the creation of jobs in the black community by mass producing and distributing various consumer products. This past summer the first line of products came out: a number of different toiletry goods including soaps, lotions, deodorants, etc.

Thousands of blacks, with no interest in the Nation of Islam's ideology, have been drawn to Farrakhan (and thus indirectly to the Nation of Islam) because of POWER. Daniel K. Tabor, a black city councilman in Ingelwood, California, writes: "The appeal of Farrakhan's POWER program for blacks...is in its calls for the economic development of the black community, and Farrakhan's program offers sound steps for that development." [29]

"Rhetoric of Hate"

Since Farrakhan's meteoric rise as a national figure in 1984, many of the 25 million black people in America have been strongly attracted to him, if not openly supportive. His is a personality that demands a response from people, and the opinions are quite polarized. For many blacks "Farrakhan offers perhaps the last hope for true liberation." [30]

However, many of the most prominent black leaders in the country have repudiated him as an opportunist and demagogue. Wallace Deen Muhammad gave a nationwide speaking tour last year in an attempt to counter Farrakhan's "rhetoric of hate." [31] Congressman Charles Rangel, representing New York City's 16th district (Harlem), has repeatedly stated that "the hatred spewed by Louis Farrakhan is scurrilous and intolerable." [32] Carl T. Rowan, one of the best known and respected journalists in the country, writes that Farrakhan "offers nothing more than religious bilge and racial hatred and is preying on the frustrations and rage of millions of black Americans." [33]

But does Minister Farrakhan really deserve these denunciations? Are he and the Nation of Islam really as malevolent as these people have made them out to be? Let us listen to Farrakhan himself and see.

Farrakhan on Whites, Jews, and America

Even a perfunctory reading of any issue of The Final Call, which lists Minister Louis Farrakhan as its publisher, will reveal that Farrakhan's racism remains unabated, in spite of claims to the contrary. Jews are denoted as "our enemies," [34] America is called the "number one enemy of freedom-loving peoples on the earth," [35] whites are referred to as "devils," [36] and blacks are warned to avoid following the "evil and filth of the white race." [37]

The statements of Farrakhan's that are best remembered, though, are ones he made during Jesse Jackson's unsuccessful bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984. In March of that year Farrakhan said, "Hitler was a very great man," and in July he referred to Judaism as a "gutter religion." [38]

Over the years the Nation of Islam has had a close relationship with Libyan dictator Muammar Khaddafi. A number of years ago they received a three million dollar loan from Khaddafi and in 1985 received another loan worth five million dollars. Also in 1985 Farrakhan invited Khaddafi to be the keynote speaker, via satellite TV hookup from Libya, at the Savior's Day celebration, and gave him a warm introduction to the audience of 13,000.

Much more could be said about the racism of the Nation of Islam. A great deal also could be written about the violent physical attacks some blacks have suffered after leaving the Nation of Islam, [39] about the death threats issued against black journalists and political leaders who have opposed Farrakhan, [40] and of Farrakhan's own role in creating the climate leading up to Malcolm X's assassination. [41]

WHY BLACKS ARE DRAWN TO FARRAKHAN

We have seen some of the reasons for the popularity of Farrakhan and his Nation of Islam. But there is more than this. Two key areas need to be examined in greater detail: the plight of the black man in America and the failures of the Christian church.

The Plight of Blacks in America

Most white Americans have never experienced the depths of despair and hopelessness that black men, women, and children in this country have endured. They have never been forced to live in ghettos or near-ghetto conditions surrounded by poverty and the violence and crime poverty breeds. Forty-five percent of black children are born into poverty (as compared to only 15 percent of white children being born into poverty). [42]

Recent government statistics show that the economic/social plight of blacks in this country is not improving. Some of the more discouraging statistics show:

- * Median black family income in 1985 was about \$1,000 less in dollars adjusted for inflation than in 1978.
- * In 1985, the typical black family had about 58 cents to spend for every dollar a typical white family had to spend. That was the same as in 1980, and four cents less than in 1970.
- * More than 31 percent of all black people were officially poor in 1985.
- * Among black families headed by single women, 52% were poor in 1985.
- * Among black males 15 to 24 years old, homicide is the leading cause of death. A black man in America stands a 1-in-21 chance of being murdered

in his lifetime. * A black person was 37 percent more likely than a white person to be a victim of rape, robbery or assault in 1983.[43]

One thing is clear: there are million of American black people who are suffering. Louis Lomax noted that members of the Nation of Islam aggressively proselytized "the abandoned black masses who live in a world of despair and futility." [44] For too long this world has been one for which Christians in America have had little concern.

Failures of the Christian Church

For the most part the Christian church has not had the care and concern for the black man that it should have had.[45] All too often it has shown little interest for his salvation or for helping his economic/social plight.

One of the greatest indictments against cultural Christianity is the racism that so-called Christians have shown, past and present. Members of the Nation of Islam have continuously capitalized on this.

During the heyday of the civil rights movement the ministers in the Nation of Islam temples would point out that the most segregated institution in this country was the Christian church. They would use clippings from newspapers showing blacks being turned away from white churches or of white Christian ministers openly advocating segregation.

During the Birmingham demonstrations one prominently displayed photo was of a group of blacks, after being ejected from a white church, praying on the church steps with whites standing a few feet away threatening them with their fists balled up. More recently, a front page headline in the - Amsterdam News declared, "Pastor won't admit Blacks." [46]

One of Malcolm X's best tactics in recruiting members to the Nation of Islam was to describe graphically the horrors of the slave trade: how literally millions of blacks died on the trip over here, how the black women were raped and killed by the white "Christian" slave traders, etc. Labeling it the "so-called Christian white man's crime," Malcolm stated that "the dramatization of slavery never failed intensely to arouse Negroes hearing its horrors spelled out for the first time." [47]

Tragically, many blacks view all Christians as racists. What changed Malcolm X's hatred of whites was the acceptance and brotherhood he saw among Muslims in Mecca. He wrote: "I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color." [48]

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

When the non-Christian sees hypocrisy in the church or hate-filled Christians, he should be aware that Jesus Himself warned that there would be counterfeit Christians among the true ones and that God would be their judge (Matt. 7:21-23). Instead of looking at them we should keep our eyes on what the Bible really teaches and what true Christians believe and practice.

Christianity, far from being the "white man's religion," is a universal faith open to all men and women: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, _that whoever believes in Him_ should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Christianity is found on every continent on earth among every race of man: black, yellow, red, and white.

People in this country often think of blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jeffrey Hunter (who portrayed Jesus in King of Kings) when Jesus is mentioned. But Jesus was an Asiatic, a Semite. He was a descendant of Isaac, the half brother of the father of the Arabs, Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-12; 17:15-19). It is historically false to state that Christianity is "the white man's religion."

Additionally, one of the central themes of the Bible concerns the care and love that true believers are to show, both for each other and for the poor and oppressed. In the Old Testament God rebuked Israel for pretending to love Him when they were unconcerned for the poor and oppressed (Isa. 58:6-7; also cf. Mic. 6:8, Prov. 29:7; 30:14; Amos 8:4-5). In the New Testament Jesus stated that the ultimate sign of those who were truly His followers would be the love they displayed (John 13:34-35). Scripture also tells us that anyone, whether he be white, black, brown, or yellow, who hates other people is blinded and not a true believer (1 John 2:9-11).

Jesus was very specific that this love was not to be directed only toward the other members of the Christian faith. Christians are commanded by Christ to love not only each other but also the non-Christian, even if he might be an enemy (Luke 6:27-28, 32-33, 35).[49]

The Christian, then, is called to a commitment of radical love and a rejection of all hate. That many professing Christians have failed to live up to this standard is the fault of human sinfulness, not Jesus Christ or biblical teaching. The same cannot be said, however, for the Nation of Islam. As we saw earlier, its teachings encourage a hateful attitude toward one's "enemies," whether real or merely perceived. Just as the hatred and racism of the white man begat a reciprocal hatred and racism in Elijah Muhammad and his followers, so their hatred can only engender more of the same. In a world seething with distrust and hostility, Jesus' radical teaching ("love your enemies") desperately needs to be applied by people of all races. Only then can the vicious cycle of hate be broken.

To the black man in this country: we urge you to look toward Jesus; He not only knows what you are suffering, He also understands. For centuries you have suffered innocently,

simply because the pigmentation of your skin is different. Jesus too suffered persecution and revilement innocently. Isaiah the prophet foretold that the Messiah would be "a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). The reward for His love was an agonizing death on the cross. Reject the urge to hate and listen to His words:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

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Purification and its Stages

The stages of purification are:

1. self becoming emptied
2. self becoming illuminated
3. self becoming adorned
4. self-having-passed-away (fana)

These stages occur in the course of the selfless remembrance of God (zeker). The first stage, becoming emptied, entails letting go of negative qualities, the desires which originate from the self. The second stage of becoming illuminated involves polishing the heart and soul of the tarnish of belief in and attachment to the self. In the third stage, one's inner being becomes adorned by Divine Attributes. Ultimately, the being of the disciple becomes completely filled by the Attributes of the Truth-Reality, to the extent that there is no sign of his own limited existence. This fourth stage is called "self-having passed-away" (fana).

*I thought of You so often
that I completely became You.
Little by little You drew near,
and slowly but slowly I passed away.*

The disciple, through these stages of purification, travels the inner way, the Spiritual Path (Tariqat). But he or she can do so only by following the duties and obligations of Islam (Shariat). Having traveled this path, the disciple becomes a perfect being and arrives at the threshold of the Truth (Haqiqat). Mohammed said, "The Shariat is my speech, the Tariqat my actions (way of being), and Haqiqat my states."

One could liken the journey within the Haqiqat, within the Truth, to training in a divine university, the "Tavern of Ruin" (kharabat). In this true center for higher education there are no professors, one's only guide being Absolute Love. Here one's only teacher is Love, one's books are Love, and one's being is Love.

Before a perfect being enters this university, he or she can be defined. However, upon entering the Truth, one is indefinable, beyond the realm of words.

*Footprints but come to the Ocean's shore.
Therein, no trace remains.
-- Rumi*

If you ask his name, like Bayazid, he answers, "I lost him years ago. The more I seek him, the less I find." If you ask of his religion, like Rumi, he answers:

*The way of a lover is not among the religions.
The church and state of lovers is God.*

If you ask how he is, like Bayazid he answers, *There is nothing under my cloak but Allah.*

If he speaks, like Hallaj, you may hear him sing *I am the Truth.*

Such words can truly come only from perfect beings who have lost their 'selves' and become the manifestation of the Divine Nature and Divine Mysteries. Their selves have departed and only God remains.

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Was the New Testament Influenced By Pagan Religions?

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Summary

Many Christian college students have encountered criticisms of Christianity based on claims that early Christianity and the New Testament borrowed important beliefs and practices from a number of pagan mystery religions. Since these claims undermine such central Christian doctrines as Christ's death and resurrection, the charges are serious. But the evidence for such claims, when it even exists, often lies in sources several centuries older than the New Testament. Moreover, the alleged parallels often result from liberal scholars uncritically describing pagan beliefs and practices in Christian language and then marveling at the striking parallels they think they've discovered.

During the first half of the twentieth century, a number of liberal authors and professors claimed that the New Testament teaching about Jesus' death and resurrection, the New Birth, and the Christian practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper were derived from

the pagan mystery religions. Of major concern in all this is the charge that the New Testament doctrine of salvation parallels themes commonly found in the mystery religions: a savior-god dies violently for those he will eventually deliver, after which that god is restored to life.

Was the New Testament influenced by the pagan religions of the first century A.D.? Even though I surveyed this matter in a 1992 book,[1] the issues are so important -- especially for Christian college students who often do not know where to look for answers -- that there is considerable merit in addressing this question in a popular, nontechnical format.

WHAT WERE THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS?

Other than Judaism and Christianity, the mystery religions were the most influential religions in the early centuries after Christ. The reason these cults were called "mystery religions" is that they involved secret ceremonies known only to those initiated into the cult. The major benefit of these practices was thought to be some kind of salvation.

The mystery religions were not, of course, the only manifestations of the religious spirit in the eastern Roman Empire. One could also find public cults not requiring an initiation ceremony into secret beliefs and practices. The Greek Olympian religion and its Roman counterpart are examples of this type of religion.

Each Mediterranean region produced its own mystery religion. Out of Greece came the cults of Demeter and Dionysus, as well as the Eleusinian and Orphic mystery religions, which developed later.[2] Asia Minor gave birth to the cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, and her beloved, a shepherd named Attis. The cult of Isis and Osiris (later changed to Serapis) originated in Egypt, while Syria and Palestine saw the rise of the cult of Adonis. Finally, Persia (Iran) was a leading early locale for the cult of Mithras, which -- due to its frequent use of the imagery of war -- held a special appeal to Roman soldiers. The earlier Greek mystery religions were state religions in the sense that they attained the status of a public or civil cult and served a national or public function. The later non-Greek mysteries were personal, private, and individualistic.

Basic Traits

One must avoid any suggestion that there was one common mystery religion. While a tendency toward eclecticism or synthesis developed after A.D. 300, each of the mystery cults was a separate and distinct religion during the century that saw the birth of the Christian church. Moreover, each mystery cult assumed different forms in different cultural settings and underwent significant changes, especially after A.D. 100. Nevertheless, the mystery religions exhibited five common traits.

(1) Central to each mystery was its use of an annual vegetation cycle in which life is renewed each spring and dies each fall. Followers of the mystery cults found deep symbolic significance in the natural processes of growth, death, decay, and rebirth.

(2) As noted above, each cult made important use of secret ceremonies or mysteries, often in connection with an initiation rite. Each mystery religion also passed on a "secret" to the initiate that included information about the life of the cult's god or goddess and how humans might achieve unity with that deity. This "knowledge" was always a secret or esoteric knowledge, unattainable by any outside the circle of the cult.

(3) Each mystery also centered around a myth in which the deity either returned to life after death or else triumphed over his enemies. Implicit in the myth was the theme of redemption from everything earthly and temporal. The secret meaning of the cult and its accompanying myth was expressed in a "sacramental drama" that appealed largely to the feelings and emotions of the initiates. This religious ecstasy was supposed to lead them to think they were experiencing the beginning of a new life.

(4) The mysteries had little or no use for doctrine and correct belief. They were primarily concerned with the emotional life of their followers. The cults used many different means to affect the emotions and imaginations of initiates and hence bring about "union with the god": processions, fasting, a play, acts of purification, blazing lights, and esoteric liturgies. This lack of any emphasis on correct belief marked an important difference between the mysteries and Christianity. The Christian faith was exclusivistic in the sense that it recognized only one legitimate path to God and salvation, Jesus Christ. The mysteries were inclusivistic in the sense that nothing prevented a believer in one cult from following other mysteries.

(5) The immediate goal of the initiates was a mystical experience that led them to feel they had achieved union with their god. Beyond this quest for mystical union were two more ultimate goals: some kind of redemption or salvation, and immortality.

Evolution

Before A.D. 100, the mystery religions were still largely confined to specific localities and were still a relatively novel phenomenon. After A.D. 100, they gradually began to attain a widespread popular influence throughout the Roman Empire. But they also underwent significant changes that often resulted from the various cults absorbing elements from each other. As devotees of the mysteries became increasingly eclectic in their beliefs and practices, new and odd combinations of the older mysteries began to emerge. And as the cults continued to tone down the more objectionable features of their older practices, they began to attract greater numbers of followers.

RECONSTRUCTING THE MYSTERIES

It is not until we come to the third century A.D. that we find sufficient source material (i.e., information about the mystery religions from the writings of the time) to permit a relatively complete reconstruction of their content. Far too many writers use this late source material (after A.D. 200) to form reconstructions of the third-century mystery experience and then uncritically reason back to what they think must have been the earlier nature of the cults. This practice is exceptionally bad scholarship and should not be allowed to stand without challenge. Information about a cult that comes several hundred years after the close of the New Testament canon must not be read back into what is presumed to be the status of the cult during the first century A.D. The crucial question is not what possible influence the mysteries may have had on segments of Christendom after A.D. 400, but what effect the emerging mysteries may have had on the New Testament in the first century.

The Cult of Isis and Osiris

The cult of Isis originated in Egypt and went through two major stages. In its older Egyptian version, which was *not* a mystery religion, Isis was regarded as the goddess of heaven, earth, the sea, and the unseen world below. In this earlier stage, Isis had a husband named Osiris. The cult of Isis became a mystery religion only after Ptolemy the First introduced major changes, sometime after 300 B.C. In the later stage, a new god named Serapis became Isis's consort. Ptolemy introduced these changes in order to synthesize Egyptian and Greek concerns in his kingdom, thus hastening the Hellenization of Egypt.

From Egypt, the cult of Isis gradually made its way to Rome. While Rome was at first repelled by the cult, the religion finally entered the city during the reign of Caligula (A.D. 37-41). Its influence spread gradually during the next two centuries, and in some locales it became a major rival of Christianity. The cult's success in the Roman Empire seems to have resulted from its impressive ritual and the hope of immortality offered to its followers.

The basic myth of the Isis cult concerned Osiris, her husband during the earlier Egyptian and nonmystery stage of the religion. According to the most common version of the myth, Osiris was murdered by his brother who then sank the coffin containing Osiris's body into the Nile river. Isis discovered the body and returned it to Egypt. But her brother-in-law once again gained access to the body, this time dismembering it into fourteen pieces which he scattered widely. Following a long search, Isis recovered each part of the body. It is at this point that the language used to describe what followed is crucial. Sometimes those telling the story are satisfied to say that Osiris came back to life, even though such language claims far more than the myth allows. Some writers go even further and refer to the alleged "resurrection" of Osiris. One liberal scholar illustrates how biased some writers are when they describe the pagan myth in Christian language: "The dead body of Osiris floated in the Nile and he returned to life, this being accomplished by a baptism in the waters of the Nile." [3]

This biased and sloppy use of language suggests three misleading analogies between Osiris and Christ: (1) a savior god dies and (2) then experiences a resurrection accompanied by (3) water baptism. But the alleged similarities, as well as the language used to describe them, turn out to be fabrications of the modern scholar and are not part of the original myth. Comparisons between the resurrection of Jesus and the resuscitation of Osiris are greatly exaggerated.[4] Not every version of the myth has Osiris returning to life; in some he simply becomes king of the underworld. Equally far-fetched are attempts to find an analogue of Christian baptism in the Osiris myth.[5] The fate of Osiris's coffin in the Nile is as relevant to baptism as the sinking of Atlantis.

As previously noted, during its later mystery stage, the male deity of the Isis cult is no longer the dying Osiris but Serapis. Serapis is often portrayed as a sun god, and it is clear that he was not a dying god. Obviously then, neither could he be a rising god. Thus, it is worth remembering that the post-Ptolemaic mystery version of the Isis cult that was in circulation from about 300 B.C. through the early centuries of the Christian era had absolutely nothing that could resemble a dying and rising savior-god.

The Cult of Cybele and Attis

Cybele, also known as the Great Mother, was worshiped through much of the Hellenistic world. She undoubtedly began as a goddess of nature. Her early worship included orgiastic ceremonies in which her frenzied male worshipers were led to castrate themselves, following which they became "Galli" or eunuch-priests of the goddess. Cybele eventually came to be viewed as the Mother of all gods and the mistress of all life.

Most of our information about the cult describes its practices during its later Roman period. But the details are slim and almost all the source material is relatively late, certainly datable long after the close of the New Testament canon.

According to myth, Cybele loved a shepherd named Attis. Because Attis was unfaithful, she drove him insane. Overcome by madness, Attis castrated himself and died. This drove Cybele into great mourning, and it introduced death into the natural world. But then Cybele restored Attis to life, an event that also brought the world of nature back to life.

The presuppositions of the interpreter tend to determine the language used to describe what followed Attis's death. Many writers refer carelessly to the "resurrection of Attis." But surely this is an exaggeration. There is no mention of anything resembling a resurrection in the myth, which suggests that Cybele could only preserve Attis's dead body. Beyond this, there is mention of the body's hair continuing to grow, along with some movement of his little finger. In some versions of the myth, Attis's return to life took the form of his being changed into an evergreen tree. Since the basic idea underlying the myth was the annual vegetation cycle, any resemblance to the bodily resurrection of Christ is greatly exaggerated.

Eventually a public rehearsal of the Attis myth became an annual event in which worshipers shared in Attis's "immortality." Each spring the followers of Cybele would mourn for the dead Attis in acts of fasting and flagellation.

It was only during the later Roman celebrations (after A.D. 300) of the spring festival that anything remotely connected with a "resurrection" appears. The pine tree symbolizing Attis was cut down and then carried corpse-like into the sanctuary. Later in the prolonged festival, the tree was buried while the initiates worked themselves into a frenzy that included gashing themselves with knives. The next night, the "grave" of the tree was opened and the "resurrection of Attis" was celebrated. But the language of these late sources is highly ambiguous. In truth, no clear-cut, unambiguous reference to the supposed "resurrection" of Attis appears, even in the very late literature from the fourth century after Christ.

The Taurobolium

The best-known rite of the cult of the Great Mother was the taurobolium. It is important to note, however, that this ritual was *not* part of the cult in its earlier stages. It entered the religion sometime after the middle of the second century A.D.

During the ceremony, initiates stood or reclined in a pit as a bull was slaughtered on a platform above them.[6] The initiate would then be bathed in the warm blood of the dying animal. It has been alleged that the taurobolium was a source for Christian language about being washed in the blood of the lamb (Rev. 7:14) or sprinkled with the blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2). It has also been cited as the source for Paul's teaching in Romans 6:1-4, where he relates Christian baptism to the Christian's identification with Christ's death and resurrection.

No notion of death and resurrection was ever part of the taurobolium, however. The best available evidence requires us to date the ritual about one hundred years after Paul wrote Romans 6:1-4. Not one existing text supports the claim that the taurobolium memorialized the death and "resurrection" of Attis. The pagan rite could not possibly have been the source for Paul's teaching in Romans 6. Only near the end of the fourth century A.D. did the ritual add the notion of rebirth. Several important scholars see a Christian influence at work in this later development.[7] It is clear, then, that the chronological development of the rite makes it impossible for it to have influenced first-century Christianity. The New Testament teaching about the shedding of blood should be viewed in the context of its Old Testament background -- the Passover and the temple sacrifice.

Mithraism

Attempts to reconstruct the beliefs and practices of Mithraism face enormous challenges because of the scanty information that has survived. Proponents of the cult explained the world in terms of two ultimate and opposing principles, one good (depicted as light) and the other evil (darkness). Human beings must choose which side they will fight for; they

are trapped in the conflict between light and darkness. Mithra came to be regarded as the most powerful mediator who could help humans ward off attacks from demonic forces.[8]

The major reason why no Mithraic influence on first-century Christianity is possible is the timing: it's all wrong! The flowering of Mithraism occurred after the close of the New Testament canon, much too late for it to have influenced anything that appears in the New Testament.[9] Moreover, no monuments for the cult can be dated earlier than A.D. 90-100, and even this dating requires us to make some exceedingly generous assumptions. Chronological difficulties, then, make the possibility of a Mithraic influence on early Christianity extremely improbable. Certainly, there remains no credible evidence for such an influence.

STRIKING PARALLELS?

Enough has been said thus far to permit comment on one of the major faults of the above-mentioned liberal scholars. I refer to the frequency with which their writings evidence a careless, even sloppy use of language. One frequently encounters scholars who first use Christian terminology to describe pagan beliefs and practices, and then marvel at the striking parallels they think they have discovered. One can go a long way toward "proving" early Christian dependence on the mysteries by describing some mystery belief or practice in Christian terminology. J. Godwin does this in his book, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World*, which describes the criobolium (*see* footnote 6) as a "blood baptism" in which the initiate is "washed in the blood of the lamb." [10] While uninformed readers might be stunned by this remarkable similarity to Christianity (*see* Rev. 7:14), knowledgeable readers will see such a claim as the reflection of a strong, negative bias against Christianity.

Exaggerations and oversimplifications abound in this kind of literature. One encounters overblown claims about alleged likenesses between baptism and the Lord's Supper and similar "sacraments" in certain mystery cults. Attempts to find analogies between the resurrection of Christ and the alleged "resurrections" of the mystery deities involve massive amounts of oversimplification and inattention to detail.

Pagan Rituals and the Christian Sacraments

The mere fact that Christianity has a sacred meal and a washing of the body is supposed to prove that it borrowed these ceremonies from similar meals and washings in the pagan cults. By themselves, of course, such outward similarities prove nothing. After all, religious ceremonies can assume only a limited number of forms, and they will naturally relate to important or common aspects of human life. The more important question is the meaning of the pagan practices. Ceremonial washings that antedate the New Testament have a different meaning from New Testament baptism, while pagan washings after A.D. 100 come too late to influence the New Testament and, indeed, might themselves have been influenced by Christianity.[11] Sacred meals in the pre-Christian Greek mysteries fail to prove anything since the chronology is all wrong. The Greek ceremonies that are

supposed to have influenced first-century Christians had long since disappeared by the time we get to Jesus and Paul. Sacred meals in such post-Christian mysteries as Mithraism come too late.

Unlike the initiation rites of the mystery cults, Christian baptism looks back to what a real, historical person -- Jesus Christ -- did in history. Advocates of the mystery cults believed their "sacraments" had the power to give the individual the benefits of immortality in a mechanical or magical way, without his or her undergoing any moral or spiritual transformation. This certainly was not Paul's view, either of salvation or of the operation of the Christian sacraments. In contrast with pagan initiation ceremonies, Christian baptism is not a mechanical or magical ceremony. It is clear that the sources of Christian baptism are not to be found either in the taurobolium (which is post first-century anyway) or in the washings of the pagan mysteries. Its sources lie rather in the washings of purification found in the Old Testament and in the Jewish practice of baptizing proselytes, the latter being the most likely source for the baptistic practices of John the Baptist.

Of all the mystery cults, only Mithraism had anything that resembled the Lord's Supper. A piece of bread and a cup of water were placed before initiates while the priest of Mithra spoke some ceremonial words. But the late introduction of this ritual precludes its having any influence upon first-century Christianity.

Claims that the Lord's Supper was derived from pagan sacred meals are grounded in exaggerations and oversimplifications. The supposed parallels and analogies break down completely.[12] Any quest for the historical antecedents of the Lord's Supper is more likely to succeed if it stays closer to the Jewish foundations of the Christian faith than if it wanders off into the practices of the pagan cults. The Lord's Supper looked back to a real, historical person and to something He did in history. The occasion for Jesus' introduction of the Christian Lord's Supper was the Jewish Passover feast. Attempts to find pagan sources for baptism and the Lord's Supper must be judged to fail.

The Death of the Mystery Gods and the Death of Jesus

The best way to evaluate the alleged dependence of early Christian beliefs about Christ's death and resurrection on the pagan myths of a dying and rising savior-god is to examine carefully the supposed parallels. The death of Jesus differs from the deaths of the pagan gods in at least six ways:

- (1) None of the so-called savior-gods died for someone else. The notion of the Son of God dying in place of His creatures is unique to Christianity.[13]
- (2) Only Jesus died for sin. As Gunter Wagner observes, to none of the pagan gods "has the intention of helping men been attributed. The sort of death that they died is quite different (hunting accident, self-emasculation, etc.)."[14]

(3) Jesus died once and for all (Heb. 7:27; 9:25-28; 10:10-14). In contrast, the mystery gods were vegetation deities whose repeated deaths and resuscitations depict the annual cycle of nature.

(4) Jesus' death was an actual event in history. The death of the mystery god appears in a mythical drama with no historical ties; its continued rehearsal celebrates the recurring death and rebirth of nature. The incontestable fact that the early church believed that its proclamation of Jesus' death and resurrection was grounded in an actual historical event makes absurd any attempt to derive this belief from the mythical, nonhistorical stories of the pagan cults.[15]

(5) Unlike the mystery gods, Jesus died voluntarily. Nothing like this appears even implicitly in the mysteries.

(6) And finally, Jesus' death was not a defeat but a triumph. Christianity stands entirely apart from the pagan mysteries in that its report of Jesus' death is a message of triumph. Even as Jesus was experiencing the pain and humiliation of the cross, He was the victor. The New Testament's mood of exultation contrasts sharply with that of the mystery religions, whose followers wept and mourned for the terrible fate that overtook their gods.[16]

The Risen Christ and the "Rising Savior-Gods"

Which mystery gods actually experienced a resurrection from the dead? Certainly no early texts refer to any resurrection of Attis. Nor is the case for a resurrection of Osiris any stronger. One can speak of a "resurrection" in the stories of Osiris, Attis, and Adonis only in the most extended of senses.[17] For example, after Isis gathered together the pieces of Osiris's dismembered body, Osiris became "Lord of the Underworld." This is a poor substitute for a resurrection like that of Jesus Christ. And, no claim can be made that Mithras was a dying and rising god. The tide of scholarly opinion has turned dramatically against attempts to make early Christianity dependent on the so-called dying and rising gods of Hellenistic paganism.[18] Any unbiased examination of the evidence shows that such claims must be rejected.

Christian Rebirth and Cultic Initiation Rites

Liberal writings on the subject are full of sweeping generalizations to the effect that early Christianity borrowed its notion of rebirth from the pagan mysteries.[19] But the evidence makes it clear that there was no pre-Christian doctrine of rebirth for the Christians to borrow. There are actually very few references to the notion of rebirth in the evidence that has survived, and even these are either very late or very ambiguous. They provide no help in settling the question of the source of the New Testament use of the concept. The claim that pre-Christian mysteries regarded their initiation rites as a kind of rebirth is unsupported by any evidence contemporary with such alleged practices.

Instead, a view found in much later texts is read back into earlier rites, which are then interpreted quite speculatively as dramatic portrayals of the initiate's "new birth." The belief that pre-Christian mysteries used "rebirth" as a technical term lacks support from even one single text.

Most contemporary scholars maintain that the mystery use of the concept of rebirth (testified to only in evidence dated after A.D. 300) differs so significantly from its New Testament usage that any possibility of a close link is ruled out. The most that such scholars are willing to concede is the *possibility* that some Christians borrowed the metaphor or imagery from the common speech of the time and recast it to fit their distinctive theological beliefs. So even if the metaphor of rebirth was Hellenistic, its content within Christianity was unique.[20]

SEVEN ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIAN DEPENDENCE ON THE MYSTERIES

I conclude by noting seven points that undermine liberal efforts to show that first-century Christianity borrowed essential beliefs and practices from the pagan mystery religions.

(1) Arguments offered to "prove" a Christian dependence on the mysteries illustrate the logical fallacy of false cause. This fallacy is committed whenever someone reasons that just because two things exist side by side, one of them must have caused the other. As we all should know, mere coincidence does not prove causal connection. Nor does similarity prove dependence.

(2) Many alleged similarities between Christianity and the mysteries are either greatly exaggerated or fabricated. Scholars often describe pagan rituals in language they borrow from Christianity. The careless use of language could lead one to speak of a "Last Supper" in Mithraism or a "baptism" in the cult of Isis. It is inexcusable nonsense to take the word "savior" with all of its New Testament connotations and apply it to Osiris or Attis as though they were savior-gods in any similar sense.

(3) The chronology is all wrong. Almost all of our sources of information about the pagan religions alleged to have influenced early Christianity are dated very late. We frequently find writers quoting from documents written 300 years later than Paul in efforts to produce ideas that allegedly influenced Paul. We must reject the assumption that just because a cult had a certain belief or practice in the third or fourth century after Christ, it therefore had the same belief or practice in the first century.

(4) Paul would never have consciously borrowed from the pagan religions. All of our information about him makes it highly unlikely that he was in any sense influenced by pagan sources. He placed great emphasis on his early training in a strict form of Judaism (Phil. 3:5). He warned the

Colossians against the very sort of influence that advocates of Christian syncretism have attributed to him, namely, letting their minds be captured by alien speculations (Col. 2:8).

(5) Early Christianity was an exclusivistic faith. As J. Machen explains, the mystery cults were nonexclusive. "A man could become initiated into the mysteries of Isis or Mithras without at all giving up his former beliefs; but if he were to be received into the Church, according to the preaching of Paul, he must forsake all other Saviors for the Lord Jesus Christ....Amid the prevailing syncretism of the Greco-Roman world, the religion of Paul, with the religion of Israel, stands absolutely alone." [21] This Christian exclusivism should be a starting point for all reflection about the possible relations between Christianity and its pagan competitors. Any hint of syncretism in the New Testament would have caused immediate controversy.

(6) Unlike the mysteries, the religion of Paul was grounded on events that actually happened in history. The mysticism of the mystery cults was essentially nonhistorical. Their myths were dramas, or pictures, of what the initiate went through, not real historical events, as Paul regarded Christ's death and resurrection to be. The Christian affirmation that the death and resurrection of Christ happened to a historical person at a particular time and place has absolutely no parallel in any pagan mystery religion.

(7) What few parallels may still remain may reflect a Christian influence on the pagan systems. As Bruce Metzger has argued, "It must not be uncritically assumed that the Mysteries always influenced Christianity, for it is not only possible but probable that in certain cases, the influence moved in the opposite direction." [22] It should not be surprising that leaders of cults that were being successfully challenged by Christianity should do something to counter the challenge. What better way to do this than by offering a pagan substitute? Pagan attempts to counter the growing influence of Christianity by imitating it are clearly apparent in measures instituted by Julian the Apostate, who was the Roman emperor from A.D. 361 to 363.

A FINAL WORD

Liberal efforts to undermine the uniqueness of the Christian revelation via claims of a pagan religious influence collapse quickly once a full account of the information is available. It is clear that the liberal arguments exhibit astoundingly bad scholarship. Indeed, this conclusion may be too generous. According to one writer, a more accurate account of these bad arguments would describe them as "prejudiced irresponsibility." [23] But in order to become completely informed on these matters, wise readers will work through material cited in the brief bibliography.

REFERENCE NOTES

- 1 See Ronald Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks* (Richardson, TX: Probe Books, 1992). The book was originally published in 1984 under the title, *Christianity and the Hellenist World*.
- 2 I must pass over these Greek versions of the mystery cults. See Nash, 131-36.
- 3 Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 104.
- 4 See Edwin Yamauchi, "Easter -- Myth, Hallucination, or History?" *Christianity Today*, 29 March 1974, 660-63.
- 5 See Gunter Wagner, *Pauline Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), 260ff.
- 6 When the ceremony used a lamb, it was the criobolium. Since lambs cost far less than bulls, this modification was rather common.
- 7 See Nash, chapter 9.
- 8 For more detail, see Nash, 143-48.
- 9 See Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra* (Chicago: Open Court, 1903), 87ff.
- 10 Joscelyn Godwin, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 111.
- 11 See Nash, chapter 9.
- 12 See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 24.
- 13 See Martin Hengel, *The Son of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 26.
- 14 Wagner, 284.
- 15 See W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 2d ed. (London: Methuen, 1952), 268.
- 16 See A. D. Nock, "Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background," in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, ed. A. E. J. Rawlinson (London: Longmans, Green, 1928), 106.

17 See J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 234-35.

18 See Nash, 161-99.

19 See Nash, 173-78.

20 See W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1948), 76-81.

21 Machen, 9.

22 Bruce M. Metzger, *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 11. The possible parallels in view here would naturally be dated late, after A.D. 200 for the most part.

23 Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 195.

Suggested Reading

Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

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Presuppositional Reasoning With False Faiths

Presuppositional Reasoning With False Faiths by Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen

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Presuppositional apologetics as taught by Cornelius Van Til urges the Christian to argue with unbelievers in an "indirect" fashion, doing an internal analysis of the unbeliever's worldview (his fundamental assumptions about reality, knowledge, and ethics) and

comparing it to the worldview revealed in the Bible. Many students of apologetics have come to see the strength of this apologetical challenge when it is applied to the various kinds of views advocated by atheists or materialists. Given the presuppositions of the atheist, he could not make sense out of adherence to the laws of logic (as I tried to show in my public debate with Gordon Stein), nor could he make sense out of the principles and procedures of science itself (as I tried to show in my public debate with Edward Tabash). The atheist cannot give a rational account of the fundamental assumptions of ethics, either.[1] Atheism is philosophically unable to argue ethically, scientifically, or logically against the Christian faith.

The question sometimes arises whether the presuppositional method can argue as effectively against non-atheists, however. That is, students of apologetics wonder whether we can argue presuppositionally with unbelievers who adhere to false religious faiths. They might not seem to fall so readily into the philosophical problems of unbelievers who deny any supernatural reality whatsoever. How does a presuppositional apologist deal with someone who has another "god" or another religious book, etc.?

It is imperative that we bear in mind that Van Til describes the presuppositional method as from the outset setting forth and working with the distinctive doctrines of Christian theism (e.g., the Trinity, divine providence). Van Til's presuppositional method is concrete, not abstract or formal; he does not enter into debate with the unbeliever merely the worldview of a generic god of some undetermined nature and character, but the specific and full worldview of Biblical Christianity. That is why Van Til's Apologetics syllabus and the book *The Defense of the Faith* both began with detailed statements of Christian theology. These were not simply a review, warming up to apologetics; they were for Van Til a defining part of the apologetical task. Accordingly, the presuppositional method is not at all amenable to use by "just any other religion" which competes with Christianity--as many critics have hastily suggested.

How does the apologist deal with advocates of other religious faiths, if he wishes to use the presuppositional method? The same way he deals with atheists and materialists, etc. by the apologist internally examines "the worldview" which is offered by whatever religious devotee is having the dialog with him. The formal fact that the opposing religionist speaks of "god" (or "gods") is not a difficulty here, for they must define their specific concept of deity. Remember here the example of Scripture: "for their rock is not as our Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:31); recall the devastating prophetic critique of the the heathen's "lifeless" idols which are (contradictorily) under the sovereignty of those who bow down to them. The use of religious vocabulary and appeals does not change the applicability of the indirect method of disproving your opponent's presuppositions.

Most unstudied (and overly general) comments by people about comparative religion--for instance, that "all religions are alike" or "you can have your pick of sacred books" -- can be easily contradicted by the apologist. If anybody is tempted to be the spokesman and defender of "just any" non-Christian religion (so as to silence the Christian apologetic), it must be politely observed that the overwhelming and vast majority of world religions cannot even offer epistemological competition to the Christian

worldview. They have no basis for "knowing" what they claim at all. Why? There are indeed other "sacred" books (Bhagavad Gita, Analects, Avesta, Adi Granth, Sutras, Tao Tsang, I Ching, etc.) but they are nothing at all like what the Bible presents itself as being. What does an internal analysis of the metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions of these different religions uncover?

Metaphysically, there is no god, or no personal god, or no god who is omniscient and sovereign, etc. Accordingly, from an epistemological perspective these "sacred" books are not and cannot be anything like what the Bible claims for itself, namely, to be the Personal communication and infallible verbal revelation from the only living, completely sovereign, and all-knowing Creator. The other religious books, on their own presuppositions, give no reason to submit to them as true or normative; in terms of their own worldviews, these books as pieces of literature can have no epistemological or ethical authority. What they say (when you can make sense of them at all) could not be anything but simply "one man's opinion" against another man's opinion!

The remaining world religions or cults which might begin to have something to offer in competition with Christianity (viz. a personal deity, a verbal revelation) are usually poor imitations of a quasi-Christian philosophical outlook (living on "borrowed capital"), or they can be treated as Christian heresies (borrowing or deferring to portions of the Bible itself or misreadings of it). Ordinarily the best tactic is to reason with such religious competitors from Scripture itself, then, refuting the departures and misinterpretations from what has been acknowledged as the word of God. This too amounts to an "internal critique" of the worldview.

For example, parts of Sun Myung Moon's teaching cannot be "authorized" by him simply with an appeal to the Bible, when he in fact rejects other aspects of the Bible and refuses to grant the Bible's own claim to plenary authority. Without that plenary authority, no simple appeal to what the Bible itself says (without some other, outside warrant) can serve to "authorize" the point he is attempting to make. The apologist will then want to cross-examine this extrabiblical authority for its credentials.

In some people's mind it is the Muslim faith, however, which presents a threat to presuppositional apologetics because, it is imagined, Islam can counter(feit) each move in the Christian's argument. This too is an inaccurate preconception. The two worldviews are dissimilar in pivotal ways when one reflects on Islam's unitarianism, fatalism, moral concepts, lack of redemption, etc. Islam can be internally critiqued on its own presuppositions. Take an obvious example. The Koran acknowledges the words of Moses, David, and Jesus to be the words of prophets sent by Allah--in which case the Koran may be, on its own terms, refuted because of its contradictions with earlier revelation (cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

Sophisticated theologies offered by Muslim scholars interpret the theology of the Koran (cf. 42:11) as teaching the transcendence (tanzih) of unchanging Allah in such an extreme fashion that no human language (derived from changing experience) can positively and

appropriately describe Allah--in which case the Koran rules out what the Koran claims to be.

Then again, the Islamic worldview teaches that God is holy and just toward sin, but (unlike the theology of the Bible --see here the words of Moses, David, and Jesus) there can indeed be "salvation" where guilt remains unremitted by the shedding of blood of a substitute for the sinner. The legalism of Islam (good works weighed against bad) does not address this problem because a person's previous bad works are not changed by later good ones, but continue on one's record in the very sight Allah (who supposedly cannot tolerate sin but must punish it).[2]

Thus we see that Van Til's presuppositional approach to defending the faith is an effective tool for responding to all kinds of unbelievers, irreligious and religious alike. That is because all men think in the context of a broader worldview which can be internally criticized, even if it utilizes "religious" concepts. The only religious concepts which can make philosophical sense out of life are those definite, concrete, truths revealed infallibly by God in His own word.

REFERENCE NOTES:

1. If you would like to hear more of how these arguments against atheism work, you may order my lecture "Does Ethics Depend on God?" (tape # 001417), my Debate with Gordon Stein (# ASST-I), and my debate with Edward Tabash (# AST2-I) each delivered at the University of California (Irvine or Davis) from Covenant Media Foundation at 800/553-3938. For more information see the Southern California Center for Christian Studies Web Site which is listed under Links to Other Sites.

2. For more on this consult my lectures on Islam (e.g., "The Crown or Crescent," (tape # 001387) and my debate (at Orange Coast College in 1991) with a leading Muslim scholar in America, "Judaism, Islam & Christianity: Sister faiths?" (# ASI2-I) which are available from Covenant Media Foundation at 800/553-3938.

Radical New Views of Islam and the Origins of the Koran

New York Times

March 2, 2002

By ALEXANDER STILLE

(Note from the editors of RIM.ORG: this article is reproduced here as printed in the New York Times, for non-profit educational purposes; it presents insight into ongoing academic studies of Quranic manuscripts by Western scholars; it is written from a secular perspective. Biblical manuscripts and parchments have been studied critically with great freedom for centuries of the history of the West, and the enormous number of manuscripts, and manuscript families up to the recent Dead Sea Scrolls attest to the unique veracity of the Bible. Openness and critical scholarship, debate and discussion are a part of Western tradition -- and as Christians in the West realize, present nothing to fear, for God's truth will stand firm and sure. Islam by contrast has maintained the image of the Quran's indubitability through fear and intimidation, a tradition dating back to the work of caliph Uthman who by the power of the sword sought to eliminate variant forms of the Quran.)

To Muslims the Koran is the very word of God, who spoke through the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad: "This book is not to be doubted," the Koran declares unequivocally at its beginning. Scholars and writers in Islamic countries who have ignored that warning have sometimes found themselves the target of death threats and violence, sending a chill through universities around the world.

Yet despite the fear, a handful of experts have been quietly investigating the origins of the Koran, offering radically new theories about the text's meaning and the rise of Islam.

Christoph Luxenberg, a scholar of ancient Semitic languages in Germany, argues that the Koran has been misread and mistranslated for centuries. His work, based on the earliest copies of the Koran, maintains that parts of Islam's holy book are derived from pre-existing Christian Aramaic texts that were misinterpreted by later Islamic scholars who prepared the editions of the Koran commonly read today.

So, for example, the virgins who are supposedly awaiting good Islamic martyrs as their reward in paradise are in reality "white raisins" of crystal clarity rather than fair maidens.

Christoph Luxenberg, however, is a pseudonym, and his scholarly tome ""The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran" had trouble finding a publisher, although it is considered a major new work by several leading scholars in the field. Verlag Das Arabische Buch in Berlin ultimately published the book.

The caution is not surprising. Salman Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" received a fatwa because it appeared to mock Muhammad. The Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz was stabbed because one of his books was thought to be irreligious. And when the Arab scholar Suliman Bashear argued that Islam developed as a religion gradually rather than emerging fully formed from the mouth of the Prophet, he was injured after being thrown from a second- story window by his students at the University of Nablus in the West Bank. Even many broad-minded liberal Muslims become upset when the historical veracity and authenticity of the Koran is questioned.

The reverberations have affected non-Muslim scholars in Western countries. "Between fear and political correctness, it's not possible to say anything other than sugary nonsense about Islam," said one scholar at an American university who asked not to be named, referring to the threatened violence as well as the widespread reluctance on United States college campuses to criticize other cultures.

While scriptural interpretation may seem like a remote and innocuous activity, close textual study of Jewish and Christian scripture played no small role in loosening the Church's domination on the intellectual and cultural life of Europe, and paving the way for unfettered secular thought. "The Muslims have the benefit of hindsight of the European experience, and they know very well that once you start questioning the holy scriptures, you don't know where it will stop," the scholar explained.

The touchiness about questioning the Koran predates the latest rise of Islamic militancy. As long ago as 1977, John Wansbrough of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London wrote that subjecting the Koran to "analysis by the instruments and techniques of biblical criticism is virtually unknown."

Mr. Wansbrough insisted that the text of the Koran appeared to be a composite of different voices or texts compiled over dozens if not hundreds of years. After all, scholars agree that there is no evidence of the Koran until 691 - 59 years after Muhammad's death - when the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem was built, carrying several Koranic inscriptions.

These inscriptions differ to some degree from the version of the Koran that has been handed down through the centuries, suggesting, scholars say, that the Koran may have still been evolving in the last decade of the seventh century. Moreover, much of what we know as Islam - the lives and sayings of the Prophet - is based on texts from between 130 and 300 years after Muhammad's death.

In 1977 two other scholars from the School for Oriental and African Studies at London University - Patricia Crone (a professor of history at the Institute for Advanced Study in

Princeton) and Michael Cook (a professor of Near Eastern history at Princeton University) - suggested a radically new approach in their book "Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World."

Since there are no Arabic chronicles from the first century of Islam, the two looked at several non-Muslim, seventh-century accounts that suggested Muhammad was perceived not as the founder of a new religion but as a preacher in the Old Testament tradition, hailing the coming of a Messiah. Many of the early documents refer to the followers of Muhammad as "hagarenes," and the "tribe of Ishmael," in other words as descendants of Hagar, the servant girl that the Jewish patriarch Abraham used to father his son Ishmael.

In its earliest form, Ms. Crone and Mr. Cook argued, the followers of Muhammad may have seen themselves as retaking their place in the Holy Land alongside their Jewish cousins. (And many Jews appear to have welcomed the Arabs as liberators when they entered Jerusalem in 638.)

The idea that Jewish messianism animated the early followers of the Prophet is not widely accepted in the field, but "Hagarism" is credited with opening up the field. "Crone and Cook came up with some very interesting revisionist ideas," says Fred M. Donner of the University of Chicago and author of the recent book "Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing." "I think in trying to reconstruct what happened, they went off the deep end, but they were asking the right questions."

The revisionist school of early Islam has quietly picked up momentum in the last few years as historians began to apply rational standards of proof to this material.

Mr. Cook and Ms. Crone have revised some of their early hypotheses while sticking to others. "We were certainly wrong about quite a lot of things," Ms. Crone said. "But I stick to the basic point we made: that Islamic history did not arise as the classic tradition says it does."

Ms. Crone insists that the Koran and the Islamic tradition present a fundamental paradox. The Koran is a text soaked in monotheistic thinking, filled with stories and references to Abraham, Isaac, Joseph and Jesus, and yet the official history insists that Muhammad, an illiterate camel merchant, received the revelation in Mecca, a remote, sparsely populated part of Arabia, far from the centers of monotheistic thought, in an environment of idol-worshipping Arab Bedouins. Unless one accepts the idea of the angel Gabriel, Ms. Crone says, historians must somehow explain how all these monotheistic stories and ideas found their way into the Koran.

"There are only two possibilities," Ms. Crone said. "Either there had to be substantial numbers of Jews and Christians in Mecca or the Koran had to have been composed somewhere else."

Indeed, many scholars who are not revisionists agree that Islam must be placed back into the wider historical context of the religions of the Middle East rather than seeing it as the

spontaneous product of the pristine Arabian desert. "I think there is increasing acceptance, even on the part of many Muslims, that Islam emerged out of the wider monotheistic soup of the Middle East," says Roy Mottahedeh, a professor of Islamic history at Harvard University.

Scholars like Mr. Luxenberg and Gerd- R. Puin, who teaches at Saarland University in Germany, have returned to the earliest known copies of the Koran in order to grasp what it says about the document's origins and composition. Mr. Luxenberg explains these copies are written without vowels and diacritical dots that modern Arabic uses to make it clear what letter is intended. In the eighth and ninth centuries, more than a century after the death of Muhammad, Islamic commentators added diacritical marks to clear up the ambiguities of the text, giving precise meanings to passages based on what they considered to be their proper context. Mr. Luxenberg's radical theory is that many of the text's difficulties can be clarified when it is seen as closely related to Aramaic, the language group of most Middle Eastern Jews and Christians at the time.

For example, the famous passage about the virgins is based on the word hur, which is an adjective in the feminine plural meaning simply "white." Islamic tradition insists the term hur stands for "houra," which means virgin, but Mr. Luxenberg insists that this is a forced misreading of the text. In both ancient Aramaic and in at least one respected dictionary of early Arabic, hur means "white raisin."

Mr. Luxenberg has traced the passages dealing with paradise to a Christian text called Hymns of Paradise by a fourth-century author. Mr. Luxenberg said the word paradise was derived from the Aramaic word for garden and all the descriptions of paradise described it as a garden of flowing waters, abundant fruits and white raisins, a prized delicacy in the ancient Near East. In this context, white raisins, mentioned often as hur, Mr. Luxenberg said, makes more sense than a reward of sexual favors.

In many cases, the differences can be quite significant. Mr. Puin points out that in the early archaic copies of the Koran, it is impossible to distinguish between the words "to fight" and "to kill." In many cases, he said, Islamic exegetes added diacritical marks that yielded the harsher meaning, perhaps reflecting a period in which the Islamic Empire was often at war.

A return to the earliest Koran, Mr. Puin and others suggest, might lead to a more tolerant brand of Islam, as well as one that is more conscious of its close ties to both Judaism and Christianity.

"It is serious and exciting work," Ms. Crone said of Mr. Luxenberg's work. Jane McAuliffe, a professor of Islamic studies at Georgetown University, has asked Mr. Luxenberg to contribute an essay to the Encyclopedia of the Koran, which she is editing.

Mr. Puin would love to see a "critical edition" of the Koran produced, one based on recent philological work, but, he says, "the word critical is misunderstood in the Islamic world - it is seen as criticizing or attacking the text."

Some Muslim authors have begun to publish skeptical, revisionist work on the Koran as well. Several new volumes of revisionist scholarship, "The Origins of the Koran," and "The Quest for the Historical Muhammad," have been edited by a former Muslim who writes under the pen name Ibn Warraq. Mr. Warraq, who heads a group called the Institute for the Secularization of Islamic Society, makes no bones about having a political agenda. "Biblical scholarship has made people less dogmatic, more open," he said, "and I hope that happens to Muslim society as well."

But many Muslims find the tone and claims of revisionism offensive. "I think the broader implications of some of the revisionist scholarship is to say that the Koran is not an authentic book, that it was fabricated 150 years later," says Ebrahim Moosa, a professor of religious studies at Duke University, as well as a Muslim cleric whose liberal theological leanings earned him the animosity of fundamentalists in South Africa, which he left after his house was firebombed.

Andrew Rippin, an Islamicist at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, says that freedom of speech in the Islamic world is more likely to evolve from within the Islamic interpretative tradition than from outside attacks on it. Approaches to the Koran that are now branded as heretical - interpreting the text metaphorically rather than literally - were widely practiced in mainstream Islam a thousand years ago.

"When I teach the history of the interpretation it is eye-opening to students the amount of independent thought and diversity of interpretation that existed in the early centuries of Islam," Mr. Rippin says. "It was only in more recent centuries that there was a need for limiting interpretation."

A Partial List of Problems and Contradictions in the Quran

This is a partial list of problems found in the Quran, which to the best of our knowledge remain unanswered. Your thoughts, comments, or explanations of any of the below are welcomed.

1. **Creation:** The biblical Genesis account says God created all in six days (see Genesis 1:1 - 2:2). The Quran, however, has a real problem here as Surah 41:9, 10, 12 have a total of eight days of creation (4+2+2=8) Meanwhile, Surah 10:3 gives the total number of days of creation as six. This is a problem of self-contradiction.

2. **Pharaoh:** According to the Quran (Surah 7:120-125) Pharaoh used crucifixion in dealing with the sorcerers - a practice which historical evidence gives no precedent to before the Babylonian Empire. This is once again a problem of historical compression.
3. **The Golden Calf:** According to the Quran (Surah 20:90-100) a Samaritan helped the Israelites build the golden calf, and it cooled after coming out of the fire. In reality, Samaritans did not exist as a people until at least 1000 years after the time of the Moses and the Israelite exodus from Egypt. Again a problem of historical compression.
4. **Judaism:** According to the Quran (Surah 9:30) the Jews believe that Ezra is the Son of God - the Messiah. This never has been a tenet of Judaism. This is a clear problem of distorted knowledge of other religions and historical fact.
5. **Alexander the Great:** According to the Quran (Surah 18:89-98) Alexander the Great was a devout Muslim and lived to a ripe old age. Historical records however show that Alexander the Great died young at 33 years of age (b. 356 B.C. - d. 323 B.C.), and believed he was divine, forcing others to recognize him as such. In India on the Hyphasis River (now Beas) Alexander erected twelve altars to twelve Olympian gods. Once again the Quran shows errors in historical and religious fact.
6. **The Trinity:** According to the Quran (Surah 5:116, 5:73-75) the Christians believe in "three Gods" - Father, Mother, and Son. This shows the influence of heretical 'Christian' sects in central Arabia at the time of Muhammad. In contrast, Christianity has always distinctly stated that the [Trinity is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit](#). The teaching of the Quran on the Trinity has undoubtedly led to confusion among many Muslims on what the Bible (*and thus Christianity*) teaches about the Triune God.
7. **Mary:** According to the Quran (Surah 19:28, 3:33-36), Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the daughter of Imran or Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron. Mary is also said to be the sister of Moses and Aaron. Clearly Muhammad confused Mary with Miriam. A second interesting point about Mary is the story of the date palm speaking and offering its fruit to her (Surah 19:23). This legend is easily traced to similar legends found in the apocryphal "Protoevangelium of James" the "Pseudo-Matthew" and "the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary" all of which have been dated to the fourth to sixth centuries, and were again believed by the sects found in Arabia. (More indepth information on Quranic sources may be found in Rev. W. St. Clair Tisdall's *The Religion of the Crescent*).
8. **[Textual Variants in the Quran](#):** Many Muslims claim that the Quran today is identical to the revelations received by Muhammad. However, there is overwhelming unanswered evidence to the contrary. This includes evidence of variations both prior to, and after Uthman.

How do we view and respond to these unresolved problems of logic, history and religious knowledge? While they do not serve as the basis for our belief that the Quran is not the

revelation of God (as there are issues of far greater consequence between the message of the Bible and the message of the Quran), they do show us that there are legitimate problems with the belief that the Quran is God's revelation to man, as God who is all knowing and infallible could not give statements of error, and then claim them as His Truth. As Christians we find the answer in the Bible. Numbers 23 tells us,

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and He will not do? Or has He spoken, and He will not make it good? (vs.19)

God, who is all knowing and all powerful, cannot be errant in His revelation to man. The problems in the Quran and differences between the Bible and Quran are numerous, leaving an unresolved difficulty for Islam which claims to be a fulfillment of the Bible. The following link provides further, more indepth discussion of the above and other [problems in the Quran](#).

Ruzbihan al-Baqli's (d. 606/1209) Commentary on "Guide us on the straight path" (Qur'an 1:6) from his Qur'an commentary (*tafsir*), *'Ara'is al-bayan*, edited in the original Arabic and translated by A. Godlas.

God's words--may He be exalted: **Guide us on the straight path**, namely, **Guide us** to what You desire of us; because the straight path is what God (*al-Haqq*) wants from creation, namely the qualities of truthfulness and sincerity in servanthood and service. Also, Direct us to the state in which You are. In addition, Direct us to gnosis of You, so that we can rest from [28] our observances, by the fresh breeze of Your intimacy and the truths of Your beauty. Also, **Guide us** to Your I-ness, so that we may become attributed with Your attributes.

It was said that the meaning of **Guide us** is: "Make our hearts incline to You; establish our aspirations before You; and Be our guide from You, to You, in order that we not become cut off from what is Yours, by You." It was said, "**Guide us on the straight path** means: Direct us on the way of gnosis, in order that we be steadfast with You in Your service." It was said, "**Guide us**, namely: Show us the way of gratitude (al-shukr) [Sulami: intimacy with You (unsika)], so that we can rejoice and exult in nearness to You" It was said, "**Guide us** by the annihilation of our attributes, on the way to Your attributes, which have neither ceased, nor will they ever cease" It was said, "**Guide us** with manifest guidance, after elucidation, in order that we may become

steadfast for You, in love of Your will." It was said, "**Guide us** with the guidance of the one whose origin is from You so that his end may be with You" And it was said, "**Guide us on the straight path** by [Divine] absence from the path, so that one might not be tied to the path" Junayd (d. 298/910) said, "When the Sufis sought guidance regarding the bewilderment that comes over them from within while they are witnessing the attributes of pre-eternality, they sought guidance toward the qualities of servanthood in order not to become drowned in the vision of the attributes of pre-eternality." [from Sulami (d. 412/1021), *Haqa'iq al-tafsir*, ms. Baladiya, f. 6b]

One of them said,[29] "We have set out towards You, so keep us aright." It was said, "**Guide us** with strength and firmness." Husayn [ibn Mansur al-Hallaj] (d. 309/922) said, "In His words **Guide us on the straight path**, He said,...the way of loving You and the way of striving to reach You." Shibli (d. 334/945) said "**Guide us on the straight path**, the path of the saints and the purified." One of them said, "Direct us to obedience to You, just as You have directed us to knowledge of Your unity." 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 40/661) --may God be pleased with him--said, "**Guide us**, [namely] establish us on the way in which there is no crookedness, and that is Islam." And it was said, "**Guide us**, in the world, to acts of obedience, and convey us in the hereafter to the [lofty] degrees (*darajat*)." [from Sulami, *Ziyadat*, ed. Bowering, 1995, p. 6]

The Master [al-Qushayri (d. 465/1074) in *Lata'if al-isharat*] said, "**Guide us on the straight path**, namely, eliminate from us the darkness of our states, so that we can become illuminated by the lights of Your sanctity and leave behind having been overshadowed by the shadows of our seeking. And raise from us the shadow of our striving, so that we can gain vision by the stars of Your generosity and find You through You." [from Qushayri, *Lata'if al-isharat*, ed. Basyuni, vol. 1, p. 50]

And 'Ali ibn Abi Talib said, "**Guide us**, namely, establish us on the straight way and the sound, well-trodden road ."

Old Testament Sabbath, New Testament Sunday?

A Dialogue on the Day

Note: The Christian observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day is debated in the correspondence dialogue recorded below. Names, personal introductions and discussions not relating to the topic of Sabbath and Sunday have been removed; original format and content are retained.

QUESTION FROM A READER:

I note your home page "statement of purpose" claim: "We will be judged according to our responses to the law and commands of Holy God."

If this true, why does the Christian church ignore the one command which Yahweh through the Bible states to remember?

Exodus 20:8

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the Seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work ..."

I challenge you to name just one Christian church which is keeping all the "law and commands of Holy God."

OUR ANSWER

Regarding churches which keep all the laws of God: As Christians we believe that we are called to live according to the laws of God, especially as you mentioned as they are embodied in the ten commandments. We believe the laws of God have a dual purpose -- they are the commands of God to all -- to show men that they fall short of God's holy requirements and point them to salvation and forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ; and then for Christians they serve as a daily guide for a life of thankfulness to God for salvation and forgiveness in Christ. That is not to say that when one becomes a Christian they begin to live perfect lives, rather it means that they trust in the work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, and then with God's help strive to live a life of honest faithfulness and thankful obedience.

There are still many Christian churches which do hold to a Sabbath rest/special day of worship. Where Old Testament Israel held the Sabbath rest on what would be Saturday, the New Testament church early on worshipped on today's Sunday as a remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; Protestant churches today continue to worship on Sunday; and there remain a good number of the Reformed and Baptist groups that continue to hold Sunday as a special day in high esteem, a day of worshipping God, and of rest from one's weekly labors. There is no doubt that secularization has crept into much of Western society which is in the main only nominally "Christian" at best, and Sabbath observance has fallen along with the trend to an irreligious secular society; this has also affected some churches. But Sabbath observance in the biblical sense certainly it does remain alive in churches in Europe, Africa, and North and South America, and throughout much of the rest of the world as well.

REPLY FROM READER

I repeat your mission statement: "We will be judged according to our responses to "the law and commands of Holy God."

A God according to Christian scripture who "is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:10)

A God who said "yesterday", "remember" "the seventh day" not the first day!!!!

A man charged with travelling at 65 miles per hour in a 35 mile zone can not argue that "a good number of the Reformed and Baptist groups" got together last week to change the law, if the change does not have the consent of the legitimate government of the land. Nor can God's "law and commands" be changed without the consent of the legitimate government of the universe.

By whose authority then was "the law and commands of Holy God" (relating to the Sabbath Exodus 20:8) changed?

Islamic scripture recognizes that God has a right to change the law, but warns: Al-Baqarah 2:79

"Then woe to those who write the scriptures with their own hands, and then say: 'This is from Allah,' ..."

In the Christian scriptures one also reads a stern warning Revelations 22:18.

I have no reason to doubt that "the Reformed and Baptist groups ... continue to hold Sunday as a special day in high esteem ..." So did the Ancient Egyptians!

However my challenge was to name just one Christian Church which is keeping all "the law and commands of Holy God" with specific reference to the Sabbath as ordained in Exodus 20:8.

Abraham pleading with God to spare Sodom gained God's pledge not to destroy the city if he could find 10 righteous people within its gates. (Genesis18:32)

All I want is the name of one Christian church which is keeping the commandments of God, not within a city, but on earth!!!!

OUR ANSWER:

In a message dated 01/19/2000 7:25:59AM, you write:

By whose authority then was "the law and commands of Holy God" (relating to the Sabbath Exodus 20:8) changed?

Here is a detailed answer to your question:

As Christians we believe that the day was changed by God, and that the God-given obligation to keep a new specific day of worshipping God remains unchanged. The Old and New Testament have continuity between them as they are the Word of God. Whatever the New Testament does not repeal from the Old Testament remains in effect today. For example much of what Christians believe about marriage and the family is revealed in the Old Testament. Similarly the foundation for the doctrine of the Sabbath as a Christian institution is laid in the Old Testament Scriptures. Gen.2:1-3 and Exodus 20:8-11 establish that Sabbath observance is a permanent moral requirement. Some would argue that Jesus did away with Sabbath observance in Matthew 12:1-14; however that passage rather shows Him teaching us and giving us helpful guidelines for our behaviour on that day.

In the book of Colossians, the apostle Paul deals with the heresy of those who would teach that salvation was by the works of man which included the observance of the Old Testament ceremonial law (these groups are referred to in history as the Judaizers). In the second chapter Paul reaffirms the authority of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lawgiver, in accord with Jesus own teaching as recorded in the Gospels. In 2:16-17 Paul takes up the matter of days: "therefore let no one act as your judge, in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. Is Paul repealing Sabbath observances as such, or the observance of the seventh day Sabbath along with the other ceremonial days? We find the answer to this question as we examine the three terms Paul uses: "festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day (or Sabbath days)." These three terms are often used together in the Old Testament to describe the various ceremonial days that God's people were required to observe. See for example 2 Chronicles 31:3; Nehemiah 10:32,33; Leviticus 23; etc. The Greek translation of these passages (called the Septuagint) uses the exact three terms that

Paul uses in Colossians 2:16. In light of the Old Testament passages we see that Paul uses the term 'Sabbath days' to include the seventh day Sabbath. By use of these three phrases, Paul is describing the Old Testament ceremonial days and Sabbaths and says that the Christian is under no obligation to observe these days.

This instruction was necessary in the time of the transition from the Old Covenant (the era prior to the completion of Jesus' work on earth) to the New (after His resurrection), as Jesus fulfilled the law and prophecies of the Old Testament. In the early New Testament many Jewish Christians continued to observe the Old Covenant feasts and days. Although they were not obligated to do so, since Christ had fulfilled these observances, they worshipped Him through them. Some however in misguided zeal thought that these days ought to be imposed on Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians. In response Paul repudiates any required observance of any Old Testament ceremonial day, because they were "a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Paul reminds us that these Old Testament rituals and ceremony pointed forward to the person and work of Jesus Christ. These things were the foreshadowing for the Old Testament believer, for that which we now can understand fully as Hebrews 1:1,2; 11:39-40 teaches. Thus every part of Old Testament ceremony had reference not simply to God as such, but particularly to Jesus Christ the coming Messiah, who would save His people from their sins. John tells us in the Gospel of John 1:14 that the Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh and tabernacled among us. In John 2:19 Christ claims to be the true temple, fulfilling all that the temple had pointed forward to and promised. After His coming the temple itself paled into insignificance and was no longer necessary (John 4:21-24) because with its festivals and sacrifices it was only a foreshadowing of Christ Himself and His perfect self-sacrifice for sin.

The ceremonial days, festivals, etc all pointed to Jesus Christ and His relation to His people. The most significant sign of these was the seventh-day Sabbath rest. When Adam fell into sin, God gave the promise of the Saviour. Until He came the Old Testament saints would remain under bondage awaiting the day of their inheritance (Galatians 3:23-26). In their end of the week Sabbath, they anticipated the coming of the Messiah who was to be the true rest-giver. The one who would pay the price for their sin, so that they did not have to seek to earn their salvation by good works. Thus the day of their Sabbath observance was a shadow of the Saviour's coming. When He came He actually did part of His atoning work on the Sabbath by remaining in the tomb, suffering death and burial in the place of His people. When He arose on the first day, His substitutionary work for His people was completed, and He entered into His glorious rest.

One day of rest in seven thus does remain the God-ordained and continuing pattern. However as a result of the work of Christ the New Testament era believer is no longer under obligation to observe Old Testament ceremonial days or the seventh day Sabbath. However, it is essential to note that in his discussion Paul never abrogates the moral obligation of keeping holy one day in seven. At creation God established the moral obligation of keeping holy one day in seven, and He reiterated this obligation in the Ten Commandments, along with all the other great moral principles of revealed religion. The particular day, however was not a part of the moral requirement of the law, but a positive

law to regulate the fulfilling of this moral responsibility to honour the Creator, and to look forward to the fulfillment of His promise of salvation, eternal rest. Thus the day of the week could be changed, and as seen in Scripture it was changed by the work of Christ Himself, and this truth is reinforced by the inspired writing of the apostle Paul, as well as in the Gospels themselves.

Clearly the church continued to observe one day in seven. The New Testament church, keeping the pattern of one day of worship in seven, immediately began to worship on the first day of the week. In Acts 20:7 Paul's own practice confirms this as he worships with the church of Troas on the first day of the week; in 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 he states that he commanded all the churches to gather their offering for the poor on the first day of the week -- the offering being an integral part of Sabbath worship.

One author, R.L Dabney states "the facts in which all are agreed, which explain the Apostle's meaning in these passages, are these: After the establishment of the new dispensation (in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ), the Christians converted from among the Jews had generally combined the practice of Judaism with the forms of Christianity. They observed the Lord's day (on today's Sunday -- the first day of the week, when Jesus' resurrection took place) baptism, and the Lord's Supper; but they also continued to keep the seventh day, the passover, and circumcision. At first it was proposed by them to enforce this double system on all Gentile Christians; but this was rebuked by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15. It was to end problems of a similar nature in Colosse that the Apostle Paul wrote these passages -- as for instance the one in Colossians 2:16-17.

One cannot escape the particular references to first day worship such as Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1,2; and Revelation 1:10. Nor can we as Christians escape the prohibition of Colossians 2:16-17 in binding any to seventh-day Sabbath keeping. Some may argue that the abrogation is certainly clear, but that the determination of the new day of worship is not. But there are only two options: either the Bible reveals the proper day, or the church may simply choose a day. The latter is expressly denied in Romans 14 and Galatians 4 where Scripture teaches that no man or church has the prerogative to establish a day for others to be compelled to worship. Thus if we are forbidden to compel worship on the seventh day due to the old system's fulfillment in Christ, and may not of our own accord legislate a new day, the only alternative left is that God has revealed this in His Word.

Several scripture passages have already been alluded to as support for the New Testament move to the first day Sabbath. The book of Hebrews is one which clearly teaches the fulfilling work of Jesus Christ in completing the requirements of the law. Hebrews 4:9-10 states: there remains a present Sabbath-keeping because "the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from His." In verse 10 the writer compares Christ's rest from His work of redemption with God's rest from the work of creation. Verse 10 refers to the individual work of Christ, a rest which is already for Him begun, as His work is completed, while in verse 11 it is made clear that the responsibility to enter into the rest remains with the believer. Thus the Christian has begun to

participate in God's rest on this earth already, but will not fully enter into that rest until with Christ in glory in heaven.

This understanding of Hebrews 4 provides a parallel between God's work of creation and His work of salvation in Christ. At the conclusion of creation, God rested on the seventh day to declare His work completed, to delight in His work, and to promise the eternal rest promised to Adam if he would keep God's command in the garden. When Adam broke this covenant or agreement, God in His mercy renewed the offer of eternal rest through the promise of a coming Redeemer, or Saviour who would make atonement for the sin of any who trust in Him. Thus the Old Testament seventh day Sabbath looked forward to that rest.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, rested from His work of redemption on the first day of the week as a sign that His work had objectively been accomplished and nothing remained to be done. In His resurrection He entered into the joy of His work and confirmed that eternal life had been purchased (Isa.53:10,11; Heb.12:2). By His example the day was changed, as He had fulfilled all of God's holy requirements, indeed including the seventh day Sabbath.

It is interesting that the Old Testament alludes to the rest of the resurrection in the eighth day that climaxed in the ceremonial feast of the booths: "For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day, you shall have a holy convocation... it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work," Leviticus 23:36. This high Sabbath at the end of this Old Testament Jewish ceremonial feast typified the rest promised by God to the people, and was seen as the conclusion of the annual cycle of feasts. This link seems to be reinforced by John's referral to Jesus' second resurrection appearance in John 20:26 -- on the eighth day.

Thus there are many indicators, first of all in the work of Jesus Christ, and then also including the apostles own theological understandings as directed by the inspiration of God and recorded in Scripture to form the basis for the new Sabbath being the first day of the week. The immediate continuity of this is borne out by various historical records of early Christianity.

So that is our conviction, and the basis for it from the Word of God.

*Note: As the above is now posted on the internet credit for the content of this section is rightly due to Dr. Joseph A. Pipa, Jr., author of **The Lord's Day** (Fearn, Ross-shire, GB: Christian Focus, 1997) 95-155.*

READER'S REPLY

What a tangled web ...

Why do you seek to preach to Muslims when you have made a such a hash of interpreting your own scriptures???

Colossians 2:16-17 You have confused moral law with ceremonial and typical law. The moral law (the ten commandments) of which the 7th day Sabbath is the fourth are not shadows of things to come, but universal and perpetual (Psalm19:7-9). The weekly Sabbath is a memorial of creation an historical event (Genesis 2:2,3 Exodus 20:8-11) and deliverance (Deuteronomy 5:15) and hence looks back as well as forward. It was instituted before Adam sinned and the promise of a Saviour. Paul is in fact referring to ceremonial Sabbaths being shadows pointing forward to Christ (Leviticus 23: 6-8, 15,16,24,25,28,37,38). He states that in Christ these shadows became reality and that Christians no longer need concern themselves with the typical and shadowy. He condemns "false teachers" who would lead his converts back to Judaic ceremonial requirements. Paul in no way undermines the moral law or the seventh day Sabbath which is eternal (Romans 7:7-12,14)

Did Christ change the Sabbath???

Luke 4:16 on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom ...

John 15:10 ... I have obeyed my fathers commands and remain in his love.

1 Peter 2:21 ... Christ ... leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

Matthew 5:17-19 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law ... not until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law ...

By whose authority then was "the law and commands of Holy God" (relating to the Sabbath Exodus 20:8) changed?

Dr. Edward T. Hiscox author of The Baptist Manual in a paper read before a New York Ministers' Conference held Nov.13, 1893. "Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament, absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week ..."

Acts 20:7 This meeting occurred on the first day of the week, but there is nothing to indicate that the meeting was held because it was Sunday. Paul was leaving the following day and this was the last opportunity to meet with those at Troas. The early Christians were in the habit of meeting often, even when it was not the Sabbath (Acts 2:46 every day they continued to meet)

1 Corinthians 16:1,2 Paul is promoting a special project and is encouraging systematic saving on the part of Corinthian Christians. There is nothing to suggest that there is any sacredness attached to the first day of the week.

Revelations 1:10 "Kuriake Hemera" This term has come to be associated with Sunday. However in John's time the only day of the week which was given a name was the Sabbath, the rest were numbered. (Microsoft Encarta "Saturday") "In Sweden, ... Saturday is Lordag, or Lords Day; and in Denmark and Norway it is Lordag". (Microsoft Encarta 99 "Saturday")

It is interesting to note that Jesus referred to himself as the Lord even of the Sabbath
Mark 2:27

God refers to the Sabbath as my holy day and the Lords holy day Isaiah 58:13.

Matthew 28:1 Clearly states the seventh day is the Sabbath.

In the absence of even the barest thread of evidence that God has changed his holy day from Saturday to Sunday in the New Testament it is safe to assume that John was in the Spirit on Saturday rather than Sunday.

Al-Nisa 4:171 "People of the book, do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but truth about God"

To quote from your letter:-

"At creation God established the moral obligation of keeping holy one day in seven"

You have distorted the truth!!! God established a particular day. The day on which he completed his creation. The seventh!!!

Does God really care?

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven ...

"The particular day was not part of the moral requirement of the law"

This is no longer a distortion. You are now on very dangerous ground!!! You are in the process of rewriting the word of God!

"... as seen in the Scripture [the Sabbath] was changed by the work of Christ"

You have not demonstrated this! According to Christian scripture Christ fulfilled the ceremonial and typical law, but did not change the moral law.

"The New Testament church ... immediately began to worship on the first day of the week" Wrong!

"In the early days of Christianity, the holy day gradually shifted to Sunday..." (Microsoft Encarta 99 "Saturday")

"The Christian Church made no formal, but a gradual and almost unconscious transference of one day to the other." F.W.Farrar, *The Voice from Sinai*, p167.

This is of itself evidence that there was no divine command for the change of the Sabbath. The church historian Socrates, who wrote in the fifth century. says: "Almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on the account of some ancient traditions have ceased to do this." *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, chapter 22, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, Vol.2, p32

In A.D. 364 many Christians were still observing the seventh day Sabbath. This is proved by the fact that the Church Council of Laodicea in that year outlawed the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ." *A History of the Councils of the Church: from the Original Documents*, Rt. Rev. Charles Joseph Hefefe, DD., Bishop of Rottenburg, book 6, sec. 93, canon 29 (Vol.2, p. 316). Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark, 1896.

There is no evidence in the New Testament to support a pattern of worship on the first day of the week. You have cited one text Acts 20:7 which refers to a meeting possibly religious? However we are told: "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news ..." Acts 5:42 Reformed and southern Baptists, with far less enthusiasm I suggest, would have met at least once in the last 10 years, as a church group on a day other than Sunday.

What the New Testament record does indicate is a continuing observance of the seventh day Sabbath among the early Christians! Acts 17:2 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures ... (See also Acts 13:14,42,44)

Acts 16:13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to a river, where we expected to find a place of prayer

I asked only that you answer my questions honestly and simply. I did not want to get involved in a debate. I have taken time to respond to your letter because dishonesty grates whether the source is among the Jews, Muslims, Christians or atheists.

You have consistently failed to meet my challenge to name one Christian church which follows all the commandments of God. My first reaction to your letter was that you were being dishonest with me in an attempt to deceive.

To be charitable you may actually believe what you have written. If this is the case you have a far more personal challenge to face, rather than answering mine. For as you have written in your mission statement: We will all be judged according to our responses to 'the law and commands of Holy God.

OUR RESPONSE

In a message dated 01/21/2000 5:52:29AM, you write:

"Paul is in fact referring to ceremonial Sabbaths being shadows pointing forward to Christ (Leviticus 23: 6-8, 15,16,24,25,28,37,38). He states that in Christ these shadows became reality and that Christians no longer need concern themselves with the typical and shadowy. He condemns false teachers who would lead his converts back to Judaic ceremonial requirements. Paul in no way undermines the moral law or the seventh day Sabbath which is eternal (Romans 7:7-12,14)"

Exactly where do you find your proof that Paul is referring to Sabbaths other than the seventh day Sabbath? Your reference to Leviticus does not support that argument being the case for the verses in Colossians. In linguistics it is clearly recognized that when there is a term referring to a common general usage apart from qualified terms for minor specific usages of a similar nature and the general term is used it does not refer to only one/some of the minor specific usages, but rather to the general use. To prove otherwise is crucial for your argument to be considered even a plausible alternative -- you have given it no valid grounds.

Your quotation from Romans 7 certainly does relate to God's law -- and Paul's early acquaintance with it showing him that he had failed in his attempts to live a holy and right life before God, to show him his sinfulness, that he might understand and realize his need of the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. I wonder at the fact that while you seem to quote this passage with such rapidity, as a (related?) buttress for your unproven (and very weak) proposition about Colossians 2:16,17, that your writing does not at all reflect its truth -- in contrast you seem bitter and virulent towards those who in your estimation, and by your interpretations have failed.

Yes, the Holy God of all will judge men by His righteous standards -- all those who do not trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and shortcomings.

You have been given more than "the barest thread of evidence" -- rather a logically valid argument. Whether or not you choose to agree, or to attempt to structure a counter-argument is your prerogative; but to blast in response that not "the barest thread of evidence" has been given shows little academic candour at best. A cogent textual and theological argument has been presented; you may indeed present your counter argument; I have responded at this time to portions which I believe are central to showing the weakness of your own, the first being the ones above.

Your historical quotation of a Microsoft Encarta article is interesting:

"Revelations 1:10 Kuriake Hemera

This term has come to be associated with Sunday. However in John's time the only day of the week which was given a name was the Sabbath, the rest were numbered. (Microsoft Encarta "Saturday")...etc..."

First of all: certainly part of the above "the only day of the week given a name was the Sabbath" is true for the Roman province of Judea, and the other areas that comprised the once nation of Israel. The only day of the week given a name there in general during this period was the Sabbath. The fact is the term the Lord's Day which does refer to Sunday (as New Testament and early church history abundantly testify) was used by John on the isle of Patmos -- in a part of the Roman Empire where the term Sabbath was not generally recognized. So the above quote from Encarta does not really apply too well to your argument.

F.W. Farrar's quote: I'm sure I could find more like it as well -- there are undoubtedly scholars today, and have been in the past who simply disbelieve, or dislike Christianity and the Bible, and that perspective no doubt shines through in their historiography, thus tend to favor a process of gradual change from Saturday to Sunday worship; Scripture itself would however even explain this apparent graduality, as some Christians of Jewish descent, and especially Judaizers continued for a time to hold the Jewish Sabbath. In fact this is the very point Paul addresses in Colossians. *Added comment: The verses alluded to as New Testament Sabbath worship simply show Paul taking opportunity to evangelize the Jews in their synagogues; and for the other passage, again we see simply a situation where Paul and the others were looking for a quiet place to pray, but end up evangelizing the people they meet by the river. Jesus of course as mentioned did keep the Sabbath -- as the Messiah he kept all of the law of God perfectly, fulfilling the ceremonial -- as explained previously.*

Of course intellectual supporters of Christianity have their own perspectives as well; there are many scholars, and among them men and women of faith; the question is are the arguments valid; and then which are better founded, most cogent? Which are most coherent both in their formal and material adequacy? There can only be one truth.

Phillip Schaff, a historian of the early church states "the Christian Sunday was regarded by the fathers as based on the resurrection of Christ and apostolic tradition..." Following the example of the Apostles the early church replaced seventh day worship with worship on the first day of the week.. there is no doubt this change was of apostolic origin. (Schaff, II, p.202)

Primary historical source support includes: Justin Martyr: Apology I, 67; Irenaeus: Against Heresies 4.16.2; Tertullian: An Answer to the Jews, VI; Ignatius: Magnesians 9; The Didache 14; The Epistle of Barnabas XV.8,9; Origen: Homilies on Numbers; Eusebius: Commentary on the Psalms, 75; Clement of Alexandria: The Instructor III, XI;

Second Clement, XVII c.120-140AD. All of these deal with Sunday the Lord's Day, and the Jewish Sabbath. There are many more references to the same in early history.

I would be interested in seeing a stronger argument from your side regarding Colossians 2:16-17, as you neither seem to consider ours sincere or valid. Beyond that exactly what you are trying to prove or argue in the main? What is your worldview/religion? You quote from the Bible and the Quran as though they are both authoritative sources for life and behaviour, while they are at odds historically, logically, theologically, and in general content.

We believe the biblical, theological and historical arguments you have been presented are correct and faithful to God's Word.

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12

READER'S REPLY

I thank you for your correspondence, I am sorry, if by contrast mine seemed "bitter and virulent."

May the love of the only God be with you!!!

Sufism, Sufis, and Sufi Orders: Sufism's Many Paths

Professor Alan Godlas, University of Georgia

Early Shaykhs of Sufism :

Abu Nasr al-Sarraj (the saddle maker) (d. 378 / 988)

His name was Abu Nasr 'Abdallah ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Sarraj. He was the author of the *Kitab al-Luma* (The Book of Flashes). Dhahabi stated "He heard [narrations] from Ja'far al-Khuldi (d. 348/959-60), Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud al-Dinawari al-Duqqi ["Raqqi" in the published edition of the *Tarikh al-islam* seems to be an error] (d. 360/971), and Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Sa'ih [or al-Salimi as Nicholson suggests]. Among those who transmitted narrations on his authority were Abu Sa'id Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Naqqash, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Sarraj, and others."

Nicholson asserted that one of Sarraj's students, Abu 'l-Fadl ibn al-Hasan al-Sarakhsi, was the shaykh of the well-known Sufi shaykh, Abu Sa'id Abu l-Khayr.

Dhahabi noted, in a problematic passage that may have originally come from Sulami's lost *Ta'rikh al-Sufiyah*, that Sulami stated, "Abu Nasr [al-Sarraj] was from a family of ascetics [awlad al-zuhhad]. He was the *manzur* (Lane's Lexicon: a person or chief person whose bounty is hoped for) in his region in *futuwwa* (lit. magnanimity; also the name of early Sufi-like organizations) and was the expositor of the folk (*lisan al-qawm*), while seeking the support of the knowledge of Islamic law (*ma'a al-istizhar bi-al-'ilm al-shari'a*). And he is the last remnant (*baqiyat*) of their shaykhs today." (Nicholson read this last sentence as "He is the legal scholar (*faqih*) of their shaykhs today" (Dhahabi, *Tarikh al-Islam*, 351-380 AH, p. 625-26; Nicholson, *Kitab al-Luma'* p. III, V)

'Attar states that he died and was buried in Tus (which is about 15 miles from Mashhad), although another source states that he died in Nishapur.

'Attar noted that Sarraj said, "Love is a fire that has been lit within the breasts and hearts of the lovers. It burns and turns to ashes everything but God" (Attar, *Tadhkirat al-awliya'*, p. 639-40).

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Regenerated by the Spirit of God

Rev. Martin Vogel, Independent Christian Reformed Church of Ancaster, Ontario,
Canada. 1996.

Acts 9 : 1 - 22

1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone

around him from heaven.

4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

12 And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damacus.

20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

The Bible teaches that through the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, our nature has become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin. Sin has corrupted us to such an extent that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil.[1] The apostle Paul said in Romans 3:10-12, "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." Since the fall of Adam, the human race has been fatally damaged. The whole man is damaged - body and soul, mind, heart and will. In Reformed theology we speak of this as the doctrine of total depravity. Man is not just sick with sin; he is dead in sin. He is totally sinful in his intellect, affections, and will. Scripture says, "The carnal mind is hostile to God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." In order to please God we need to be radically changed. There is no hope for us whatsoever, unless God makes us a new creature. We are incapable of doing any spiritual good unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God. Jesus said, "You must be born again."

Well, Saul of Tarsus came to know what this was all about. By sovereign grace the Lord took hold of him and transformed him. From a violent persecutor of Christians he became a preacher, missionary, theologian, leader, soldier of Christ, and perhaps the greatest contender for the faith that this world has ever seen, next to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Saul of Tarsus was **regenerated by the Spirit of God**.

From Acts 9:1-22, I would have you focus on 4 things:

- (1) The antagonism to Christ, in verses 1-2.
- (2) The encounter with Christ, in verses 3-9.
- (3) The guidance of Christ, in verses 10-19.
- (4) The commitment to Christ, in verses 20-22.

(1) As you may know, the apostle Paul had not always been a great preacher and teacher of the gospel. For a time in his life he was very antagonistic to Jesus Christ.

Saul was born in Tarsus, which, at that time, was an important city in the Roman province of Cilicia. His father was a **Pharisee**. His father must have been a rather devout Pharisee for he saw to it that Saul study in Jerusalem, under one of the greatest rabbis of his day - a man named Gamaliel. Saul proved himself to be an excellent student. In Galatians 1 he said that he advanced in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers. In his youth, Saul was well educated and well trained to be a faithful pharisee.

The first time Saul's name is mentioned in Scripture is in Acts 7, in connection with the stoning of Stephen. The witnesses, who were the first to cast the stones, laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul, and Saul was consenting to his death. Saul must have heard Stephen debating with the Jews, and he had no use for him. Stephen spoke of salvation through Jesus Christ. As far as Saul was concerned this Jesus Christ was an imposter, a false, self-proclaimed Messiah who went about deceiving people. No,

Saul had no use for Jesus Christ. Because Stephen preached Christ, he was considered to be a heretic worthy of death.

Following the death of Stephen, a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem and believers were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. The leader of this persecution was Saul of Tarsus. Because he was a devout Pharisee he actually thought that by persecuting believers he was offering service to God (John 16:2). We read in Acts 8:3 that Saul "made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison." Equipped with authority from the chief priests, he went about hunting Christians. He went from house to house, very thoroughly rooting out Christians. He did his job with great zeal and persistent diligence. The chief priests must have been very proud of him. The Jerusalem church was scattered under his attacks.

As chapter 9 opens we read that Saul was "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord." Stamping out Christianity had become the goal and focus of his life. Ever since the death of Stephen he took it upon himself to destroy the church and the followers of Christ. Saul was filled with inner hatred. Everything he thought, said, and did, was controlled by his desire to destroy Christianity. The air that he breathed was that of threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord (disciples here meaning believers). Having made havoc of the church in Jerusalem, successfully scattering the members, Saul decided to continue his mission elsewhere. Hearing of a group of Christians in Damascus, Saul decided to make that his next target. Verses 1 and 2 say that he went to the High Priest and "asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." The High Priest was the head of the Sanhedrin, and was therefore granted a certain amount of authority by the Romans. The High Priest had the power to issue warrants for arrests of Christians in Damascus. Saul therefore went to the High Priest for this official documentation, which I'm sure the High Priest was more than happy to grant.

Notice how brutal Saul was. He didn't care if they were men or women. His plan was to bring them bound to Jerusalem. To walk from Damascus to Jerusalem took about 5 or 6 days, being approximately 150 miles. Saul was going to take women from their families, husbands from their wives, parents from their children, and drive them like cattle for 5 or 6 days from Damascus to Jerusalem. He didn't care if lives were destroyed, families were broken, and marriages were torn apart. His single focus was to bring a halt to this spreading Christianity. These people of "The Way", as they were called, followers of Jesus who claimed to be "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6) - these people of "The Way" had to be stopped.

You see, my friends, Saul was very religious. He was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures, he knew the Law and the Prophets - but he was unregenerate. He was dead in trespasses and sins. What he thought were good works in the eyes of God, were evil works. Instead of a servant of God, he was a servant of Satan. He was born in the covenant, circumcised the eighth day, and observed the law as a faithful Pharisee - but he was living in spiritual darkness; dead in

sin. Saul in his spiritual blindness missed the whole point of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament Scriptures all pointed to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25-27). Saul was circumcised externally, but not internally. His circumcision should have been to him a seal of the righteousness of faith - faith in Jesus Christ. His circumcision should have pointed him to the need for the circumcision of the heart. Saul was zealous for religious traditions, but he was unregenerate and antagonistic to Jesus Christ.

This can also happen in the church today. Someone can be born and raised in the church, and marked with the sign of the covenant in baptism; he may be zealous for the traditions of his fathers, and yet be unregenerate. Just like Saul, we can have a false security in the covenant without faith in Jesus Christ. How dangerous this can be in the church!

(2) By God's grace Saul was delivered from this life of religious deception. As he made his way to Damascus he was stopped dead in his tracks. We read in verse 3 that suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. As the light shone around him from heaven, Saul and his travelling companions fell to the ground (Acts 26:14). There are those who have tried to explain this experience as being the result of an epileptic seizure or sunstroke. Clearly, this was not the case. The account in Acts 22 and 26 record the fact that it was not only Saul, but also those who travelled with him who saw the light and fell to the ground. No, this was not a fit of epilepsy or sunstroke, it was **an encounter with the risen Jesus Christ**. In Acts 26, Paul says that he saw a light that was brighter than the sun. Jesus appeared to him in great glory! Saul, the bold, fearless, hardened persecutor of Christians was driven to the dust in terror!

As he lay there prostrate on the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" What a frightening, disturbing, and penetrating question that must have been for Saul, "Why are you persecuting Me?" Saul said, "Who are you Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am **Jesus**, whom you are persecuting." Jesus? The imposter? The false Messiah? The trouble-maker? What a life-shattering revelation this must have been! At this very moment Saul's whole world collapsed. Everything he had learned, and believed, and fought for, crumbled at this encounter with Christ. What a devastating moment this must have been as he discovered that his enemy, Jesus Christ, was in fact the Lord! Stephen was right after all! The Christians in Jerusalem were right after all! Saul was fighting for the wrong side! Jesus was alive, raised from the dead, exalted in glory. Christianity was true! The Gospel was true! The crucified Christ is indeed the Lord!

It is hard to imagine what must have raced through Saul's mind as he lay in the dust before Jesus Christ. "How could I have been so deceived? How could I be so foolish? How could I be so blind? How could I be so ignorant?" By persecuting Christians, Saul was inflicting blows directly on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ identifies Himself with His people, "Why are you persecuting **Me**?" Every arrest that Saul made on earth was an attack against Christ in Heaven. Every evil word spoken to believers on earth was an evil word against Christ in Heaven. Every stone against Stephen was a stone against Christ. Every home broken into was an assault upon Christ. Saul had not just been sinning against believers, but against Christ the Lord.

The risen Lord said to him, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." For all this time, Saul had been like an unwilling ox who kicks back only to feel the pain of the sharp goads. When the ox kicks back, in stubborn disobedience, it leads to pain. For all his life Saul had been fighting against God, and it resulted in pain. A life apart from Jesus Christ is a difficult life, a painful life. Until Jesus confronted him, he continued to kick against the goads.

But now Saul's resistance was crushed. He was broken by his Lord. He was overcome by the guilt of his crimes and the weight of his sin. Look at verse 6: "So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" In fear and trembling he surrendered himself to the Christ that he once hated. He submitted himself in reverential awe to the Lord Jesus Christ. Trembling and astonished, he said, "What do you want me to do?" He had no other option but to devote his life to the Lord Jesus Christ, the living glorious Lord. Here we see, my friends, the evidence of true conversion. One who is brought from death to life surrenders his will to the will of Christ. One who is born-again by the Spirit of God gives himself to serve Jesus Christ. One who is truly regenerated is willing to leave his old life forever behind him, in order to serve the Master.

"Lord, what do you want me to do?" Dear reader, have you ever asked that of the Lord? Have you ever come to that profound awareness of your sin? Have you ever realized the enormity of your guilt before God? Perhaps you have never persecuted believers, as Saul did, but **your** sin is also worthy of hell. Have you fallen in reverential awe before Jesus Christ, and said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee." "Lord, I don't want to kick against the goads. I don't want to live in stubborn rebellion against Your will. Lord, what do you want me to do?" Have you surrendered your will to the will of Christ in that way?

Saul was broken. He was crushed. A broken and a contrite heart God will not despise (Psalm 51:17). The Lord did not destroy him for his sin, but rather he told him to "arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." God was going to use this man in a wonderful and mighty way. God would reveal His will to him in the city of Damascus.

Now, while all this was going on, we read in verse 7 that "the men who journeyed with him stood speechless hearing a voice but seeing no one." Acts 26 says that they had all fallen to the ground when they saw the brilliance of the light. Now they stood speechless. They heard a voice, but they were not able to understand the words that were spoken. Notice the particularity of God's Grace. Of this group of men the Lord Jesus Christ singled out **one** man - Saul - as the object of His grace. God is sovereign in the salvation of sinners. Saul was no better than the others. He was the ring-leader. He later referred to himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Yet, God chose him as the special object of His mercy. No wonder Paul would later write with such fondness of the electing grace of God, having chosen His own in Christ from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1). Paul came to understand the privilege of being a recipient of God's electing love.

And so we read in verse 8 that "Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus." Saul's entry into the city of Damascus was very different than what he had planned. Instead of entering as the bold and fearless persecutor of Christians, he entered as a helpless blind man being led by the hand. He was in the city of Damascus three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. He had three days without any distractions to contemplate his encounter with Christ. He had time to meditate, to restructure his thinking, and to pray. What a remarkable turn of events this was. He who had come to battle the Christian faith was himself conquered by the Christian faith. He who had gone to Damascus to make prisoners was himself a prisoner in his blindness. For three days he fasted. For three days he communed with God. For three days he considered what the Lord would have him do. Physically he was blind, but spiritually he was now able to see. He was brought from death into life. The encounter with Christ was the great turning point in his life.

(3) We come, then, to consider the third point, namely, **the guidance of Christ**. We have seen the antagonism to Christ, and the encounter with Christ; now the guidance of Christ.

Saul was not left on his own in the city of Damascus. While he was in darkness for three days the Lord was preparing the way for him to be received into the Christian church, which he had hoped to destroy. The exalted Christ was guiding the way. Verse 10 says that there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias. Acts 22:12 describes him as a "devout man", and "well spoken of by all the Jews." Ananias was a godly man, perhaps one of the leaders in the church of Damascus. If he was one of the leaders of the church, he would have been one of Saul's first victims. Ironically, it is this very man that Jesus appointed to go to Saul. We read in verses 10-12 that the Lord appeared to him in a vision and said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

While Saul was fasting in his blindness, meditating upon his Damascus road experience, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to Ananias and gave him a task to do. What an incredible test this must have been for Ananias. Saul of Tarsus was widely known for his violence against the church. He was greatly feared. Imagine how Ananias must have felt when the Lord gave him this message, "Arise and go to the house of Judas and inquire for one called Saul of Tarsus." The Lord told Ananias that Saul was praying. He was pouring his heart out to the Lord. He also told Ananias about His vision to Saul. The Lord had informed Saul, in a vision, that Ananias was coming to restore his sight.

Nevertheless, Ananias was understandably reluctant. Verse 13 says, "then Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.'" The church in Damascus had heard all about Saul's persecution in Jerusalem. When the Christians fled from Jerusalem, some of them probably ended up in Damascus. Therefore, the Christian community in Damascus was fully aware of the

danger. It would appear that what the Lord was asking of Ananias was suicidal. To go to the home where Saul was staying was like walking into a death trap. I trust that any one of us would be reluctant.

But the Lord overruled the objection of Ananias with the words of verses 15 and 16. The Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." God said to Ananias, "I have chosen him. I have chosen him for a special task. The man that you fear is going to bear the gospel you love. The man that you fear is going to preach the gospel of salvation. He is going to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles. He is going to preach Christ before kings. He is going to preach Christ to the children of Israel."

If you follow the life of the apostle Paul you see that these words were perfectly fulfilled. Paul became the great apostle to the Gentile world. In his epistles he often states his calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He also testified before kings; King Agrippa, and perhaps even Caesar. And on numerous occasions he had opportunity to address the Jews. And as he proclaimed the Word, you know how much he suffered. His suffering did not end until he died. Already, shortly after his conversion, his suffering began as the Jews plotted to kill him in this very chapter. Saul, who had persecuted others, would himself be persecuted. Saul, who hated others, would himself be hated.

Well, Ananias obeyed the word of the Lord and went to the street called Straight, and found the house of Judas where Saul was residing. Verse 17 says, "He entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'" Isn't this a very striking scene? Saul, who had come to lay his hands upon believers to **harm** them, instead has the hands of a believer layed upon him to **heal** him. He had planned to lay hands on Christians to arrest them. Instead, the hands of a Christian are layed upon him to restore him to health. Rather than the Christians being hurt under Saul's persecuting hands, Saul is helped under a Christian's healing hands. The ones that he hated have come to help him.

And notice how Ananias addressed this feared persecutor of the church. In verse 17 he said to him, "**Brother Saul.**" Brother Saul? Is this man a brother? This man who assisted in killing the children of God? Brother Saul? This man who scattered the church in Jerusalem? At this very moment he may have still had the documents in his pocket, granting permission from the High Priest to arrest Christians. And yet, Ananias calls him "Brother". Instead of despising him, Ananias accepted him, and welcomed him as a true brother in Christ. Saul was adopted into the family of God. Through the regenerating power of God he was made a son, and thus a brother of Ananias. How it must have touched Saul's heart to hear Ananias call him "Brother".

Furthermore, Ananias not only promised that Saul would regain his sight, but verse 17 says that he would also be "filled with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit was already present in Saul's life on the road to Damascus. It was the Holy Spirit who convicted him

of sin. It was the Holy Spirit that brought about regeneration. It was the Holy Spirit that caused him to say, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" It was the Holy Spirit that drove him to prayer and fasting for three days. But now the Holy Spirit is promised to come upon him in order to equip and empower him for service. The Holy Spirit would equip him in a unique way, so that he might faithfully serve his Lord.

As Ananias laid his hands upon Saul, immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized (verse 18). By receiving baptism Saul openly identified himself with the people that he had formerly persecuted and despised. He also openly identified himself with the Name of Jesus Christ. He was baptized into the Name of the triune God; the Father who adopted him, the Son who purchased him, and the Holy Spirit who converted him and dwelt in him. And following his baptism, Saul immediately joined in the fellowship of the believers. Verse 19 says, "And when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus."

What wonderful days they must have been, both for Saul, as well as for the church in Damascus! After overcoming their fear of him they must have rejoiced in the Grace of God! How they must have celebrated his conversion! What overwhelming joy there must have been in the salvation of this seemingly unsavable sinner. What an encouragement of the Lord to this once fearful church!

How gracious is the Lord our God! He saves the unsavable. He redeems the unredeemable. He is able to take the most unlikely candidate, and drive him to his knees. **He is able to do this also today.** If you are a believer with a rebellious son or daughter or neighbour or husband or wife, you may give up hope, but God is able to bring them to their knees. He takes sinners and molds them and shapes them as a potter shapes a vessel for his own purpose. And then he uses that vessel for His own Glory!

(4) In verses 20-22 we see how the Lord immediately began to use Saul in a positive way. His commitment to Christ was instantly evident. Being transformed by the Grace of God he could not help but speak of it. Verse 20 tells us, "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." Of all places he went to the synagogues! In verse 2 of this chapter he asked for letters from the High Priest, that he could present at the synagogues of Damascus, authorizing him to arrest Christians. Now, instead of coming to the synagogues with warrants for the arrest of believers, Paul came to the synagogues with the arresting message of the gospel. He preached that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The result of his preaching was that "all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" (verse 21). The whole community was shocked at the radical change in this man. He expounded the Old Testament in a whole new light. He proclaimed Christ as the central message of the Old Testament. As the people listened to him they wondered: Is **this** the same man? Is **this** the same Saul of Tarsus? Is **this** the same ardent defendent of Judaism? The people of

Damascus could not comprehend the transformation in this man. With the same energy that he once opposed Christianity, he now defended and promoted Christianity. Having been its greatest opponent, he became its greatest promoter.

We read in verse 22 that "Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ." Being filled with the Holy Spirit, Saul increased in strength. All his former education was now used for the advancement of the gospel; the truth of salvation in Jesus Christ the Messiah. No one was able to stand against him. No one was able to match his grasp of Scripture. No one was able to prove him in error. No one was able to challenge the truth. Having been regenerated by the Spirit of God Saul could not help but proclaim the glorious message of salvation through faith in Christ.

Now dear reader, if you have come to understand the forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ, then your commitment to Him **must** become clearly evident to those around you. Your commitment to Christ **must** become clearly visible in your works. It **must** become evident that the Holy Spirit is at work in your life. People **need** to see the difference in your life, that you are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

You have not had a dramatic encounter with Christ, as Saul did on the road to Damascus. Saul was chosen as an apostle, and therefore he had to have seen the risen Christ - that was one of the marks of an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:1 ; 15:8 ; Acts 1:22). But, even though you have not seen the risen Christ personally, it is the same Spirit who transformed Saul that also works in his people today. It is the Spirit of Christ that brings sinners from death to life; from darkness to light.

If you do not know the transforming power of the Spirit in **your** life, plead with the Lord, that He might dwell with you. Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13)

Then ask Him! Ask Him for the Spirit! Ask Him to transform you as a useful vessel to the glory of God, that your works might be pleasing to Him. You might never be a great preacher or missionary as Paul was, but the Lord will nevertheless use you as the Spirit controls you. He will use you in your home, church, community, and at the job. As He uses you, you might experience suffering for the Name of Christ. You might experience opposition and rejection. You might experience hatred on account of the Word. But God will guide you every step of the way! As He led the apostle Paul, so He will lead you.

Then trust in Him. Walk with Him. And offer yourself to His service saying, "Lord, what do you want me to do? Lord, what do you want me to do? Here I am! Use me as your servant. Use me to the honour of your name."

Endnotes:

[1] Lord's Day 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism - Question and Answer 7 and 8

Where does man's corrupt nature come from?

From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise. (Genesis 3) This fall has so poisoned our nature (Romans 5:12-19), that we are born sinners - corrupt from conception on. (Psalm 51:5)

But are we so evil and corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good, and inclined toward all evil?

Yes (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isaiah 53:6), unless we are born again, by the Spirit of God. (John 3:3-5)

Islam United?

A Comparison of Shi'ite and Sunni Belief and Practice

To the casual Western observer, the religion of Islam often appears as a monolithic entity. This image of Islam is often reinforced from various directions. Spike Lee's recent motion picture *Malcolm X* shows the famed black leader, turning away from the aberrant and racist [Nation of Islam](#), to the real Islam portrayed in the hajj - Malcolm's pilgrimage to Mecca. In Mecca, Malcolm, along with the moviegoers, is powerfully impressed with the cohesiveness and sense of oneness in Islam. Malcolm becomes a devout Muslim, striving to do good and help the oppressed after his return to America. The prevailing concept of the oneness of Islam is further reinforced by Muslims who often argue that the differences within Islam are minor and inconsequential, especially in contrast to the numerous denominations and sects found under the banner of Christianity in the world of today. Yet, despite the images and affirmations the question remains: how valid is the assertion that Islam is united in essential belief, though differing in minor points? In order to begin to answer this question, and to develop a deeper understanding of Islam, the historical origins, theological and legal distinctives, and the practical ramifications of the variations within Islam must be examined. The focus of this article is to compare Shiite with Sunni Islam.

The Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his introduction to Allamah Tabatabai's *Shiite Islam*, states, "the issues which .. arise [in a comparison of Shiism and Sunni Islam] .. if presented without the

Reference Notes:

¹ Allamah Tabatabai, *Shiite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975).

²Tabatabai, 6.

³Tabatabai, 8.

⁴Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 1990), ix.

⁵Tabatabai, 39.

⁶Tabatabai, 41.

⁷Bernard Lewis,

proper safeguards and without taking into account the audience involved could only be detrimental to the sympathetic understanding of Islam itself." ¹ Attempting to explain differences Nasr argues that in Islam "real peace or salvation lies in Unity through this divinely ordained diversity and not in its rejection."² However, "Shiism and Sunnism must not cease to be what they are and what they always have been... [and] therefore [Shiism] must be presented in all its fullness, even in those aspects which contradict Sunni interpretations.." ³ Nasr's concern to maintain the unity of Islam is evident as he attempts to reconcile this with the differences within Islam, yet his statements lead one to wonder whether he believes contradictions are divinely ordained. Other religious scholars are more skeptical in light of what they view as a prevalent uncritical approach to the study of Islam. Andrew Rippin argues that "such naive historical study seems to suggest that Islam is being approached with less than academic candour."⁴

In order to fully understand Shiism and how it differs from Sunni Islam, the historical origins of Shiism must be considered. According to Allamah Tabatabai, the history of Shiism begins with Muhammad's acceptance of Ali's response to the invitation to become successor and inheritor.⁵ Upon the death of Muhammad, the majority of the Muslims quickly selected a caliph - who was not Ali. The minority group who protested this decision became known as the party or shi`ah of Ali.⁶ Here, according to Shiites, is the beginning of Shiism. However, Bernard Lewis, professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, disagrees with this as being evidence of the distinctive historical origin of Shiism. He states,

The early history of Shi`ism is still very obscure. Most of the expositions that have come down to us are the work of theologians, both Sunni and Shi`ite... They were all written at later dates and often read back into the past the ideas and conflicts of later times. In doing so, they tend to systemize and stabilize much that was shifting and chaotic. In time, the Shi`a crystallized... marking them off from Sunni Islam... In early times this had not yet happened. The Muslims were still a single community, in which various groups formed and broke up, following different doctrines and leaders and changing them with bewildering ease.⁷

According to John L. Esposito, "the revolt of Ali's son Husayn, led to the division of the Islamic community into its two major branches, Sunni and Shii."⁸ Whatever the case may be of actual historical origins, in order to understand the fundamental beliefs of Shiism, and to see how they differ from Sunnism, it is important to understand what

Islam in History (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 298.

⁸John L. Esposito, *Islam - The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 45.

⁹Tabatabai, 40.

¹⁰Tabatabai, 40.

¹¹Tabatabai, 57.

¹²Tabatabai, 57.

¹³Tabatabai, 59.

¹⁴Esposito, 45.

¹⁵Tabatabai, 232.

¹⁶Esposito, 45.

¹⁷Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 173.

¹⁸Rippin, 107.

¹⁹Rippin, 48.

²⁰Rahman, 174.

²¹Rippin, 110.

²²Tabatabai, 210; Esposito, 46.

²³Esposito, 47.

²⁴These terms respectively refer to: belief in divine unity, prophecy, resurrection, the

Shiism views as its own historical origin and development.

The Shiite scholar, Allamah Tabatabai, as stated previously, sees the roots of Shiism in Muhammad's acceptance of Ali as his successor. According to Tabatabai, Muhammad "clearly asserted that Ali was preserved from error and sin in his actions and sayings."⁹ Not only was "whatever he said and did in perfect conformity with the teachings of religion" but "he was [also] the most knowledgeable of men in matters pertaining to Islamic sciences and injunctions."¹⁰ After the death of Ali, the Shiites became a often persecuted minority - especially under the reign of Mu`awiyah.¹¹ The second Imam, Hasan, was killed under Mu`awiyah.¹² Husayn, the third Imam, along with numerous citizens of Medina were massacred under the authority of Yazid, the son of Mu`awiyah, during his reign as caliph.¹³ According to John Esposito, the memory of these and following tragedies and martyrdoms "provided the paradigm of suffering and protest that has guided and inspired Shii Islam."¹⁴ Not found in Sunni Islam, the ideas of martyrdom and survival through persecution have become a distinct part of Shiite religion, and are celebrated and remembered during the lunar months of Muharram and Safar.¹⁵

One of the central and distinctive Shiite doctrines, and an integral part of Shiite history, is the doctrine of the Imamate. The Shii Imam is the leader of the Shiite Muslim community and "must be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and Ali, the first Imam."¹⁶ The Imam is "both sinless and absolutely infallible in his pronouncements on dogma and, indeed, in all matters."¹⁷ A sign of Allah's goodness towards mankind, the Imam enables the salvation of the creation by "providing a sure guide in the world and a certain answer to issues of dispute."¹⁸ Andrew Rippin states "[Allah's] mercy and justice indicate that there can never be a time when the world is without an Imam, for if that were so, people would have no guidance and there would be no proof available of [Allah's] mercy towards His creation."¹⁹ Some more extreme Shii sects believe the Imam is "an incarnation of Allah and a bearer of the divine substance."²⁰ All Shiites believe that one of the Imam's functions is to intercede on behalf of his followers in the hereafter.²¹

The majority of Shiites believe there have been twelve Imams, with Muhammad al-Muntazar, also known as Sahib al-Zaman (the Lord of the Age), being the twelfth Imam.²² The twelfth Imam is believed not to have died, but has entered occultation - or to have disappeared. Yet, Shiites believe he will return "at the end of the world to vindicate his loyal followers, restore the community to its rightful place, and usher in a perfect Islamic society in which truth and justice will prevail."²³

Imamate (the Imams as successors of Muhammad), and divine justice. Tabatabai, 11.

²⁵Tabatabai, 11.

²⁶Esposito, 45.

²⁷Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the preface to Allamah Tabatabai's work describes walayut (also spelled walayah) as "the esoteric function of interpreting the inner mysteries of the Holy Quran and the Shari`ah." Tabatabai, 10.

²⁸Tabatabai, 10.

²⁹This concept relates directly to the Shii doctrine of ijtihad. Mahmud Ramyar, "Ijtihad and Marja`iyat," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, et al., *Shiism - Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 233.

³⁰"Authority in Twelver Shiism in the Absence of the Imam" in Wilfred Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985),

As Allamah Tabatabai states, the five Shiite principles of religion are *tawhid*, *nubuwwah*, *ma`ad*, *imamah*, and *`adl*.²⁴ Sunnism and Shiism agree on *tawhid*, *nubuwwah* and *ma`ad*, but differ on the other two.²⁵ The doctrine of the Imamate or *imamah*, creates a number of distinct differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam. Sunnis do not accept this doctrine, and consequently do not see the Imams as infallible, sinless, or as a source of absolute religious authority.²⁶ Shiites believe that after the occultation of the twelfth Imam, the divine light or *walayat*²⁷ was passed on to the mujtahid or more specifically to the ayatullahs, who "act as the interpreter of religion for the religious community."²⁸ When the mujtahids are "unanimous on a religious precept and there are no objections.. [it is] proof that an infallible (imam) is satisfied."^{29 30}

The doctrine of the Imamate, however, leads to much deeper differences between the Shiites and Sunnis. According to Sunni scholar Fazlur Rahman, "the Shi`a.. which differs from orthodoxy doctrinally, also has an entirely separate body of Hadith."³¹ Shiites, in contrast to Sunnis, accept the hadiths of Muhammad and the Imams, as being of equal importance and validity.³² The Shi`a also have different interpretations for parts of the Quran.³³ According to the Sunnis "there is nothing in the Quran and the Tradition to support the Shii claim that the Imamate is one of the 'pillars' of religion."³⁴ However, Shiites, especially in areas concerning the Imamate and esoteric interpretation of the Quran, disagree with Sunni interpretation and construction of Quranic verses - as in Surah 3:7.³⁵ Another conflict of Quranic interpretation is Surah 3:110, where the Shiites instead of reading the Arabic word *umma* in reference to peoples or community, read the word *a'imma* in reference to the Imams.³⁶ As the Shiites also historically do not accept the caliphs as the legitimate leaders of the Islamic community, there is the "tendency to suggest modifications to the [Quranic] text - citing additions, omissions, changes and alterations to the version promulgated by Uthman."³⁷ The importance of these discrepancies is far reaching as the Quran and Hadith are the sources of authority for both Islamic law and theology.³⁸ These serious questions about the essential foundations of Islam remain unresolved to the present.³⁹

Mohammed Arkoun, in the book *Islam: State and Society*, deals with the inter-related disciplines of *Usul al-fiqh* and *Usul al-din*.⁴⁰ The *Usul al-fiqh* is accepted as authoritative and is a part of *`aqida* or all beliefs and propositions accepted by Muslims without questioning and as a matter of faith.⁴¹ Here is where the differences between the Shiite and Sunni Hadith present a glaring problem. As Arkoun states "the Quran and Hadith are accepted as stable, objective sources of the Law," yet, "the Hadith is presented in two very different corpus: the Sunni (Bukhari, Muslim and others) and the Shii (Kulayni, Ibn Babuya)."⁴²

163-172.

³¹Rahman, 65.

³²Nasr, 35.

³³A.J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 17-19.

³⁴Nasr, 75.

³⁵The Shiites believe the verse should read "and none knows its interpretation, save only Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge; they say.." The Sunni interpretation places a period after Allah, a point Shiites reject as they believe this verse refers directly to the Imams. Arberry, 17.

³⁶Rippin, 105.

³⁷Rippin, 105.

³⁸Andrew Rippin and Jan Knappert, *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 12, 15.

³⁹For further information see [Textual Variants of the Quran](#)

Arkoun continues to say, "add to this fact that the divergent readings and interpretations make the Usul less authoritative than it claims."⁴³ A consequence of the Usul al-fiqh being accepted as authoritative, "is that the authors must have reached the perfect required knowledge of Arabic so that there is no need for any revision of their work."⁴⁴ This consequence, when met with the prevailing problems of Quranic interpretation between Shiites and Sunnis throughout Islamic history, leaves grave doubts about the authority of Islamic Sharia. Arkoun agrees, stating "if we raise problems of reading according to modern linguistics and semiotics ... we can start a task never undertaken in Islamic thought: the critique of Islamic reason."⁴⁵ Arkoun goes on to show that within Shiism, the Shii theory of ijthihad which relies on the authority of the Imams and marja' al-taqlid, is open to criticism in the same manner.⁴⁶ Yet, in the scope of this article, the contradictory differences between Shiism and Sunnism in the area of Quran and Hadith are the most important, as they create solid evidence for a serious problem in Islam, caused by what otherwise might be excused as minor differences.

Aside from differing inheritance laws, the Shiite law or Sharia is largely similar to that of Sunni Islam.⁴⁷ Yet for the Shiites, a body of Hadith distinct from that of the Sunnis is the basis for religious ritual in which the Sunnis do not partake. One of these is the passion play during the month of Muharram, part of the festival of Ashura - a commemoration of the martyrdom of Husayn.⁴⁸ "There are also at this time elaborate street processions in which people chant, cry and sometimes beat themselves in order to participate in the passion of the Imam."⁴⁹ Though many traditional Sunnis do not accept art forms depicting human beings, or practice drama, the Shii do.⁵⁰ Pilgrimage to holy places such as the tombs of Imams and saints also has a greater emphasis in Shiism than Sunnism.⁵¹

Some of the other distinctly Shiite beliefs and practices include *taqiyah* and *mutah*.⁵² Taqiyah is when "a man hides his religion or certain of his religious practices in situations that would cause definite or probable danger as a result of the actions of those who are opposed to his religion or particular religious practices."⁵³ This doctrine is based in part on Surah 3:28, and Surah 16:106.⁵⁴ The second practice, mutah, is based on the historical precedent set by the actions of the companions of Muhammad, such as Zubayr al-Sahabi, as well as the teachings of the Imams, both of which are contained in their Hadith.⁵⁵

The differences between Shiism and Sunnism are numerous with many details, as well as larger topics such as eschatology and divine justice, left untouched in this article. Though this article has dealt primarily with the beliefs and practice of twelver Shiites, there are also numerous

⁴⁰The term Usul al-fiqh refers to epistemology and methodology of the Sharia or Law, while the term Usul al-din refers to theology. Mohammed Arkoun, "The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought," in Klaus Ferdinand and Mehdi Mozaffari, eds. *Islam: State and Society* (London: Curzon Press, 1988), 62.

⁴¹Arkoun, 62.

⁴²Arkoun, 63.

⁴³Arkoun, 63.

⁴⁴Arkoun, 63.

⁴⁵Arkoun, 63.

⁴⁶Arkoun, 63.

⁴⁷Joseph Schact, *An Introduction To Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 16.

⁴⁸Tabatabai, 232-233.

⁴⁹Tabatabai, 233.

⁵⁰Rippin, 98-99.

⁵¹Tabatabai, 232.

⁵²Taqiyah refers to the practice of dissimulation, and mutah to temporary

other sects within Shiism such as the Zaydi, Isma`ili, Nizari, Musta`lis, Druze, and Muqanna`ah.⁵⁶ Some scholars also argue that the Babi, Baha`i, and Batini sects should be considered as derivatives of Shiism, though Shiite scholars such as Allamah Tabatabai say they "should not in any sense be considered as branches of Shiism."⁵⁷ However, even the very existence of different sects of Islam ought be viewed as a deep dilemma within Islam in light of Quranic injunction:

"And be ye not among those who join gods with Allah, those who split up their religion and become sects, each party rejoicing in that which is within itself!" (Surah 30:31-32)

"As for those who divide their religion and break into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least." (Surah 6:159)

marriage.
Tabatabai, 223-230.

⁵³Tabatabai, 223.

⁵⁴Tabatabai, 223.

⁵⁵Tabatabai, 227-228.

⁵⁶Tabatabai, 75-85.

⁵⁷Tabatabai, 76.

In conclusion, while it is true that Shiism and Sunnism are united in many ways, the blatant differences in fundamental areas, such as the composition and interpretation of the Quran and Hadith, leave profound problems for Islam as a body of religious belief. Many Islamic scholars and leaders, for whatever motivation, have chosen to continue to avoid or ignore this difficult reality. The questions remain unanswered.

As Christians, our response is that it is clear that Islam is not a unified, coherent body, as so often is claimed in contrast to the apparent differences between various Christian denominations. Indeed the differences between conservative Protestant (Christian) groups which hold to the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, infallible and complete Word of God show far more unity, the differences being a result of interpretation of Scripture, rather than having differing scriptures as within the body of Islam.

We believe the central problem of Islam is not merely its lack of formal adequacy in its claims of religious authority (the problem not only of conflicting internal claims as seen between Shiite and Sunni, but also of revelation in the Quran and Hadith which conflict with the Judeo-Christian Scripture, which the Muslim sources claim as being their own roots, albiet now "corrupted.")but perhaps more profoundly the lack of material adequacy -- Islam fails to honestly and adequately deal with how sinful man can ever be renewed to fellowship with a perfectly Holy and Just God. Islam claims that a simple adherence to the "five pillars" is all that is ultimately required. True enough, the hadith allow for many more, at times conflicting practices aimed to earn righteousness; but if God is Holy and who He is claimed to be, then only complete righteousness, a fully pure and holy life, can meet up to His standards for living. No individual can hope to be absolutely

perfect in heart and action; and indeed even if one were so from this moment on it would not eradicate the debt owed for previous sins and shortcomings, but would merely be giving what is owed to God at that present moment of life. It would not annul previous wrong. The Bible alone clearly and adequately deals with the situation of sinful individuals before a truly Holy God. There it is clearly shown that the heart problem of every individual, the evils in this world are rooted in the sinfulness of the human heart. The message of the Gospel (Injil) is that the One True and Holy God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem men from their sins; to pay for what they could never hope to pay by all their good deeds. The life of the Christian (one who trusts in Jesus as Lord and Saviour) then is dedicated to striving to live a holy life out of thankfulness for the forgiveness one has asked for and received from God, through Jesus Christ. The motivation is not fear, or the desire to try one's best to be good enough in the sight of our Holy and Righteous God to be allowed into eternal paradise; no it is thankfulness and gratitude for the gift of salvation freely offered to all who long to live rightly before God, who realize their sinfulness, and trust in the work of Jesus to forgive.

Jesus said,

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8: 12) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:16-21)

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"The parable of those who take protectors other than God is that of the Spider,
Who makes for itself a house;
but truly the flimsiest of houses is the Spider's house;
If they but knew."

Quran 29:41

"Weave no more with soot and slime of your thought,
Like the spider, the web of rotten warp
While you are silent, His speech is your speech
While you weave not, He is the weaver"

Jalal Al-Din Rumi

Sufi Psychology

Psychology has provided us with a useful body of knowledge regarding personality formation, its function and dysfunction. Psychotherapy has provided us with the means to better understand psychological problems and the tools to alleviate dysfunction and cope with life in a more effective way. However, psychology inherently contains certain limitations as it does not and cannot fully address the reality of an expanded consciousness or the spiritual connection in the journey of life. Therefore, psychology (as it is generally practised), only represents a part of the whole.

Sufi psychology on the other hand, is a well detailed and holistic process that enables the person to better understand the structure of its self and its soul and the connection of its soul to God. It embraces psychology, traditional spirituality, metaphysics and ontology and it is grounded in the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, using the outer as well as inner meanings. The prophet of Islam (pbuh) has said that the Quran contains an external meaning and seven layers of internal meanings. These inner meanings form the light that can be shone upon the true structures of man's personality/ego, exposing a profound reality that extends beyond our mere perception of it.

Generally speaking, the various schools of psychology have one goal and purpose in mind: to help a psychologically unhealthy individual become more functional and better adjusted according to the norms of a given society. It is assumed that the completion of this process will result in 'happiness'. From a spiritual perspective, even a well adjusted person still perceives his personality to be 'real' and often remains unconscious to his soul and spirit. This seeming reality undoubtedly causes inner turmoil and anxiety. Sufi psychology, which existed long before the onset of modern psychology, goes beyond the ordinary treatment of so-called dysfunctions and directs itself towards a holistic existence, resulting in inner peace, harmony and balance.

In both psychology and spirituality, the first step requires the recognition that one is unhealthy. For example, a person could be quite neurotic without acknowledging it, and therefore continue his neurotic thought patterns and behaviours whilst believing that he is alright, and that it is other people who have a problem. Similarly, a person may be totally out of touch with Reality, perceiving this life to be the only reality, with no connection with his spiritual aspect, and existing in complete self/ego absorption, unaware of the fact that he is what is often called a 'lost soul'. Sufi psychology addresses the psychological as well as spiritual issues and facilitates the ultimate goal in which the individual can proceed down a path of self realisation and spiritual unfoldment. Spiritual psychology may provide the means to discover who we are, where we are going and what the purpose of our life's journey is.

Spiritual psychology in general, and Sufi psychology in particular, are concerned not only with this life and the function of the self within it, but also in the hereafter. They are concerned with both the descending and ascending journey of the soul, and evoke continuing knowledge of before and after the ego development, and methods of achieving the ultimate state of perfection. This is after all, what real self-transformation is all about - the journey from the self to the Ultimate Self which is the doorway to God-Consciousness.

"You search for the one who is with you.
You look for the looker - closer to you than you.
Don't rush outside.
Thaw like melting ice, and wash your self away."

Jalal Al-Din Rumi

Sufism/Irfan

For over fourteen centuries the broad Sufi traditions have contributed a body of literature and teachings through which the path of love and consciousness has flourished. Those who follow the Sufi path today are the inheritors of these immense treasures.

Sufism is the path of knowing God and journeying to God, where the purpose of life is realised and lived. It is about the struggle with the false self or ego (*nafs*) to reach the essential self, which is a reflection of the Divine Reality. Irfan (*gnosis*) is about realising the Divine Unity and the Divine Reality.

In the Holy Quran, in Surah Qaf, God says He is closer to us than our jugular vein. He whispers a call to every human heart to draw closer to Him and He has given us a vehicle to achieve this — Sufism, the mystical inner path of Islam.

Is the Sufi Path for everybody?

"If we compare Sufism to mountain climbing, we can state that potentially all people can climb Mt. Everest, but in actuality very few people are willing to undergo the training and have the muscles and the heart strong enough to reach the top of the mountain. Sufism is for all people in the sense that potentially all people can become Sufis, but in actuality 'many are called but few are chosen' as Christ said."

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

If you can hear the call and respond and persevere on this path, you will accomplish the goal of your life's journey.

"One thing must not be forgotten. Forget all else, but remember this, and you will have no regrets. Remember and be concerned with everything else, but ignore this one thing,

and you will have done nothing. It is as if a king sent you on a mission to a foreign land to perform one special task for him. If you do a hundred things, but not this appointed task, what have you accomplished? Human beings come into this world for a particular purpose, and if they forget it they would have done nothing at all. "

Jalal Al-Din Rumi

To find out more see [About Us](#) and [Sufi Psychology](#)

Sufism: The Mystical Side of Islam

And they say: "None shall enter Paradise unless He be a Jew or a Christian. Those are their desires." Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful." Sura 2:111

During the eighth and ninth centuries A.D., a new emphasis began to develop within the religion of Islam. This emphasis was a reaction against the prevailing impersonal and formal nature of Islam. For many Muslims the shari'a, while seen as necessary, failed to satisfy their deepest spiritual longings and desires. The search for deeper meaning began with a pietistic asceticism, which in turn led to the development of the popular mystical side of Islam - known as tasawwuf or Sufism.

The controversial nature of the subject of Sufism becomes evident when one realizes that this short introduction already reveals a viewpoint which the Sufi would strongly disagree with. For, if the Sufi spiritual quest is to be viewed as legitimate, even within Islam itself, it must be rooted in the Quran and the sunna of Muhammad. Andrew Rippin, in his work *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, states that "Sufis.. in their search for legitimation of their spiritual quest [must show] whether Islam as a religion contained within it a spiritual-ascetic tendency from the very beginning."¹

In defense of Sufi legitimacy, some Muslims argue that it was simply a response to the growing materialism in the Islamic world.² However, this argument skirts the basic reason for Sufism, as during early Islamic times under Muhammad's leadership, wealth was enjoyed and served as a great motivation for the military expansion of Islam. Muslims, at the time, followed a legal system allowing unbridled materialism, though they were fully observant of the present religious doctrine. The formal and legal nature of the Islamic system never addressed the issue of materialism, and as a result was seen as inadequate by those who became Sufis in their search for deeper spirituality. Consequentially, Islam was to all appearances a religion of

Reference Notes:

¹Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 118.

²[see Appendix A](#) - Sufism: An Interview with Imam Mohamad M. Algalaleni.

³Rippin, 118..

⁴Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 131..

⁵Rahman, 131..

⁶Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972), 11-12..

a decidedly unspiritual nature.

To admit this would be devastating to the religion of Islam. Yet, if Islam is to be defended as a spiritually adequate, Sufi doctrine and practice must be proven to be inherently Islamic in nature, as “to suggest that Islamic mysticism is, in fact, a borrowing from outside raises the spectre of denial of the intrinsically spiritual nature of Islam and thence the spiritual nature of Muslims themselves.”³

Thus we are left with several controversial, yet critically important questions. First, was Sufism present from the very beginnings of Islam, in the life of Muhammad and the Quran? Secondly, has Sufism borrowed from the outside - from other religions? And finally, how does the evidence for the answers to these questions reflect on the nature of Islam itself?

Sufism has influenced many Muslims, and is, especially in the West, portrayed and regarded as a valuable and legitimate part of the Islamic faith. Fazlur Rahman, in his work *Islam*, says that “considerable ink has been spent by modern scholarship on the ‘origins’ of Sufism in Islam, as to how far it is ‘genuinely’ Islamic and how far a product, in the face of Islam, of outside influences, particularly Christian and Gnostic.”⁴ Rahman seems to hint that some of this ink has been wasted, as he concludes that “outside influences must have played an accessory role and these no one may deny, but they must have supervened upon an initial native tendency.” However, aside from a vague reference to the ideas of trust in and love of Allah as being a result of “developments within the intellectual and spiritual life of the community,”⁵ Rahman fails to clarify or give any support to his claim that the essential and central basis of Sufism is Islamic.

Another Muslim scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his work *Sufi Essays*, expresses his disdain of “[scholars of Islam in the West] following the older practice of explaining Sufism away as some kind of alien influence within Islam,” and rejoices with the fact that “many are now willing to accept the Islamic origin of Sufism and the unbreakable link connecting Sufism to Islam.”⁶ While these are responses to the questions initially posed, they seem to be more concerned with the maintenance of the outward appearance of Islamic unity, than with critical academic research and appraisal.

Not only do these statements seem one-sided from a scholarly standpoint, but they also run counter to what Nasr terms “indigenous puritanical movements of a rationalist and anti-mystical kind”⁷ found within Islam. As one author succinctly states, the fact remains that within Islam, Sufism is often “frowned upon by Muslim orthodoxy, yet

⁷Nasr, 12..

⁸Tara Charan Rastogi, *Islamic Mysticism - Sufism* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1982), 1..

⁹Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufism* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1990), 15..

¹⁰Rippin, 119..

¹¹In Arabic “*Inna li'Llahi wa-inna ilayhi raji 'un.*” Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), 28..

¹²Lings, 32..

¹³Haqiqa refers to the ‘inner Truth’ or ‘inner Reality’ that Sufis believe is at the heart of Islamic revelation. William Stoddart, *Sufism - The Mystical Doctrines and Methods of Islam* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1986), 41..

¹⁴Eisegesis, or the practice of interpreting meaning into a passage, bears a striking resemblance to Sufi methods of Quranic

quite amazingly fawned upon and romantically fondled by Muslim masses.”⁸

In response to critics, Sufis argue that tasawwuf has been present from the very beginnings of Islam, and profess to find evidence for their claims in the sunna and the Quran. On this basis they state that tasawwuf “is the esoteric or inward (batin) aspect of Islam.”⁹

According to Sufi doctrine a number of verses in the Quran provide clear support for their mysticism. Perhaps the most often quoted as a proof is Surah 24:35, “*Allah is the Light of Heaven and Earth! His light may be compared to a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is just as if it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed olive tree, [which is] neither Eastern nor Western, whose oil will almost glow though the fire has never touched it. Light upon light, Allah guides anyone He wishes to His light.*”¹⁰ Another verse, often chanted in Sufi gatherings, and which the Sufis claim sums up the whole of Sufism is Surah 2:156, “*Verily we are for Allah, and verily unto Him we are returning.*”¹¹ A third often used verse is Surah 50:6, “*We (Allah) are nearer to him (man) than his jugular vein.*”¹² The Sufis believe that Muhammad has said that every verse of the Quran has ‘an outside and an inside’ - a belief clearly in line with their quest for the haqiqa.¹³ However, the very method of Quranic interpretation used by the Sufis in order to support their claims, can arguably be seen as a reliance on eisegesis rather than exegesis.¹⁴

Many of the traditions about the life of Muhammad which are often referred to by Sufis are not found in the major hadith collections (Bukhari, Muslim, Kulayni, Ibn Babuya), having been rejected by the collectors as unsound.¹⁵ However, within Sufi spheres the traditions are maintained - and viewed by Sufis as giving full legitimacy to the Sufi way of Islam. Yet, as Andrew Rippin suggests, “[this] simply indicates that they [Sufis] have, like all other Muslims, always gone back to the prime sources of Islam for inspiration as well as justification of their position.”¹⁶ The ulama regarding the shari‘a as the organizing principle in the life of the Islamic community, as the revealed way - guaranteed by Allah; have and continue to largely oppose Sufism.¹⁷ As one scholar has stated, “[opponents] have never been wanting; [Sufis’] beliefs have been refuted, their practices condemned, their dervishes ridiculed and occasionally executed, and their shaikhs castigated.”¹⁸ Thus the question remains whether the Quran and sunna were used for justification or inspiration, an area requiring extensive research which does not yet seem to have been undertaken.

As there is clearly no consensus on Sufi legitimacy as derived from the Quran and hadith, and as an adequate answer will require much more

interpretation. Orthodox Muslims opposed to Sufism argue that Sufi interpretations are indeed eisegesis - in other words the Sufis are ascribing an ‘inner’ meaning which the verses themselves do not contain. See also note 17 for further comment on Sufi self-legitimatization..

¹⁵Rippin, 119..

¹⁶Rippin, 120..

¹⁷Fazlur Rahman in his work *Islam* states, “the Sufis, in order to justify their stand, formulated (ie. verbally invented) statements, sometimes quite fanciful and historically completely fictitious, which they attributed to the Prophet.” Rahman, 134..

¹⁸J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), 246..

¹⁹Rippin, 120..

²⁰Nasr, 15..

²¹Burckhardt, 16..

²²Burckhardt, 16..

detailed study, it is presently impossible “for modern historians to take ‘objective’ facts from this type of material.”¹⁹ By the same token, Muslims cannot objectively argue Sufi origins from the Quran and hadith. Thus we are brought to the question of whether Sufism has borrowed from the outside - from other religions.

Titus Burckhardt, an Islamic scholar highly commended by Seyyed Hossein Nasr for his “truly authentic expositions of Sufism emanating from genuine teachings,”²⁰ objects, arguing in line with Sufi doctrine that “there is no adequate reason for doubting the historical authenticity of the spiritual ‘descent’ of the Sufi masters... in an unbroken chain back to the Prophet himself.”²¹ While Burckhardt chides orientalist for “being anxious to bring everything down to the historical level... and attributing the origins of Sufism to Persian, Hindu, Neoplatonic, or Christian sources,”²² the alternative he proposes is, as previously shown, simply inadequate from an objective and academic perspective.

In comparison to Nasr and Burckhardt, some Islamic scholars, such as Fazlur Rahman, take a more discriminate approach, admitting that popular Sufi preachers “exerted a powerful influence on the masses by enlarging Quranic stories with the aid of materials borrowed from all kinds of sources, Christian, Jewish, Gnostic, and even Bhuddist and Zoroastrian.”²³ Rahman even goes so far as to state that “a number of [foreign] ideas were introduced into Sufism and thence into popular Islam.”²⁴ However, rather than rejecting Sufism as essentially un-Islamic, he argues that Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d.1111) was the great reformer of Sufism, “purifying it of un-Islamic elements and putting it at the service of orthodox religion.”²⁵ Rahman recognizes that Ibn al-‘Arabi’s (d.1240) later and influential formulation of Sufi epistemology was absolutely unorthodox in its monism and pantheism, but seems to attempt to negate this by giving an immense list of Sufi and other Muslim thinkers who rejected portions of, or all of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s epistemology.^{26 27} Rahman concludes his chapter on Sufi doctrine with the declaration that,

“[the synthesis of Sufism and orthodoxy] provides us with a shining example of the fundamentally catholic genius of Islam - a panorama of continued tensions and challenges and of equally persistent efforts to resolve these tensions and meet these challenges in a process of modification, adaptation and absorption.”²⁸

While Rahman’s literary skills are clearly evident, his critical appraisal of Sufism essentially ends at al-Ghazali, subsequently revealing the tendency to act as an apologist by avoiding any further mention of un-Islamic elements in Sufism, focusing instead on the ‘catholic genius of

²³Rahman, 132..

²⁴Rahman, 133..

²⁵Rahman, 140. Other authors also agree with Rahman’s position on this point. A.J. Arberry argues that Abu Hamid al-Ghazali brought about Sufism’s reconciliation and assimilation with orthodox Sunni theology and religious law, through a number of writings consolidated in the *Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din*, which was written between 1099 and 1102 A.D. A.J. Arberry, *Sufism - An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), 74. .

²⁶Rahman, 148..

²⁷Ibn al-‘Arabi (1165-1240 A.D.) was one of the great Sufi masters of all time and is referred to as ‘The Greatest Shaikh’ (al-Shaykh al-Akbar). Muslim opinion has always been split about Ibn al-‘Arabi: for some he is a great heretic; for others, a great saint. Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press,

Islam’.

A thorough and critical examination of historical and present day Sufism, quickly reveals the influence of numerous religious ideas foreign to Islam. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who so vehemently argues against the idea that Sufism is based on religious practice and doctrine inherently alien to Islam, does admit that in his opinion, Zoroastrianism “had more intimate contact with Islam than did Manichaeism.”²⁹ Nasr states that in Persia “Zoroastrianism provided first of all a vocabulary for Sufi poets like Hafiz who often speak of the ‘fire-temple’, the Zoroastrian priest, etc., as symbols of the Sufi center (khaniqah or zawiyah), the spiritual master and so on.”³⁰ Nasr also states that “Zoroastrian angeology and cosmology were also resuscitated by Shibab al-Din Suhrawardi, the founder of the [Sufi] school of Illumination or Ishraq, who made these symbols transparent in the light of Islamic gnosis.”³¹ Though these assertions have a solid scholarly basis, they fly in the face of Nasr’s earlier attempts to declare Sufism a legitimate and original development of Islam. Nasr appears to realize the quandary he has placed himself in, attempting to resolve the dilemma with the declaration that “this manner of speaking, however, does not at all imply an historical influence of Zoroastrianism upon Sufism.”³² Most scholars would be perplexed by this rather illogical conclusion, especially when it is considered that Zoroastrianism as a religion predated Islam by over 1000 years.

The further one delves into Sufism from an academic perspective, the more clear it becomes that both the origins and content of Sufism clearly show the inclusion of religious ideas and influences contrary and contradictory to orthodox Islam. The scholar Elliot Miller states that “[being] based on experience rather than doctrine, Sufism has always been more open to outside influence than other forms of Islam... in addition to early influences from Christianity, one can find elements of Zoroastrianism, Neoplatonism, Hinduism, and other diverse traditions.”³³

Martin Lings, himself a practicing Sufi, in his work *What is Sufism?*, states that “Prince Dara Shikoh (d.1619), the Sufi son of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan, was able to affirm that Sufism and Advaita Vedantism [Hinduism] are essentially the same, with a surface difference of terminology.”³⁴ Prince Dara Shikoh was also responsible for the translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Yoga Vasishtha*, and the *Upanishads* into Persian.³⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr acknowledges that “many Sufis in India called Hinduism the religion of Adam,” and, “[the] orthodox Naqshbandi saint Mirza Mazhar Jan Janan considered the Vedas as divinely inspired.”³⁶

1992), 110..

²⁸Rahman, 149..

²⁹Nasr, 137..

³⁰Nasr, 138..

³¹Nasr, 138..

³²Nasr, 138..

³³Elliot Miller, “Sufis - The Mystical Muslims,” *Forward* (Spring/Summer 1986), 17-23..

³⁴Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), 99..

³⁵Dara Shikoh (also spelled Shukuh) was a Sufi of the Qadiriyyah order and a devout Muslim - according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Shukuh believed the *Upanishads* to be the ‘Hidden Books’ to which the Quran refers (Ivi. 77-80) and wrote that “they contain the essence of unity and they are secrets which have to be kept hidden.” Nasr states that “it is enough to read Shukuh’s translation of any of the *Upanishads* to realize that he was not only translating words into Persian but

While Sufi teachings have been influenced by various religions, their practices also bear close similarities to those of Hinduism and other mystical religions of the East. The Sufi orders are led by shaikhs, who play the same role as Hindu gurus. Some of the shaikhs were described as having “pronounced psychic powers.”³⁷ The master-disciple relationship was seen as an essential facet of Sufism by the reformer al-Ghazali who stated,

the murid [disciple] must of necessity have recourse to a shaikh [master] to guide him aright. For the way of faith is obscure, but the Devil’s ways are many and patent, and he who has no shaikh to guide him will be led by the Devil into his ways. Wherefore the murid must cling to his shaikh as a blind man on the edge of a river clings to his leader, confiding himself to him entirely, opposing him in no matter whatsoever, and binding himself to follow him absolutely. Let him know that the advantage he gains from the error of his shaikh, if he should err, is greater than the advantage of his own rightness, if he should be right.³⁸

Most Sufi orders still consider the five pillars of Islam to be essential, and practice them piously. However, under the leadership of the shaikh they go far beyond this, aiming “to break the conditioned patterns of behaviour which inhibit the desired spiritual awakening.”³⁹

The mystical quest is pursued through a number of mental and physical exercises. These include whirling dances “intended above all to plunge the dancer into a state of concentration upon Allah.”⁴⁰ Martin Lings states that “the body stands for the Axis of the Universe which is none other than the Tree of Life. The dance is thus a rite of centralization, a foretaste of the lost Centre...”⁴¹ A Moroccan Sufi order reduces the dance to a rigorous “rhythmic up and down movement of the body,” combined with “a rhythmic rise and fall of the breast as the lungs are filled and emptied.”⁴² As a result the Sufi may “see visions, hear the voices of angels and prophets, and gain from them guidance... it is a condition of joy and longing, and when the condition seizes the seeker he falls into ecstasy.”⁴³ Breathing exercises are also combined with meditation in order to induce altered states of consciousness.⁴⁴

Central to all of these practices are ritual “invocations of the Divine Name,” also known as dhikr, which can be done either silently or in a chant.⁴⁵ Here similarities with Hindu mantras are unmistakable. One author declares, “the Sufi doctrine of the dhikr coincides with that taught by the nineteenth-century Hindu saint Rama-krishna, who succinctly summed it up in the phrase: ‘God and His Name are one.’”⁴⁶

The Rifa‘iyya, a major Sufi order which spawned numerous sub-

also ideas into the framework of Sufism.” However, as usual Nasr follows up with a statement denying that this is “an attempt to syncretize,” once again revealing a blatant disregard for the evidence presented, not to mention a complete lack of logical thought. Nasr, 141..

³⁶Nasr, 139..

³⁷Miller, 19..

³⁸Miller, 19..

³⁹Miller, 20..

⁴⁰Lings, 85..

⁴¹The members of one popular order (the Mawlawiyya) begun by Jalal ad-Din Rumi (d. 1273) are the origin of the Western term ‘whirling dervishes’. Lings, 84..

⁴²Lings, 85..

⁴³Miller, 21..

⁴⁴Miller, 21..

⁴⁵Stoddart, 66..

⁴⁶Stoddart, 67..

⁴⁷Netton, 214..

⁴⁸John Alden

groups and associated branches, was named after Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-Rifa‘i (d. 1182). The practices of this order reveal the extremes to which some Sufi rituals went as the Rifa‘i dervishes “became famous for their extreme practices like eating live snakes and performing various feats with fire.”⁴⁷ This preoccupation with snakes and fire is clearly paralleled in the practices and rituals of Hinduism.

In response to Sufi rituals, John Alden Williams states that “the observer may encounter things which seem to belong in a case book of abnormal psychology; or witness what looks remarkably like demonic possession.”⁴⁸ Elliot Miller says, “the natural (and, from the Christian perspective, God-given) mental barriers to psychic intrusion are broken down, and a link is established to the spirit world.”⁴⁹

The evidence of Sufi borrowings from other religions such as Hinduism and Zoroastrianism is certain. The similarities in teachings and ritual are overwhelming. It is no surprise then that the goals of Sufism reflect the pantheism and monism of Hinduism and other Eastern religions.

Idries Shah, a famed twentieth-century Sufi thinker, states that Sufi practice in the mystic quest culminates when “by divine illumination man sees the world to be illusion.”⁵⁰ Numerous other Sufi saints also clearly reflect monistic and pantheistic beliefs in their sayings:

Mansur al-Hallaj (d.922): “I saw my Lord with the eye of the heart. I said: Who art Thou? He answered: Thou.”

Abu Maydan (d. 1197): “Everything outside of God is unreal, everything taken individually or collectively, when you truly know it... Whatever does not have root in his Being, can in no wise be real.”

Muhammad al-Harraq (d. 1845): “Seekest thou Laila [Divine Reality], when she is manifest within thee? Thou deemest her to be other, but she is not other than thou.”⁵¹

Jalal al-Din Rumi (d.1273): “Though the many ways [diverse religions] are various, the goal is one. Do you not see there are many roads to the Kaaba?”⁵²

In some Sufi orders the goal of the mystical quest is “personified as a woman, usually named Laila which means ‘night’... this is the holiest and most secret inwardness of Allah... in this symbolism Laila and haqiqa (Divine Reality) are one.”⁵³ This, and the above statements appear to be distinctly contrary to Muslim orthodoxy in their blatant echoes of Eastern mystic religions. Yet, for Sufis this is not a problem.

Williams, ed.,
Islam (New York:
George Brazillier,
1962), 155-156..

⁴⁹Miller, 21..

⁵⁰Idries Shah,
Reflections -
Fables in the Sufi
Tradition
(Baltimore:
Penguin Books,
1972), 1.; Miller,
20..

⁵¹Stoddart, 83-84..

⁵²Nasr, 149..

⁵³Stoddart, 74..

⁵⁴Nasr, 147..

⁵⁵Nasr, 147.

As Ibn 'Arabi stated,

My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christians, and a temple for idols and the pilgrims Ka'ba and the tables of the Torah, and the book of the Koran. I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and faith.⁵⁴

Another Sufi saint, Mahmud Shabistari, in his work *Gulshan-i Raz* (The Mystic Rose Garden) concurs, declaring, "...what is mosque, what is synagogue, what is fire temple? ... 'I' and 'You' are the Hades veil between them.. When this veil is lifted up from before you, there remains not the bond of sects and creeds."⁵⁵

Thus, not only has Sufism been influenced by other religions, but its mystic quest for spirituality has led it to embrace all sorts of religion, as abundantly shown in the writings of the great Sufi saints. To try to deny this as a scholar is incomprehensible. Yet, those scholars who are sympathetic towards Islam, as previously shown, have a marked tendency to minimize or altogether ignore these facts.

How then, in conclusion, does the evidence presented, reflect not only on the nature of Sufism, but on the very nature of Islam itself?

Sufism is clearly a reaction or response to what was lacking in early Islam. The argument for Muslim materialism lends support to the concept of a spiritual void in Islam - keenly felt by many Muslims as their civilization began to expand and come into contact with other religions. There was a hunger for more spirituality, along with the realization that despite all of the shari'a Islam did not effectively deal with the problems of materialism.

The very strength of Islam, in its reliance on a simple creed and the five pillars of practice, proved to be the very weakness of Islam. While the Islamic system had allowed for rapid expansion, and the five practices were a uniting force, it soon became evident that one could accept this framework and step right through it into whatever they pleased. In the early days this meant earthly success, as Islam spread rapidly through the desire for wealth and gain. Yet, just as those caught up in materialism had accepted and stepped through the framework of the shari'a, all the while continuing in their materialistic lives, so also the Sufis in reaction to the materialism of the Islamic civilization, stepped through the framework of legality into a world of mysticism. However, in their reaction, the Sufis created a more serious problem for Islam, as due to their religiosity, they introduced new teachings, reinterpreting the Quran and sunna.

Another area of weakness in Islam, which helped lead to the problem of Sufism, is found in the teachings of Muhammad. Here the vagueness of character caused by the doctrine of the indescribability of Allah allowed for the influence and development of pantheistic and monistic ideas, in essence creating a contradictory belief system. The orthodox ulama developed their theology in line with what they viewed as their 'Judeo-Christian' roots, while the Sufis were largely influenced by Eastern mystics. Consequently, the influences of Hinduism, and other forms of mystical religions on the development of Sufism, can be seen, in part, as a result of the doctrine of the indescribability of Allah.

Sufism does contribute a lacking spirituality to the religion of Islam. Growing out of the weakness of the Islamic system of belief and practice, it, however, added a dimension which has diversified and further weakened the structure of Islamic belief and practice.

Reflecting on the evidence presented, and conclusions given, we see that to assume Sufism, with its radical concepts, is a legitimate part of Islam introduces definite problems for anyone who then attempts to try to defend Islam as a logically coherent set of beliefs. For Sufism not only points to a lack of spirituality in Islam, but also contradicts orthodox Muslim teachings - in the process clearly opening the door to all the world's religions.

Appendix A

Sufism: An Interview with Imam Mohamad M. Algalaleni

Imam Mohamad M. Algalaleni, is the leader of the London Mosque, and has lived in Canada for five years. A Syrian by birth, the Imam studied the Quran, Islamic theology, and law, for twelve years in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Imam Mohamad M. Algalaleni's grandfather was a Sufi leader. These questions were put to him as part of the initial research towards this paper in Islamic studies at The University of Western Ontario. The purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of the present day view of Sunni Muslim clerics towards Sufism, as well as to attempt to discern the influences of Sufism upon North American Muslims. The interview took place on March 19, 1996.

1. Was Sufism present from the very beginnings of Islam, in the life of Muhammad and in the Quran?

In regards to the history of Sufism, the Holy Quran and the sunna of the Prophet don't actually mention this word. However, the main idea behind Sufism was in the Holy Quran and the sunna. In other words, Allah urged the Muslims to purify themselves from

diseases and from evil in general, and this is the main purpose, in my opinion, behind Sufism. But, this title, this word [Sufism or tasawwuf], isn't found at all in the Quran or the sunna. This title actually came into being some 200 years later.

2. One author of a book on Sufism states that Sufism is presently “frowned upon by Muslim orthodoxy.” Other scholars, such as Fazlur Rahman, argue that Sufism contained many un-Islamic influences, but that these were corrected by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, who purified Sufism and made it a legitimate part of Islam. Which do you feel is correct, and why?

I think the reason behind Sufism was the materialism which the Muslim society faced at the time, as the Muslim society had become more and more widespread and wealthy. Materialism infected the hearts of many Muslims, and then those [Sufi] scholars came forward with the call to “go back to your God, purify yourself, go back to the reality of Islam.” They told the people not to be influenced by materialism, that they had to be closer to Allah, that they had to practice their religion, and remember the approaching hereafter. This is the reason why Sufism was established at the time - because of the civilization which took place in the Western society at that time.

3. An important and influential Sufi living after al-Ghazali was Ibn al-‘Arabi. al-‘Arabi stated “When you know yourself, your ‘I’ness vanishes and you know that you and Allah are one and the same.” This clearly states the belief that everything that exists is one, having the same essence and reality. Is this contrary to orthodox Islam? How have Muslim scholars responded to al-‘Arabi’s teachings?

Actually, all the scholars, or at least the majority of them did not accept what Ibn Arabi brought to the Islamic thinking or belief. Because, as you know, Islam is based on the ‘oneness’ or tawhid, a Muslim should worship Allah alone, and Allah Almighty is not, or we as human beings are not part of Allah. Thus Ibn Arabi’s concepts created divisions or differentiation between scholars and himself. Up to today, many scholars have written books against Arabi’s ideas, even though some of his students try to defend Ibn Arabi by saying he didn’t mean what people understood him to teach - that mankind and God are one unit. Yet the majority of Muslims rejected Arabi’s teaching because it is the opposite of tawhid, of oneness; believing in Allah. Nonetheless, I feel that this kind of high feeling [in Ibn Arabi] was because he was very sensitive towards God and as a result said this teaching - actually this teaching was mistaken; but maybe he didn’t mean it in this way. There are people who didn’t go deeply into his philosophy and blamed him... but this is actually a long story. In conclusion, I would say that we don’t agree with this statement anyway.

4. Do Sufis have their own separate set of hadith or traditions, supporting their beliefs? Do they interpret parts of the Quran differently than other Muslims?

Sufism considers the two main sources, the Quran and the sunna. However, on occasion they explained some of the sayings of the Quran and the sunna in different ways. That is, some but not all of these. The verses which relate to the purpose of Sufism - purifying the

soul - they [Sufis] talk about these verses deeply, and maybe sometimes they added some meaning which other scholars don't agree with. But all of them, the Sufis, agreed on one thing - that there were two sources for authority, the Quran and the sunna.

5. In the regions of India and Pakistan, Sufism seems to have had a particularly strong impact. Yet, many Sufis in these areas seem to be influenced by Hinduism. One author, Martin Lings, who is a practicing Sufi, quite boldly states that "Prince Dara Shikoh (or Shukuh), the Sufi son of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan, was able to affirm that Sufism and Advaita Vedantism (Hinduism) are essentially the same, with a surface difference in terminology." Another Muslim scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that the "orthodox Naqshbandi saint Mirza Mazhar Jan Janan considered the Hindu Vedas as divinely inspired." According to orthodox Islam, are these types of statements correct? Why is it that Sufism seems so prone to the influences of other religions such as Hinduism, which are in many ways contrary to the Islamic standards of monotheism?

Actually, I think - this is a personal opinion - for those who are in India, Muslims, Hindus who claim that Hinduism and Sufism are the same or equal; it is in my opinion wrong, absolutely wrong. Environments affect the people who live in them - this is a usual issue as you know. Perhaps Muslims in India became closer to Sufism because of their environment. This may be because Buddhism and Hinduism take care of these issues - spiritual issues.. but in a different way.

I have an idea about the Naqshbandi because we have those in my country - in Syria, and in Turkey. They are Muslims, and they don't believe in Hinduism at all, they practice Islam. Maybe the author who wrote this statement noticed the appearance of both groups but didn't go deeply by studying these circumstances for Muslims and non-Muslims in India. But they are different, even though some authority stated this statement.

6. What does Sufism offer as an aspect of Islam, especially in comparison to the Islamic sharia? Is it a search for a more spiritual dimension in response to the traditional legal nature of Islam?

Sufism gives special attention for the spiritual issues, because they believe that when a Muslim has good faith and good spiritual life then he will be a good Muslim. He will practice Islam perfectly, and he will follow the sharia - the Islamic law at the same time. So they insisted on this point of rituals... Yes, I agree with you. As I mentioned at the beginning the reason behind that is materialism which established shortly before Sufism, then this movement we consider it as a reaction in our Islamic history. Even now some Muslims are following Sufism, for the same reasons. As you know as well, the whole world is running to materialism.

7. To what extent are Sufi ideas and practices influential among Muslims in Canada and the United States? Are there Sufi orders present here in North America?

Actually, the Sufism movement in Canada and North America is very weak in my opinion, because Sufism depends on shaikhs [guru-type leaders], special scholars who lead their students, teaching them and watching them, and we don't have those scholars to lead this movement. This is largely because no shaikhs will come from the Middle East because of the materialism in North America - they cannot live here. However, maybe some people, probably very few, had involvement with Sufism before, when they were still in their countries, and they still have it inside their hearts. And perhaps they practice it partially, but they cannot practice it completely because there is no Sufism without shaikhs, without religious leaders, at all.

8. Where, in the world today, is Sufism the most prevalent?

I don't know the exact proportions, but India, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and some in Syria. But the first four are the main countries where Sufism takes place.

Appendix B

A Christian Response to Sufism

According to numerous scholars, Sufism continues to play an important role in Islam. Jack Rippin, in his work *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, states,

Recent anthropological studies especially have shown that, throughout the Muslim world, Sufi brotherhoods remain a vital part of the religious environment. The desire for an emotional aspect to religious life, in combination with the appeal of images which glorify Muhammad and, indeed, the divine, has a substantial place in Islam and this is frequently provided by the Sufi tradition. Grouped around a spiritual leader and following certain practices designed to stimulate the experience of God, Sufi brotherhoods flourish throughout the Muslim world, even if they are not always condoned by governments or establishment religious forces.¹

The last sentence may explain, why, as Imam Mohamad M. Algalaleni stated, Sufism is most prevalent in India, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt and Syria - countries with a less fundamentalist approach than Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, the important point to note, is that Sufism remains both prevalent and discouraged in the Islamic world, despite official legitimacy. The reasons for it being discouraged are undoubtedly linked to those proposed in my paper; however, the very opposition to Sufism only intensifies the dilemma Islam finds itself in. As a result those defending Islam are left skirting the issues - clearly

Reference Notes:

¹Rippin, 145.

²Miller, 21.

³Miller, 22.

⁴John 14:6, The Holy Bible - New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 1214..

⁶Miller, 22.

evidenced in both the paper and interview.

Sufism does exist in the Western world today - and on a large scale. Elliot Miller states,

...for the past forty years the direct and indirect influence of the East has prepared the ground in the West for the seed of the Sufi message. Idries Shah, the “Grand Sheikh of the Sufis” .. has devoted his life to demonstrating the applicability of Sufi ideas and practices to today’s life in the West... In 1916 the Sufi Order of the West was founded in London by another important Indian Sufi, Hazrat Inayat Khan. His Chishti Order master sent him to the West specifically to spread the Sufi message. Khan died in 1927, but his son, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, has succeeded in establishing 88 centers in America, and 166 worldwide. Pir Vilayat, who turns 70 this year, is a frequent, highly respected speaker on the New Age circuit. ...the Sufi order does not insist that its members identify with the Islamic faith. It has rightly been described as “one of the most thoroughgoing syncretistic movements in history...”²

Perhaps it is no surprise that orthodox Muslims argue that Sufism really only exists in the Middle East, as North American Sufism is a blatant modern day example of the religious philosophy of Ibn Arabi, Rumi, al-Hallaj, and Shabistari among many other Sufi saints. Again the problem arises. Again we return to the impossibility of attempting to reconcile pantheism with monotheism.

From a Christian perspective, these problems in Islam are no surprise. They arise because, “as a theistic religion.. Islam is incapable of delivering a vital spiritual experience.”³ Islam is empty because, as Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”⁴ Thus true peace and happiness - real spirituality - can only be entered through the grace of Jesus Christ.

“Those who deny that grace and seek instead to win entrance into God’s presence through good works will find themselves haunted by a spiritual void and a lack of assurance concerning their personal salvation. Theism in conflict with God’s revelation [the Bible] is doomed to spiritual impotence. Bereft from beginning to end (by rejection of the gospel) of any participation in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Islamic tradition was left with only one recourse for filling the spiritual void: common occult mysticism”⁵ - or as it is more commonly known: Sufism.

A Partial List Of Sufi Orders:

This information is taken from Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press, 1992), 11-267. The orders and founders I have listed present strong support for the nature of Sufism as I have presented it in my paper - in stark contrast to the writings of many present day Islamic scholars.

Ahmadiyya - [also Badawiyya] the name of a major Sufi order, established initially in Egypt. The order is immensely popular in present day Egypt. It is named after the famous Egyptian Sufi saint al-Badawi (1200-1276) to whom many miracles are ascribed; his tomb in Tanta receives many pilgrims and his birthday is celebrated every year with ceremonies and processions. These rituals include the performing of the dhikr on rooftops and the circumcision of many infants and young boys.

Burhaniyya - [also Dasuqiyya / Shadhiliyya] a popular Sufi order in Egypt, and especially in Cairo. It derives its names from its founder Burhan al-Din Ibrahim b. Abi'l-Majd 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Dasuqi (1246-1288).

Chistiyya - major Sufi order founded in India by Mu'in al-Din Hasan Chisti (1142-1236). The order in India was influenced early on by the writings of **Shibab al-Din Abu Hafs al-Suhrawardi**, and, like **Ibn al-'Arabi**, adhered to the doctrine of 'Unity (or Oneness) of Being.' It places strong emphasis on dhikr recitation, and other mystical and ascetical practices. Presently it is divided into a number of major branches.

Mawlawiyya - [also Mevleviyya] Whirling dervishes. These are an important Sufi order, originating in Turkey, whose name derives from the title borne by their inspirer, the Persian mystical poet **Rumi** of Mawlana (Arabic for 'Our Master'; the Turkish form is Mevlana). The whirling dance is performed with music during their dhikr. Like all other Sufi orders in Turkey, the Mawlawiyya was banned in 1925 by Ataturk, as part of his program for the secularization of Turkey. However the order continues to exist in Turkey and elsewhere.

Naqshabandiyya - a major Sufi order which became popular in Central Asia, Kurdistan, and the Indian subcontinent but much less so in the Arab world. Presently also found in Syria. The order derives its name from Baha al-Din al-Naqshbandi (d. 1389) who is not, however, considered the founder. It emphasizes a mental dhikr and adherence to a rule of eleven principles.

Ni'matullahiyya - a major Sufi Shi'ite order named after Shah Ni'matullah Wali (1330-1431). Gained popularity in Iran and India. Presently divided into a number of branches, one of which flourishes in London, England.

Qadariyya - the order often cited as the first in the history of Sufism. Named after 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166) a noted Hanbali preacher and ascetic, who spent the main portion of his life in Baghdad, where his tomb, much visited over the centuries, is

located. Never the most popular order, it however did spread widely across the Near and Middle East, and also established in parts of India.

Rifa'iyya - a major Sufi order named after Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Rifai (1106-1182) who spent most of his life in the marsh area of Southern Iraq where he attracted many disciples who became famous for their extreme practices like eating live snakes and various feats with fire. Ibn Battuta, a famed traveler of the Islamic world in the 1300's, wrote with horrified fascination about these practices. The early Rifa'iyya was extremely widespread, found in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, and even in the Maldives. It has spawned a very large number of sub-groups and associated branches under a variety of names.

Shadhiliyya - a major Sufi order named after Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Shadhili (1196-1258). Achieved popularity in North Africa, Arabia and Syria. Gave rise to numerous offshoots and sub-groups.

Suhrawardiyya - a major Sufi order whose origins go back to 'Abd al-Qahir Abu Najib al-Suhrawardi and **Shibab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umar al Suhrawardi**. The order originated in Iran and spread to India where it gained more prominence and split into a number of branches.

Tijaniyya - a major order named after its founder Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815) who announced he had seen a vision of prophet Muhammad who bade him to begin his Sufi work. The ownership of wealth was accepted by this order, and it stressed thanksgiving to Allah. Presently popular in North Africa, Western Sudan, Senegal and elsewhere in West Africa.



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Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism's Many Paths
Dr. Alan Godlas, University of Georgia

Sufism or *tasawwuf*, as it is called in Arabic, is generally understood by scholars and Sufis to be the inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimension of Islam. Today, however, many Muslims and non-Muslims believe that Sufism is outside the sphere of Islam.

Nevertheless, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the foremost scholars of Islam, in his article [The Interior Life in Islam](#) contends that Sufism is simply the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam.

After nearly 30 years of the study of Sufism, I would say that in spite of its many variations and voluminous expressions, the essence of Sufi practice is quite simple. It is that the Sufi surrenders to God, in love, over and over; which involves embracing with love at each moment the content of one's consciousness (one's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, as well as one's sense of self) as gifts of God or, more precisely, as manifestations of God.

[Sufis Without Borders](#) An online discussion group loosely moderated by Dr. Godlas and a moderating committee; currently over 400 international participants from many Sufi orders and perspectives, interested non-Sufis, and scholars.

[Sufi News and Sufism World Report](#) A frequently updated news digest from around the world concerning Sufis and Sufism.

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Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism: Awakening to the Awareness of the Unmanifest World

At any moment in the course of following the Sufi path, Sufis may have an experience in which they become drawn into the presence of God. This experience has often been called *jadhbah* (attraction) or *wajd* (ecstasy) (lit. finding). Another way of speaking of this experience is to describe it as "awakening to the 'unmanifest or unseen world' (*al-ghayb*)." The following link, written by the Muslim scholars of the as-Sunnah Foundation, explains both the Prophet Muhammad's [knowledge of the Unseen](#) as well as the unveiling (*kashf*) or knowledge of the Unseen that the "friends of God" or "saints" (*awliya'*) attain.

In one of the more important works of early Persian literature, *Kashf al-mahjub* (Uncovering the veiled), Hujwiri, or Data Ganj Bakhsh as he is also known, in the 11th cent. CE discussed various views of [Ma'rifah: Gnosis or Direct Knowledge of God](#), which is an important epistemological principle in Sufism.

[Al-Ghazali's Treatise on Direct Knowledge from God: Introduction](#) indicates the opinion of one of Islam's greatest scholars concerning the possibility that humans--aside from prophets--can attain "direct knowledge" from God.

For more on the unveiling of the unmanifest realm (*kashf al-ghayb*) see the article [On Kashf and Mukashafat](#), also written by scholars of the as-Sunnah Foundation.

Sufism: Name and Origin

by Paul Yachnes

Sufism has been described in many different ways by scholars writing in English, throughout this century, but they all agree on its essential character as being the inner, esoteric, mystical, or purely spiritual dimension of the religion of Islam. R. A. Nicholson

in his little introduction to Sufism, *The Mystics of Islam* (1914), remarks: "Sufism, the religious philosophy of Islam, is described in the oldest extant definition as 'the apprehension of divine realities'," and although referring to it as "Islamic mysticism," he still maintains the popular idea that Sufism was largely the product of diverse philosophical and spiritual influences, including Christian, Neoplatonic, and others. He further states that it is "a subject so vast and many-sided that several large volumes would be required to do it anything like justice".

More than 35 years later his student, A.J. Arberry, in his brief introduction to the subject, *Sufism* (1950), similarly states that Sufism is "the name given to the mysticism of Islam" and "the mystical movement of an uncompromising Monotheism". It was this author that first maintained that although Sufism was the recipient of many influences from Neoplatonic and other sources, that it was in essence derived from the Qur'an and Prophetic (Muhammadan) tradition, and attempted to view "the movement from within as an aspect of Islam, as though these other factors which certainly determined its growth did not exist". This approach became generally accepted and was echoed by later scholars.

Martin Lings, writing in an article on Sufism in the 14th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1968), defined Sufism as "the name by which Islamic mysticism came to be known in the 8th or 9th century A.D." and stated: "It is only in secondary respects that there can be said to have been any development in Sufism, or for that matter in Islam as a whole, since the time of the Prophet". Taking this idea one step further, he writes: "The influences on Sufism from outside have been enormously exaggerated. Probably the chief influence was Neoplatonism, but even this was confined mostly to terminology and to methods of doctrinal exposition".

In something of a departure from previous definitions, Victor Danner, in his introduction to his translation of Ibn `Ata'illah's *Book of Wisdom* (1978), writes: "When dealing with Sufism, it is best to leave to one side such terms as 'mystic' and 'mysticism,' if only because in the modern Western world such words nowadays often lead to confusion". He prefers to identify it operatively and institutionally, as he does in his book *The Islamic Tradition* (1988): "Sufism is the spiritual Path (tariqah) of Islam and has been identified with it for well over a thousand years...It has been called 'Islamic mysticism' by Western scholars because of its resemblance to Christian and other forms of mysticism elsewhere. Unlike Christian mysticism, however, Sufism is a continuous historical and even institutionalized phenomenon in the Muslim world that has had millions of adherents down to the present day. Indeed, if we look over the Muslim world, there is hardly a region that does not have Sufi orders still functioning there". Such is his estimation of the importance, within Islam, of Sufism that he says: "Sufism has influenced the spiritual life of the religion to an extraordinary degree; there is no important domain in the civilization of Islam that has remained unaffected by it".

This discussion of the name and origin of Sufism was taken verbatim from [Sufism: An Annotated Resource Guide](#), by Paul Yachnes. (Fixed, December 9, 2000.)

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism: Remembering God

The Qur'an instructs Muslims to remember God, whose reality encompasses and pervades both the unmanifest and manifest worlds (*al-ghayb wa-al-shahadah*). Sufis have developed this into the quintessential Sufi practice of silent and vocal *dhikr* (remembrance). An inherent problem in *dhikr*, however, is the difficulty in remembering God when one has little or no awareness of God. To start with, Muslims begin with a name of God, such as "Allah," which is often called the "comprehensive" name (*al-ism al-jami'*). It is comprehensive in the sense that it comprises all of the infinite names of God, which refer to the source of the awareness of all of reality. In down to earth terms, the ultimate source of one's awareness of the words on this page, for example, is the reality of one of the names of God, all of which are encompassed by the name Allah. In short, the source of one's present awareness--whatever that awareness may be--is encompassed by the name Allah. Thus, remembering God can begin quite simply and ordinarily with the awareness of two things: one's present awareness and the name Allah--even when one has no awareness of the reality to which the name Allah refers. (to be continued...)

The hadith scholar al-Mundhiri (d. 656/1258) compiled a collection of hadith that could inspire desire for God and those that could inspire fear of God. This collection, called the *al-Tarhib wal-al-tarhib*, was abridged by the scholar Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. The hadiths that are related to *dhikr* in Ibn Hajar's work can be accessed in English translation on the web page of the Muslim scholar Ayesha Bewley called [Chapter on Dhikr.](#)

Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Iskandari (d. 709/1309), a Shadhili shaykh, wrote the treatise *Miftah al-falah*, (The Key to Success). See the following section [On Dhikr](#), translated by Ayesha Bewley.

The on-line book [Dhikr, Remembrance of Allah](#), (link down as of Nov. 24, 2001; the new link may be [Questions on Dhikr \(Remembrance of Allah\)](#)), chapter 9 in the Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine) is an on-line book written by the as-Sunnah Foundation-- which is affiliated with the Naqshbandi Shaykh Hisham as well as with his shaykh, Shaykh Nazim-- discusses in detail many aspects of Dhikr.

[Dhikr: Remembrance of God](#), written by scholars affiliated with the Naqshbandi order, is a concise article in which the following topics are discussed: *dhikr* in the Qur'an and Sunnah, opinions of great Muslim scholars on *dhikr*, and the two major forms of *dhikr*: vocal and silent.

[Dhikr in Islam](#) excerpted from the book *The Naqshbandi Sufi Way*, written by the contemporary Naqshbandi, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, this is a concise article focusing on the Islamic basis for the practice of dhikr.

[Dhikr from *Nuzhat al-majalis*](#) Translated by scholars affiliated with the Naqshbandi order, this passage on dhikr from a medieval Arabic text is accompanied by the translator's notes in brackets. (Fixed, 1 October 2000.)

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism, Remembrance (dhikr), and Love

The Sufi follows the path toward God primarily by means of love. For the Sufi who is enraptured with the love of God (who is the source of all existence, or, as some might say, who is all of existence), all of existence is extraordinarily beautiful. In contrast, one who is not in love with God to this degree will not see what is so awesome about existence. A [discourse on love by Shams-i Tabrizi](#) (the man who was the catalyst of Rumi's divine ecstasy) illustrates this.

While some Sufis such as Rumi become utterly consumed by love's fire, for most who wish to love God, their love is merely a wavering flame, ever in danger of diminishing. Hence, by remembering God's forgotten reality and beauty, Sufis rekindle the flame of their love for God. In Sufism, it is remembrance that makes the heart grow fonder. In a nutshell, this is the relationship between *dhikr* and love.

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Early Sufi Shaykhs and Shrines

- Hasan al-Basri, (d. 110 AH/ 728 CE) from Basra in today's Iraq, is one of the earliest links in most Sufi lineages. He is generally noted in Sufi chains of transmission and is listed as having received the transmission from 'Ali, who in turn received it from the Prophet Muhammad. Linked here is an abridged translation of his well-known [letter extolling asceticism written to the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz \(r. 717-720\)](#) (See Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 33-35, whose source was the Arabic of Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani, *Hilyat al-awliya'*, vol. 2, pp. 134-140). (The Eliade archive that was the source of this is now --October 16, 2001-- back on line again after a few years of being.) For a useful article see Dr. G. Haddad's [al-Hasan al-Basri](#).
- Rabi'a al-Adawiya, certainly the most famous woman Sufi saint, lived during the 2nd c. AH/ 8th c. CE and died in Basra (in Iraq). See this [Biography of Rabi'a](#). It is said [that

Rabi'a (al-Adawiya ?)] used to kneel a thousand times daily saying, 'I ask for no recompense, but [only] to satisfy the Almighty God.' See some brief [Excerpts from Rabi'a's Poetry and Anecdotes](#) told about her. (See above for Rabi'a bint Isma'il) (corrected 3/22/98). See [Deb Platt's Rabi'a site](#) for more extensive and topically organized quotes of Rabi'a as well as a short biography.

- [Bayazid-i Bistami](#), (d. 874 CE) whose [shrine](#) can be visited through this gateway, was a Sufi shaykh who died before the advent of the Sufi orders. He is generally known as an exponent of "intoxicated" Sufism.
- [Sahl ibn 'Abdallah al-Tustari](#) (d. 896) wrote some treatises as well as a commentary on the Qur'an, which has been published in the original Arabic and was the subject of a scholarly study in English by Gerhard Bowering, a professor at Yale University. The commentary has not yet been reliably edited, nor has it been translated into English, even though it is short.
- [Mansur al-Hallaj](#) (858-922) is one of Sufism's most controversial figures. Executed in Baghdad for political reasons, Hallaj became famous for his problematic saying, "I am the Real" (*Ana 'l-Haqq*), which can also be translated as "I am the Truth" and "I am God." The only work of his translated into English is the [Tawasin \(Ta wa-sin\)](#). It was translated by 'A'isha al-Tarjumana and is now on-line, although there are errors in the scanned document. A collection of his Arabic poetry survives. One of his poems, translated into English, can be found at the following link: [Hallaj on God](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005).
- [Abu al-Hasan Kharraqani](#) (b. 351- 352/962-964 and d. 425/1033)--whose tomb is in the town of Kharraqan, which is in the general region of Bastam and which today is in the vicinity of Shahrud, within the administrative district of Semnan in Iran--received a spiritual transmission from Abu Yazid Bastami and like [Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khayr](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005) (967-1049 CE) received spiritual guidance from Shaykh Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad 'Abd al-Karim Qassab-e Amuli. When he was asked about being a dervish (*darvishi*)--which is roughly the equivalent of *faqr* (spiritual poverty), namely the Sufi path--he said, "It is an ocean that derives from three springs: the first, abstinence; the second, generosity; and the third, being independent of people." When he was asked about the "gnostic" (*'arif*). He replied, "A gnostic is like a bird that has flown from its nest seeking food but has not found any. It then tries to make its way back to the nest, loses its way, and becomes bewildered--wishing but unable to go home." (From *Nur al-'ulum*, ed. by 'Abd al-Rafi' Haqiqat, pp. 37, 39.)
- Abu Sa'id ibn Abi'l-Khayr (d. 440/1049), was an early Sufi shaykh who at different stages of his life was an ascetic, an antinomian ecstatic, and a spiritual guide. He received a Sufi transmission from Abu al-Fadl al-Hasan (or ibn al-Hasan) al-Sarakhsi, whom Abu Sa'id called his "pir" (a Persian word referring to a spiritual guide and often equivalent to "shaykh"). After the death of Abu al-Fadl, Abu Sa'id looked to Abu 'Abbas al-Qassab (the butcher), whom Abu Sa'id called "shaykh," for spiritual guidance. The hagiography *Asrar al-tawhid* is one of the two major sources for what we know of his life and teachings. It has been translated as [The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness](#) (link to Mazda Press) by John O'Kane. A collection of quatrains (*ruba'iyat*) is attributed to Abu Sa'id. See a selection of some of these among the on-line excerpts from the book [Abu Sa'id Abu'l-Khayr and His Rubaiyat](#) by the Sufi shaykh Dr. Zahurul Hasan Sharib.
- Khwajah 'Abdallah al-Ansari, an important Hanbali Sufi author and saint, died in the 481 AH / 1089 AD. [His tomb in Herat, Afghanistan](#), (link fixed, Nov. 30, 2000)

continues to be an important pilgrimage site. He wrote a number of treatises in both Arabic and Persian. In a short treatise in Persian titled "Discourses" (Maqulat) (ed. by Dastgirdi, pp. 147-48; translated here by Dr. Godlas), he states the following: Do you know when the "one who affirms the reality of God" (*muhaqqiq-e Haqq*) will become [at] one (*yakta*)? When three things become apparent in him: when what is God's becomes separated from what is man's; when worldly existence (lit. water and earth) goes to Adam and Eve; and when the light of the unmanifest realm becomes one with God. Come out of your self like a snake out of its skin! [Your identity of] "one who affirms reality" is a pretense. The truth of self is that all is He. Let go of your self, since relationship to God is good. How can the critics' criticism matter to one, when clear water is in the stream?!

Know that people are a headache, the cure for which is being alone. Neither do we associate with people, nor do people have [a sense of] separateness from us. The self is the idol and [people's] approval is the sign of duality (lit. zunnar). I have all at once uttered the whole of the depths of the truth, whether you accept or deny it.

As long as there is duality, [one's] relationship is with Adam and Eve. But when duality departs, the one [reality] is God. When the path of Lordship (*rububiyat*) appears, the dust of humanness departs.


He is not veiled; but He is not apparent to every eye. To this extent, conceal with dignity, since time clarifies. In the scroll of the Sufi, speech does not arise from the heart, but from the soul. [In fact,] it is also not from the soul; speech is the pretense. If you can stand drinking, drink. Otherwise, get to work and shut up!

This is the world of the *mysterion* (*sirr*); and this people have *mysteria* (*asrar*). What business does a watchman have with the secrets of kings?!

For some time I would seek Him yet would find my self. Now I seek my self and find Him.

Love arrived and became like my blood within veins and skin.
Until it emptied me and filled me with the Beloved.
The Beloved has completely taken possession of the parts of my body.
A name is given by me to me, and the rest is all Him.

- [Abu Hamid al-Ghazali](#) (d. 1111 CE) was arguably one of the most significant Sufis of what has been called the period of consolidation. The article linked with his name is a well-documented survey of his life and thought written in October 2001 by Mustafa Abu Sway of al-Quds University. His lengthy masterpiece, the *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Ihya 'ulum al-din) clearly expressed the Sufi dimension of Islam. Linked here is his spiritual autobiography [The Deliverance from Error](#) (al-Munqidh min al-dallal), in which he beautifully portrays his transformation from an intellectual who merely conjectures about religious truths into a Sufi who experiences ultimate reality and truth.

- ['Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani](#) (d. 1131 CE.) was a prominent disciple of the great Sufi shaykh and writer on "love," Ahmad al-Ghazali, who was the younger brother of the well-known mainstream Muslim scholar, Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1111 CE.). For political reasons, 'Ayn al-Qudat was unfortunately sent to prison, where he wrote the book *Shakwa al-gharib* (Complaint of the Stranger), an excerpt of which can be found at the previous link. Ultimately, he was executed.
- Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 606/1209) was an ecstatic Sunni Sufi shaykh and author from Shiraz (Iran). He was the subject of a recent study, [Ruzbihan Baqli](#), by Professor Carl Ernst. Although Ruzbihan wrote a number of books, only his diary of visions [The Unveiling of Secrets \(*Kashf al-asrar*\)](#) (in Ernst's translation) is available in English. His most voluminous work is his encyclopedic Qur'an commentary, 'Ara'is al-bayan, which includes not only his own view of the Sufi implications of the Qur'an but also substantial Qur'an commentary from the earliest Sufi shaykhs (taken from Sulami) and from Qushayri. See his commentary on ["Guide us on the straight path"](#) (Qur'an 1:6). See as well my article [Surrender: Its Significance for Today and in the Qur'anic Commentary of Ruzbihan al-Baqli](#) . After having identified 65 manuscripts of 'Ara'is al-bayan and having edited and translated a fragment of it for my Ph.D. dissertation, I am currently in the process of editing and translating its entirety. Although Henry Corbin translated part of a work of Ruzbihan's on Spiritual Love (*Le Jasmin des fideles d'amour*), the first full length French translations of Ruzbihan's works have been published only recently by Paul Ballanfat as *Le dévoilement des secrets (*Kashf al-asrar*)* and *L'ennuagement du coeur* (which also includes another work, *Les Eclotions de la lumiere de l'affirmation de l'unicite*).
- [Ibn 'Arabi by Prof. William C. Chittick](#) This article, published in the Encyclopaedia Iranica, is by the chief authority in the US on Ibn 'Arabi, whose writings were the dominant influence on Sufi literature after the 13th c. CE. A less detailed discussion is found in the article [A Biographical Sketch of Ibn 'Arabi](#) Although Ibn 'Arabi is often attacked (an example of which is [The Declaration that Ibn 'Arabi is a Disbeliever \[Takfir Ibn 'Arabi\]](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005)), many consider him to be the greatest Sufi. Hence his title is the "Greatest Shaykh" (*al-Shaykh al-akbar*). Here you can see the excellent pictures of [Ibn 'Arabi's mosque](#) and [its mihrab](#).(Fixed 12 Nov. 1998)

Ibn 'Arabi's ideas became the most significant influence on Sufi literature. A selection of them, as expressed by the great scholar of Sufism Henry Corbin, can be found in [Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi](#). Ibn 'Arabi's greatest work is the *al-Futuhat al-Makkiya* (Meccan Revelations). Prof. James Morris discusses a part of it in his four-part article titled [Listening for God: Prayer and Heart in the Futuhat](#). A number of [chapters of the Futuhat](#) have been translated by the scholar Ayesha Bewley. One of these in particular addresses the following issues: [The beginning of the spiritual creation and the macrocosm and microcosm](#). A brief guide to following the path towards God written by Ibn 'Arabi (translated by the scholar A. Jeffrey) is [What the Seeker Needs](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005).

- [The Poetry of Yunus Emre](#) (in Turkish and English translation)(link fixed 20 August, 2005). Yunus Emre is no doubt the most beloved Sufi poet in the Turkish language. Even if you do not know Turkish, you may catch a glimmer of the beauty of Yunus if you

listen to the some of his poems being sung at the [Yunus Emre \(with audio\) page](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005). Another interesting site for Yunus is [Yunus Emre and Humanism](#) Surfers should realize, however, that the emphasis on "humanism" often found in contemporary literature on Turkish Sufism may lead to a misreading of Yunus.

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism: an Introduction

Tbaaraatuhum shattaa wa-husnuka waahid
Wa-kullun ilaa dhaaka al-jamaali yushiir
Their expressions are manifold and Your loveliness is one
And everyone points to that beauty

Quoted by Shaykh 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, former Shaykh al-Azhar

Jumla ma'shuq ast-o 'aashiq pardah'i
Zenda ma'shuq ast-o 'aashiq mordah'i
All is the Beloved and the lover is a veil
The Beloved is alive and the lover is dead

Rumi, Mathnawi

Man qaala laa ilaaha ill Allah, dakhala al-janna
Whoever says, 'There is no god, but God,' enters Paradise.

Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad

Ever since Sufis first began to speak about Sufism, they have defined it in many different ways. Read a number of these at the link [Classical Sufi Definitions of Sufism](#), (fixed 16 Nov. 1998) and see as well the online version (minus the footnotes of the original) of the poem, translated from Persian, titled [What is Tasawwuf \(Sufism\)?](#) and commented on by Dr. Godlas. For some time now, scholars in the West have discussed [Sufism's definition and origin](#). Sufis--which is what practioners of Sufism are called--see themselves to be on a spiritual journey toward God. In order to guide spiritual travellers and to express the states of consciousness experienced on this journey, Sufis produced an enormously rich body of literature, often using a specialized technical vocabulary, some of the terms of which can be found in this [Glossary of Sufi Terms](#). This journey is referred to as the path (*tariqah*). While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God and will become [close to God in Paradise](#)--after death and the "Final Judgment"-- Sufis believe as well that it is possible to become close to God and to experience this closeness--while one is alive.

Furthermore, the attainment of the knowledge that comes with such intimacy with God, Sufis assert, is the very purpose of the creation. Here they mention the [hadith qudsi](#) in which God states, "I was a hidden treasure and I loved that I be known, so I created the

creation in order to be known." Hence for the Sufis there is already a momentum, a continuous attraction on their hearts exerted by God, pulling them, in love, towards God. They experience the joyful ecstasy of being gently drawn to their Eternal Beloved, yet this primordially blissful return seems to have been interrupted. The Persian poet Hafiz remarked,

O Wine giver, pour me a cup and pass it around
for love seemed easy at first, but later the difficulties arose.

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Islam's Relationship to Sufism: Approval and Criticism

Although it has had its share of detractors throughout the history of Islam, numerous Muslim scholars have spoken favorably about Sufism. See the article [Scholars on Tasawwuf](#), written by the as-Sunnah Foundation, for both a chronological list of Muslim scholars who have made supportive comments, as well some of their remarks.

[Fatwa on Sufism](#) This *fatwa* (Islamic legal judgment) concerning Sufism was delivered by Shaykh 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, a former Shaykh al-Azhar, the chief religious authority in Egypt. Here, Arabic readers can also look at the [text of Shaykh 'Abd al-Halim's work](#) (Link fixed 20 August, 2005).

Tasawwuf, variously referred to as Sufism, Islamic mysticism, Islamic spirituality, and Islamic psychology or psychotherapy has suffered at the hands of a sustained critique in the Islamic world during the twentieth century (CE). The article [Islamic Sprituality: the Forgotten Revolution](#) (Link fixed 20 August, 2005), by 'Abd al-Hakim Murad, presents the outlines of this critique and responds.

A common criticism of Sufism is that it is *bid'ah* (innovation) and thus is not authentically Islamic. A response to question [Is Sufism Bid'ah?](#) has been written by the American Muslim scholar, Nuh Ha Mim Keller.

One of the criticisms often leveled at Sufis by their fellow Muslims is that they withdraw from social and political activity. This is far from being true in Muslim central Asia, where in Chechnya, for example, Sufis have traditionally been very active in fighting against Russian invaders. This is seen in the following link [on Sufis of Chechnya](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005), which is comprised of numerous quotations from the book *Mystics and Commmissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, by the scholars Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush. (Back on-line 4/12/98; and links fixed 23 July 2002.)

See also the excellent article [The Religious Roots of Conflict: Russia and Chechnya](#), written by David Damrel, Assistant Professor at Arizona State University, in which the

history of the Naqhsbandi, Qaderi, and Uwaysi resistance to the Russian invaders is discussed. (Link fixed 1 October 2000.)

The strongest resistance to the Russian colonization of the Caucasus, including Chechnya, was led by the Sufi, [Shaykh Shaml](#).

[The Debate between Ibn Taymiya and Ibn 'Ata Allah](#) illustrates some of the medieval criticisms of Sufis and their responses.

An on-line critique of Sufism, written by a Salafi Muslim, A. A. Tabari, is [The Other Side of Sufism](#). (Link fixed, 1 October 2000.)

A rebuttal to this critique has been written by a Sufi scholar, Dr. Hesham Bazaraa. It is called [The Other Side of Salafism](#).

Another recent critique of Sufism titled [Sufism: The Deviated Path](#) was written by a Muslim, Yusuf Hijazi, and published in an extremist Wahhabi Islamic magazine, *Nida'ul Islam*. A refutation titled [Response to a Misleading Article on Islam and Sufism](#) has been written by a Muslim professor of physics, Fariddudien Rice. (Link fixed, June 7, 2002.)

[A Fatwa Refuting the Argument that Celebrating the Birthday of the Prophet Should be Prohibited](#) by Dr. 'Isa al-Mani al-Humayri of the Department of Religious Endowments (awqaf), Office of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Dubai.

[Celebrating the Prophet's Birthday](#), [link down Nov. 24, 2001; the new link may be [Questions on Mawlid \(Celebrating the Prophet's Birthday\)](#)] called *mawlid*, *moulid*, and *milad*, while often criticized by non-Sufi Muslims, is nevertheless an important part of the devotional lives of many Sufis. This link is to an online book written by the [Naqshbandi, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani](#).

[Islamic Research Center](#) presents both sides of a variety of issues involving Sufism, issues concerning which Muslims disagree.

[Sufi Music](#) has had its supporters and detractors throughout Islamic history.

Sufism, Sufis, and Sufi Orders: Sufism's Many Paths

Professor Alan Godlas, University of Georgia

What is Sufism? : Early Definitions

When asked about Sufism, [Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Qassab](#)--the master of Junayd--said, "Sufism consists of noble behavior (akhlaq karima) that is made manifest at a noble time on the part of a noble person in the presence of a noble people."

When he was asked about Sufism, [Junayd](#) said, "Sufism is that you should be with God--without any attachment."

With regard to Sufism, [Ruwaym ibn Ahmad](#) said, "Sufism consists of abandoning oneself to God in accordance with what God wills."

On one occasion when he was asked about Sufism, [Samnun](#) said, "Sufism is that you should not possess anything nor should anything possess you."

Concerning Sufism, [Abu Muhammad al-Jariri](#) said, "Sufism consists of entering every exalted quality (khulq) and leaving behind every despicable quality."

When he was asked about Sufism, ['Amr ibn 'Uthman al-Makki](#) said, "Sufism is that at each moment the servant should be in accord with what is most appropriate (awla) at that moment."

Regarding Sufism, ['Ali ibn 'Abd al-Rahim al-Qannad](#) said, "Sufism consists of extending a 'spiritual station' (nashr maqam) and being in constant union (ittisal bi-dawam)."

All of these definitions of Sufism given by Sufis who lived in the 9th and 10th centuries (CE) are provided by [al-Sarraj](#) (d. 378 AH/ 988 CE) in the earliest comprehensive book on Sufism, the *Kitab al-Luma'* (The Book of Flashes) (ed. by R. Nicholson, pp. 34-35). These definitions of Sufism, however, are mere signposts pointing one to the Doorway

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Sufism: Obstacles on the Path

The difficulties in following the path or obstacles to getting closer to God derive primarily from one's self or ego (*nafs*). In other words, it can be said that if one is not recognizing or experiencing God's "closeness" or presence, the responsibility for this condition lies with one's own self.

Some of the gross effects of the dominance of the *nafs* are that one may become overwhelmed by the need to gratify desires such as anger, lust, and the many addictions that afflict us. Other gross effects are that one may become dominated by states of consciousness such as anxiety, boredom, regret, depression, and self-pity-- so that one feels like a powerless victim or prisoner tortured within one's own mind.

Given that the Sufi regards every thought, feeling, and perception that he or she has (including his or her sense of self) as a manifestation of God or as a particular view of God's face ("Wherever you turn there is God's face"--Qur'an), a more subtle effect of the dominance of the *nafs* than those expressed earlier (but still a devastating effect) is to imagine that God is absent from one's experience or to imagine that one does not have the choice to embrace the way in which God appears at this moment. Such mistaken imaginings often cause one to cease to surrender gratefully and lovingly into God's embrace. In fact, being overcome by these subtle effects opens the door for the gross effects mentioned earlier.

Hence, one of the emphases of Sufism is upon the struggle to overcome the dominance that one's *nafs* has over one, a struggle that first and foremost involves choosing at each moment to remember and surrender actively to God--irrespective of whether the form in which God becomes manifest is one of absence or presence, benevolence or severity. As Rumi said:

I am a lover of both his benevolence and severity!
Amazing it is that I'm in love with these opposites!

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Sufi Orders and Their Shaykhs

[Depiction of a Mogul Miniature of Four Great Sufi Shaykhs](#) by the renowned painter Rembrandt (1606-69 CE).

[Malamatiya](#)

[Yasawiya - Ahmet Yasawi](#)

[Kubrawiya \(and Oveyssi\)- Najm al-Din Kubra](#)

[Oadiriya - 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani](#)

[Rifa'iya - Ahmet Rifa'i](#)

[Mevleviye - Jalal al-Din Rumi](#)

[Bektashiye - Haji Bektash Veli](#) (As of Dec. 4, 2004, all of the links for the preceding orders have been fixed and are current.)

[Naqshbandiya - Baha' al-Din Naqshband](#)

[Ni'matallahiya - Shah Ni'matallah Vali](#)

[Bayramiye - Haji Bayram Veli](#)

[Chishtiya - Mu'in al-Din Chishti](#)
[Shadhiliya - Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili](#)
[Khalwatiya - 'Umar al-Khalwati](#)
[Tijaniya - Ahmad al-Tijani](#)
[Muridiyya - Ahmadu Bamba](#)
[Qalandariya](#)
[Orders in North Africa](#)
[Orders in East Africa](#)
[Orders in West Africa](#)
[Orders in South Africa](#)
[Orders in Indonesia and Malaysia](#)
[Orders in Afghanistan](#)
[Orders in Pakistan](#)
[Orders in Kurdistan](#)
[Orders in Russia](#)
[Orders in Turkmenistan](#)
[Orders in the Balkans](#)

- The Malamatiya (the blameworthy) can be considered a proto-Sufi order that arose in the 3rd century AH / 9th century CE before the crystallization of the Sufi orders. Malamati principles became integrated into later Sufism. The scholarly article [Hakim Tirmidhi and the Malamati Movement of Early Sufism](#) by Prof. Sara Sviri provides a number of foundational ideas as well as important historical data for understanding the Malamatiya.

- Sufi orders (*turuq*) crystallized as institutions beginning around the 6th century AH/ 12th century CE. One of the first orders was the Yasawi order, named after **Khwajah Ahmad Yasavi** (d. 562 AH/ 1166 AD), from the city of Yasi, where his tomb is located. Today it is called Turkestan and is situated in Kazakhstan, about a six hour drive northwest from Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. His shrine is undergoing multi-million dollar renovations, which should be finished by the Fall of 1998, when a commemorative festival and international conference in Turkestan on Khwajah Ahmad is planned. A few generations after Khwajah Ahmad, an important Yasavi shaykh was Isma'il Ata. He was from a village in the vicinity of Tashkent. One of his sayings to his disciples was as follows: "Accept this advice from me: Imagine that the world is a green dome in which there is nothing but God and you, and remember God until the overwhelming theophany (*al-tajalli al-qahri*) overcomes you and frees you from yourself, and nothing remains but God" (Al-Khani, *Hada'iq al-wardiya*, p. 109).

- The Kubrawiya Sufi Order--originating, like the Yasawiya, in Central Asia-- was named after **Najm al-Din Kubra** (d. 618/1221) (Abu al-Jannab Ahmad ibn 'Umar ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khiwaqi al-Khwarazmi), known as the "saint-producing (lit. "sculpting or chiseling") shaykh" (shaykh-e vali tarash), since a number of his disciples became great shaykhs themselves. Although originally from Khiva, located today in western Uzbekistan, he moved nearby to the capital city, Khwarazm. Shaykh Najm al-Din was killed defending Khwarazm, which was completely destroyed during the Mongol holocaust. Today, [his tomb](#) (and here as well is another image of [Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra's tomb](#)) is in the town of Konya Urgench, which was built in the area of the ruins of Khwarazm. Apparently, he is known there as Kebir Ata. Konya Urgench is located in Turkmenistan and is about an hour's drive over the border from the city of Nukus in the Karakalpak region of Uzbekistan. (If you intend to visit Shaykh Najm al-Din's shrine from Uzbekistan, you must have a Turkmen visa--if you are not Uzbek.)

Some of the more historically significant Kubrawi shaykhs were 'Ala al-Dawla Simnani (d. 736/1336) and Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh (d. 869/1464). The Nurbakhshi Kubrawi lineage embraced Shi'ism. One continuation of this lineage today is the Oveysi (Uwaysi) Shahmaghsoudi order, known as the [Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi](#). (Link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004)

- The Qadiriya Sufi Order--branches of which are found throughout the Muslim world-- was named after ['Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani](#) (d. 1166 CE). Here you can read [Qala'id al-jawahir \(Necklaces of Gems\)](#) a book length hagiography of 'Abd al-Qadir written by Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Tadifi al-Hanbali. You can also virtually visit the [tomb of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir](#) in Baghdad. [The website devoted to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani](#) (Link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) is the most comprehensive site on the web concerning a particular shaykh and his writings. A representative example of the works attributed to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir is [On Removing the Cares of the Heart](#), which is the seventh discourse in his *Futuh al-ghayb* (Revelations of the Unseen). Another source for works attributed to him is the website devoted to his [discourses](#). A later Punjabi (Pakistani) Qadiri Sufi Poet was [Bulleh Shah](#) (The previous link contains a substantial article on his life and poetry as well as links to a number of his poems in both English and the original Punjabi.) A short paragraph about him as well as two translated poems can be find at [Bulleh Shah](#). (Link fixed, 22 September 2005.) One of the most significant Qadiri shaykhs in West African was [Osman Dan Fodio](#) (from Wikipedia). See [Usman dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate](#) (Link fixed 22 September 2005) (a short but useful article from the Library of Congress Country Study of Nigeria). In Northern Nigeria in recent years the [Qadiriyya tariqah](#) was continued by [Maulana Dr. Sheikh Muhammad al-Nasir Kabara](#) and his successor, Sheikh Qaribullah al-Nasir Kabara. One branch of the Qadiriya in Senegal utilizes drums in their gatherings. Released fully in CD format as [Tabala Wolof: Sufi Drumming of Senegal](#), (Link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) you can listen here to a brief cut of this [Senegalese Qadiriya drumming](#). (Link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004.)

The Moroccan-based [Qadiriya-Butshishiyya](#), has links to the Shadhiliyah. It is headed by [Shaykh Sidi Hamza el Qadiri el Boutchichi](#) and centered in Oujda (Madagh) in the Northeast of Morocco, although numerous zawiyahs exist throughout Morocco. The order is certainly the most significant tariqah in Morocco today and is rapidly expanding.

It also has zawiyas and representatives in France, England, Italy, Spain, Canada, Finland, and the United States. Another rich web site on the Qadiriya Boutchichiyya is called [The Sufi Way](#).

One branch of the Qadiriya active in Turkey and the United States is the [Qadiri-Rifai Tariqa](#) (link fixed Dec. 04, 2004) headed by Shaykh Taner Ansari and now centered in Northern California.

- [Shaykh Ahmad al-Rifa'i](#) (d. 1182 CE) (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) is the shaykh from whom the Rifa'i order is derived. In some cases, such as that of Shaykh Taner (noted above), the Rifa'i and Qadiri orders have united.
- [Rumi and the Mevleviye](#) This comprises links to Rumi's poetry, discourses, biographical essays, the history of his *tarikat* (Sufi order), and the *Sama*. Although many American readers are surprised to hear that Rumi was a devout and committed Muslim, nevertheless his writing is so "Islamic" that his *mathnawi* was referred to by the great Naqshbandi poet Jami as "the Qur'an in Persian." (Additions as of 2/28/98)
- The Bektashiya, which originally derived from the Yasaviya (mentioned above), took its name from [Haji Bektash Veli](#) (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) This site consists of a biography of Haji Bektash and a number of images, including a painting of him and an image of his shrine. The following site also contains biographical material that complements the previous site. [Haji Bektash Veli](#) is one of the most significant Anatolian (Turkish) Sufi saints. Here you can visit the [Shrine of Haji Bektash](#), (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) which is located in the town of [Haji Bektash Koy](#). (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) (At the previous link there is a picture of small *Sama* in progress.)

See also the [Alevilik- Bektashilik Research Site](#), (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) a very rich scholarly and comprehensive website containing numerous articles in both English and Turkish. In addition, [The Bektashi Order of Dervishes website](#) (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004) gives an useful introduction to the history and principles of the order. An Albanian branch of the Bektashi order was established in the USA by Baba Rexheb. See the obituary for him written by Prof. Frances Trix, [Baba Rexheb: Albanian Bektashi Leader](#) (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004). In addition the following brief biography contains a picture of his tomb (which is near Detroit, Michigan,US) [Baba Rexheb](#) (link fixed, Dec. 4, 2004).

[Kurds, Turks and the Alevi revival in Turkey](#) At times, both in history and today, Sufi elements are found in political movements. One such contemporary mixture is in the leftist Alevi-Kurdish movement in Turkey, in which Haji Bektash and Pir Sultan Abdal are considered to be saints. This article, by Professor Martin van Bruinessen, one of the chief authorities on Kurdish religious groups, clarifies the facts of this issue. (Back on-line 5/18/98)

[Yunus Emre](#) (link fixed, Dec. 04, 2004) is the most significant Bektashi poet.

(As of Dec. 04, 2004 all of the links to the preceding orders have been fixed and are current.)**

- The Naqshbandiya, named after [Baha al-Din Naqshband \(d. 791/1389\)](#) (Link fixed 22 September 2005) is a *tariqah* that is widely active throughout the world today and that even has a strong presence on the Web. You can read about all of the shaykhs of one of its main lineages at this link [The Golden Chain](#) (Link fixed 22 September 2005). The Naqshbandiya further developed basic Islamic practices and principles into the [eleven principles of the Naqshbandi Order](#). One of Khwajah Baha al-Din's successors was Khwajah Muhammad-e Parsa. The tomb and mosque of his son, [Khwajah Abu Nasr-e Parsa](#) (fixed 22 Sept. 2005) is in Balkh, in Afghanistan. Another of Khwajah Baha al-Din's successors was Ya'qub-e Charkhi (d. 1447), whose most significant disciple and successor was [Khwajah 'Ubayd Allah Ahrar](#) (d. 895/1490) (fixed 22 Sept. 2005). Read here a [Qur'anic commentary of Khwajah Ahrar's](#) on *Guide us on the straight path (Qur'an 1:5)*. One of the most highly regarded Naqshbandi Shaykhs is Ahmad Sirhindi. See a [Biography of Shaykh Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005) and another [Biography of Imam-i Rabbani, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi](#), (a PDF document; link fixed 22 Sept. 2005) known as the *Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani* (Renewer of the Second Millennium)(d. 1034/1624). This is an on-line translation of the *Manaqib ve Maqamat-i Ahmadiya-yi Saidiya* written by Muhammad Mazhar, a son of Ahmad Said Faruqi.

One of the most important Afghan / Uzbek shaykhs of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was a Naqshbandi in the lineage of the Mujaddid, a shaykh whose name was Sufi Islam, or, as he was also known, Shaykh al-Islam Karrukhi. His *khaniqah* (Sufi hospice) at Karrukh, near Herat (in Afghanistan), is apparently still functioning. In the Summer of 1997, while travelling in Uzbekistan, I obtained a copy in Persian of his life story and teachings. If any readers have any information about Afghans or others who may be connected to Sufi Islam's lineage, [please send me \(Dr. Godlas\) email](#) by this link.

The most significant Nasqshbandi shaykh in Syria until his passing in 2004 was [Shaykh Ahmad Kuftaro](#). Born in 1915, Shaykh Kuftaro was particularly important because not only was he a Naqshbandi shaykh since 1938, but he since he was Syria's Grand Mufti (the chief scholar of Islamic law) since 1964.

The shaykh of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani order is Shaykh Nazim. His representative for the United States is Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, who is the author of the on-line book, [The Fundamentals of Tasawwuf \(Sufism\)](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005). See their extensive website [The Naqshbandi Homepage](#). Another branch of the Naqshbandiya is the [Naqshbandiya of Shaykh Mahmud Es'ad Cosan](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005) (pronounced "Jo'shan"). This branch is centered in Istanbul, Turkey. A branch of the Naqshbandiyah now centered in Manchester, England, is that of [Shaykh Asif Hussain Farooqui](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005). An organization centered in the United States and having as its purpose the education of both Muslims and non-Muslims about the holistic nature of Islam--which includes spirituality as an essential dimension--is the [Naqshbandiya Foundation for Islamic Education](#). See the website devoted to [Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan](#) (Turkish only; link fixed 22 Sept. 2005), a twentieth century Turkish Naqshbandi scholar and Sufi. Of the various pages at the site, one focuses on [his Sufi activities](#) (archived link). A Turkish Naqshbandi shaykh who recently passed away was

Ahmet Kayhan. A [biographical sketch of Ahmet Kayhan](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005) has been written by a disciple of his, Henry Bayman. See also a [picture of Ahmet Kayhan](#). For a concise overview of a number of branches of the Naqshbandi order in Turkey today, see the article titled [Concerning the Naqshbandiyya in Turkey](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005).

Anyone interested in researching the Naqshbandi order will find the [Bibliography of the Naqshbandiyya](#) by Vika Gardner, a Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan, to be very useful.

- Haji Bayram Veli (d. 833 AH/ 1429-30 CE), a great Anatolian shaykh and disciple of the Khalwati shaykh, Hamid al-Din or Hamid Aksaray (d. 805 AH/ 1402 CE), was the founder of the Bayramiye order. Three of his disciples each founded or were at the root of separate orders: Ak Shams al-Din founded the Shamsiye order, Hizir Dede was the ancestor of the Celvetiye (Jalwatiya), and Bursali Omer Dede was the founder of the Melamiye (Malamiya) order. [The Tomb and Mosque of Haji Bayram](#) (link fixed Jan. 2005) in Ankara can be viewed here. More information, especially about the interior of the [mosque of Haci Bayram](#) (as it is spelled in Turkish) is found at the website of the Turkish Ministry of Culture. The Ottoman Melami Sufi order became interconnected with the Bayramiye order.
- [Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti](#) (from Chisht or Chesht-e sharif, due East of Herat on the Hari Rud in Afghanistan, although his tomb is in Ajmer, India) is the most well-known of the early saints of the Chistiya order, which is prominent in India and Pakistan and has spread (in various forms) to the West. The first of the Chishti saints was Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti (d. 329/940-41), whose shaykh was a well-known Sufi shaykh, Mimshad (or Mumshadh, after al-Dhahabi in Tarikh al-islam) al-Dinawari (d. 299/911-12) (from Dinawar, which was a city in Iranian Kurdistan northeast of Kermanshah, that was later completely destroyed by Timur). See [An Introduction to Sufism](#), is an article written by a recently deceased shaykh of the Chistiya who had resided for many years in Toronto. Read about Khwaja Moinuddin's shrine (*dargah*) at two sites: [The Dargah](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005) and [Ajmer Sharif](#); and virtually visit the [Dargah of Khwaja Mu'in al-Din](#) in Ajmer, India. Visit also [the Shrine of Nizam al-Din Awliya \(d. 725/3125\)](#), (fixed Sept. 22, 2005) a Sufi shaykh of the Chisti order who is buried in New Delhi, India. One of disciples of Nizam al-Din Awliya was the great Sufi poet [Amir Khusraw Dihlawi](#) (d. 725/1325), who was buried at the feet of his master. Chishti orders with websites include the following:

[Chishti-Habibi Soofie Islamic Order](#) website was constructed by a South African branch of the Chishti order deriving from Sayed Khwaja Habib Ali Shah from Hyderabad (India) (d. 1326/1906).

[Chisti Order of Sufis](#), (link fixed Sept. 22, 2005) which is affiliated with Shaykh Hakim Abu Abdullah Moinuddin, the author of the [Book of Sufi Healing](#). This is an excellent,

comprehensive site covering topics such as the history and literature of the Chisti Order and including pages on actual Sufi practice and Sufi healing.

[Gudri Shahi Branch of the Chishti Order](#) (link fixed Sept. 22, 2005) established by Dr. M. Qadeer Shah Baig in Toronto, Canada. The current *khalifa* in Toronto is Syed Mumtaz Ali.

[Gudri Shahi/Zahuri Branch of the Chishti Order](#) previously headed by Hz. Zahurul Hasan Sharib (d. 1996) and currently headed by Inaaam Hasan of Ajmer, India. This branch now has a presence in England, the Americas, and other regions of the world. Jamiluddin Morris Zahuri (a devotee of Hz. Zahurul Hasan and the webmaster of the Zahuri website), notes that the Gudri Shahi order actually has two lineages, one deriving in this material world from the Qadiriya and the other being an "Uwaysi" transmission (occurring in the non-material world of the spirit) from Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti to Hazrat Saeen Gudri Shah Baba (Saenji Sahib), who is the founder of the Gudri Shahi order. In addition, some members use the appellation "Zahuri" to refer to their affiliation with Hz. Zahurul Hasan Sharib. For more information see [Jamiluddin Morris' letter to Dr. Godlas](#) (links fixed 22 Sept. 2005).

The teachings of another Chishti branch that also has a Qadiri lineage can be found at the site [Islam and the Sufi Tradition of Chishti Qadhiri](#). The current shaykh is FaizeeShah.

[The Chishti Website](#) is a nicely designed general website, in both English and Russian, dealing with the Chishti order, although there does not appear to be any information on the connection of the site to any particular Chishti lineage or shaykh. The focus of the site is teachings rather than history, although there is some information on early Chishti shaykhs. Of particular interest to me is one of its main articles, [Sufi Symbols](#), a treatise on the symbolism of the letters of the alphabet.



- The Shadhiliya Order, named after [Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili](#) (d. 656 AH/1258 CE), whose tomb is at Humaythra on Egypt's Red Sea coast, has branches throughout North Africa and the Arab world. It has also become established in Europe and the United States. One shaykh who has brought the Shadhiliya to the U.S. is [Sidi Shaykh Muhammad al-Jamal ar-Rifa'i as-Shadhili](#), (link fixed 13 June 2002) whose organization has established the [Sidi Muhammad Press](#) website, which contains information about the principles of Sidi Shaykh al-Jamal's teachings concerning the [Shadhili order](#) (link fixed 13 June 2002). The Shadhiliya derives from the *tariqat* of Abu Madyan Shu'ayb (d. 594 AH/1198 CE), whose tomb is in Tlemcen, Algeria. A recent book, [The Way of Abu Madyan](#), by the scholar Vincent Cornell, provides his biography, a discussion of his teachings, and a number of texts written by Abu Madyan and translated into English along with the original Arabic.

One of Abu Madyan's disciples was Muhammad 'Ali Ba-'Alawi, from whom the ['Alawiya Order](#), also known as the Ba'Alawiya Order, derives. A branch of the 'Alawi Order is the

['Attasiya Order](#) (or as they themselves write it: Attasia Tarikah), which is centered in Yemen but also has *zawiyas* (hospices) in Pakistan, India, and Myanmar. The 'Alawiya order in the Yemen has recently been studied by the anthropologist, David Buchman. In his article titled [The Underground Friends of God and Their Adversaries: A Case Study and Survey of Sufism in Contemporary Yemen](#), Professor Buchman summarizes the results of his six month period of fieldwork in Yemen. The article was originally published in the journal *Yemen Update*, vol. 39 (1997), pp. 21-24.

['Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish](#) (d. 625 AH/1228 CE), another disciple of Abu Madyan, transmitted his teachings to Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili. One of al-Shadhili's most prominent disciples was [Abu-l-'Abbas al-Mursi \(d. 686 AH/1287 CE\)](#), whose shrine is in Alexandria, Egypt. From another angle, visit the [Mosque and Tomb of al-Mursi](#). His *murid* (disciple) and successor was Ibn 'Ata' Allah Iskandari (d. 709/1309 in Cairo), who wrote the text [The Key to Salvation: A Sufi Manual of Invocation](#) (Miftah al-falah). See also the chapter on *dhikr* (remembrance of God) from [Miftah al-falah](#) translated by the scholar Ayesha Bewley. Another of Ibn 'Ata Allah's works is the [Hikam](#) (maxims or aphorisms), partially translated here by Ayesha Bewley. An important Shadhili shaykh in Morocco was [al-Jazuli](#) (d. between 869/1465 and 875/1461), whose fame was spread throughout the Muslim world by his collection of prayers titled [Dala'il al-khayrat](#). The order founded by him, the Jazuliya, as well as other Moroccan Sufi orders and saints, are discussed by Prof. Vincent Cornell in his recent book [Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism](#).

Another Moroccan branch of the Shadhili order is the Darqawiya, founded in the late 18th century (CE) by Mawlay al-'Arbi al-Darqawi. Selections from the [Letters of Shaykh al-Darqawi](#) have been translated by the scholar Ayesha Bewley. One of the first *tariqas* to become established in the West was the ['Alawiya branch of the Darqawiya](#), (link fixed Nov. 23, 2001) which became named after Shaykh Ahmad ibn Mustafa al-'Alawi al-Mustaghanimi, popularly known as [Shaykh al-Alawi](#) (link fixed Nov. 23, 2001) A significant book about him, written by Martin Lings, is titled [A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century](#). (offline Nov. 23, 2001). A Shadhili shaykh who has established centers in the West has been [Shaykh Abdalqadir al-Murabit](#), a Scottish convert to Islam, whose lineage is Shadhili-Darqawi. Currently his order is known as the [Murabitun](#). At other times his order has been known as the Darqawiya and Habibiya. One of the first books that Shaykh Abdalqadir wrote was *The Book of Strangers*, which he authored under the name Ian Dallas. For a brief anecdote of Shaykh Abdalqadir in the early 1970's, go to the chapter ["Forgiveness and Maturation of the Heart"](#) from the book *Recovery of the Sacred*, by the psychiatrist Carlos Warter, and scroll down to " A few weeks later, I was walking down Telegraph Avenue...", which begins after about two-thirds of the chapter.

A contemporary order deriving, in part, from Shaykh Abdalqadir is the [al-Haydariyah al-Shadhiliyah](#), headed by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri. Of Shi'ite descent, Shaykh Fadhlalla, nevertheless, neither teaches within a Shi'i nor a Sunni framework.

Between October 17-26, 1999, the [First International Shadholian Festival](#) occurred in Egypt. It concluded with a pilgrimage to the tomb of Abu 'l-Hasan al-Shadhili and involved Sufi gatherings of *dhikr* and chanting. (Offline, Feb. 2004.)

The Burhaniya or Burhamiya, named after Shaykh Burhan al-Din Ibrahim al-Dasuqi (d. 687/1288), sometimes regarded as derived from the Shadhili order and sometimes from the Rifa'i order, is an order active today in Egypt. A branch in Australia is led by [Murshid F. A. Ali ElSenossi](#). (Link fixed, February, 2004.) whose organization is called the [Almiraj Sufi and Islamic Study Centre](#).

- Possessing many branches with distinct names, the **Khalwatiya** order regards its founder to be 'Umar al-Khalwati (d. 800/1397) and traces itself back to Abu Najib Suhrawardi (d. 563/1168) founder of the **Suhrawardiya** order. Among the Khalwati branches with links on the web are the following:

- [Sammaniya order](#) of the Sudan, the current shaykh of which is Hasan As-Shaykh Qaribullah, located in Um Durman.

- [Halveti-Jerrahi order](#) of Turkey. Until recently, the shaykh of the Jerrahi order was [Safer Efendi](#) (also known as al-Iqtida Efendi), who was based in Istanbul. He passed away on February 21, 1999. There are a number of [Jerrahi centers throughout the world](#), many of which were established through the efforts of a former shaykh, Muzaffer Ozak, known as Muzaffer Efendi, whose pen name was Ashki. The Italian center of the order also maintains a website titled [Jerrahi-Halveti Order of Italy](#), the shaykh of which, Gabriel Mandel Khan, was a representative of Safer Efendi.

- The **Nimatollahi Sufi Order** --named after its founder, Nur al-Din Ni'matallah Vali, known as Shah Ni'matallah-- although originally a Sunni order, became Shi'i in the 16th century. Four primary branches are 1) the [Khaniqahi Ni'matullahi](#), also called the Ni'matullahi Sufi order, which is more precisely the Dhu'r-riyasateyn (Munis 'Ali Shah) Ni'matullahiya; this branch is the most well-known in the West, primarily on account of the efforts of its current shaykh, Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh; 2) [Safi 'Ali Shahi order](#), named after its chief figure, [Safi 'Ali Shah Isfahani \(d. 1316/1899\)](#); 3) the Khaneghah Malekniya Naseralishah, named after its former shaykh, Pir Malikniya, who was also known as Nasiralishah and who passed away in 1998. I was informed by a member of this order that they carefully observe Shari'ah (Islamic law); and 4) [Nimatollahi Gonabadi Sufi Order](#) which is also called Bonyad Erfan Gonabadi. See also their webpage [Bonyad-e Erfani-ye Ni'matullahi-ye Gonabadi](#). Another website, [Nimatollahi Gonabadi Sufi Order](#), as of October 26, 2002 appears to be offline. The order is centered in Iran in the city of Gonabad, whose primary 20th century shaykh was Sultan Husayn Tabandah. A characteristic of this order (according to Pourjavady and Wilson's book on the history and poetry of the Ni'matullahi order called *Kings of Love*, p. 252) was careful observance of the Shari'ah (Islamic law). (The preceding material on the Ni'matullahiya was revised on 6 Nov. 2000 and then on 27 Dec. 2000)

[The shrine of Shah Ni'matallah Vali](#), (who had been a disciple of the well-known but little-studied Qaderi Sufi author, 'Abdallah Yafi'i) in Mahan, Iran, is still an important pilgrimage site. [Here you can look heavenward](#) from the tomb area within the shrine of Shah Ni'matallah (or Ni'matullah and Nematollah, as it is sometimes written). The following image is a fine view of the [dome of Shah Ni'matallah's shrine](#), along with a

minaret. Here is the [dome of Shah Ni'matullah's shrine](#), including two minarets. The following picture shows the [courtyard pool](#) of the shrine. Inside the shrine is a room where Sufis could spend a period of time in seclusion, meditating, praying, and fasting. Such retreats often lasted for forty (*chehel*) days. Hence such rooms were called *cheleh'khanah* (a forty room). One such [cheleh'khanah](#) at the shrine can be seen here. The following two linked images appear to be offline now (7 Nov. 2000): [dome of Shah Ni'matullah's shrine](#), and a minaret. See also a view from the ground level of the [shrine of Shah Ni'matullah](#).

- [The Tijaniya](#), named after Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815 CE) is an important Sufi order primarily in Africa. See a short biographical sketch, [Shaykh Ahmed al-Tijani](#) by Baruti M. Kamau, who is affiliated with the Tijani order. One of the most significant Tijani shaykhs was Hajj 'Umar Tal al-Futi. For him, a useful starting point is this [Biography of Hajj 'Umar Tal al-Futi](#) (1794-1863), written by the African-American Muslim writer Baruti Muhammadu D.S. Kamau. (Added, January 14, 2001.) Centers of activity are in West Africa, Morocco (where Shaykh al-Tijani's tomb is located), and Egypt. While there are a number of Tijani shaykhs today, one of the most significant is [Hassan Cisse](#) (link fixed 15 January 2002). See this [Introduction to the Tariqa Tijaniyya](#) (link fixed 15 January 2002) for a summary of the principles of the Tijani path, the most important of which are 1) Asking God for forgiveness, 2) Saying *La ilaha illa 'llah* (There is no god but God), and 3) Offering prayers of blessing upon the Prophet Muhammad. The Tijaniya has a significant following among African-Americans in the United States. The article [The Tijaniyya, a Tariqa of the 20th century](#) contains a short biography of Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani and brief discussions of a few of the more important 20th century and contemporary shaykhs. The author of the article, Muhammad 'Isa Mavongou, is a French convert to Islam and a disciple of a Mauritanian Tijani shaykh, Sheikh El Haj 'Abdallah ould Michry. [The African American Islamic Institute](#), (link fixed 15 January 2002) is a Tijani institution which publishes a [newsletter](#). A center has also been established in Trieste, Italy.

- [The Muridiyya](#), established by [Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba](#) (d. 1927) is an order of major importance in Senegal and has a presence in various other countries, including France, England, and the U.S. The [tomb of Ahmadu Bamba](#) in Touba, in Western Senegal, is a major pilgrimage site. There are a large number of various [Muridiya websites](#) listed here.

- **Qalandariya** as a term is used in two ways: 1) it may refer to any wandering Sufi, who may be called a Qalandar, or 2) it may refer to a specific Qalandar tariqat. One such tariqat is the [Qalandariya of Sheikh Baba Sultan](#), or Sheikh Muhammad Sultan, as he was also known, of Kashmir.

Orders in North Africa

- [Sudanic Africa](#) is an online scholarly journal containing, among other things, numerous articles on Sufism in Islamic Africa.
- [Ibriziana](#) a PDF file (which you can read if you have Adobe Acrobat) by Dr. Bernd Radtke from the online journal *Sudanic Africa*, concerns one of the most important Sufi texts, the *Ibriz* of Ibn Dabbagh. The *Ibriz* is of great significance in the development of the Tariqa Muhammadiya, a Sufi orientation emphasizing the cosmic importance of the Prophet Muhammad, and was an important work for a few North African Sufi orders.

Orders in East Africa

- [Sufism in the Somaliland](#) is an academic article written by one of the chief authorities of East African Islam, I.M. Lewis. This article comes from London's Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS), v. 17, 1955. I would be interested in an update, however, since it is over forty years old.
- [Somali-Ethiopian Sufis and Shrines](#), part of a scholarly article by Ulrich Braukšmper. (Back on-line 6/22/98)
- [The Tomb of Shaykh Abadir](#), the patron saint of Harer Ethiopia.

Orders in West Africa

- [Sufi Orders in Mauritania](#)

Orders in South Africa

- ["Some Religion He Must Have": Slaves, Sufism, and Conversion to Islam at the Cape](#) a lengthy and well-documented scholarly paper written by Dr. John Edwin Mason, professor of History, University of Virginia.
- [Turning to the core: Sufism on the Rise?](#) by Dr. Abdulkader Tayob, professor of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, is a short survey of contemporary Sufi activity in South Africa.

Orders in Indonesia and Malaysia

- [Sufism in Indonesia](#), the page of Haji Michael Roland, consists of good background information on the history of Sufism in Indonesia and on the living tradition as well.
- [Javanese Mystical Movements](#) is a well-designed page with an anthropologically informed article on the major characteristics of mystically oriented groups in Java, some of which are traditionally Sufi Muslim, while others are syncretic (blending beliefs and practices deriving from a variety of sources).
- [Shaykh Ahmad Qusyasi's Symbols](#), a stunningly illustrated Malay Sufi manuscript with a scholarly discussion of the manuscript. (The illustrations may take a while to load [100-120k].)

Orders in Afghanistan

- [Sufi Orders in Afghanistan](#) is a short but informative article on Afghan Sufi orders after the fall of the Taliban.

Orders in Pakistan

- [Imagining Sufism: Reconstituting the Chishti Sabiri Silsila in Contemporary Pakistan](#) by Robert Rozehnal, Assistant Professor of Islam and South Asian Religions at Lehigh University.
- [Sufi Movement in Pakistan](#) a non-scholarly article that is nevertheless a useful starting point for those interested in Sufism in Pakistan.(Author not indicated.)
- [Shah Darazi Order and Khaniqah of Sachal Sarmast](#) The Shah Darazi order is a branch of the Kubrawiya order. This Khaniqah is located in the district of Khairpur, in Sindh, Pakistan.

Orders in Kurdistan

- [Sufi Orders Among the Kurdish People](#) is a brief article taken from *The Kurds, A Concise Handbook*, by Dr. Mehrdad R. Izady of Harvard University. This article has a detailed bibliography.

Orders in Russia

- [Sufism in Russia Today](#) a paper presented in March 2000 at the University of Birmingham by Robert G. Landa of the Oriental Institute of Moscow.
- [A Study of Sufism in post-Soviet Dagestan of the Russian Federation](#) by Galina M.Yemelianova, Ph.D., a Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK.

Orders in Turkmenistan

- [Shrine Pilgrimage in Turkmenistan as a Means to Understand Islam among the Turkmen](#) a scholarly article published in the Central Asia Monitor (1997) and written by David Tyson, M.A., formerly of the University of Indiana. (Back online May 6, 2002)

Orders in the Balkans

- [A Glimpse at Sufism in the Balkans](#) by the Muslim scholar Huseyin Abiva, is a useful historical survey of Sufism in the Balkan countries.

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism: Struggle With One's Nafs

The behavioral absolutes of the shari'ah (Islamic law) set the outer limits that the Sufi must keep within. But the Sufi struggle with one's *nafs* puts further curbs on the Sufi's behaviour and consciousness. Usually this struggle is spoken of as having two dimensions: negation (*nafy*) and affirmation (*ithbat*), corresponding to the two components of the first *shahadah* (testification of faith), *La ilaha* (There is no deity) and *illa Allah* (except for God). In reference to the two kinds of effects of the dominance of the *nafs* mentioned above, the "negation" can be said to take the form of attempting

- to control oneself from acting out one's anger or gratifying addictions,
- to negate the thought that one will find fulfillment through these means,
- to negate the sense that one cannot escape one's depression, and
- to give up imagining that God is absent.

The "affirmation" can be said to take the form of embracing and engaging the presence of God in whatever form it may appear within one's consciousness--even in the form of the thoughts that "God is absent," "I am depressed, or "I am distant from God." This unconditional embrace of the presence of God is simply called *taslim* in Muslim languages. This word is cognate with and is at the root of the word "Islam," and in light of the meaning expressed here, I have translated it as "engaged surrender."

In this regard, the struggle with one's own *nafs* has been called the greater struggle or greater "holy war" (*al-jihad al-akbar*) in contrast to the lesser struggle (*al-jihad al-asghar*), which is against injustice and oppressors in this world. The concept derives from the popular hadith of the Prophet, in which he said to Muslims returning from a battle, "You have returned from the lesser struggle to the greater struggle." And he was asked, "What is the greater struggle?" He answered, "The struggle against one's self (*nafs*), which is between the two sides of your body." Needless to say, in Sufism these two struggles are mutually reinforcing and occur simultaneously. In particular, the practice of "engaged surrender" in the "greater" struggle with one's own *nafs* diminishes certain obstacles in the consciousness of the Sufi, obstacles that--if not struggled against--will hinder the Sufi's capacity to engage in the "lesser" struggle in their life in the world.

An early text on the struggle with one's self is the treatise [Jihad al-nafs](#), written by the al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. 932). (Fixed, 1 October 2000.)

Another treatise on the struggle with the *nafs* is [al-Ghazali's jihad al-nafs](#). This is taken from his masterpiece *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) is one of the most well-known Islamic scholars and is often credited with establishing the orthodoxy of Sufism. A substantial [biography of al-Ghazali](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005) emphasizing his contribution to Islamic philosophy is by the scholar, Kojiro Nakamura. A short [biography of Al-Ghazali](#) is present in the online Encyclopedia Britannica (but only a few paragraphs are online unless the reader has a paid subscription to the Britannica, which libraries often have, or which individuals can obtain for free though a 14-day subscription). (Link fixed, Jan. 1, 2002.)

See also [Jihad al-akbar](#), an excerpt from the book *Islamic Beliefs and Doctrine According to Ahl al-Sunna: A Repudiation of "Salafi" Innovations* written by the contemporary Naqshbandi, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani. In this online article, the author discusses the idea

of the struggle against one's self, the "greater jihad" (*al-jihad al-akbar*), paying particular attention to the various evidence from hadith literature. Note that at the beginning of the excerpt a reference is made to the "above Hadith." It is possible that the hadith in question is the hadith on the "greater jihad" that I have mentioned above.

In spite of strong arguments for the idea that the greater jihad is the jihad against the self, Muslim militants and Wahhabis resist such a concept and attempt to invalidate it on the basis of hadith criticism and the conviction that relegating warfare to the status of "lesser jihad" gives it far less significance than it should have in Islam. See the article [Greater and Lesser Jihad](#) by a certain Abu Fadl and on line at Nida ul-Islam (The Call of Islam), a website supportive of al-Qaeda.

A contemporary discussion of *jihad* from a Sufi perspective is expressed in the essay [The Spiritual Significance of Jihad](#) by Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University.

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufi Qur'an Commentary (Sufi Tafsir)

- [Sufi Qur'an Commentary: A Survey of the Genre](#) Written by Dr. Godlas in its original form for publication in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, this comprehensive multi-page article discusses the major works of Sufi Qur'an commentary. Note that this is under construction, but the link is now functional. (The instructions for downloading the necessary font--for users of Windows using either MS Explorer or Netscape and a formatting error that prevented Netscape users from viewing proper font--have been fixed as of March 1, 2001.) In response to reader requests (on account of difficulty with the original font, I have reformatted the article ["Sufi Qur'an Commentary" in Unicode](#). If you do not have a full unicode font already installed on your computer, instructions for downloading are included on the first page of the reformatted article.
- ["Guide us on the straight path"](#) (Qur'an 1:6) in the Sufi Qur'an commentary *'Ara'is al-bayan* (The Brides of Explanation) by Ruzbihan al-Baqli (d. 606/1209) (See below.)
- ["Faith" in the Tafsir of Kashifi](#), a 9th/15th century Naqshbandi. He weaves together material from Khwajah Baha' al-Din Naqshband, Junayd al-Baghdadi, and Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi.

Sufism -- Sufis -- Sufi Orders

Sufism, the West, and Modernity

In the twentieth century Sufism began to spread in the West. An uneven and spotty but still useful introductory on-line article is [A History of Western Sufism](#) (fixed January, 2005) by Prof. Andrew Rawlinson of the University of Lancaster.

The following articles by Kinney and Bayman illustrate some general trends and issues:

- [The Sufi Conundrum](#), written by Jay Kinney, the publisher and editor-in-chief of the magazine *Gnosis*, discusses a number of issues confronting Americans as they investigate the nature and practice of Sufism today.
- [Sufism and Modernity](#) (link fixed, Dec. 10, 2004) is a chapter from the on-line book [Science, Knowledge, and Sufism](#), (link fixed 20 August, 2005) by Henry Bayman (author of [The Station of No Station: Open Secrets of the Sufis](#)), a disciple of the Turkish [Shaykh Ahmet Kayhan](#) (d. 1998). This particular chapter consists largely of a Sufi analysis of modernity, solidly based upon the writings of other scholars who have written about modernity, scholars such as Marshall Berman, Charles Taylor, and Alain Touraine.

Sufism in the West falls into four general categories:

[Islamic Sufi Orders in the West](#)
[Quasi-Islamic Sufi Organizations or Orders](#)
[Non-Islamic Sufi Organizations or Orders](#)
[Organizations or Schools Related to Sufism or Sufi Orders](#)

Islamic Sufi Orders in the West

The common denominator of the Islamic Sufi Orders now established in the West is the avowed adherence to Islam and specifically to the [Shari'ah](#), although the interpreter of the Shari'ah for a particular order may be the shaykh of that order. (In a few of these orders the shaykh may on occasion have non-Muslim disciples.) Some of the Islamic Sufi orders in the West are the following:

Shadhili Order, the branches of which are as follows:

- [Murabitun](#) This order was established in West by [Shaykh Abdalqadir al-Murabit](#) See [The Recovery of True Islamic Fiqh](#): An introduction to the work of Shaykh Abdalqadir as-Sufi by the Muslim scholar Abdalhaqq Bewley. This is a branch of the Shadhili-Darqawi order. At other times it has been known as the Darqawi and Habibiya orders.
- One offshoot of the Murabitun is the [al-Haydariya al-Shadhiliyah](#), (link fixed, Nov. 17, 2001) headed by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri. He is represented in the U.S. by Hajj Mustafa Ali, an American convert to Islam.
- 'Alawiya Order, deriving from Shaykh al-'Alawi. Shaykh al-'Alawi's current fame in the West derives largely from Martin Lings' book, [A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005). There are at least four distinct branches of this order in the West today (each of which has its own characteristics): 1) The website of [Sidi Ahmed Ibn Mustafa al-'Alawi](#) (known as Shaykh al-'Alawi) is maintained by a disciple of the Algerian shaykh, Sidi Ash-Shaikh al-Mouloud Boudai; 2) Another branch has among its shaykhs an American convert to Islam, [Nuh Keller](#), (link fixed 20 August, 2005) who,

although he is based in Jordan, has a number of disciples in the West, one of whom maintains a website of a number of his works; 3) The third branch is that of the 'Alawiya Maryamiyyah, founded by Frithjof Schuon and noted by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his article, "Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998)" in the initial volume of the journal [Sacred Web: A Journal of Tradition and Modernity](#) (July, 1998); 4) The fourth branch is connected to an Algerian shaykh known as Sidi 'Alawi who in the West has a number of disciples, in particular, in Switzerland and the US.

- [Shadhiliyya Sufi Center of North American](#) and whose books are published by [Sidi Muhammad Press](#) (link fixed Nov. 17, 2001), established in the U.S. by Sidi Shaykh Muhammad al-Jamal from Jerusalem (al-Quds). The website of the Midwestern Branch of this order is called the [Shadhuli Sufi Center of Peace and Mercy](#). Read an [Outsider's Account of a Shadhili dhikr on Long Island, NY](#).
- [Tariqa Burhaniya](#), while primarily in the Sudan, where the shaykh is Sheikh Mohamed Sheikh Ibrahim Sheikh Mohamed Osman, it does have centers in New York City and Montreal (Canada). The order has one central website, titled [Tariqa Burhaniya Disuqiya Shadhuliya](#) indicating that originally it is a branch of the Shadhiliya order that later branches off with the coming of the Shaykh Ibrahim al-Disuqi (circa 12th century CE).



Naqshbandi Order

- [Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order](#) established in the West by Shaykh Nazim. Currently, his *khalifa* (representative) in the U.S. is Shaykh Hisham Kabbani.
- [The Circle Group](#) was founded by an American Sufi, [Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005), who is the *khalifa* of [Hazrat Azad Rasool](#), (link fixed, Dec. 1, 2000) a Naqshbandi shaykh from New Dehli.

Chishti Order

- [Chishti Order](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005) established in the U.S. by an American Sufi, Shaykh Hakim Moinuddin Chishti.
- [Yousufi / Albayli Branch of the Chishti Order](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005).
- [Gudri Shahi Branch of the Chishti Order](#), established by Dr. M. Qadeer Shah Baig in Toronto, Canada. The current *khalifa* in Toronto is Syed Mumtaz Ali.
- [Gudri Shahi/Zahuri Branch of the Chishti Order](#) previously headed by Hz Zahurul Hasan Sharib (d. 1996) and currently headed by Inaaam Hasan of Ajmer, India. This branch now has a presence in England (where its website is located), the Americas, and in a number of other regions of the world. It also has an initiatic relationship with the Qadiriya. See my description of the [Gudri Shahi/Zahuri lineage](#)

Qadiriya Order

- Qadiriya-Butshishiya, is guided in the U.S. by two *muqaddems* (representatives) of Shaykh Hamza (the current head of the order. These muqaddems are [Faouzi Skali](#) for New York and [Ahmed Kostas](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005). Although Ahmed Kostas is also the guide for the Fez center of the [Qadiriya-Butshishiya](#) (link fixed 20 August,

2005), periodically he visits the U.S., where a growing number of followers are located. He can be contacted at the [Sufi Village](#). (Link fixed 23 November 2001 and Dec. 5, 2002)

- [Qadiri-Rifa'i Order](#) established in the U.S. by Shaykh Taner Ansari. (Link fixed, Dec. 5, 2002)

Tijani Order

- [The Tijani Order](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005) was established in U.S. by [Shaykh Hassan Cisse](#). (Link fixed, Dec. 1, 2000) Followers direct a center of the [Tariqah Tijaniyya in Detroit](#).

Jerrahi Order

- [Jerrahi Order of America](#) was established by Shaykh Muzaffer Ozak. Its three American centers are in Chestnut Ridge, New York, where [Shaykh Tosun Bayrak](#) is the khalifa; in Redwood City, CA, where the khalifa is [Shaykh Raghīb aka Dr. Robert Frager](#); and in [Chicago \(Midwest Branch\)](#), where the khalifa is Shaykh İlhan al-Jerrahi. Among the activities of the order is the [school establishment in Afghanistan](#). (New links added November 27, 2003.)
- [Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi Order](#) consider themselves to be within the Halveti-Jerrahi Tariqat in the lineage and leadership of the Turkish Sheikh Muzaffer Ashki al-Jerrahi (d. 1985) and the Westerners, [Sheikh Nur al-Jerrahi \(Lex Hixon\)](#) (d. 1995) and his successor (who is a woman), Sheikhha Fariha (Friedrich) al-Jerrahi. See [The Pavilion of Light](#), which consists of an online volume of transcribed discussions with Shaykh Nur, as well as the link [Teachings](#), which includes discourses of Shaykh Nur and Shaykha Fariha.


Nimatullahi order, although originally a Sunni order, became Shi'i in Iran in the 16th century. There at least four branches in the West, each of which refer to themselves in the following manners: 1) [Nimatullahi Sufi Order](#), or Khaniqahi Ni'matullahi, the current *pir* (shaykh or master) of which is Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh; among the branches of the order in the West, this one is the most well-known, primarily on account of the prolific publications in English of its current shaykh, Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, who is now based in England; 2) [Safi 'Ali Shahi order](#), named after its chief figure, Safi 'Ali Shah Isfahani (d. 1316/1899); 3) the Khaneghah Maleknia Naseralishah, named after its former shaykh, Pir Malikniya, who was also known as Naseralishah. See the illuminating account of an initiate of Pir Maleknia titled [One Man's Search for the Way](#); and the 4) [Nimatollahi Gonabadi Sufi Order](#). (Link fixed October 26, 2002.)

Uwaysi Order, a Shi'i branch of the Kubrawiyya, was brought to the West by its shaykh, Shah Maghsoud Angha. See biographies of him at [Shah Maghsoud Sadeqh Angha](#) and [Moulana Shah Maghsoud](#). There are currently two recent and distinct branches of the Uwaysi order that are very active in the West:

- 1) [The Maktab Tarighat Oveysi Shahmaghsoudi Sufi Order](#). The shaykh of this branch is Salaheddin Ali Nader Shah Angha, the son of Shah Maghsoud Sadeqh Angha.
- 2) [Uwaiysi Tarighat](#), headed by Shah Maghsoud's daughter, [Seyedeh Nahid Angha](#) and

her husband [Shah Nazar Seyed Ali Kianfar](#). In addition, Dr. Angha and Dr. Kianfar jointly established another organization, the [International Association of Sufism](#), noted below. (Uwaysi section revised on July 4, 2001.)

Muridiyah Order

- [Khidmatul Khadim](#), the official webpage of the Muridiyyah Order. Deriving from Shaykh Ahmad Bamba Mbacke, aka Ahmad Al Baki and Ahmad du Bamba (d. 1927) and centered in Senegal, the order now has an office in New York City. 

Burhani Order

- [The Borhaniyya \(or Burhamiya\) order](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005), under the leadership of Murshid F. A. Ali ElSenossi, has flourished in Australia since 1990.

Quasi-Islamic Sufi Organizations and Orders

In most of these organizations, although the shaykh himself or herself adhered or adheres to the Shari'a, the practice of Islam was not made a condition for receiving instructions on following the Sufi path. In some instances the shaykh may have identified him or herself as a Muslim and on other other occasions may have identified him or herself as a member or another faith. Also in some of these organizations, on some occasions the shaykh may have not observed the shari'a in the manner that is normative for Sunni's and/or Shi'is. Hence in these organizations, significant numbers of aspirants are Muslims and significant numbers are non-Muslims.

- [Bawa Muhayyadden Fellowship](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005) established in the U.S. (Philadelphia) by His Holiness Bawa Muhayyadden.
- [The Threshold Society and Mevlevi Order](#), formerly centered in Vermont, but now located near Santa Cruz in California, U.S., is headed by Shaykh Kabir and Camille Helminski. An important part of the move of the Mevlevi Order to the West was the guidance given by [Shaykh Suleyman Dede](#).
- A branch of the Turkish Rifa'i Marufi order is led in the US by [Sherif Baba](#) (el-Hajj el Fakir er Rifa'i M. Catalkaya). Sherif Baba lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and teaches throughout the United States. He received a traditional religious *medrese* training in addition to his training in Sufism with masters of the Rifa'i-Marufi, Halveti, Kadiri, Bektashi, and Melami Sufi orders. One of the activities of the Rifa'i Marufi order is the sponsorship of the annual [Rumi Festival of Chapel Hill](#). (Fixed, July, 2004.) The Rifa'i Marufi order can be contacted at (919) 933-0772. See also Rodrigo Dorfman's [Garden of the Sufis](#) website, which contains a *dhikr* led by Sherif Baba as well as a few of his discourses (sohbet) and a variety of other mutli-media presentations pertinent to Sufism as it is being practiced in Chapel Hill, NC.

Non-Islamic Sufi Organizations and Schools in the West

In addition to the various Islamic Sufi orders that now have centers in the West, a number of non-Islamic Sufi organizations have arisen in the West. These groups teach various

Sufi doctrines and practices but -- in contrast to nearly all Sufi orders in the Muslim world -- have disconnected their teachings from Islam. Hence followers of these groups are generally not Muslims. Adherents of such schools often assert that Sufism pre-dates Islam and thus in principle is universal and independent of it. The following Sufi groups and teachers have a non-Islamic view of Sufism:

- [Sufi Order International](#), formerly the Sufi Order in the West, founded by [Hazrat Inayat Khan](#), who was succeeded by his son [Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan](#) (link fixed 22 Sept. 2005), who has recently been succeeded by his son, Pir Zia Inayat Khan. See the short biographies of each of the [shaykhs of the Sufi Order International](#) (the above links were fixed on August 20, 2002). Visit the [Hazrat Inayat Khan](#) The collected works are online at [www.murshid.org](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005).
- [International Sufi Movement](#) (formerly described at [International Sufi Movement](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005)) is also derived from Inayat Khan and is headed by another of his sons, [Hidayat Inayat Khan](#). Somewhat more detailed is the [biography of Hidayat Inayat Khan](#). (Link fixed, November 23, 2001.)
- [Sufi Ruhaniat International](#) (originally named "The Sufi Islamia Ruhaniat Society" (SIRS) was established by Murshid Samuel Lewis (1896 - 1971), a disciple of Hazrat Inayat Khan. [Murshid Sam](#), who was particularly active in San Francisco during the height of the "hippie era," created the [Dances of Universal Peace](#), which became popularly known as "Sufi Dancing." (Links fixed Oct. 12, 1999 and Nov. 23, 2001)
- [Mevlevi Order of America](#), founded by Jelaluddin Loras, son of the main force behind the spread of the Mevlevi Order in the West, Suleiman Hayati Dede.
- [Idries Shah](#) was a Sufi teacher and prolific author who passed away in 1996 [the biographical material at the previous link was apparently much of the basis of the [Obituary of Idries Shah](#) (apparently offline October 22, 2002) published in the London Telegraph (December 7, 1996). See also the brief but illuminating [remarks about Shah by Doris Lessing](#) the well-known writer and student of Shah]. Through his writings, Idries Shah was arguably the single most important influence in popularizing Sufism (in a non-Islamic form) in the West. See the brief discussions of some of his works at [ISHK Books](#) (Fixed, October 10, 1999) and Doris Lessing's [Review of Shah's book *The Commanding Self*](#) (*The London Times*, May 5, 1994) as well Lessing's more comprehensive and hypertext linked [The Sufis and Idries Shah](#) People familiar with his work maintain the site [Sufi Studies Today](#).
- [Omar Ali-Shah](#) is a Sufi teacher and writer similar in orientation to his late brother Idries Shah. (Link fixed, February 6, 2001.)
- [The Golden Sufi Center](#) was established in various cities in the U.S. and around the world in order to disseminate the teachings of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya Sufi Order (in a non-Islamic form) as taught by Irina Tweedie and Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee.
- [Sufi Foundation of America](#) (link fixed November 23, 2001, offline for a while, then online October 12, 2003) is centered in New Mexico (U.S.) and headed by [Adnan Sarhan](#), a Sufi originally from Baghdad, who is a master of drumming and Middle Eastern dance. Healing various addictions is a major aspect of his work.
- [Sufism Reoriented](#) is a non-Islamic Sufi organization that takes [Meher Baba](#) as its focus and regards him as the avatar (God in human form). This article deals with its current spiritual leader (murshida) Carol Weyland Conner, who succeeded Dr. James MacKie as the organization's head. (Written by Nivedita Sharma and online at

Boloji.com, but published originally by Women's Feature Service, March 31, 2003.) David Berry, a devotee of Meher Baba, provides a "Baba lover's" view of Sufism in his article [What is Sufism?](#).

Organizations or Schools Related to Sufism or Sufi Orders

- [Islamic Studies and Research Association \(ISRA\)](#) is a US based international organization of Muslims aspiring to revive Islam, primarily through reviving its spiritual dimension, Sufism. Its membership is comprised of both Muslims having a variety of Sufi affiliations as well as Muslims who simply love God, who love the Prophet Muhammad, and who love all those dear to God and the Prophet.
- [International Association of Sufism](#), was established in the U.S. by Seyedeh Nahid Angha, Ph. D. (the daughter of [Shah Maghsoud Sadegh Angha](#)) and her husband, Shah Nazar Ali Kianfar, Ph. D. Among its many activities is the sponsorship of an annual conference in which both Islamic and non-Islamic Sufis take part. This year's conference, the Ninth Annual Sufism Symposium, to be held May 24-27, is titled [Sufism: Practicing Harmony](#) The IAS also publishes an online journal, [Sufism: An Inquiry](#). (Updated, March 4, 2001 and August 3, 2001)
- [American Sufi Muslim Association](#) (ASMA Society) founded by Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, centered in New York City (link fixed 20 August, 2005).
- [The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society](#), established in both the U.S. and England, in both locations organizes annual conferences on the work of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) and publishes a scholarly journal. Both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars present papers at their conferences.
- [The Naqshbandi Foundation for Islamic Education](#) (NFIE), although not a Sufi order, is an Islamic Sufi related organization comprised largely (but not limited to) followers of various branches of the Naqshbandi order. Its two main activities are (1) a yearly celebration of the Milad al-Nabi (birthday of the Prophet Muhammad), at which Sufis and scholars with a variety of Sufi affiliations give presentations, and (2) the publication of a scholarly journal, [Sufi Illuminations](#).
- [Australian Centre for Sufism](#), not affiliated with any particular Sufi order, was founded by clinical psychologist and initiated Sufi teacher, Fleur Nassery Bonnin. She believes in the necessity of doing both psychological and spiritual work.
- [The Beshara School of Intensive Esoteric Education](#) was founded in the England and the U.S. by a Turkish gentleman, Bulent Rauf (d. 1987), who had a strong interest in Sufism, especially the writings of Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi. Beshara regards itself as a school for realizing esoteric truth, a school that is independent of religion. (Link fixed 3/21/99)
- [SUBUD](#) was established originally in Indonesia by [Bapak Subuh](#) (link fixed 20 August, 2005) (d. 1987), who in his youth was a Sufi. There are now many centers throughout the world. An excellent summary of Subud is found at [Subud: Its Origin and Aim](#). Bapak encouraged members of Subud to practice the [religion of their choice](#). Hence some followers of Subud are Muslims and others are affiliated with other religions, while some do not have a religion. For a comparative study see [Subud and Sufism](#) by Dirk Campbell. Especially useful is Campbell's comparisons of Idries Shah's assessments of Subud with Pak Subuh's own remarks.

Terror and Peace

July 2, 2002 *The Pakistan Star (Toronto Edition)*

This past Friday a bomb blast rocked the American Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan. The act was carried out by a suicide bomber driving a Suzuki van into the surrounding protective barriers. The toll was 11 killed and numerous people injured. Those killed were primarily Pakistanis. Sadly it was but another violence wracked day in a long history of violence. Many mourned the violence, and long for peace and security. But some think otherwise..

Why has this brutal violence flared up once again? Why does it continue to occur over and over? Why do we see Islam and brutal violence together again and again? Why do those who kill act with such callous disregard for life, their own lives included? What is it that motivates them? What is it that brings men to fight what they perceive to be evil and destructive and in so doing become participants in far greater evil and destruction themselves? What is it about the heart of man that leads to this? What kind of worldview or mentality is it that persuades men that evil and brutality are good and necessary? To believe as the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* declared "that foul is fair, and fair is foul"?

A Pakistani Muslim friend told me some time ago of the corrupt grip of Islamic radicalism on the educational systems of Pakistan. He argued that it was the mullahs, the madrassas, certain Islamic student unions and their preying upon the disaffected intellectuals to the poverty stricken and frustrated, along with their intimidation of others, that led to such evil and violence. He said it was that the hopeless were indoctrinated into believing that by a 'heroic' death of murdering civilians, under the name or aim of Islamic expansion, there would be certain entry into paradise.

Recently I read of the publishing of an open letter to those who practice Islam. It called them to self-examination. To not side-step the heart issues, but to face them head on. It asked why is it that there is debate also in the North American Muslim community over the events of the past year? Why not unanimous and wholehearted condemnation of violence among those within the mosques and Islamic centers? Why there were/are feelings of sympathy, support, or even jubilation among some at the events of September 11? And disappointment by some that September 11 did not lead to the downfall of America, but appeared to be merely a bump in the road to that nation? Why do the same long for the implementation of sharia in North America and Europe? Is it the claimed desire for peace that rules, or is it for some at heart a hatred and callousness against any who would stand in the way of a lust for power and control? Can there really ever be true peace or happiness within a worldview founded by violence and intimidation? Or will it prove itself to be merely a vortex of increasing suspicion and violence leading to self-destruction? These are questions that must be answered if truth and peace are truly to prevail.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the day when the Promised One would come (Isaiah 9:6-7). The Prince of Peace is Jesus Christ. This is illustrated when he spoke of the day when the Child would be born and His name would be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" and whose peace would increase and come to prevail by the power of the Lord. The Bible teaches this many times in the Injil, or Gospel. In John chapter 18:1-11, we read of the account of Jesus' wrongful arrest, and how his disciple Peter drew his sword and attacked his enemies, cutting the ear off one. Jesus tells Peter to put away his sword. The same event is recorded in the writing of Luke who gives us the added information that Jesus at the same time healed the man who had been injured. (Luke 22:51) Time and again we see the Gospel teaching that Jesus came to bring peace -- that is peace with God, reconciling men to God through His sacrifice for their sins. He taught time and again that the fruit, the result of peace with God will be at peace with your fellow man. Jesus said "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hurt you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:43-45)

The Bible teaches that Jesus' death was a self-sacrifice of love. Love for men and women who by their sin had become the enemies of God. Jesus took upon Himself the punishment and penalty of God's wrath against sinners -- those who rejected and ignored God and His true way. That is real grace and love -- forgiveness by God, through Jesus for everyone who will repent of sin and seek forgiveness by Him. So it is the love of Jesus Christ -- who died selflessly for those who least deserved it, who sought forgiveness even for those who treated Him violently and abusively, and who taught that true religion can never be advanced by the sword -- it is His love that stands in stark contrast to the beliefs of those who live by violence. It is His love that makes men willing to peacefully stand up for truth, even if the cost is death. (consider the Christians who died while worshipping in the Protestant International Church in Islamabad in March 2002, and those in Bahawalpur in October 2002, all who were slain because they dared worship God for His grace and love in Jesus Christ, rather than give in to threats and intimidation). It is God's love and true way of peace that exposes the darkness of a falsehood that would lead men to destroy both themselves and others.



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Truth Unchanged, Texts Unchanging?

The Text of the Bible and the Text of the Quran: A Brief History

Its really nice to be able to agree with people. I like to agree with people. And I have trouble with the person who regards all types of communication to be subtypes of argumentation the person who views every statement as a full-out assault on his person, his pedigree or the way he rides the city bus. Yet, in spite of my aversion to this tank-column mentality, I do believe that there are some things worth arguing about. That some things are true, that others are false, and that the two cannot be compromised. And this is one thing on which Muslims and Christians agree: when we disagree with each other, we cannot both be right. But when someone degrades the Name of my God, mocks the Word of my God, and changes "the truth of God into a lie"[1] - I am no longer agreeable. Sadly, Muslim apologists, of late, have done just this. They have criticized and mocked the Bible[2] and its authenticity, and not too subtly either. On the other hand, our Muslim friends maintain their Qur'an is still the perfect replica of the heavenly table unchanged since its delivery over thirteen centuries ago. In this paper we will carefully examine both of these claims. In it, I simply argue that a Muslim cannot deny the authenticity of the Biblical text, without undermining all support for the Quranic text.

The Text of the Qur'an

The orthodox Muslim position on the text of the Qur'an is easy enough to state. With the exception, of a few Shiite groups[3], Muslims hold that not one jot or tittle has been changed in the text of the Qur'an since it was assembled in the early history of Islam.[4]

Mohammad informs us that the text was revealed to him over a period of 22 years, and that he met with the angel Gabriel annually to ensure that the Qur'an was unaltered. From this point, accounts vary greatly.[5] Some believe that Muhammad organized the Qur'an[6], others hold that Abu Bakr[7] was the first, or Umar[8], or Salim[9], or Uthman and a very weak isolate Hadith credits Ali with the work.[10] It is possible to find *eight* in the traditions who were supposed to have done the job.[11] Others yet hold that the final form was not finally settled until the recension of al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf.[12] There, however, a few factors that help us to eliminate Muhammad as a collector of the Qur'an. Briefly, the majority of the Hadith do not support the tradition, and many Muslims argue that the 'canon' could not have been closed until after the death of Muhammad because of on-going abrogation.[13] In this paper, we will assume that Umar and Abu Bakr performed the first collection of the Qur'an, and that Uthman placed Zaid in charge of the first recension of variant copies. This accounts to a degree, for a number of variations in the Hadith - and it is the Hadith which we must work with, as we have no other *Muslim* source for determining the history of the Qur'anic text. Now having introduced our topic, let us get to the heart of the matter: the existence and nature of textual variations in the Qur'an.

Textual Criticism and the Qur'an:

Textual criticism is not a new invention. And paleography is not a new science. So it would seem to be a fairly simple thing to get together a team of experts, board the transportation device of choice, and examine the oldest manuscripts of the Qur'an which Muslims can produce. "Strangely enough," Ahmad Von Denffer tells us,

although during the past two centuries of more intense orientalist study of Islam perhaps tens of thousands of books on Islam have been written and published by the orientalists, the original studies on the Qur'an, which are the sole basis of all research on Islam, number not more than half a dozen or so. . . - apart from translations - published during the present century.[14]

Only four German orientalists (Noldeke, Schwally, Bergstraesser and Pretzel), we are told, and two English scholars (Arthur Jeffery and John Burton) deal with the history of the text of the Qur'an.[15] Von Denffer views this absence of study on the Quranic text as "strange" - Arthur Jeffery does not. His colleague, Professor Bergstraesser, while studying the text of the Qur'an, discoloured one of twenty alleged originals of Uthman with his own blood.[16] Jeffery himself is barred from examining at least one manuscript which he maintains is of great importance.[17] The examination of the Quranic text has neither been an easy, nor a safe one for non-Muslims - neither have Muslims ever endeavoured to formulate a critical text themselves.[18]

In spite of this discouraging news, and in spite of the fact that the Archives in Munich have been destroyed by bombs and fire (so the whole process has to be begun again)[19], I do have access to both of the English works on the text of the Qur'an - hence, this paper. And though it is obvious that a paper of this scope cannot hope to deal exhaustively with the works of Jeffery and Burton - I can still summarize their conclusions.

Jeffery's work is basically a catalogue of textual variations (comparing today's text with the oldest sources) from 15 primary codices, 13 secondary codices and some unnamed codices. He sees this as the first step towards a critical text of the Qur'an (similar to the critical texts of the Bible). His work has not made Muslim apologist particularly happy, though Von Denffer acknowledges the usefulness for his work.[20]

Burton's work, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, discusses variances in the Qur'an and depends for the most part on the Hadith, rather than the extant texts of the Qur'an. Now we cannot agree with Burton on his major thesis: the Hadith are a 2nd or 3rd century forgery created to justify the doctrine of abrogation which in turn is used to reconcile the Sharia (law) with the Qur'an.[21] He argues that the Hadith depict the Qur'an as being corrupted - and then he rejects the Hadith. Yet in reaching this conclusion he reveals all the pertinent contradictory accounts of the origins of the text, and of the collection of the Qur'an. Simply because of this, his work remains invaluable.

Jeffery's thesis is brief and lucid: the different ancient texts he looks at are *different*. The Muslim relying on his putative knowledge tells us that from two to twenty "of the original manuscripts of the Qur'an prepared 1400 years ago still exist today,"[22] and that these texts are precisely the same. Jeffery points to the texts he has reproduced for us in his book and asks for explanations. And of course, he is provided with some.

There are three explanations for these variances that feature prominently in Islamic works on the subject. (1) The most common assertion is that the differences are merely that of

'dialect'.^[23] Some Muslims were transmitting the Qur'an in a dialect other than that of the Quraish.^[24] (2) Others tell us that the differences are only to be found in the copies "which some of the Companions of the Prophet and their followers had prepared for their personal use before the Caliph 'Uthman had several copies of the Qur'an prepared and sent to various Muslim regions."^[25] Finally, one author states that (3), any critical work without the *isnad* on every variant reading is defective.^[26] Uninhibited by chronology, we will discuss the first explanation first, the third one second, and the second one last.

Briefly, the problems with 'the dialect answer' are three: the Hadith *does* distinguish between different 'readings' and different 'dialects';^[27] Companions of Muhammad who spoke the *same* dialect and were from the Quraish tribe *still* held that the other's text was corrupted^[28] and finally, Jeffery reminds us, the vast majority of dialectical differences are not written anyway.^[29] The problem with explanation (3) is in fact provided by Von Denffer himself: someone simply has to trace back the *isnad* and publish that too. Von Denffer acknowledges that the gathering of the *isnad* can be done.^[30] But he objects to the whole idea as, he maintains, such a collection presupposes that "the text of the Qur'an as we have it today, is not the 'original' or 'correct' version."^[31] On this he is simply wrong. One *can* go about tracing the *isnad* to demonstrate that there are variances in the earliest copies of the Qur'an. Granted. But one can *also* trace the *isnad* to demonstrate that the orientalist are all wrong and that the manuscripts are all forgeries or something of that sort. This would, after all, provide the final answer to our question. This is precisely what Professor Bergstraesser was doing until his assassination.

The second explanation is the most interesting (the well-it's-only-the-codices-of-the-companions position). This explanation admits the variances, but minimizes them by relegating the codices of the companions to a rather trivial position, and portrays them as being of dubious worth. With this answer in front of us, I think it is worth beginning with a question of Burton: if we trust the Hadith of the Companions - why not their codices? They do after all, have the same *isnad*.^[32] Now Burton of course, rejects the variances as being trivial because he sees the Hadith as pure forgery. Doubtless however, most Muslims will sleep well with dismissing the variations in this manner. But as Muslims want to depend on the Hadith as reliable^[33], and the Hadith must be traced to the contemporaries of Muhammad, and the same *isnad* support the alternative readings of the Qur'an in addition to the Hadith - one cannot dismiss them lightly. Burton has this to say:

The Qur'an, like the Sunna, had originally relied for its dissemination upon oral transmission, and Muhammad, it has been hinted above, is pictured in some of the exegeses of Q. 87 as failing to retain in his memory all the materials revealed to him by Gabriel. Portions of the Qur'an are thus conceived to have been irrecoverably lost before the Prophet had communicated them to his followers. *In the case of the revelations which Muhammad had successfully communicated, the quality of his memory is irrelevant. The Companions assumed the responsibility for their memorisation and preservation.* Subsequently, certain of the texts, intended by their divine author not to appear in the version of the Qur'an

to be transmitted to posterity, were withdrawn from the memories of Muhammad and his associates [emphasis added].[34]

This observation is critical: the companions *cannot* be dismissed - rather their word is of paramount importance. *They* are the ones who memorized the Qur'an. *They* are the ones who wrote it down. So we must return to the record of the Hadith, and ask a question: what did the companions think of Zaid's compilation of the Qur'an? The answer is not difficult to find. Simply put, the most knowledgeable companions were *incensed* with the recension of Uthman,[35][36] they continued to use their own codices,[37] and they commanded their followers to do likewise.[38] Zaid's recension was so unpopular in some regions that non-Uthman texts were commonly used until 322 AH - it was in fact called the period of *ikhtiyar*, or "free choice." [39] The companions on whose memory the correct transmission of the Qur'an depended, were unhappy with the Qur'an of Zaid - and therefore of ours today, if it is Zaid's. The material that Jeffery has found and reprinted from the companions cannot be classed as trivial. It is the key to the support or collapse of the assertion that the Qur'an has never changed. Unless Jeffery's work is the world's most clever forgery - which no one has claimed - there is certain evidence that there are variances.

In spite of all the evidence and argumentation, it remains difficult to comprehend what could have motivated the early Companions - who for the most part[40] remained dedicated Muslims - to intentionally corrupt the text. I think the answer is to be found in posing another question to the Hadith: how 'fixed' was the Qur'an in Muhammad's *own* lifetime?

As good as seventh century memories were supposed to be, unintentional errors could creep in; and some codices reveal evidence of inserted exegetical notes to aid the teacher or reader.[41] Others have the occasional synonym in the place of the original word.[42] It is this last phenomena that interests us. Today such a manoeuvre would be considered a sacrilege, but it appears from the Hadith that Muhammad accepted synonyms as adequate representations of the revelation.[43][44] We are also told that seven different readings of the Quran were revealed,[45] and on occasions where Muslims disputing over a passage would come to have Muhammad settle the dispute, he would tell them that they were *both* right.[46] There is therefore no need to dream up some conspiracy theory - the Qur'an simply was not a rigid text in Muhammad's lifetime - and the texts of his companions reflect that fact. But there are also other arguments for variances in the Qur'an - some weaker, some stronger.

First of all, if it is acknowledged that 90 percent of the Hadith were fabricated by pious, well-meaning Muslims[47] - one must ask why the same could not, at least theoretically, have been done with the Qur'an. I consider that argument of the weaker brand, as the majority of the society could not read or write, and many of the variant texts belonged to the Companions of Muhammad. In fact, the safeguards for keeping unwanted material *out* of the Qur'an were for the most part, very stringent[48] and we can at assume for the sake of argument that there have been no major *additions*.[49] This point is rightly

impressed upon us by Muslim apologists of all stripes. But there is a word closely associated with 'additions' that is also very relevant to us - 'subtractions.'

In spite of all the safeguards imposed by Zaid to assure us that nothing has been *added* to the Qur'an, we are struck with the plain and broad fact that there is no mechanism possible for assuring us that parts of the Qur'an are not *missing*. In fact, Ali, Abdullah, Ubbay, and Hudaifa *all* held that parts of the Qur'an were missing,[50] and the Mutazalite scholar, al Nazzam, accuses Abdullah of denying two Surahs that *he* held to be part of the Qur'an.[51] We also have examples of missing content such as the infamous 'Satanic verses,'[52] and the two doctrines of abrogation which allow the 'word-only' to be lost, or the 'word-and-content' to be lost.[53] These not only make room for, but explicitly teach us that some parts of the Qur'an *are* lost. It should be no surprise then if an abrogated verse be found in an ancient manuscript - it should in fact be *expected*.

In summing up, I want to stress that if the Hadith are accurate, the Qur'an is for the most part, unchanged. I think it is safe to conclude with Fazlur Rahman that "A great many variant readings have been recorded by Quranic commentators but, as scholars agree, they do not materially affect the meaning of the Qur'an except in a very small number of relatively unimportant points of ritual." [54] We will only know for sure once scholars are allowed full access to examine all the ancient manuscripts of the Qur'an. But we *cannot* hold that there are *no* variances - that the Qur'an "remains today letter for letter as it was revealed over 1400 years ago." [55] If the Hadith are correct, neither Muhammad, the Companions, nor the early Muslims had an absolutely static Qur'an. Our Qur'an is a reliable record of the Qur'an of what Muhammad's taught - the message, the doctrines, and most of the laws are all intact. But not, in some cases, *verbatim*. If on the other hand the Hadith are *not* accurate - we still have Jeffery's variances. Clearly, Jeffery remains a skunk for any Quranic garden party.

The Text of the Bible

Now I not only like to agree with people, but I also like to be fair with people. So I try to sketch both the Christian and Muslim positions as best as I can. We cannot of course treat all their arguments in a paper of this scope - we will not even begin to deal with Old Testament criticisms.[56] Instead we will narrow our discussion to the New Testament, particularly the four Gospels.[57]

The orthodox Christian position on the Bible is not difficult. The entire New Testament was written by Apostles and eyewitnesses in the first century, with the Gospels already circulating before the fall of Jerusalem - 70AD. Each book or letter was inspired by God, and therefore contains no error, and expresses no contradictions. There are slight variations in the text - the accuracy of the copy exceeds 99% [58] - and there is no single fact or doctrine called into question by the variations in the extant codices. Jesus has told us that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away." [59] - this is the infallible testimony of the Scriptures. Christians hold that the truth of this testimony is evidenced in the world, and key to this witness is the early dating of the Scriptures. The assertions of Muslim apologists typify the reasons why this early dating is significant.

When researching what Muslim apologists have to say about the Bible, I have tried to cite what appears to be their best and most popular works on the subject.[60] The main assertion of Islam's apologists is simple: the Bible is corrupted. More specifically, the Gospels are not an authentic record of the words of Jesus. Some time is required for this to take place, as orthodox Islam holds that Jesus wrote a gospel too.[61] We need enough time for (a.) His gospel to be written, (b.) His gospel to be lost (or corrupted almost completely),[62] (c.) every secondary trace of it to and mention of it to be lost in all the annals of history, (d.) a whole new set of gospels to be created (Maurice Bucaille suggests there may have been a hundred gospels)[63] and (e.) the Christian community had to accept these forgeries. Clearly we need more than time for these historical gymnastics - we need the most incredible conspiracy theory of history. So, some arguments are offered.

The most comfortable way of explaining the loss of Christ's Gospel and the creation of the new ones has been to create a sort of 'blank spot' in history. Muslim apologists hold that the earliest writings had to be written in the late first century,[64] and all codices and papyri relegated to the third where possible, and the late second century for any fragments of the New Testament.[65] Any differences between the early manuscripts must be magnified, and those documents considered unreliable must be touted as the most accurate.[66] Church history must be depreciated, and the conclusions of higher criticism embraced. This is the most comfortable way of explaining the loss of the gospel that agrees with the Qur'an, and the creation of some new ones which do not. But as necessary as these assertions are for the Muslim, they leave him without a foundation of his own to rest on. We'll start with the last thing first: higher criticism (different than 'modern' criticism, as 'higher' criticism was popular a century ago).

'Higher' criticism, its late dating of the New Testament, and its hypothesized 'Pauline' and 'Johannine' schools, rest on theories that were very much in vogue in the last century. Their presuppositions, briefly, disallow the supernatural (eg. miracles), any reference to Jesus proclaiming himself to be more than a man ('God' was a dubious concept to these scholars), and any possibility of fulfilled prophecy. Baur, his co-theorists, and his modern counterpart in the "Jesus Seminar" hold that there was a dialectical tension between Paul and the Judeo-Christians - a tension which developed into different schools,[67] and the letters and gospels were reactions against these developing theological tensions. They had a reason for this. They wished to justify these presuppositions enumerated above. The German critics wanted to 'late-date' the gospels because the gospels contained prophecies (e.g. the fall of Jerusalem) - and those prophecies were fulfilled. Rather than accept that God revealed something and it came to pass, they supposed that survivors of the event described it as prophecy, after the fact. This accounted for the accuracy of the prophecy, but needed late dating.

Having belaboured the point, here is the problem: Muslim apologists want to hold to the conclusions of higher criticism but reject its presuppositions. But higher criticism *is only a theory*. It is a misunderstanding to hold that there is 'evidence' for the theory. No archaeologist has stumbled across a 'Johannine schoolhouse' that outlines the plans for a revision of biblical history, or a 'Pauline clubhouse' that has action plans for getting

around the 'Judeo-Christians' on the blackboard. The presuppositions have formed the theory, not the other way around. So if Muslims are to abide by the conclusions of higher criticism, they need to formulate their own arguments. And I must point out that if one is to accept higher criticism of the Bible, one should accept higher criticism of the Qur'an. **The scholars who reject the Bible, also must reject the Qur'an.** The arguments of higher criticism are completely incompatible with Islam. So if Muslims want the dating of higher criticism, they must provide their own arguments. And some have.

On a purely evidential basis, some have asserted that all the documents of the New Testament are not old enough. The popular Muslim apologist, Maurice Bucaille, tells us that the oldest manuscripts of the Gospels are from the 4th century,[68][69] though he does allow that the writing of the Gospels was probably finished before 110 AD. Christians have three general arguments against this late dating: (1) the internal evidence for dating withing the manuscripts, (2) extant fragments, papyri and manuscripts, and (2) the testimony of early Church history.

Sir Frederick Kenyon (cited by Yusuf Ali as an authority on the Bible) deals masterfully with the internal dating of the Bible, dealing in depth with the Gospel of John which critics have attacked with greatest vehemence - for John witnesses to many of Christ's claim to be the only Way - and to be God incarnate. Commenting on an archaeological find, he concludes that:

The net result of this discovery -- by far the most important since the discovery of the Sinaiticus -- is, in fact, to reduce the gap between the earlier manuscripts and the traditional dates of the New Testament books so far that it becomes negligible in any discussion of their authenticity. No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text, and no unbiased scholar would deny that the text that has come down to us is substantially sound.[70]

As for the late dating and corruption of extant manuscripts, I can only provide a survey here, while allowing Norman Geisler and Kenyon[71] to deliver the devastating news:

There is more abundant and accurate manuscript evidence for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world. There are more manuscripts copied with greater accuracy and earlier dating than for any secular classic from antiquity. First, let us examine the number and nature of the New Testament manuscripts themselves....

The total count of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament is now around 5,000. The New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger counts 76 papyri, 250 uncials, 2,646 minuscules, and 1,997 lectionary manuscripts. This would total 4,969. No other book from antiquity possesses anything like this abundance in manuscripts.[72]

Kenyon holds that we have portions of the New Testament dating back to the beginning of the second century.[73] And a part of the Gospel of John was preserved for us in

Egypt, having made it there already by 130-150 AD.[74] He holds that in the third century the gospels and Acts circulated as a unit, and that the four gospels could have been circulating *together* in the second century.[75] Church history supports this. The writings of the fathers have plenty to say about the Bible.

The testimonies of Ignatius,[76] Irenaeus,[77] Polycarp,[78] Papias,[79] Melito,[80] Theophilus,[81] Justin Martyr,[82] Hegesippus,[83] Tertullian,[84] Clement of Rome[85] and Clement of Alexandria[86] all make reference to the New Testament[87] - often as Scripture. In 140 AD when Marcion (a Gnostic) presented his New Testament Canon, he was opposed by Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Epiphanius.[88] To posit that the New Testament Canon had just been written, when (1) the Bible was already widely spread, with (2) no controlling body existed for the dissemination of the Bible (as the slight variances in texts demonstrate)[89] and with (3) people already being labelled as heretics because of their positions on Scripture, is simply a display of one's lack of knowledge in Church history.

These testimonies are, loosely speaking, the 'Christian Hadith.' The church fathers were the people who lived with and were taught by the apostles - the inspired authors of the New Testament.[90] The parallel is a weak one however, as the writings, unlike the Hadith, were written records, not verbal traditions recorded two centuries later. For this very reason, any denial of the reliability of the early church *writings* leaves Islam's apologists devoid of grounds for accepting the Hadith. Particularly when we are told that Muslim scholars, from Bukhari on, do not accept nine tenths of all Hadith. There simply are no giant holes in time for the apologists' version of history to take place.

Final thoughts

It seems plain to me, that if Muslims accept a higher criticism of the Bible - they must accept a higher criticism of the Qur'an. And if they are to reject the Gospels as inauthentic records because of slight variances in our manuscripts - they must dismiss the 'Gospel of Jesus' as myth[91] - because there *are* no manuscripts. If Muslims believe that any variance in the texts of revelation is a sure sign that a revelation is not from God - then the Qur'an is surely not of God. If Muslims maintain that there has been a grand conspiracy of history and that the testimony of the witnesses cannot be trusted - then no one can trust the verbal records of the Hadith - recorded centuries later. And yet if the Hadith are accurate, the Qur'an does have variances. Plainly, Muslim apologists cannot deny the authenticity of the Biblical text - without undermining all support for the Quranic text. Plainly Muslim apologists need some new arguments. Some better arguments. Some arguments that will discredit the Bible - without destroying the Qur'an.

End Notes:

1. Romans 1:25a.

2. Eg. Maurice Bucaille refers to the Old Testament as an "odd assortment of documents." *The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science* (Indianapolis: North American Trust Publications, 1979), 5.
3. Gatje, Helmut. *The Qur'an and its Exegesis: Selected texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 39.
4. See also: Muhammad Zafrulla Khan's *Islam: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1980), 83; Von Denffer, Ahmad. *Ulum Al-Qur'an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1989), 44; Khalifa, Mohammad. *The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism* (London: Longman, 1983), 15, 48; Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre. *The Bible and the Quran Compared: Part 1*. Pamphlet: Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre. *Why God's Book Cannot Contain Error*. Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre International. Pamphlet.
5. Rippin, Andrew. *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, Vol. 1. The Formative Period* (London: Routledge, 1990), 24.
6. Zaid is cited to support this tradition. Burton, 214.
7. Burton, John. *The Collection of the Qur'an*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 122. (Hereafter referred to as 'Burton' - any other work of Burton will be cited in full). Zaid is also credited with the Hadith supporting Abu Bakr as the first collector of the Qur'an. Burton, 123. He is also credited with saying the same about Umar. See also Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 41.
8. Burton, 120. The reports of Umar and Abu Bakr can be reconciled if one extracts from the tradition that Abu Bakr told Umar to do the collecting after Umar came to him and asked, though this really stretches the literal interpretation of some of the Hadith.
9. Burton, 120-121.
10. Burton, 122.
11. Burton, 165.
12. Jeffery, Arthur. *The Qur'an as Scripture* (New York: Books for Libraries, 1980), 99. "That the practice of pointing came generally accepted and consistently carried through the whole of the Codex is said to be due to the activity of the famous official al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf, who was perhaps the most remarkable figure in Islam during the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik. When we come to examine the accounts of the activity of al-Hajjaj in this matter, however, we discover to our surprise that the evidence points strongly to the fact that his work was not confined to fixing more precisely the text of the Qur'an by a set of points showing how it was to be read, but he seems to have made an entirely new Recension of the Qur'an, having copies of his new text sent to the great metropolitan centres, and ordering the destruction [sic] of earlier copies in existence there, much as 'Uthman had done earlier."
13. Burton, 112.
14. Von Denffer, 158.
15. I should note that 'Western' scholars are not inherently critical of the Muslim account. William Muir, in his *The Life of Mahommet*, Vol. 1 (Osnabruch: Biblio Verlag, 1988), 27 - is sympathetic, as is William Montgomery Watt. *Companion to the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1994), 26, 156. They are of course not alone. And it should be noted that Muir predates Jeffery, and Watt does not go into any depth here.

16. Jeffery, *Quran*, 97.
17. He has, in fact, been only able to catalogue a small number of extant manuscripts relative to the number that are available.
18. Jeffery, Arthur. *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an*. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1975), 3.
19. Jeffery, *Quran*, 103.
20. Von Denffer, 161.
21. Many scholars have examined the Hadith, have recognized the contradictions and have held that must try and find the *one* true account from *all* the contradictory accounts. Burton simply takes one more step, and argues that *none* of the Hadith related to the Quran are accurate (he concludes that Muhammad wrote the Quran, that it has been changed by later Muslims, and that it is incompatible with the Sharia). We can reject his conclusion (regarding the massive Hadith conspiracy) because he can *only* arrive at his conclusion if he *knows* that the Hadith are false. Contradictions alone are never enough to establish this. (eg. Joe can assert A, Sue can assert B, and Herb can assume C - if the three contradict each other, that does not rule out the possibility that one of his assertions may be true. Though none, admittedly, may be). We can, secondly, reject his hypothesis regarding the Hadith, because it is a theory based on a 'conspiracy' of significant magnitude that is not justified by standard test of historiography. A confused account, yes. No truth in it - no. And that takes us to our third objection to Burton's conclusion: the theory itself relies on the Hadith. If the Hadith *are* all fabricated then the Hadith on which he builds *his* theory are fabricated. *If* his position is true, it cannot be true. His thesis is internally inconsistent, and in fact is self-refuting. The Hadith which he marshalls to support his opinion are, to be sure, impressive - but not sufficient.
22. Islamic Information and Da'wah Center, *The Bible and the Qur'an Compared: Part 1*. Pamphlet; and Jeffery, *Quran*, 97. The years referred to here are years from the Muslim calendar. Hence the fourteen centuries.
23. Khalifa, Mohammad. *The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism* (London: Longman, 1983), 47.
24. Muhammad's tribe.
25. Von Denffer, 161.
26. Von Denffer, Ahmad. *Ulum Al-Qur'an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*. (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1989), 161-162.
27. Burton, 170.
28. "A further modification was imposed upon the scholars. 'Abdullah, in the case of the non-Arab had permitted the substitution of one word for another. 'Abdullah was a non-Meccan. The substitution would have been presumably a synonym in his dialect for a word in the Meccan dialect. Then there was the story of 'Umar's quarrel with Hisam. Not only were 'Umar and Hisam fellow tribesmen. Both were fellow tribesmen of the Prophet. The reference to dialects was thus watered down to a reference to synonyms. The aim was to rationalize the claim that there had existed variant readings transmitted from several Companions of the Prophet." (Burton, 154).
29. Jeffery, *Quran*, 96.
30. Von Denffer, 162. Note that he must argue this - if Muslim scholars cannot account for the ancient texts, then there is no way of conclusively demonstrating that those texts are not the authentic originals.

31. Von Denffer, 161.
32. Burton, 168.
33. That is, the most commonly accepted collections of Abu-Muslim, Bukhari, etc.
34. Burton, John. *Kal-nasikh wa-l-mansukh* (Cambridge: Trustees of the "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial" Trust, 1987), 5.
35. Burton, 166-167.
36. Jeffery, *Materials*, 8.
37. Burton, 169.
38. Burton, 167.
39. Jeffery, *Materials*, 1; *Qur'an*, 97-98.
40. Zwemer, Samuel, M. *Islam: A Challenge to Faith* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1907), 23-24.
41. Burton, 171.
42. Burton, 152.
43. Burton, 188.
44. Khalifa, in an *attempt* to deal with all these problems, constantly makes deprecating remarks about their intellect, education and above all their conclusions - but fails to explain what is wrong with the premises of the arguments. He in effect 'defies the phenomena' without offering any argument more penetrating than *ad hominen* rebuttals (eg. pp. 49, 51-52). He concludes that none of these men are qualified to make assertions about the text of the Qur'an (though he feels qualified to criticize the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the sacred writings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confuciansim, and Taoism). Khalifa depends heavily on Bucaille, and also uses an encyclopedia for his criticisms of the Bible. Khalifa, 7-9.
45. Burton, 148-149. Cites Tabari here.
46. Burton, 149-151.
47. Richard Bulliet lays some of the blame on the shoulders of Muhammad himself - he quotes the following Hadith: "Mendacity will spread after me. So when someone relates a hadith from me, test it according to the Qur'an and sunna; if it agrees with them, then it is from me, *regardless of whether of not I have actually said it.*" [emphasis mine]. *Islam: The View From the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 35.
48. Burton cites an exception to this rule on p. 126.
49. Exceptions: see Burton, 220.
50. "They collected the Qur'an into a *mushaf* in the reign of Abu Bakr, some men writing to the dictation of Ubayy. When they reached Q9.127 some supposed that that was the last part of the Qur'an to have been

revealed. But Ubayy pointed out that the Prophet had taught him two verses more and, since they were the last of the Qur'an to have been revealed, the Book should close on the note on which it had begun.' Other verses had been withdrawn in respect of both their wording and ruling. An example in the Tradition is Anas' *hadith* on the Qur'an's reference to the Bi'r Ma'una martyrs. Further cases include Ubayy's remark that *Ahzab* had originally been as long as *Bauara*; Hudaifa's remark, 'They don't recite a quarter of *al Bara'a* today'...

The Qadi Abu Bakr al Baqillani states, 'The entire Qur'an revealed by God and commanded by Him to be recorded in writing, except what he suppressed, wording and ruling together, or wording only, although He may have also suppressed the ruling, is this which is between two covers. Not one jot is missing and not one tittle has been added.'" (Burton citing various Hadith. 124, 130-131. See also 117).

51. Despite the statement attributed to 'Abdullah that he who denies a single verse of the Qur'an denies the entire revelation, 'Abdullah is depicted in the literature as having denied whole chapters of the Qur'an! ...The codex ascribed to 'Abdullah is said to lack three of the suras present in our (the 'Uthmanic) text. The codices ascribed to ibn 'Abbas, Ubayy and Abu Musa are said to contain two suras which the 'Uthmanic text lacks." (Burton, 220).

52. Sherif, Faruq. *A Guide to the Contents of the Qur'an* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), 39.

53. Burton, 124, 130-131.

54. Rahman, Fazlur. "The Message and the Messenger," *Islam: The Religious and Political Life of a World Community*. Kelly, Margorie, ed. (New York: Praeger, 1984), 49.

55. Islamic Information and Daw'ah Centre. *The Bible and the Qur'an Compared: Part 1*. Pamphlet.

56. I will restrict myself to a couple observations. Most late dating of the Old Testament was built on the assumption that there was no writing prior to 1000 to 800 BC. A theory latched on to by Encyclopedia Britannica's 9th edn, 1881. This dating of course would make the concept of Moses writing the Pentateuch impossible. Kenyon has exploded this myth in his book *The Bible and Modern Criticism*. This scepticism did not originate with the Bible but was a trend of the times, touching the works of Homer, etc. Kenyon points out as *one example* that the excavations at Nippur, Ashur, Ur, and Kish have "brought to light thousands of inscribed tablets ranging back to the third millenium BC." 11. This precedes the time of Abraham significantly. The first presupposition led textual critics to a further conclusion. They noticed that the Pentateuch appeared to rely on a number of earlier documents. Since they already determined that there was no writing prior to Moses, they decided that the Pentateuch was written over a considerable period of time in various stages after Moses. Now no Christian scholar is silly enough to assert that the Deuteronomic postscript and account of the death of Moses was written by Moses - but this does not mean that it need be dated at the time of the Kings or after, as Khalifa, Bucaille, and Metzger and May in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. With documents going back to the third millenium, the Pentateuch *may* rely on some documents - but Moses still could have used these documents. The Bible not only makes reference to non-Biblical books (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18; 1 Kings 11:41; 2 Chronicles 9:29; Esther 10:12) but it openly tells us that research is used by some authors eg. Luke 1:1-4. This does not in any way contradict the fact that these holy men of old were inspired (not 'guided' as Khalifa caricatures inspiration, p.7) by the Holy Spirit.

57. Not that they are any more important than the other portions of Scripture - but they are more vehemently attacked by Muslims than most other books of the Bible.

58. Geisler, *Apologetics*, 307.

59. Matthew 24:35

60. Yusuf Ali's polemic translation and commentary, Mohammad Khalifa (who relies heavily on Maurice Bucaille), Maurice Bucaille himself, and two popular handouts - one by Islamic Communication Trust, and the Islamic Information and Daw'ah Centre. I have also referred to a work by Bruce Metzger (Bucaille - approved) and "The Jesus Seminar" - a popular work with the MSA. Necessarily, as he best typifies the research and argumentation of Muslim apologists and is by far the most popular (and vitriolic) - I quote extensively from Bucaille. At the end of this paper I include an appendix which briefly examines the research methods of the five Muslim works.

61. A Muslim version, not the one Mark refers to in 1:1.

62. It is interesting to note that the chart Bucaille reprints that depicts the history of the Gospels leaves no room for a "gospel of Jesus." Bucaille, 76.

63. Bucaille, 78.

64. Eg. Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim, *Jesus Prophet in Islam*, (Norfolk: Diwan Press, 1977), 17.

65. Bucaille, 54-81.

66. Even the Roman Catholic Church which endorsed the Apochrypha in 1546 holds the Apochrypha as "useful for edifying reading but without the authority of Holy Scripture." *Good News Bible: Catholic Study Edition*, (New York: Sadlier, 1979), 1152.

67. Blomberg, Craig L. "The Seventy Four "Scholars": Who Does The Jesus Seminar Really Speak For?" *Christian Research Journal*. (Christian Research Institute, Fall 1994), 35-36. This article contains the best summary position on Textual criticism and penetrating rebuttal that I have seen yet.

68. Bucaille, 78.

69. He neglects to inform the reader that the term 'manuscripts' refers to 'vellum' - only a recent invention and thus earlier copies were written on the fragile papyri. Papyri disintegrated quickly unless in an extremely dry climate (like Egypt or the Jordan wilderness) and therefore finds are hard to come by. In addition to this, Christians were persecuted fiercely, and the cumbersome rolls of papyri would not be easy to hide. Kenyon, Frederic G. *The Text of the Greek Bible* (Surrey: Unwin Brothers Limited, 1975), 3-11.

70. Kenyon, *Our Bible*, 20.

71. The following excerpts from Kenyon are also very relevant to our topic:

The first really important discovery of Biblical manuscripts did not appear until 1931. This was a group consisting of portions (sometimes substantial, sometimes small) of eleven codices (ie. in leaves like a modern book, not rolls) ranging in date from the second to the fourth century and therefore for the most part older than the great vellum codices, the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, which up to then were the oldest extant authorities for the text of the Greek Bible... Three manuscripts are of the New Testament, among which nearly every book is represented; one having originally contained the four Gospels and Acts in a hand which may be assigned to the first half of the third century; one contains nearly the whole of the Pauline Epistles (86 leaves out of 104, of which the last five were probably blank), written about a.d.200; and one with the middle third of Revelation of the third century... It will be seen that these manuscripts between them carry back the textual tradition of the New Testament for a full century... Its importance lies in the fact that papyrological experts agree in assigning the date of its writing to the first half of the second century. Small therefore as it is, it suffices to prove

that a manuscript of the gospel was circulating, presumably in provincial Egypt where it was found, about the period A.D. 130-150. Allowing even a minimum time for the circulation of the work from its place of origin, this would throw back the date of the composition so near to the traditional date in the last decade of the first century that there is no longer any reason to question the validity of the tradition. And this evidence does not stand alone. In the same year, 1935, Dr. (now Sir) H.I. Bell and Mr. T.C. Skeat, of the British Museum, published some fragments, purchased the previous year for the museum, of three leaves of papyrus codex, the writing of which can also be ascribed to the first half of the second century. They contain records of incidents in our Lord's life, apparently forming portions of a Gospel differing from the four canonical books though with strong signs of relation to them. The style is simple and straightforward, without any of the exaggerations or tendentious doctrinal character of the later apochryphal gospels; and its date of origin must be assigned to the first century. The fragments include records of four incidents in our Lord's life... The language of the the Synoptic Gospels is evident here; but in the fourth incident the language of the Fourth Gospel is equally clear... It is evident therefore that the writer of this "new Gospel" was acquainted not only with the Synoptic Gospels but with St. John: for the only alternative, that he was writing material which was afterwards incorporated in the Fourth Gospel, is highly improbable in view of the very individual style of that Gospel. There is no evidence or probability of a school of "Johannine" writers earlier than the Gospel itself. Here, therefore, is confirmatory evidence of the existence of the Fourth Gospel by about the end of the first century: and the implications of this evidence are of the first importance. If the Gospel was written before the end of the first century, as now seems irrefragably proved, not only are the contentions of Baur, van Manen, and all that school shattered to pieces, but the probability of the authorship of the Apostle St. John seems to be enormously strengthened. (*Our Bible*, 18-23).

72. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 306-307.

73. FF. Bruce supports this: "Towards the end of the first century we have signs of a move to collect the literary remains of Paul.. the Acts of the Apostles became more generally known towards the year 90... at a later date in the first century it began to circulate among the churches and immediately it rekindled a strong interest in the personality and activity of Paul... We know, for example, that about the year 95 the cupboard somewhere in Rome which was the Vatican Library of that date contained not only Paul's letter to the Romans (as we should expect in any case) but also copies of his letter to the Corinthians and (possibly) one or two others. It also contained copies of the Epistle to the Hebrews" *The Spreading Flame: The Rise and Progress of Christianity from its First Beginnings to the Conversion of the English* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1966), 224.

74. Kenyon, *The Bible*, 21.

75. Kenyon, *Greek*, 9.

76. "Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (martyred c.116), clearly knows our New Testament in general. He knew the Epistles of Paul well, but the Gospels of Matthew and John appear to have been his favorites." (Thiessen, 12).

77. Norman Geisler also informs us that Irenaeus, who was born in the early first half of the century (Kuiper, B.K. *The Church in History* (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., ND), 17.) referred in passing to the gospels as Scripture. Geisler, Norman L. *Decide for Yourself: How History Views the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 25-26.

78. "Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (c.69-155), uses much of the New Testament in his letter to the Phillipians. He had the Gospel of Matthew, and probably also the other three Gospels; he had all of Paul's Epistles, I Peter, and I John; he had I Clement and probably also the Book of Acts." (Thiessen, 12).

79. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (c.80-c.155), testifies that Mark wrote his Gospel according to what he had heard Peter tell of the words and works of Christ, and that Matthew wrote his *Logia* in Aramaic. He knew John's Gospel, and Eusebius tells us that he quotes I John and I Peter." (Thiessen, 12-13).

80. Thiessen, 13.

81. "Theophilus, bishop of Antioch (c.115-c.188), wrote a treatise to his pagan friend Autolyucus. It seems clear that he had the bulk of our New Testament books and that he held them in equal terms with the Old Testament. He first mentions the Gospel of John by name." (Thiessen, 13).

82. "Justin the Martyr (c.100-165) was a Greek born in Samaria. He wrote a number of works; three of those which have come down to us are unquestionably genuine: the two *Apologies* and the *Dialogue with Trypho* the Jew. It is practically certain that he used Matthew, Luke, and John, and his reference to the Memoirs of Peter probably means Mark's Gospel. He knows Acts, 1 Peter, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, the Apocalypse (which he regards as a work of the Apostle John), and the *Didache*. Justin travelled widely and finally settled in Rome, where he founded a school. His testimony is, therefore, very important." (Thiessen, 16).

83. "Hegesippus (c. 110-180) a Jewish Christian Church historian, is a witness against the Tubingen hypotheses. He gives us a lengthy account of the martyrdom of James, the Lord's brother. Travelling a good deal, he finally came to Rome. Eusebius tells us that on his way, "he found everywhere the same doctrine." He embodied his findings in five books, known as *Memoirs*. No doubt the bulk of our books in the New Testament were at use in Corinth and Rome at the time, and the absence of any note of surprise or dissent in the writings of Hegesippus may be taken as a sign that he was accustomed to the recognition of the same books." (Thiessen, 16-17).

84. Tertullian specifically referring to four Gospels. Geisler, Norman L. *Decide for Yourself*, 26-27. "Tertullian of Carthage (c. 150-222) was a lawyer of great influence, and a voluminous writer in Latin. He also wrote some in Greek. His writings laid the foundations for Latin theology. He accepts our four Gospels, thirteen Epistles of Paul (Souter raises a question about Philemon), Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and the Apocalypse. He holds that Barnabas wrote Hebrews, and does not accept the book as Scripture. He does not mention or quote from James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John, which may or may not indicate the rejection of these books. In his case also 1 John may have been intended to mean 2 and 3 John as well. (Thiessen, 23).

85. "Clement of Rome (c.30-100) wrote a letter in the name of the Church at Rome to the Church at Corinth about A.D.96, known as 1 Clement which was regarded as canonical by some writers. He knew Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and is full of references to Hebrews. He may have been acquainted with James, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy, and Titus, also, although this is not certain. There is nothing that does not fit in with the authenticity of the others also. (Thiessen, 21).

86. "Clement of Alexandria (c.155-c.215) has left us with three great works, *The Exhortation to the Greeks*, *The Pedagogus*, or *Instructor*, and *The Stromato*, or *Miscellanies*. He was exceedingly well read. Clement accepted all the books in our present New Testament, not passing by the books that were disputed by some, as Jude and the rest of the Catholic Epistles. He held that Hebrews was written by Paul in Hebrew and that Luke had translated it. But he commented on only four of the Catholic Epistles, leaving out James, 2 Peter and 3 John. He also recognized the Apocalypse." (Thiessen, 17)

87. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

88. Thiessen, 21.

89. Kenyon concludes that "it is evident that by the end of the second century there was no general control of the text of the books which were gradually coming to be recognized as canonical." *Our Bible*, 20.

90. A helpful reference work can be found in the writings of Eusebius Pamphilus (c.265-340). *Ecclesiastical History*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

91. But what if such a gospel *did* emerge? Douglas Groothuis issues this challenge: "Should any supposed record of Jesus' life come to the fore, let it marshal its historical merits in competition with holy writ. The competitors have an uphill battle against the incumbent." Rhodes, Ron. "The Jesus of the New Age Movement: Part Two in a Two Part Series on New Age Christology," *Christian Research Journal*. (Fall 1989), 15ff.

Appendix: Research and Citation Methods

This appendix is simply a brief analysis of how *some* Muslim apologists are doing their research. I am concerned with both the research *scope*, and *methodology* of these apologists, and can only hope that this appendix may reach some budding researcher, and be of some help to them. The methodology in research is perhaps the most serious.

Maurice Bucaille cites a number of authors in his work, *The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science*, but he rarely cites what page (and at times what work) he derives his information from when speaking with reference to the Bible or its text.[1] Yusuf Ali is guilty of precisely the same fault in his two appendices on the Bible. No page references. Mohammad Khalifa refers to Bucaille's work - and follows suite. No page references. The best referenced apologetical works were, ironically, the two shortest - the two pamphlets referred to in this paper.[2] I find it disappointing that Ahmad von Denffer depreciates Arthur Jeffery's work because he left out the *isnad* of the codices he cites. I can only say that Islam's apologists diminish their credibility when they leave out the modern equivalent of *isnad* - page numbers. Their omission makes any examination of context at best, labourious, and at its worst, impossible. There is a fine line between inferior documentation and dishonesty.

Equally as damaging to credibility, is the reliance on works such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and introductions to Bibles as sources for broad sweeping, global-type claims about history, doctrine, exegesis and integrity of the biblical text.[3] This is not scholarship. Maybe this is allowable in a small paper (such as the pamphlets), but not in a book that purports to be teaching about the origins of the Bible. Bucaille complains a number of times that commentators do not touch on the alleged contradictions of the Bible.[4] I found this an extraordinary claim I referred to the six commentators[5] on my shelf and each provided a discussion, often quite in depth, on the very points that Bucaille labours at from pages 83-93. Perhaps his problem lies in the fact that he uses 'commentaryets' rather than commentaries. Perhaps it is to be found in the simple fact that he cites so few authors. In fact, the number is so limited that he cites the same authors in

his 'defence' of the Bible as he does in his assault on it![6] Simply put, Bucaille & Co. are knocking down the proverbial straw man.

The only other thing that really concerns me, is *who* these authors cite. Wherever it is possible to determine who Bucaille is citing, he is citing Roman Catholic sources. Without exception. The same goes for the two handouts with one exception.[7] Relying on Roman Catholic authors is of course not a problem in and of itself (though Bucaille's work seems in part to be a reaction against his Roman Catholic up-bringing)[8], but the almost *exclusive* reliance on those sources is a *rather* skewed sampling of Christian apologetics and theology. The problem could be a result of Bucaille's habit of equating Catholicism with Christianity, as if the Roman Catholic were accepted as an authority over all of Christianity.[9] The reader must also be alerted to the fact that the Roman Catholic tradition has always undermined the foundation of Scripture in their rejection of the Bible *alone* as the source of Divine truth.[10] Protestantism has always - as Bucaille indicates on page 44[11] - placed a greater emphasis on Scripture. One would hope then, for a defence of Scripture, that Bucaille would dedicate some space to an orthodox Christian defence of Scripture. For that is the last point: the men Bucaille cites are not orthodox Christians. It is no wonder that they provide him with unorthodox conclusions. Since Vatican II, the bulk of Roman Catholic scholarship has been unorthodox. This is particularly noticeable in their Bible introductions on which Bucaille depends so heavily. Considering themselves advanced, these authors have followed the higher criticism of the last century.[12] Bucaille takes note of this on page 47[13] - but sees no necessity to qualify any of his finds.

My last comment pertains to Yusuf Ali's work - just something I found interesting. There are few great scholars who would *disagree* with Yusuf Ali's data, arguments or conclusions *more* than Sir Frederic Kenyon. And Ali cites Kenyon as an authority on the Bible.[14] I agree of course. He is.

Notes:

1. Bucaille, Maurice. *The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science* (Indianapolis: North American Trust Publications, 1979). Noted exceptions: page 67 and 114.

2. One is produced by Madresa Ashraful Uloom (The Islamic Communication Trust), and the other is by the Islamic Information and Da'wah Centre.

3. Eg. Bucaille, 3, 10, 45, 59, etc.

4. Bucaille, 59.

5. *The Expositor's Bible*, Vol.4. Nicoll W. Robertson, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1943), 698; Henry, Matthew. *A Commentary of the Whole Bible*, Vol.5. (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, N.D.), 3-5, 617-619; Poole, Matthew. *A Commentary of the Holy Bible* Vol.3. (McLean: MacDonald Publishing Company, N.D.), 2-5, 203-204; Ryle, J.C. *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*. Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 105-107; Wesley, John. *The New Testament* (Halifax: William Nicholson and Sons, 1869), 11-12, 149-150; Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVI. William Pringle, trans. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 80-92.

6. Eg. Bucaille, 39 - cites Father de Vaux to defend the Bible, on p. 11-14.
7. James Dunn's *The evidence for Jesus* is cited, but as his middle initial has been left out, there is no helpful method of determining *which* James Dunn he is.
8. Bucaille, 44-45.
9. Eg. Bucaille 1, 2.
10. Geisler, Norman L., and Ralph E. MacKenzie. "What Think ye of Rome? Part Three: The Catholic Protestant Debate on Biblical Authority," *Christian Research Journal*, Spring/Summer 1994, 26-27, 35-39.
11. Bucaille, 44.
12. Kohlenberger, John R. III. "How to Choose a Study Bible", *Christian Research Journal*, Winter 1996, 18.
13. Bucaille, 47.
14. Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the meanings and Commentary*, Revised and Edited By The Presidency of Islamic Researchers, IFTA, and Call and Guidance. (King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, N.D.), 332, 334.

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What is Sufism?

*"When I come to Love, I am ashamed of all
that I have ever said about Love."*

-- Rumi

From a speech given by Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, Master of the Nimatullahi Order, at the Sorbonne, Paris, in 1963:

Introduction

The substance and definition of Sufism: the substance of Sufism is the Truth and the definition of Sufism is the selfless experiencing and actualization of the Truth.

The practice of Sufism: the practice of Sufism is the intention to go towards the Truth, by means of love and devotion. This is called the *Tariqat*, the Spiritual Path or way towards God.

The definition of the sufi: the sufi is one who is a lover of Truth, who by means of love and devotion moves towards the Truth, towards the Perfection which all are truly seeking. As necessitated by Love's jealousy, the sufi is taken away from all except the Truth-Reality. For this reason, in Sufism it is said that, "Those who are inclined towards the hereafter can not pay attention to the material world. Likewise, those who are involved in the material world can not concern themselves with the hereafter. But the sufi (because of Love's jealousy) is unable to attend to either of these worlds."

Concerning this same idea, Shebli has said, "One who dies for the love of the material world, dies a hypocrite. One who dies for the love of the hereafter, dies an ascetic. But one who dies for the love of the Truth, dies a sufi."

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Sufism

Sufism is a school for the actualization of divine ethics. It involves an enlightened inner being, not intellectual proof; revelation and witnessing, not logic. By divine ethics, we are referring to ethics which transcend mere social convention; a way of being which is the actualization of the attributes of God.

To explain the Truth is indeed a difficult task. Words, being limited, can never really express the Perfection of the Absolute, the Unbound. Thus, for those who are imperfect, words create doubt and misunderstanding. Yet:

*If one cannot drink up the entire ocean,
one can drink to one's limit.*

Philosophers have written volumes and spoken endlessly of the Truth, but somehow their efforts have always fallen short. For the sufi, philosophers are those who view the Perfection of the Absolute from a limited perspective; so all they see is part of the Absolute, not the Infinite in its entirety. It is indeed true that what philosophers see is correct; nevertheless, it is only a part of the whole.

One is reminded of Rumi's well-known story of a group of men in India who had never seen an elephant. One day they came to a place where an elephant was. In complete darkness they approached the animal, each man feeling it. Afterwards, they described what they thought they had perceived. Of course their descriptions were different. He who had felt a leg, imagined the elephant to be a pillar. The man who felt the animal's ear, described the elephant as a fan, and so on. Each one of their descriptions with respect to the various parts they had experienced was true. However, as far as accurately describing the whole, their conceptions had all fallen short. If they had had a candle, the

difference of opinions would not have come about. The candle's light would have revealed the elephant as a whole.

Only by the light of the Spiritual Path and the mystic way can the Truth really be actualized. In order for one to truly witness the Perfection of the Absolute, one must see with one's inner being, which perceives the whole of Reality. This witnessing happens when one becomes perfect, losing one's (partial) existence in the Whole.

If the Whole is likened to the Ocean, and the part to a drop, the sufi says that witnessing the Ocean with the eye of a drop is impossible. However, when the drop becomes one with the Ocean, it sees the Ocean with the eye of the Ocean.

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How is it possible to realize Perfection?

Man is dominated by his self's desires and fears. Those who are ensnared in these habitual impulses are out of harmony with the Divine Nature, and thus ill. As a result of this illness, feelings become disturbed and accordingly, thoughts and perceptions become unsound. Thus, one's faith as well as one's knowledge of the Truth strays from what is real.

In order to follow the way to Perfection, one must first rectify these incorrect thought processes and transmute one's desires and fears. This is accomplished by coming into harmony with the Divine Nature. This way of harmony (the Spiritual Path) consists of spiritual poverty, devotion, and the continuous, selfless remembrance of God. In this way, one comes to perceive the Truth as it really is.

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Asceticism and Abstinence in Sufism

In order to travel the path, the sufi needs strength supplied by proper bodily nourishment. It has been said that whatever the sufi eats is transformed into spiritual qualities and light. However, the food of others, since it but serves their own desires and fears, only strengthens their selfish attachments and takes them further away from the Truth.

*This one eats and only
stinginess and envy result.
While that one eats and there is but
the light of the One.
This one eats and only
impurity comes about.
While that one eats and all becomes
the Light of God.*

It is clear then, that Sufism is not based upon ascetic practices such as abstinence from food. In our school, the traveler on God's Way is only instructed to abstain from food when he is sick or entangled in excessive desire or fear. In this case, the Master or Spiritual Guide permits one to refrain from eating for a brief period of time, and instead directs one to concentrate on spiritual practices. In this way, the excess is transmuted and the seeker's inner being becomes harmonious. Then, the dervish will be enabled to continue on the dangerous ascent to the Infinite.

Some have thought that by fasting the strength necessary for purification is attained. On the contrary, in Sufism abstinence alone is not enough to purify the self. It is true that asceticism and abstinence give one a certain spiritual state, and in this state one's perception may be clarified. But if the self is likened to a dragon that by fasting becomes powerless, it is certain that when the fast is broken and enough food is eaten, the dragon will revive, and stronger than ever will go about attempting to fulfill its desires.

In Sufism, it is by the Tariqat (Spiritual Path) that the self is gradually purified and transformed into Divine Attributes, until there is nothing left of one's compulsive self. Then all that remains is the Perfect, Divine Self. In such extensive and precise work, asceticism and abstinence are virtually worthless.

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The Spiritual Path

The Tariqat is the way by which the sufi comes into harmony with the Divine Nature. As we have said, this way is comprised of spiritual poverty (faqr), devotion and the continuous, selfless remembrance of God (zeker), which are represented by the cloak of the dervish (kherqeh).

1. Spiritual Poverty (faqr)

This is both the feeling of being imperfect and needy, and the desire for perfection. The Prophet, Mohammed, said, "My honor is from spiritual poverty. I have been honored over and above all prophets by being graced with spiritual poverty." And God revealed to the Prophet, "Say, God increase my true knowledge of you." As this saying indicates, even though Mohammed was given the honor of Prophethood, it was still necessary that he feel his poverty and desire to be nearer to the essence of God.

2. The cloak of the dervish (kherqeh).

The kherqeh is the garment of honor of the dervish. It symbolizes the Divine Nature and Attributes. Some people have mistakenly imagined that the cloak actually possesses these properties and have felt that if one was to wear such a cloak, one would become a saint. However, wearing spiritual clothing does not make one spiritual. A sufi wears what he or she likes while being in harmony with what is socially approved. 'Ali said, "Wear those clothes which neither cause you to be looked down upon, nor admired and envied." Thus, it is not the clothes which make the sufi, rather it is his or her actions and inner being.

*Recline on the throne of the heart,
and with purity in manner be a sufi.
-- Sa'di*

The cloak is sewn with the needle of devotion and the thread of the selfless remembrance of God. He or she who wishes to be honored by this cloak of poverty must, with devotion, become surrendered to a spiritual guide. True devotion draws one's heart towards the Beloved. It involves continuous attention to the Truth-Reality and constant effort to let go of attention to the self. This includes unquestioned obedience to one's spiritual guide.

The guide, by spiritual means, penetrates to the depths of the disciple's soul, transmutes his negative qualities, and brings to nothing the impurities of the world of multiplicity. In other words, the guide takes the needle of devotion from the disciple's hand and with the thread of the disciple's selfless remembrance of God, sews the sufi cloak upon the

disciple. Then, by the grace of this cloak of Divine Names and Attributes, the disciple will become a perfect being.

3. Continuous, selfless remembrance of God (zeker).

Contained in Absolute, Infinite Unity are forces which emanate and become manifested as created beings. Each being, according to its nature, receives grace from these forces. In the realm of words, the manifestations of these forces, or truths, are expressed by Divine Names. Examples are: the Living (al-hayy), meaning the life of creation is directly connected with Him; and the Transcendent (al-'ali), meaning the force of the universe is with Him.

The Divine Names, in the continuous, selfless remembrance of God (zeker), are prescribed by the Master of the Spiritual Path, in order to cure his disciples of the disease of the self and its desires and fears. But this remembrance is of no value unless all of one's senses come to be fully centered on the meaning-reality of the respective Names. It is only by full acknowledgment and love of the reality of these Divine Names that attention to the self falls away. Then, the self becomes purified and adorned by the Divine Attributes.

*The Beloved sat facing my open heart
for so long that,
but for Her Attributes and Nature,
nothing remained of my heart.
-- Maghrebi*

Only in such a fashion can the repetition of the Divine Names be called the selfless remembrance of God, or *zeker*.

The disciple is like a machine whose energy comes from devotion. This machine, by means of the selfless remembrance of God, transmutes all of the self's desires and fears into Divine Attributes. Gradually, the disciple's self passes away and the Divine Nature becomes manifest; then the disciple truly becomes the recipient of the sufi cloak, and his heart and soul become illuminated by the grace of the Divine Attributes. At this point the disciple is worthy of entering the spiritual feast of the sufis, which takes place in the "Tavern of Ruin" (kharabat). This is the spiritual state of self-having-passed away-in-God (fana). Here, the sufi directly perceives the secrets of the Truth. As is said in the Qur'an, "Only the purified experience It (the Truth)." These purified ones, in Sufism, are called Perfect Beings.

In order to show how the remembrance (zeker) is done, let us take the example of LA ILLAHA ILL ALLAH. Its meaning is: *there is no god, but God (who is One)*.

The sufi sits either cross-legged or on his or her heels, with the right hand placed on the left thigh and the left hand over the right wrist. In these positions one's hands and legs

form a y LA (the negative particle in Arabic), symbolizing the nonexistence of the sufi before the Beloved. In this state, the sufi must relinquish attention to and belief in this world, the hereafter, and himself.

The Y of one's arms begins at one's navel and continues up to one's neck. It is a scissors which symbolizes the cutting away of the head of one's self, and the surrendering of the belief in and attachment to one's own limited existence.

With ILLAH (god), the sufi moves his head and neck toward the right in a semicircle. This is called the arc of possible existence. The movement symbolizes the negation, or rather, the giving up of the belief in the reality of "other than God". "Other than God" in Sufism is merely all transient, limited, and possible existences. Human beings attend to these possible existences instead of the Eternal, All-encompassing, Necessary and Absolute Reality of God.

Then, with ILL ALLAH, the sufi moves his head and neck to the left. This is called the arc of necessity and symbolizes the reality of the Necessary, the Absolute Reality.

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The Manifestation of the Divine

Since words are but manifestations of objects, concepts, and truths, the sufi feels that by continuous and complete attention to the meaning and reality of his remembrance of God, he becomes the true manifestation of that remembrance. That is to say, with continuous, selfless remembrance a Divine Attribute comes to predominate in the being of the sufi.

The sufis consider that there is a particular Divine Attribute which dominates the being of every prophet and saint, such that they can be said to be the incarnation of that attribute. For example, sufis feel that Moses is the manifestation of the transcendent aspect of Reality, because of his ability to speak with God without an intermediary. In the Qur'an, the Lord said to Moses, "Do not fear, because you are transcendent." Jesus is the manifestation of prophethood. While an infant he cried, "God gave me the book and placed me as a prophet."

All of the prophets are manifestations of the Divine Unity and Perfection, but Mohammed is its supreme manifestation. His name is the most exalted of the Divine

Names, containing all the Names within it. Thus, Mohammed is the spiritual incarnation and manifestation of all of God's Names. Mohammed himself said, "What God first created was my Light."

In addition, each prophet is the manifestation of one of the Divine Attributes, and all of the Attributes are contained in the most exalted Name. Also, Mohammed is the manifestation of the Great Name. So, due to the fact that his manifestation is inclusive of all the Names, he hierarchically comes before all other created things, and for the same reason said, "I was a prophet while Adam was still between water and earth."

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Sama

*If you are not one with the Beloved
Seek!
and if you are in Union,
Rejoice!*

The musical and ecstatic aspect of Sufism is called Sama. The sufi, while being spiritually enraptured, gives the attention of his or her heart to the Beloved. With particular movements and often special and rhythmical music, he engages in the selfless remembrance of God. In this state, the sufi is a drunken lover who becomes unaware of everything but God. With all his faculties he is attentive to the Beloved, and he has totally given up and forgotten himself.

Not all disciples engage in Sama. It is only given as a practice to some by their spiritual guide, who determines whether it is appropriate for them or not. Sama can be likened to a medicine; it is sometimes prescribed and sometimes prohibited.

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Sainthood

Earlier, we have said that the aim of Sufism is the cultivation of Perfect Beings who are mirrors reflecting the Divine Names and Attributes. In Sufism, a perfect being is also called a wali (saint), a word which literally means 'sincere friend'. All who have been prophets have also been saints. The spiritual degree of sainthood is a station indicating the condition of one's inner being, while the rank of prophethood reflects one's mission as a divine messenger.

The prophetic mission of Mohammed was both Absolute Sainthood and Prophecy. 'Ali, while not among the prophets, attained to this same Absolute Sainthood. Mohammed said, " 'Ali and I are of the same light," and 'Ali said, "Spiritually, I have been with all the Prophets."

In the eyes of the great sufis, the saints have included the successors of 'Ali in his spiritual-political role as first of the Shi'ite Imams. Also among the saints are the Sufi Masters who have followed the esoteric path of 'Ali.

These enlightened beings, each according to his or her own capacity, have drunk from the fountain of Truth. Because they are known only by God, only God can truly know the differences between their spiritual stations. In a prophetic tradition (hadith), God says, "My friends (saints) are under my banner, no one knows them but I."

Most people do not have the patience necessary to know the saints. One who is encompassed can not truly know what encompasses him. True knowledge of the saints comes from knowing their reality through one's inner being.

A common misunderstanding is the thought that by going into seclusion one can become a saint. However, in the way of the sufi, the way of Mohammed and 'Ali, one must live in society. Being a recluse and retreating from contact with people has no lasting spiritual value.

Mohammed said, "The faith of a believer is not perfect unless one thousand sincere people give witness to his 'infidelity'." He meant that the divine knowledge of a perfect believer is beyond the level of thinking of most people. Those who hear such a perfect being speak, since they can not perceive the truth of what he is saying, will call him an unbeliever.

A true believer, a sufi, must live in, serve and guide society, and be a vehicle by which society receives Grace. It is for this reason that conforming to and being in harmony with society, being at peace with all, is a quality of a perfect being.

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