

ENGAGING ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Using the Hadith in Christian ministry to Muslims

Dr Bernie Power



Jesus said about the prodigal son: “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

“Allah says about every person: ‘If my slave ... comes one span nearer to Me, I go one cubit nearer to him; and if he comes one cubit nearer to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.’” (Hadith al-Bukhari 9:267)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Transliteration table</i>	4
<i>List of illustrations</i>	5
<i>List of side-bars</i>	5
<i>List of tables</i>	6
SECTION I : INTRODUCTION	7
The purpose of this book	8
Chapter 1. WHAT IS THE HADITH?	9
1. How and why did the Hadith arise?	9
2. The Form of the Hadith	13
3. Collections of the Hadith	15
4. The authority of the Hadith	15
Chapter 2: CLASSIFYING THE HADITH	17
1. The Content of the Hadith	17
2. Categorizing the Hadith	17
3. The role of the Hadith in the lives of Muslim	25
Chapter 3: CAN CHRISTIANS USE THE HADITH?	39
1. Approach of this book	29
2. The use of one religious system to support or promote a different one	32
(a) Examples from history	33
(b) Contextualisation in the Old Testament	33
(c) Contextualisation in the New Testament	35
SECTION II: FINDING CONCORD	40
Chapter 4: POSITIVE ASPECTS OF MUHAMMAD'S LIFE	40
1. His character – a comparison with Moses	41
(a) Obedience and application of the law	43
(b) Generosity and care for others	43
(c) Humanity and humility	44
(d) Forgiveness and tolerance	46
2. Muhammad's prophethood	47
Chapter 5: POSITIVE TREATMENT & DEPICTION OF WOMEN	50
1. Key women in the lives of Muhammad and Jesus	50
2. Religiously observant women	51
3. Women as material providers	52
4. Responding to women's social and emotional needs	52
5. Religious needs and uncleanness	53
6. The role of women in development of the religion	54
Chapter 6: THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS	56
1. The nature of God	56
2. Prayers of Muhammad	57
3. Eschatology	61
Chapter 7: ETHICAL ISSUES	64
1. Orientation towards others	64
2. Moral requirements	65
3. Parallel teaching	67
4. Connection with God	70

5. Reflections	71
SECTION III: SEEKING CONNECTIONS	72
Chapter 8 : THE CHARACTER AND ACTIONS OF GOD	74
1. Divine beneficence	74
2. Divine holiness	74
3. Divine initiative	75
4. Divine proximity	76
5. Divine enfleshment	77
6. Connections with biblical themes	79
Chapter 9: THE NATURE OF HUMANITY	82
1. Positive ascriptions	82
2. Negative ascriptions	83
3. The impact of Adam	84
4. The role of Satan	85
5. Synthesis	86
6. Humans: individual or corporate?	86
7. Connections with biblical themes	87
Chapter 10: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS	89
1. Sins incur penalties	89
2. Sins must be paid for	89
3. Sin and forgiveness as commercial transactions	90
4. The unforgivable sin	92
5. Unstable identity of those who sin	93
6. Uncertain outcome for those who sin	93
7. Connections with biblical themes	94
Chapter 11: THE INADEQUACY OF WORKS	97
1. Actions are not a clear sign of one's final destiny	97
2. Muhammad's works did not guarantee his entry to Paradise	97
3. The relationship between faith and works	99
4. Connections with biblical themes	99
Chapter 12: AVOIDING PUNISHMENT FOR ONE'S SINS	101
1. The Qur'an disavows human atonement but the Hadith affirms it	101
2. Some sinful actions would be overlooked	101
3. A required action or outcome could be replaced another	102
4. Sins could be passed on to others	104
5. Sins could be expiated by the action of another person	105
6. Connections with biblical themes	105
Chapter 13: GAINING REWARD	107
1. Non-completion or inadequate completion of a good deed was sometimes acceptable	107
2. A person could gain a reward from the action for others	107
3. A living person could pay in substitution for a dead person	108
4. A single action could have positive eternal consequences	109
5. The positive action of one person could have beneficial implications	110

6. Rewards and punishments could cross the life/death boundary	110
7. Connections with biblical themes	110
Chapter 14: PICTURES OF THE CROSS	114
1. The sinlessness of Christ	114
2. Sacrifice & Ransom	115
3. Other pictures of the cross	117
Chapter 15: APPROPRIATING THE CROSS	122
1. The task of intercession	122
2. The primacy of faith and love over works	124
3. The Transformed life	126
4. Assurance of the believer	128
SECTION IV: USING THE HADITH IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY:	129
Chapter 16: DIALOGUE WITH MUSLIMS	129
1. Discursive dialogue	130
2. Religious experience dialogue	134
3. Secular dialogue	135
Chapter 17: DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIMS	139
1. The nature of God	139
2. The nature of humanity	140
3. The need for forgiveness	140
4. Issues of atonement	140
5. Connections with biblical themes	141
6. Other pictures of the cross	142
7. Christ as mediator and intercessor	142
8. The primacy of faith and love over works	143
9. The transformed life	143
10. Assurance of the believer	143
11. Criticism of these uses of the Hadith	143
12. How to use this material	144
Chapter 18 - CONCLUSION	147
 Appendix – List of topics in al-Bukhari’s Hadith	 150
Bibliography	153

Transliteration Table

Consonants

b = ب	z = ز	f = ف
t = ت	s = س	q = ق
th = ث	sh = ش	k = ك
j = ج	s{ = ص	l = ل
h{ = ح	d{ = ض	m = م
kh = خ	t{ = ط	n = ن
d = د	z{ = ظ	h = ه
dh = ذ	‘ = ع	w = و
r = ر	gh = غ	y = ي

Vowels

Short: a = ا i = ي u = و

Long: ā = آ ī = ي ū = و

Diphthong: ay = آي aw = أَوْ

Illustration	LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	page
1	Nine volumes of alBukhari's Hadith	8
2	Muhammad the Greatest	12
3	A network of isnads	14
4	Relationships between sources of the Hadith	18
5	Classification of the Hadith	24
6	Ways of using the Hadith	25
7	Christian responses to the Hadith	32
8	Palimpsest	38
9	Replacing the Black Stone	43
10	Muhammad's marriage to Khadija	49
11	Connections and progression in prayer	56
12	Muhammad praying at the Ka'ba	57
13	Comparing the 'umma' with being 'in Adam'	86
14	The Promise/Threat Graph	90
15	Switching between 'believer' and 'non-believer status'	92
16	A bounded set	93
17	A centred set	94
18	The Sin-Sacrifice Cycle	115
19	Different views of the death of Christ	120
20	Goals of dialogue	129
21	Trajectories of interpretation	143
22	Cross and Crescent flag 2011	147
23	Cross and Crescent flag 1919	148
Figure	LIST OF SIDE-BARS	page
1	Muhammad's authority	10
2	Example of a Hadith	13
3	Headings in the Hadith	17
4	Cultural Adaptation	30
5	Muhammad and materialism	41
6	Muhammad and his drunk uncle	45
7	Biblical prophetic manifestations	47
8	Menstrual matters	52
9	Maintaining Social Cohesion	64
10	Wealth, Weddings and Weeping	68
11	The Running Father	74
12	A Marxist view of God	78
13	Muslims ponder the Incarnation	80

14	Effects of Adam's sin	84
15	Muhammad uncertain of Paradise	97
16	The apparent teaching of Islam	100
17	Sins may escape punishment	101
18	The Principle of Expiation	103
19	Sins may result in transference of punishment	104
20	A volunteer may take on the punishment for another's sin	104
21	A progression in the meanings of expiation	105
22	An incomplete good deed brings a reward	106
23	Rewards for good deeds are transferable	107
24	Rewards for good deeds are transferable to the dead	108
25	The effects of a single good deed could be everlasting	108
26	The effects of a single good deed extended to others	109
27	Temporal actions can have eternal effects	109
Table	LIST OF TABLES	page
1	Details of the "six books"	15
2	Hadiths categorized based on the ultimate source	18
3	Hadiths categorized based on their <i>isnāds</i>	19
4	Hadiths categorized based by number of reporters	19
5	Hadiths categorized based by mode of reporting	20
6	Hadiths categorized based by stringency of reporting	21
7	Hadiths categorized by shortcomings in the text	22
8	Hadiths categorized by trustworthiness of their reporters	23
9	List of books referred to in the Old Testament	34
10	Jewish non-biblical books	36
11	Greek books	36
12	List of Muhammad's prayers in al-Bukhari	59
13	Eschatological parallels between the Hadith and the Bible	60
14	Parallels between Hadith teaching and Jesus' teaching	66
15	Jesus' descriptions of his relationship with his heavenly Father	69
16	Qur'anic descriptions of the transcendence of Allah	75
17	Anthropomorphic language in the Bible and Qur'an	77
18	Descriptions of humanity in the Qur'an	82
19	Pillars of Islam fulfilled by others	108
20	Varieties of Dialogue	129
21	Contrasting views of revelation	131
22	Bases for secular dialogue	135
23	Examples of moral issues	135
24	Potential areas for action	136
25	Progression through the various texts	138

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Today nearly one quarter of the earth's population subscribes to the Islamic religion, and this number is growing rapidly mostly due to a high birth rate. The world's only major post-Christian faith has proved resistant to the Christian message. Compared with non-Islamic people groups in sub-Saharan Africa, South America, and parts of Asia, the fruit of Christian ministry amongst Muslims has been meagre. Professor Dudley Woodberry notes that “no mission work has had less success than Christian mission to Muslims.”¹ Social, political and cultural factors militate against easy Christian access. The rate of literacy in the Muslim world is generally low, minimising the potential impact of printed resources. Poor infrastructure, repressive government censorship and general poverty have often restricted access by outside electronic mass media and other forms of outreach into many Muslim countries.² Where local Christian communities live in Muslim-majority countries, their witness has usually been muted by centuries of ‘protected’ *dhimmi* status³ and fear of persecution.

Many missiological methods have been applied⁴ to ensure that the message of Jesus Christ receives a hearing among the followers of the Prophet Muhammad.⁵

Surprisingly, little attention has been paid to the body of literature called the Hadith.⁶ After his death, Muhammad's words and actions or *sunnah* (literally ‘a trodden path’)⁷ were collected in the Hadith (literally a story, a narration, a report) and became considered normative for the lives of Muslims forever. Burton describes the relationship between *Hadith* and *sunnah*: “the term *Hadith* refers to a document, the term *sunnah* refers to the usage described in such a document.”⁸ These ancient documents could be a rich source of material to aid Christians in their task of understanding and responding to Islam. Samuel Zwemer commented that the Hadith “have exercised tremendous power on Moslem thought since the early days of Islam; not only by supplementing but by interpreting the Koran. The *Hadith* are accepted by every Moslem sect, in some form or other, and are indispensable to Islam.”⁹ An African writer asserts: “As Muslims, our knowledge of Islam would be incomplete and shaky if we did not study and follow the *Hadith*. Similarly an outsider cannot understand Islam if he ignores the *Hadith*.”¹⁰ Brown notes that “although it stands second to the Quran in terms of reverence, it is the lens through which the holy book is interpreted and understood. In this sense, in Islamic civilization the Sunna has

¹ Woodberry “Failure”, 121

² Notwithstanding the efforts of organisations like Middle East Media (MEM), and the TV station Sat-7.

³ Many Christians and Jews question the positive perception of *dhimmi* status as ‘protection’ as it is sometimes portrayed by Muslim writers. See Durie, *Third Choice*

⁴ Terry, “Approaches”

⁵ In this thesis, Muhammad is sometimes referred to as ‘the Prophet’. This is based on the biblical precedent of applying the title of ‘prophet’ to anyone, false or true, Jewish or pagan, who claimed to speak publicly for his deity e.g. 1.Kg.18:19, Neh.6:14 and Titus 1:12. However the prayer for Muhammad recited by devout Muslims after each mention of his name, often abbreviated as PBUH (‘Peace be upon him), will not be written. This follows the precedent of Tariq Ramadhan who, noting that he writes for a wide audience, suggests: “Let the Muslim reader personally and inwardly formulate this prayer as he or she reads.” Ramadhan, *Messenger*, 217

⁶ The term “Hadith” will be used in this book as both an individual and collective noun, following standard academic practice. Occasionally the plural ‘hadiths’ will be used. The Arabic word *h}ad}ith* is singular, and its plural is *ah}ad}ith*. Since it is a commonly accepted term in English it, like the words ‘Muhammad’, ‘Islam’ and ‘Qur’an’ will not be transliterated.

⁷ The plural of *sunnah* is *sunan*. Some Hadith collections have this title.

⁸ Burton, *Introduction*, ix

⁹ Zwemer, *God*, 8

¹⁰ Kateregga & Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 31

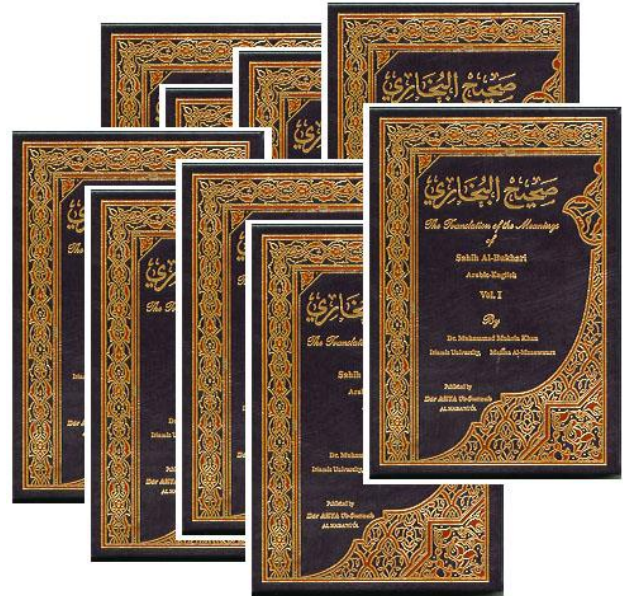
ruled over the Quran, shaping, specifying, and adding to the revealed book.”¹¹

The purpose of this book

The goal of this book is to evaluate the Hadith for positive Christian approaches to Muslims. The main focus will be an analysis of al-Bukhāri’s collection of the Hadith.¹² The vast scope of the Hadith literature necessitates some selection. Al-Bukhāri’s collection is not only representative of the Hadith genre, it is one of the *ṣaḥīḥayn* (two authentic) books, considered by Muslims to be the apex of the most widely accepted Hadith collections.

Illustration 1: The nine volumes of al-Bukhari’s Hadith

Although the Hadith constitute a major part to the preaching in many mosques and inform and regulate much of the everyday life of many Muslims, Christian workers rarely utilise them as part of their ministry to Muslims. This book attempts to redress that imbalance. Parshall comments: “It is my opinion that it is permissible to utilize Hadith passages in witness to Muslims.”¹³ The potential success of such a venture is mooted by no less a figure than the missiologist J. H. Bavinck. “There never has been a system so tightly woven that God did not leave providentially some cracks through which the dynamic of God could find its way in.”¹⁴ The use of the Hadith may be one of the keys to ensure that the Christian message receives a positive hearing by Muslims.



¹¹ Brown, *Hadith*, 3

¹² The Hadith pericopes (individual accounts) will be referred to by their number e.g. B.1:37, which refers to al-Bukhāri Vol. 1, Hadith account no. 37. Al-Bukhari’s collection has nine volumes, with the number of pericopes varying from 582 (vol.6) to 895 (vol.3)

¹³ Parshall, *Inside the Community*, 14

¹⁴ Bavinck cited in Peters, “Overview”, 401,402

CHAPTER 1 – WHAT IS THE HADITH?

1. How and why did the Hadith arise?

Muslims claim that their religion is all-inclusive: “Islam was not satisfied with preaching only broad principles ... It is a complete code of life.”¹⁵ Sayyid Qutb notes that “[h]istory has shown that Islam is unique in its ability to provide guidance for the entire range of human activity.” Thus, Islam “does not separate spiritual and secular life, for what seems to belong to the citizen and to Caesar is in reality God’s property.” Proper religiosity “is comprehensive and covers all aspects of life just as capillaries and nerves direct themselves to all parts of the body”.¹⁶

Clearly the 6200¹⁷ odd verses of the Qur’an do not cover every possible human contingency. According to Ismail al-Faruqi¹⁸ and Jalal-ud-din al-Suyuti (c. 1445-1505) in *Itqān fi ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (‘Perfection in the Qur’anic Sciences’) only five hundred of its verses describe law, while Mutawalli puts the verse count at two hundred.¹⁹ Bennett suggests a middle number of three hundred.²⁰ Whatever the actual tally, less than 10% of the Qur’an’s verses have a legal connotation. The lacuna was to be covered by Muhammad’s sayings and deeds.

“The fact that Muhammad [lived] through all the major experiences to which a human being may be exposed in the course of his life gives the practice of the religion its specific character and lends this ‘imitation’ a remarkable precision, even in the simplest acts of daily life.”²¹

Muhammad’s experiences cited include being orphaned at a young age, living in a city and in the desert, travelling to Syria as an adolescent, mixing with the rich, experiencing poverty, engagement in commerce, being involved in monogamous and polygamous marriages, having the joy of fatherhood, then the sadness of seeing all but one of his children die, facing persecution and rejection, and then becoming the successful religious, political and military leader of a growing community. He is described as exhibiting “great moral character”.²² Having lived a full and varied life, he died aged sixty-three.²³

(a) The Qur’anic basis for a sunnah focussed on Muhammad

During his public ministry, Muhammad was recognised by other Muslims as the undisputed earthly ruler and sole legislator of Islam. According to the Qur’an, obedience to him must be unquestioning. Muhammad is presented to Muslims as a judge in all disputes. His

¹⁵ Hakim, *Islamic Ideology*, xi.

¹⁶ Qutb, *Islam and Universal Peace*, 3

¹⁷ “The total number of Qur’ān verses is variously given as 6204, 6214, 6219, 6225 or 6236.” Juynboll “Hadith and the Qur’an”, Vol.2, 386. Bennett counts 6,666. Bennett, *Search*, 20. Hughes, *Dictionary*, 489 details sources of the different numberings of the verses.

¹⁸ Al-Faruqi, *Islam*, 35–44.

¹⁹ http://www.islamic-world.net/islamic-state/consti_reading.htm accessed 17th June, 2013

²⁰ Bennett, *Search*, 20

²¹ Eaton, “Man”, 36

²² Q.68:4. Many books have been written extolling the virtues of Muhammad e.g. Al-Sheba, *Muhammad The Messenger of Allah*

²³ B.5:243, 742. We will follow the generally held convention for references to al-Bukhārī’s Hadith, using this format. ‘B’ stands for ‘al Bukhari’ and B.5:243, 742 means Volume 5, Accounts no. 243 and 742. There are 9 volumes in al-Bukhārī’s hadith, based on the translation by Khan, *Translation*. Some references also or instead list the ‘Book’ of the Hadith. See the Appendix for a list of how the ‘Books’ correlate with the ‘Volumes’

decisions must not be resisted but accepted with full submission.²⁴ Those who obeyed him would be blessed²⁵ and triumphant,²⁶ but those who disobeyed would suffer the punishment of hell.²⁷ The implications of submission to Islam are presented as important: Muhammad said: “If you love God, follow me, and God will love you, and forgive you your sins.”²⁸ The Qur’an formulates a one-to-one correspondence between divine and prophetic obedience: “He who obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah”.²⁹ Making a pledge to the Prophet was the same as making a pledge to Allah.³⁰ Muhammad is therefore given a place of great honour: “God and His angels bless the Prophet. O believers, do you also bless him, and pray him peace.”³¹

Muhammad’s impact went far beyond his legal enactments. “For the original Muslim community ... all authority was invested in the Prophet. The figure of the Prophet dominated Islam... The unity of that community is not centred on the statements the Prophet makes but on the Prophet himself ... because the message is manifested in the actions of the messenger. In other words, the Prophet reveals what Islam is, but Islam is also what the Prophet does.”³²

Muslims claim that Muhammad is the model for all people to follow. His actions were not simply descriptive of his own life, but also prescriptive for all Muslims. The Qur’anic bases for this are several: “You have had a good pattern in God’s Messenger”³³ and “And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it)”³⁴. According to Islam, this is the path of purity, freedom and prosperity (see Figure 1). Based on the frequent injunctions to ‘obey Allah and his messenger’,³⁵ as well as warnings against disobedience to Muhammad,³⁶ Brown comments: “The *imitatio Muhammadi* thus became the standard for ethical behavior among Muslims, forming the basis for Islamic law and setting the standard for even the most mundane activities – the order in which fingernails should be cut or the proper length of the beard.”³⁷

One scholar outlines the logic: “The underlying assumption was presumably that Muhammad’s practice would be in accordance with his understanding of the revelation, and that,

Figure 1:

Muhammad’s authority

“Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures) - in the Law and the Gospel - for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him - it is they who will prosper.” (Q.7.157)

²⁴ Q.4:65

²⁵ Q.4:81

²⁶ Q.24:52

²⁷ Q.4:115; 72:23

²⁸ Q.3.28,29

²⁹ Q.4:80

³⁰ Q.48:10

³¹ Q.3.56

³² Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, 53

³³ Q.33.21

³⁴ Q.59.7

³⁵ This phrase occurs at least fifteen times throughout the Qur’an e.g. Q.3:32,132; 4:59,69; 5:92; 8:1,20, 46; 9:71; 24:52,54; 33:31; 47:33; 49:14; 58:13; 64:12 Variants are found in Q.4:64,66, 80

³⁶ e.g. Q.4:14; 8:13; 33:36; 59:4.

³⁷ Brown, *Rethinking tradition*, 1

since he was the recipient of the revelation and so closest to it, his understanding of it would be better than most Muslims.”³⁸ It was not the first time such an application had occurred: “This practice was no Islamic innovation, for the inclination to look towards a tribal leader’s person and behavior for guidance was a common aspect of pre-Islamic culture.”³⁹ However there is more than the pragmatism of following established custom. Jews and Christians, as well as Muslims, are enjoined to follow the Prophet’s teaching and example for their own welfare, because their eternal destiny is at stake: “Whoso obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens underneath ... dwelling forever ... But whoso disobeys God and His Messenger, ... He will admit to a Fire, therein dwelling forever.”⁴⁰

(b) The Hadith’s basis for a *sunnah* focused on Muhammad

Although Muhammad’s sayings as collected in the Qur’an were seen to be absolutely requisite, “(e)ven when the Prophet did not claim his words to be divinely inspired, his utterances were generally held to bind the community.”⁴¹ He said: “if I forbid you to do something, then keep away from it. And if I order you to do something, then do of it as much as you can.”⁴²

In the Hadith, Muhammad presented himself as the best example to follow. He told his followers: “By Allah I fear Allah more than you do, and am more obedient to Him than you.”⁴³ He encouraged others to follow his *sunnah*⁴⁴ and to leave “the ways and traditions of the Days of Ignorance”.⁴⁵ He stated that “he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers).”⁴⁶ There was a special incentive for Jews and Christians. Those who left their former monotheistic religion and followed Islam would receive a double reward.⁴⁷ When a group of Muslims did not follow his example in a particular matter, he chided them in a sermon: “What is wrong with such people as refrain from doing a thing that I do? By Allah, I know Allah better than they, and I am more afraid of Him than they.”⁴⁸ His followers extended this imitation to include behaviour which Muhammad did not undertake himself, but did not prohibit when it occurred in his presence. For example, at a meal, Muhammad “left the *mastigar* [sand-lizard] because he disliked it. Muhammad’s cousin Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘The *mastigar* was eaten at the table of Allah’s Apostle and, if it had been illegal to eat, it could not have been eaten at the table of Allah’s Apostle.’”⁴⁹

Throughout the Hadith, Muhammad’s status is increasingly enhanced in comparison to the other prophets. On his ascent to heaven, he is greeted by all the other prophets.⁵⁰ Moses wept because more of Muhammad’s followers would enter Paradise than his own followers.⁵¹ On the day of Resurrection, Muhammad claimed he would be “the chief of all people” whose

³⁸ Watt, *Islamic Revelation*, 72

³⁹ Firestone, *Jihad*, 93.

⁴⁰ Q.17:18

⁴¹ Wild, “Political interpretation”, 273

⁴² B.9:391

⁴³ B.3:683

⁴⁴ B.2:71,82

⁴⁵ B.2:382, 384, 385

⁴⁶ B.7:1

⁴⁷ B.1:97.1; 4:655; 7:20

⁴⁸ B.8:123

⁴⁹ B.3:749; 7:301, 303, 312, 314 c.f. 9:453

⁵⁰ B.4:429

⁵¹ B.5:227

intercession would be accepted.⁵²

The Hadith reiterate this, for Muhammad said: “He who obeys me, obeys Allah, and he who disobeys me, disobeys Allah.”⁵³ He even made a claim to absolute geographical sovereignty: “The earth belongs to Allah and His apostle.”⁵⁴ This gave him universal responsibility: “Allah has trusted all the people of the earth to me.”⁵⁵

(c) The legal schools’ basis for a sunnah focused on Muhammad

Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘i (d.204/820), the founder of one of the four orthodox Sunni schools, taught that the recurring phrase “the Book and the Wisdom”⁵⁶ referred to the Qur’an and the Hadith. The wisdom achieved by Muhammad is placed alongside the Qur’an itself. Muhammad retorted to a questioner: “Who would obey Allah if I disobeyed Him?”⁵⁷ Due to his apparently infallible perception, it is believed that all his acts were inspired, and could be applied to situations for which the Qur’an supplied no answer. One Hadith suggested this: “The best talk is Allah’s Book (Qur’an), and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad.”⁵⁸ It is little wonder that Muhammad’s companions sought to imitate him in every way.⁵⁹ His wife Aisha saw no gap between the Prophet and his book. When asked about his character, she replied: “The character of the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) was the Qur’an.”⁶⁰ Hassan al-Barbahāri (d. 329/941) put it simply: “Islam is the Sunna, and the Sunna is Islam.”⁶¹ The four Sunni legal schools – Hanafī, Maliki, Shāfi‘ī and Hanbālī – all present Muhammad as the model of full humanity.



“If the Muslim is to tap that same source and become ‘one who understands’, he has no choice but to model himself upon this ‘perfect exemplar’, imitating Muhammad so far as he is able, both in his character and in his mode of action. Since the Prophet is ‘closer to the believers than their [own] selves’ (Q.33.6), it can be said that he is the believer’s *alter ego* or - to take this a step further - more truly ‘oneself’ than the collection of fragments and contrary impulses which we commonly identify as the ‘self’.”⁶² The polemicist Ahmed Deedat goes further, declaring Muhammad to be “the Greatest Saviour of humanity and Islam.”⁶³ (see Illustration 2)

Illustration 2: There are many books extolling the virtues of Muhammad⁶⁴

⁵² B.4:556

⁵³ B.4:204; 9:251,384,385

⁵⁴ B.4:392

⁵⁵ B.4:558

⁵⁶ Q.2:129,151,231; 3:48,79,81,164; 4:54,113;62:2

⁵⁷ B.4:558

⁵⁸ B.8:120

⁵⁹ B.1:167

⁶⁰ Muslim 369 cited by Sa’d ibn Hisham ibn Amir. References from CD-ROM “The Islamic Scholar” Hadith/Muslim

⁶¹ Brown, *Hadith*, 174

⁶² Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man*,186

⁶³ cited in Al-Kalby, *Prophet Muhammad*, 5. The term ‘Saviour of the world’ had previously been applied to Jesus (Jn.4:42; 1.Jn.4:14).

⁶⁴ Source: http://islamicindia.in/items_images/1211350247Muhammad%20s%20the%20greatest.jpg accessed 22nd April, 2011

Some decades earlier Sir George Bernard Shaw is reputed to have said: “I have studied [Muhammad] - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity.”⁶⁵

Muhammad was presented as unique through his designation as ‘the seal of the prophets’.⁶⁶ When he claimed in his final sermon: “To-day I have perfected for you your religion, and have completed My favour upon you, and am well-pleased with Islam as your religion”,⁶⁷ he closed the door to further revelation.⁶⁸ The possibility of later prophets, as in Judaism, or the inspiring role of the Holy Spirit, as in Christianity, was not envisaged.⁶⁹ Muhammad saw himself as the final and necessary brick in an otherwise beautiful edifice.⁷⁰

Following Muhammad’s death, and as Islam spread to other lands, new Muslims were curious about the life of the founder of their religion. Stories about Muhammad were transmitted orally for some generations and were eventually collected. For most Muslims, the *sunnah* of the Prophet became a key foundation for both belief and action.

2. The form of the Hadith

The Hadith are written accounts of the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and some of his ‘companions’ (*sah{āba*) and ‘successors’ (*t{ābi‘un*). A ‘companion’ was someone who knew Muhammad personally, but who can be classed as a ‘companion’ is a matter of some dispute.⁷¹ Muhammad’s earliest biographer, Ibn Ishāq, gives one list of the earliest Companions,⁷² and al-Bukhārī cites 208 Companions.⁷³ Others are more expansive, with numbers varying from the 1,525 in the earliest census taken at the Treaty of Hudaibiya to the 40,000 present at the Farewell Pilgrimage to Abū Zar‘a al-Rāzi’s estimate of over 100,000 who ever saw or heard the Prophet.⁷⁴ Successors’ (*tābi‘ūn*) were those who had conversed with one of the Companions of the Prophet. Put together, these make an impressive pool of potential

Figure 2:

An Example of a *Hadith*

Allah’s Apostle was the most generous of all the people, and he used to reach the peak in generosity in the month of Ramadan when Gabriel met him. Gabriel used to meet him every night of Ramadan to teach him the Qur’an. Allah’s Apostle was the most generous person, even more generous than the strong uncontrollable wind (in readiness and haste to do charitable deeds).” (al-Bukhārī 1:5)

⁶⁵ George Bernard Shaw 'The Genuine Islam,' Vol. 1, No. 8, 1936. <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/105721/20091001-1031/islammonitor.org/index27057.html> accessed on July 7, 2013. . The reliability of this quote has been challenged by various writers who claim that this book never actually existed.

See <http://idlethink.wordpress.com/2008/12/03/being-an-unforgivably-protracted-debunking-of-george-bernard-shaws-views-of-islam/> accessed 17th June, 2013

⁶⁶ Q.33:40

⁶⁷ Q.5:3

⁶⁸ The door to *ijtihād* (independent interpretation of the legal sources) was seen as still open, at least until the time of al-Ghazālī (d.1111) writing his “The Incoherence of the Philosophers”, when he deemed this door closed. Muhammad Iqbal (1875-1938) called for the reinstatement of *ijtihād* by a Muslim legislative assembly in order to restore an Islamic legal system that accorded with modern conditions.

⁶⁹ References to the ‘Holy Spirit’ *rūh} alqudus* e.g. Q.2:87, are commonly believed by Muslims to refer to the angel Gabriel.

⁷⁰ B.4:735, also 4:734

⁷¹ Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, 25,26

⁷² Ibn Ishaq, *Sira*, 115-117 (Guillaume’s translation)

⁷³ Siddiqui, *Hadith Literature*, 18.

⁷⁴ Siddiqui, *Hadith Literature*, 14,15

Each Hadith is recorded in a self-contained pericope or account, varying from only a sentence long, or they may extend to several pages. The text of the Hadith is called the *matn* (lit. ‘letters’) (see Figure 2).

A single *matn* may have a variety of *isnāds* or routes by which the tradition was transmitted to the compiler. Illustration 3 shows the variant and complex paths by which a saying of the Companion Abū Bakr (in the square at the bottom) found its way to the various compilers (who are circled).⁷⁶ This particular Hadith describes the process by which the Qur'an was compiled during the Caliphate of Abū Bakr (d.13/634).⁷⁷



A network
of *isnāds* for a
single Hadith
from Abu Bakr. The
seven collectors of
this Hadith are
circled

75 B.1:1

⁷⁷ B.6:201; 6:509; 6:551; 9:301

3. Collections of the Hadith

As the ‘science of Hadith’ developed, six collections of Hadith became generally accepted as ‘canonical’. Information about these collections is outlined in Table 1.⁷⁸ Of these ‘six books’ (*al-kutub al-sitta*), the ‘two approved’ versions (the *ṣaḥīḥayn*) of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are seen as the pinnacle of reliability among the Sunni Hadith. Some of the details of these are disputed, whether the total number of hadiths,⁷⁹ the number without repetition,⁸⁰ or the number of hadiths considered.⁸¹

Table 1: Details of the ‘six books’

Common name of the collection	Name of compiler	Dates of compiler	Number of Hadiths	Number without repetition	Number of Hadiths considered
<i>Ṣaḥīḥ} Al-Bukhārī</i>	Muhammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī	d.256/870	7,275	2,602	300,000 or 600,000
<i>Ṣaḥīḥ} Muslim</i>	Muslim b. al-Hajjāj	d.261/875	7,190	3,030	300,000
<i>Sunan Abu Dāwūd</i>	Abu Dāwūd Sulayman b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistāni	d.275/889	5,274	4,800	500,000
<i>Almujtaba</i> (‘the selected’) from <i>Kitāb al-sunan al-kubra</i>	Aḥmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā‘i	d.303/915	5,270		
<i>Al-Jāmi‘ al- Ṣaḥīḥ}</i>	Muhammad b. Isa al-Tirmidhi	d.279/892	3,956	3,873	
<i>Sunan Ibn Mājah</i>	Ibn Mājah al-Qazwīni	d.273/886	4,341	1,339	

4. The authority of the Hadith

The Hadith are generally seen as eclipsed in authority only by the Qur’an. Rahman refers to the Hadith as “the authoritative second source of the content of Islam besides the Qur’an.”⁸² Anderson speaks of the Traditions as “equally inspired in content though not in form.”⁸³

⁷⁸ These Sides are obtained from various sources, including Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhārī* Vol. 1, p. xv and Kutty, "The Six Authentic Books of hadith", 20

⁷⁹ Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam*, 28 recognises that other authorities give figures of 7,295 and 7,397 (e.g. Brown, *Hadith*, 32)

⁸⁰ Guillaume, *Traditions*, 28 citing Houdas. Brown, *Hadith*, 32 agrees with the number of 2,602. Kutty, "The Six Authentic Books of Hadith", 20, gives a figure of 2,762.

⁸¹ Guillaume, *Traditions*, 28. Quoting Uwaydah, Khan, *Authentication*, 31 cites the larger figure.

⁸² Rahman, *Islam*, 43

⁸³ Anderson, *Islam in the Modern World*, 39

However, al-Shāfi'i placed the Hadith on equal footing with the Qur'an in authority with his statement: "The command of the Prophet is the command of God."⁸⁴ Al-Bukhari's collection holds a place of special eminence. Khan claims that it "is widely considered by many to be the most authentic book after the Qur'an."⁸⁵

Rahman claims that the Hadith are a necessary support for the Qur'an. "For, if the Hadith *as a whole* is cast away, the basis for the historicity of the Qur'an is removed at one stroke."⁸⁶ The South African Council of Muslim Theologians finds an unbreakable link between the Qur'an and the Hadith:

"The Holy Qur'an without the Hadith or Sunnah of the Prophet remains unintelligible in certain instances and in view of that, the Holy Qur'an has, in several verses, ordered Muslims to follow the Prophet in all his deeds and sayings. Therefore, if one believes in the Holy Qur'an, there is no other alternative but to uphold the Hadith of the Prophet."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Brown, *Rethinking tradition*, 8

⁸⁵ Khan, *Authentication*, 139

⁸⁶ Rahman, *Islam*, 66 (italics his)

⁸⁷ Cited in Caner & Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 96.

CHAPTER 2: CLASSIFYING THE HADITH

1. The Content of the Hadith

It is difficult to collate and classify the Hadith. A single Hadith may contain several points addressing a variety of topics. They were unrelated in content, but were reported at the same time.⁸⁸ Nor is it easy to determine the context in which they occurred. Like the Qur'an, the Hadith accounts are not in chronological order. This makes it difficult to tell which Hadith might have come earlier, indicating an initial reaction, or which came later, indicating perhaps a more mature and measured response.⁸⁹ Many of the Hadith are repeated, some up to ten times in a single collection because they have been transmitted by varying routes of *isnad* or chain of transmitters. In Arab culture, repetition is often a means of emphasizing a point, or it may simply be an aid to comprehension. "Whenever the Prophet spoke a sentence (said a thing), he used to repeat it thrice so that the people could understand it properly from him."⁹⁰

Although the topics mentioned in the sidebar (Figure 3) are all found in each Hadith in that type, any particular Hadith may address a series of topics, so these categories are only a rough indication of content of the Hadiths in each category. Many of the groupings contain common material – almost identical accounts of donkeys walking in front of a group of people being led in prayer by the Prophet.⁹² They fall under three different classifications of content, labelled as 'Knowledge', 'Virtues of the Prayer Hall' and 'Characteristics of Prayer'. The broad categories conceal much detail in the Hadith narratives. One hadith,⁹³ for example, does contain some information about "Characteristics of Prayer", but it also relates the story of a man cursed with a long difficult life for lying to others.

Figure 3

Headings in the Hadith

The compilers of the Hadith have classified them according to content. "In the classical manuals and compilations Hadiths were organized by topics. In the *Sahih* of Bukhāri they are organized under such headings as faith, purification, prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage, commerce, inheritance, wills, vows and oaths, crimes, murders, judicial procedure, war, hunting, and wine."⁹¹ The numbers of entries under each heading vary greatly from only six ('revelation' in Book 1:1-6) to over five hundred (prophetic *tafsīr* 'commentary' in Book 6:1-501). A full compendium of topics in al-Bukhāri's collection, with the numbers of Hadith listed after them is found in the Appendix

2. Categorising the Hadith

The Hadith may be categorised in a variety ways, based on different criteria.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ The Hadith read much like Martin Luther's 'Table Talk', responding to particular questions asked by people or giving details of events which happened to him and interpreting them for their own situations.

⁸⁹ Some Hadith do record the events during the reigns of later Caliphs e.g. B.4:326

⁹⁰ B.1:94, 95

⁹¹ Lapidus, *History*, 102

⁹² As found in B.1:76, 474 & 820. This was supposed to annul prayer according to B.1: 486, 490, 493, but Aisha, Muhammad's favourite wife, objected to this saying because it equated dogs and donkeys with women.

⁹³ B.1:722

⁹⁴ This area of study is called *musṭalah al-Hadīth* 'classification of the Hadith'. For more detail see <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16764070/Mustalah-Al-Hadith>. Much of the material from this section was adapted from Reem Azzam "Modern Historical Methodology vs. Hadeeth Methodology". Source:

(a) Based on their origin

There are two types of Hadith based on their origin. In a *Hadīth nabawi* (‘prophetic Hadith’), the Prophet speaks on his own authority, whereas in a *Hadīth qudsi* (‘sacred Hadith’), God speaks through the mouth of the Prophet. The overwhelming number of Hadiths are of the first kind, with only several hundred or so of the second type. The most comprehensive collection, *al-Ahādīth al-Qudsiyyah*, compiled by the Committee of the Qur’an and Hadith of the Higher Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt in 1978, contains “four hundred Sacred Hadith with different variants where they occur”.⁹⁵

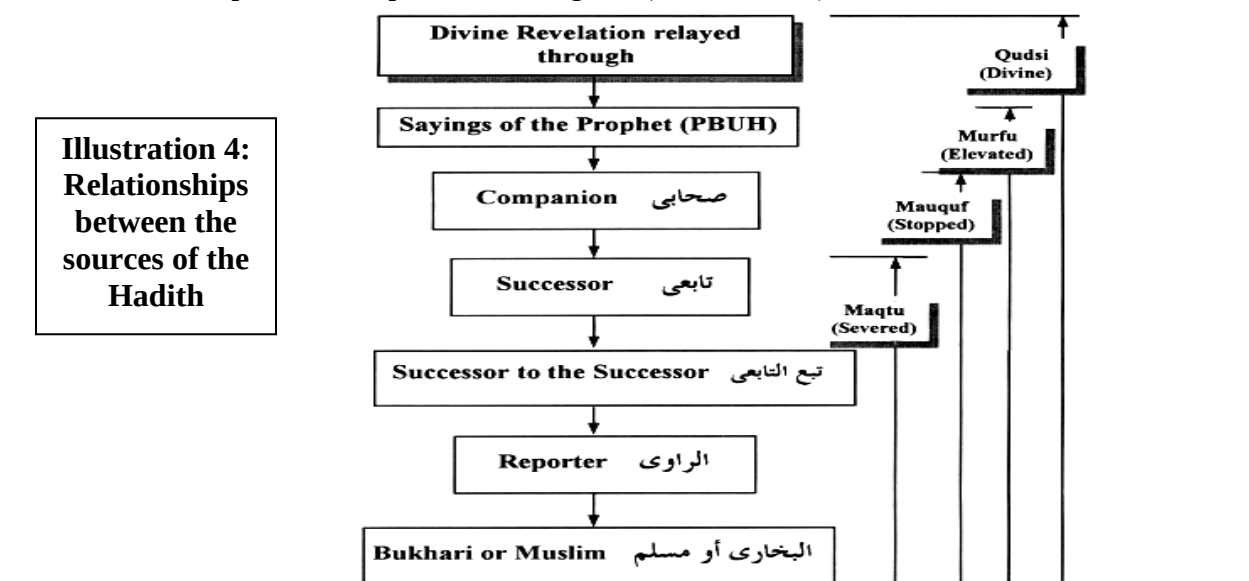
Despite this distinction, a claim for divine inspiration for all the Hadith is made by some scholars: “The teachings of Islam are based primarily on the Quran and the Hadith and ... both are based on divine inspiration.”⁹⁶ One translator of al-Bukhārī’s Hadith refers to it as “the Second Inspiration.”⁹⁷

(b) Based on their ultimate source

Hadiths may be categorised according to the ultimate source from which they originated (Table 2). **Table 2: Hadiths categorized based on the ultimate source**

Type	Meaning	Definition	Example
<i>qudsi</i>	‘sacred’	Traced back to God	B.4:415
<i>marfū‘</i>	‘elevated’	Traced back to Muhammad	B.1:1
<i>mawqū‘</i>	‘stopped’	Traced back to a Companion	B.1:731
<i>maqtū‘</i>	‘severed’	Traced back to a Successor	B.6:352

These relationships can be depicted in a diagram (Illustration 4):⁹⁸



<http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/historyandhadeeth/azzamcomparison.html> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013 and Robson, “Hadīth”, vol.3 pp.25-6.

⁹⁵ according to Ibrahim & Johnson-Davies, *Forty Hadith Qudsi*, 16

⁹⁶ Hamidullah, *Introduction to Islam*, 23

⁹⁷ Khan, *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih Al-Bukhārī*, xvii

⁹⁸ Source: Perspectives, P.O. Box 65250, Hampton, VA 23665, from the website

<http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/brief1/introduction.htm> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

(c) Based on links in the isnād

Hadith may have some gaps in the links between the transmitters (see Table 3)

Table 3: Hadith categorized based on their isnads

Type	Meaning	Definition	Example
<i>musnad</i>	‘supported’	No break in the chain back to Muhammad	Muslim Bk 10, No. 3780
<i>muttas}il</i>	‘continuous’	Uninterrupted chain going back only to a Companion or Successor	
<i>mursal</i>	‘unattached’ or ‘hurried’	The generation between Prophet and Successor (i.e. Companion) is missing	“No marriage is valid except by the consent of the guardian” (B.9:98)
<i>munqat{i</i>	‘broken’	The generation between the Successor and the Compiler is missing	Muhammad prophesied that the Muslims would kill his grandson al-Hussein. ⁹⁹
<i>mu’d}al</i>	‘perplexing’	More than one consecutive reporter is missing	Adam was caught by the hair after he ate the fruit ¹⁰⁰
<i>mu’allaq</i> or <i>balaghah</i>	‘hanging’ or ‘reaching’	No <i>isnād</i> – Muhammad is quoted directly	“The differing amongst my Ummah is a mercy.” ¹⁰¹

(d) Based on the number or reporters in each stage of the isnād

Each Hadith may have only one or several reporters at each stage of its *isnad* (see Table 4)

Table 4: Hadith categorized by number of reporters

Type	Meaning	Definition	Example
<i>mutawātir</i>	‘consecutive’	Multiple reporters at every stage	B.1:109
<i>ah{ād</i> ‘single’	<i>mashūr</i>	‘famous’	At least three reporters at every stage B.1:239
	<i>‘azīz</i>	‘strong/rare’	At least two reporters at every stage B.1:14
	<i>gharīb</i>	‘strange/scarcely’	Only one person at one stage ‘Travel is a piece of punishment’ ¹⁰²
	<i>fard</i>	‘solitary’	Reported in only one locality

⁹⁹ “Al-Hakim said, ‘This is a sahih Hadith according to the conditions of the two Shaykhs (i.e. Bukhāri & Muslim), but they did not collect it.’” Source: <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/aape.html> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/asb2.html> accessed on 17th April, 2008

¹⁰¹ According to al-Subki (d.756 AH), no isnad exists for this Hadith. Source: <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/aape.html#G16> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

¹⁰² “With regard to its isnad, this Hadith is sahih, although most gharib aHadith are weak; Ah}mad b. H}anbal said, ‘Do not write these gharib aHadith because they are unacceptable, and most of them are weak.’” <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/aape.html> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

(e) Based on the manner or mode in which the Hadith was reported

Hadiths were reported in different ways, using an array of terminology in the *isnād* describing how this hadith was heard from its earlier source (see Table 5).

Table 5: Hadith categorized by mode of reporting

	Meaning	Definition
<i>ḥiddathanī</i>	‘he narrated to me’	A recognised teacher recited the Hadith to his student
<i>ḥiddathanā</i>	‘he narrated to us’	The teacher recited the Hadith to a group of his students
<i>akhbaranā</i>	‘he informed us’	The students repeated the Hadith to their teacher and the teacher affirmed its veracity
+ ‘ <i>an</i>	‘on the authority of’	There is no clear indication of how the tradition was received
<i>sami ‘tu</i>	‘I heard’	This indicates that the reporter personally heard the hadith from his own teacher.
<i>qāla</i>	‘he said’	This is more vague and can signify either hearing from the teacher in person or through someone else.
<i>tadlīs</i>	‘concealing’	<i>Tadlīs al-isnād</i> -Narrator reports something from a contemporary who he never met
		<i>tadlīs al-shuyūkh</i> – a transmitter’s name is concealed by a nickname or other name
		<i>tadlīs al-taswiyyah</i> – an intermediate weak transmitter’s name is omitted
<i>musalsal</i>	‘uniformly linked’	All reporters use the same mode of transmission

(f) Based on the nature of the matn and its isnad

The reporters listed in the *isnads* were not considered of equal reliability (Table 6).

Table 6: Hadith categorized by stringency of reporting

Type	Meaning	Definition	Example
<i>Shādhah</i>	‘irregular’	It is reported by a trustworthy person against the narration of a more reliable reporter	Tirmidhi reported by Abu Huraira ‘lie on right side after prayer’ cf. B.1:599
<i>munkar</i>	‘denounced’	The narration of a weak reporter, particularly if it contradicts the general sayings of the Prophet	‘Asma bint Abu Bakr was ordered to treat her mother kindly c.f. B.8:9
<i>ziyādatu thiqa</i>	‘an addition by one trustworthy’	A reliable person reports additional material not found in other authentic sources	Muslim bk 1 no.152 Two reporters, Al-Hasan b. Makdam and Bindar, reported it with the addition, “... at the beginning of its time”
<i>mudraj</i>	‘interpolated’	The reporter adds something e.g. explanation of a difficult word	“Complete the ablution, for Abu ‘l-Qasim ... said: Woe to the heels from the Fire!” c.f. B.1:57

There is an element of subjectivity in these definitions, for Hadith reporters and transmitters varied in their stringency.

“It should be noted that even these rankings are not absolute. Some scholars of Hadith were stricter than others. The scholars of Hadith themselves are ranked as “*Mo’tadel*” ‘moderate’ such as Al-Zahabi, “*Motashaddid*” (strict) such as Ibn Al-Jawzi and Al-Daraqutani and “*Mutasahil*” (Lenient) such as Al-Hakim.”¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Source: <http://ibnayyub.wordpress.com/2007/10/31/the-science-of-Hadith-based-on-classic-primers> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

(g) Based on defects in the isnad or matn

Some Hadiths contained imperfections according to various commentators (Table 7).

Table 7: Hadith categorized by shortcomings in the text¹⁰⁴

Type	Meaning	Definition	Example
<i>ma'lūl</i> or <i>mu'allal</i>	'defective'	Wrong classification of a Hadith or wrong attribution of the Companion	Muslim bk 39 no.6707
<i>mudḥarib</i>	'shaky'	Equally reliable reporters disagree about some points in an isnad or text	B.3:386
<i>maqlūb</i>	'changed' or 'reversed'	The name in an isnad or the order of a sentence in the text is reversed, or one text or isnad is replaced with another	Muslim bk 5 no. 2248

¹⁰⁴ Examples taken from <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/aape.html> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

(h) Based on the quality of the reporters

Reporters of Hadiths varied in their reliability. Not all were considered equal (Table 8).

Table 8: Hadith categorized by trustworthiness of their reporters

Type	Categories	Meaning	Definition	Example
<i>s{ah{īh{</i> ‘sound’	<i>‘ādil</i>	‘just’	The reporter was a pious, honest & truthful Muslim	
	<i>thābit</i>	‘steadfast’	The reporter was known for his accuracy	
	<i>thiqa</i>	‘trustworthy’	The reporter was known for his reliability	
	<i>h{āfid}</i>	‘memorising’	The reporter was known for his powers of recollection	
<i>h{asan</i>	‘fair’		The reporter does not reach the high standards above, but he is not criticised	“Whoever visits my grave, my intercession will be guaranteed for him” ¹⁰⁵
<i>d}a ‘īf</i>	‘weak’		The reporter was known to have a weak memory or was careless	“Paradise is under the feet of mothers.” ¹⁰⁶
<i>mawd}ū</i> ‘ or <i>sakhīm</i>	‘fabricated’ or ‘forged’		The text goes against the Prophet’s norm	“The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr.” ¹⁰⁷ “We have returned from the lesser Jihad to the greater Jihad (i.e. the struggle against the evil of one’s soul).” ¹⁰⁸
			The isnad contains a liar	
	‘infirm’		There is a discrepancy of times or dates	

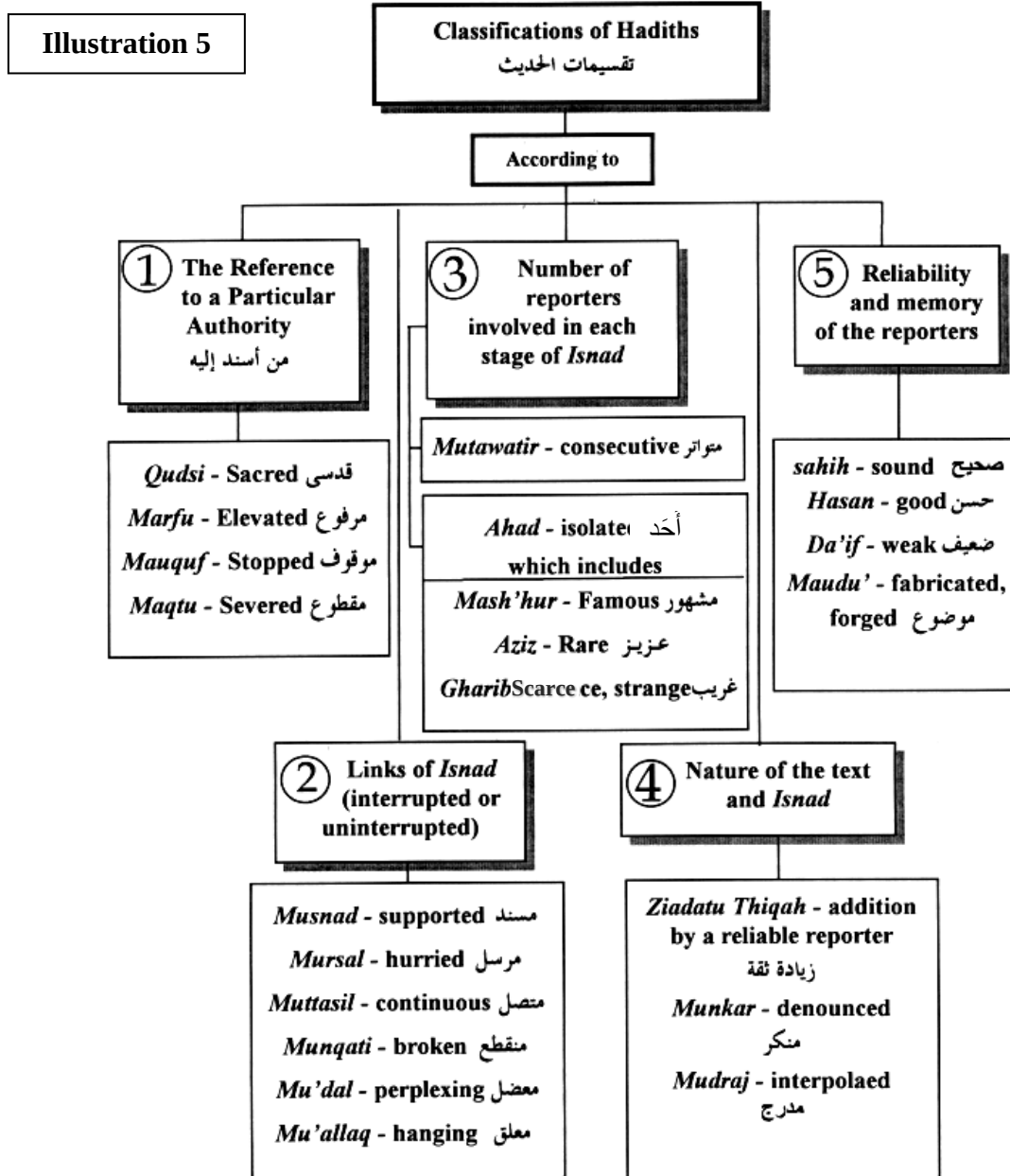
¹⁰⁵ According to http://mac.abc.se/home/onesr/d/wvmg_e.pdf accessed on 17th Jun, 2015

¹⁰⁶ This wording is *d}a ‘īf*, but a similar concept is presented by Ibn Majah and al-Nasai. Source: <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/aape.html#G21> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

¹⁰⁷ According to Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, it is a statement of al-Hasan al-Basri. Source: <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/aape.html> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

¹⁰⁸ Aly, *People Like Us*, 153 admits: “This famous ‘greater jihad’ report is of highly questionable historical authenticity. It does not occur in any of the most authoritative collections of narrations of the Prophet, and probably surfaced for the first time among ascetic movements just before al-Ghazzālī’s time.” This hadith is also listed by Mohammed Omer Shah 125 *Fabricated and Weak Hadith* (no. 121) <http://www.scribd.com/doc/109509558/125-Weak-and-Fabricated-Hadeeth#scribd> (accessed October 15, 2015)

These classifications can be depicted in a diagram (Illustration 5).¹⁰⁹



Besides these major classifications, there are at least sixty other ways of assessing the Hadith. These incorporate the *rijāl* ('men') studies of the backgrounds and qualifications of the transmitters, including 'the manners required in traditionists', 'knowledge of brothers and sisters among reporters' and 'knowledge of the dates of birth and death of reporters'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Source: Perspectives, P.O. Box 65250, Hampton, VA 23665, from the website <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/brief1/introduction.htm> accessed on 17th Jun, 2013.

Note that this diagram follows different transliteration conventions.

¹¹⁰ See Azami, *Studies*

(i) Meccan and Medinan Hadiths

There arises the question of how to identify the chronology in the Hadith. At times, the task appears simple: the conversation about the decision to embark on the ‘apostasy’ *ridda* wars against the rebelling Arab tribes is presented as taking place in the early days of Abū Bakr’s caliphate (632-624 A.D).¹¹¹ Some statements by Muhammad, e.g. “Faith consists of more than sixty branches”¹¹², could have been made at any time during his prophetic ministry. Whether a particular verse or passage of the Qur’an was revealed in Mecca or Medina or earlier or later is often important for the science of *tafsīr* (interpretation). The law of abrogation determines that a later verse abrogates an earlier verse. Crucial in establishing the sequential order of verses is an understanding of the ‘occasion of revelation’ (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). The Hadith collections can be helpful in determining this, for they often identify when and where a certain verse was revealed, allowing the verse’s chronological priority to be established. It could be used to settle disputes.

“The people of Kufa disagreed (disputed) about the above Verse. So I went to Ibn Abbas and asked him about it. He said, ‘This Verse: ‘And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell,’ was revealed last of all (concerning premeditated murder) and nothing abrogated it.’”¹¹³

Sometimes it is clear whether a particular Hadith relates to Mecca or Medina. The Hadith which begins with: “I came to the Prophet while he was leaning against his sheet cloak in the shade of the Ka’ba. We were suffering greatly from the pagans in those days” is clearly early Meccan, from the period before the *Hijra*. The identity of the source can be an important clue. Aisha, for example, who is responsible for 18% of the Hadiths, was only eight years old when she left Mecca, so she could hardly have been a reliable witness of the events in Mecca.

3. The role of the Hadith in the lives of Muslims

Significantly, the Hadith are preserved in narrative form, as stories. They are not simply ways of passing on historical accounts to be preserved for their own sake. “Stories frequently serve as a means of transmitting behavioural expectations of human relationships. Stories are tribal codes for establishing order in all societies”¹¹⁴ The Hadith are required to be acted upon. Some would claim that not accepting the Hadith as authoritative deems one to be a *kāfir* (unbeliever).¹¹⁵ Despite this, they are not seen only as prescribing rules of behaviour. The Hadith have impacted Muslim societies and individuals in at least four ways: (Illustration 6)

(a) A spiritual connection to the past

From the earliest days, many Muslims yearned for a closer union with God. This was sought through spiritual disciplines, such as memorizing the Qur’an or the Hadith. The length of the *isnād* was seen to play a role in this. “The early ascetic Muh{ammad b. Aslam al-T}ūsī (d.242/856) asserted: ‘Proximity in

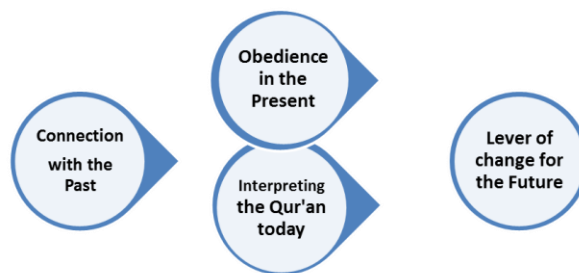


Illustration 6: Ways of Using the Hadith

¹¹¹ B.2:483

¹¹² B.1:8

¹¹³ B.6:114

¹¹⁴ Hansen & Kahnweiler “Storytelling”, 1391

¹¹⁵ <http://islamicssystem.blogspot.com/2007/11/refutation-of-gadaffi-others-who-reject.html>

the isnād is proximity – or a means to gain proximity – to God.’ Ibn al-S{alāh [al-Shahrazūrī d.643/1245], after quoting the words of al-T}ūsī continued: ‘He is right because proximity in the *isnād* is proximity to the Messenger of God and proximity to him is proximity to God.’ ”¹¹⁶

The eighteenth century saw great changes in the Muslim world. Western colonialism brought economic development and social turmoil. The Neo-Sufi movement arose partly in response to this. It differed from traditional Sufism, for it “restated the goal of the Sufi path in terms of the individual being in harmony with the spirit of the Prophet rather than losing individual identity by absorption into the absolute being.”¹¹⁷ The Hadith took on a new importance. Rejecting medieval scholasticism and classical *tafsīr* (commentaries), Neo-Sufis turned to the original sources, including the earlier collections of the Hadith, which were ‘elevated’ to a higher status. ‘Elevation’ meant discovering the Hadiths with the shortest isnads.

“But the significance of elevation lay in the realm of spirituality rather than the transmission of knowledge. [There were]...certain affinities between the circulation of h{adīth and the circulation of Prophetic relics. Elevation turned h{adīth into a special kind of relic. It allowed the believer to come into a closer contact with the spiritual power of the Prophet. Whereas the believer was stuck at his own historically (inferior) station in terms of years (*ta’rīkh*), by a different view of time, shorter isnāds allowed him to be closer to the Prophet in terms of generations (*t{abaqāt*).”¹¹⁸

Even a modern Muslim may seek the deeper attachment to Muhammad that the Hadith offer.

“The intimate knowledge we have of Muhammad’s life (much of which we owe to Aisha) is, from a practical point of view, just as important as his religious teaching and the example he set in affairs of greater consequence. The believer feels close to him in life and hopes to be closer still after death, loving him not only as master and as guide but also as brother-man. It is in the light of this relationship that we may understand parts of the record which often appear trivial to the occidental...”¹¹⁹

(b) A code of behaviour for daily life

The Hadith were taken seriously by devout Muslims. Ibn H}anbal, the revered founder of the H}anbalite school of Islamic jurisprudence, was reputed never to have eaten watermelon because of the lack of a prophetic Hadith concerning it.¹²⁰ Many Muslims are comforted by the comprehensive and regulatory nature of the Prophet’s *sunnah*, for it determines how they should behave in every situation. “Islam is a complete way of life. It is comprehensive guidance covering all areas of human activity”.¹²¹

(c) An interpretative tool for the Qur’an in the present

Azami suggests that “If there is no other authentic source of knowledge than the Qur’an, and if the reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet are rejected as untrustworthy, then the meaning and significance of many of the verses of the Qur’an itself will remain unclear and incomplete.” He cites the example of Zaid’s divorce¹²² and Muhammad’s encounter with the

¹¹⁶ Dickinson, “Ibn al-S{alāh{ al-Shahrazūrī and the isnād”, 503

¹¹⁷ Voll, *Islam*, .36

¹¹⁸ Dickinson, “Ibn al-S{alāh{ al-Shahrazūrī and the isnād”, 481

¹¹⁹ Eaton, *Destiny*, 186

¹²⁰ Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, 75

¹²¹ Sarwar, *Islam*, 13

¹²² Q.33:37

blind man.¹²³ “[I]t is almost impossible to understand or explain the meaning of a large number of Qur’anic verses if the Traditions are rejected as useless and inauthentic.”¹²⁴

(d) A lever for change for the future

Rather than simply being an anchor of conservatism within Islam, the Hadith can also operate as a means of renewal. “The use of myth and story is not value-neutral. [People] can use story and storytelling in organisations to describe and sustain the current power structure, or to nurture and fuel creativity and liberation and to develop new meaning ...”¹²⁵ Even old stories may be employed in this way. Brown says: “I would suggest that tradition is not an enemy of change, but the very stuff that is subject to change. Tradition both changes and may be used to justify change; it can, in fact, be revolutionary.”¹²⁶ He cites ancient examples (Khārijites, ‘Abbāsids and Ibn Taymiyya) and modern ones (Iran, Arab Sunni revivalism and Islamic feminism) as movements that conscript tradition into the fight for change. Instead of looking at tradition as an ancient storehouse enshrouded in darkness and modernity as the source of light, we could see tradition as “a beam of light, refracted by the prism of modernity. A tradition emerges from the prism of modernity as a multi-coloured spectrum of responses.”¹²⁷

Despite pointing backwards to the seventh century, the Hadith have been enlisted as a tool by reformers at various stages of history. Shaykh ‘Abd al-H}aqq Dihlawī (d.1642) championed “a ‘reformist’ type of Islamic belief which stressed Hadith as the basis of Muslim learning and pious practice [o]pposed to the excesses both of legal studies and of Sufi spirituality...”¹²⁸ The Moroccan scholar Ah}mad bin Idrīs (d. 1837) was a proponent of Neo-Sufism on the Arabian peninsula. “When Ah}mad’s reformism brought him into conflict with the conservative establishment in Mecca, it was as a *muh}addith* [Hadith scholar] that he was publicly examined by a panel of ‘ulama [and] ... was able to confound his critics and emerge with an enhanced reputation.”¹²⁹

4. Attitude of this study towards the Hadith

Questions have been raised about the historicity and authenticity of the Hadith by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Not only is the jury still out, but it is vigorously debating these issues. Does this negate the use of the Hadith in such an undertaking as this? Not necessarily. Stories can have a significant impact on individuals and communities even if they are not historical recordings of events which actually occurred. Stories are socially constructed. They have been preserved because they refer to values and themes that are important to the members of an organisation.¹³⁰ Fables, myths and legends, have a significant role in providing an identity for a community as well as affirming and strengthening its values. Later research may suggest or even prove that these early accounts have little or no basis in reality, or that they reflect the needs

¹²³ Q.80:1-3

¹²⁴ Azami, *The Sunnah in Islam*, 29-31

¹²⁵ Boyce, “Organisational story and storytelling”, 10

¹²⁶ Brown, *Rethinking*, 2. This is reminiscent of Jeremiah’s radical call to Israel to return to “the ancient paths...where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Jer.6:16)

¹²⁷ Brown, *Rethinking tradition in modern Islamic thought*, 3

¹²⁸ Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 450

¹²⁹ Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, 78. By contrast, Moroccan Sultan Muhammad ibn Abdallah (r.1757-1790) used the Hadith to support his fundamentalist views. His son, Malway Suleyman (r.1792-1822) opposed Sufi tendencies, and sent a delegation to Mecca for consultation with the Wahhabis, later accepting many of their interpretations. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, 102.

¹³⁰ Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*

and thinking of a later period, and are therefore not historically verifiable. Despite this, the teaching embedded in these narratives can continue to fashion and reinforce the tenets of the society because it attributes dependability and legitimacy to them.

Since the Hadith collections are deemed to be true and authoritative by most Muslims, they can be regarded as a *textus receptus*. A parallel can be found in the “canonical criticism” and “post-critical alternative” which is applied to the Old Testament.¹³¹ Such an approach addresses the text as a document which forms and informs the community of faith, rather than simply “as a means to ascertain its genetic history.”¹³² Clark provides a pragmatic reminder:

“[u]ltimately the question of the historical validity of these traditions is less important than the fact that they have worked: they have proved able to bring a sacramental sense of the divine into the life of millions of Muslims over the centuries.”¹³³

This study will proceed on the basis that the Hadith are believed by most Muslims to be a reliable record of the sayings and actions of Muhammad and his Companions, and hence have become a source of authority and inspiration for their thinking and actions even today.

¹³¹ This is the approach by Childs, *Introduction*, 109-135

¹³² LaSor et al, *Survey*, 13

¹³³ Clark, *Islam*, 38

CHAPTER 3: CAN CHRISTIANS USE THE HADITH?

1. Approach of this book

The focus of this book will be an examination of the *matn* (contents) of the Al-Bukhārī's Hadith collection, accompanied by analysis and theological reflection. This study will seek to categorise the Hadith literature and assess how its various texts may serve as a diagnostic tool and resource for responses by Christians to *dār al-islām* (the house of Islam).

(a) Two lenses of assessment

The Hadith will be assessed through two lenses.

Firstly, they will be evaluated positively from a comparative viewpoint. The goal of this method is to find the common ground between Muslims and Christians. There is shared truth which can be openly declared. "We will want to see how far we can walk along the same road with the Muslim before we come to the fork where our paths diverge."¹³⁴ This can occur without denying or betraying one's own faith-commitment. There can be forward movement side-by-side, like a pair of railway tracks, without stepping in the other's footprints. Truth should be recognised even if it does not originate within one's own faith tradition. Yāqūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindy, 'the Arab Philosopher' (d. 259/873) states: "We should not shy away from welcoming and acquiring the truth regardless of where it came from, even if it came from distant races and nations that are different from us. Nothing is more important than seeking the truth, except the truth itself. We should not belittle the truth, or those who utter it or bring it."¹³⁵

Christian apologists have long suggested that all truth comes from God, with Jesus as the *logos* of the universe through whom the world was created.¹³⁶ Justin Martyr rather boldly announced that "whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians".¹³⁷ The Bible proclaims about Christ: "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."¹³⁸ St Augustine of Hippo is reputed to have said: "Truth, wherever it is to be found, it is the Lord's. Even the gold of Egypt is still gold."¹³⁹ Echoing this, Parshall notes that "truth is truth wherever it is to be found."¹⁴⁰ The conservative theologian Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921) applied this approach broadly.

"We must not then, as Christians, assume an attitude of antagonism towards the truths of reason, or the truths of philosophy, or the truths of science, or the truths of history, or the truths of criticism. As children of the light, we must be careful to keep ourselves open to every ray of light. Let us, then, cultivate an attitude of courage as over against the investigations of the day. None should be more quick to discern truth in every field, more

¹³⁴ Chapman, *Cross and Crescent*, 324

¹³⁵ *Arab Development Report*, 32. A frequently-quoted Hadith is "Seek knowledge, even if you have to go to China." According to an important Islamic website on the Hadith, this account is spurious. "This additional statement is found in a few of the (weak) narrations of the previous hadith, and is declared as *maudu'* by Ibn Hibban, Ibn al-Jauzi, al-Sakhawi and al-Albani. (Al-Da'ifah, no. 416; Da'if al-Jami' al- Saghir, nos. 1005-6)". Source: <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/hadeeth/scienceofhadith/afor.html#F2> accessed 17th Jun, 2013

¹³⁶ Jn.1:1-3

¹³⁷ Justin Martyr *Second Apology*, xiii <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-secondapology.html> accessed 9th December, 2011

¹³⁸ Col.2:3

¹³⁹ Bell, *Grace for Muslims?*, 68

¹⁴⁰ Parshall, *Bridges*, 19

hospitable to receive it, more loyal to follow it, whithersoever it leads.”¹⁴¹

Secondly, the Hadith will be assessed from the perspective of biblical teaching in order to find springboards to truth which will be helpful in the apostolate to Islam. Every religious system contains some links which can be starting points for connection to a biblical perspective, and Islam is no exception. Many historical examples of such cultural adaptation exist (see Figure 4).

One of the goals of this study is to identify these links, and to determine ways in which they can be developed.

This approach taps into the stream of general revelation for Christians who “believe that God uses general revelation as a type of preparation for the special revelation of the Bible ... [because] general revelation results in indirect components in a culture that provide bridges for understanding religious truths found in the Bible.”¹⁴⁶

Kraft suggests that “we should (1) take seriously those passages of Scripture (e.g. Acts 14:17; 17:22-31; Rom.1,2; Gen.14:18-20) that indicate that God has been at work with every people at every time; (2) that, therefore, Christian witnesses need to be diligent in discovering such workings (e.g. in redemptive analogies).”¹⁴⁷

The identification and application of such material will constitute the major focus of this work. This need not lead to compromising the truth of the Bible.

“To proclaim relevantly therefore is not, as Helmut Thielicke observes, ‘To accommodate ourselves or ape those we would reach.’ Far from it, Paul actually contradicted the Greeks and Jews and showed them God was completely different to what they had expected. But it was in terms of *their* suppositions and notions that he searched them out. He met their questions on their level. That makes all the difference. He did not ape what they were saying just to make the Gospel palatable.”¹⁴⁸

As careful a scholar as Kenneth Cragg has advocated the use of Islamic texts in presenting the reality of Christ. He asks rhetorically: “If Muslims are to understand new truth, or find fuller

Figure 4

Cultural adaptation was recommended by Francis Xavier, and applied by sixteenth century Jesuits to Chinese and Indian culture and religion.¹⁴² The concept of ‘redemptive analogies’, finding elements of non-Christian religion and traditions which illustrated Christian truths, was developed by Richardson.¹⁴² Other examples could include the use of the Talmud¹⁴⁴ in witness by Messianic Jews. Some have found pointers within ancient Chinese characters to the truths of primeval history revealed in the book of Genesis. They claim that this is a verification of Paul’s declaration about God: “He did not leave Himself without witness.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ cited in Collins, *Language*, 178,179

¹⁴² Ronan and Oh, *East Meets West*. Robert de Nobili in India and Matteo Ricci in China used this approach.

¹⁴³ Richardson, *Eternity and Peace Child*. Richardson’s approach has been criticised e.g. Glasser “Old Testament Contextualisation”, 38. Remarkably, Richardson himself disavows the use of Islamic motifs in discovering bridges of truth. “I learned that Islam is unique among non-Christian religions. It stands alone as the only belief system that, due to its very design, *frustrates* anyone who seeks to use the redemptive-analogy approach... The more digging I did into the Koran the more I realised when it comes to Islam the redemptive-analogy approach cannot work.” (italics his) Richardson, *Secrets*, 18,19

¹⁴⁴ Taylor, “Al-Bukhāri and the Aggada” 191-202 speculates on parallels between al-Bukhāri and the Talmud

¹⁴⁵ Acts.14:17. Kang and Nelson, *Discovery*, 10

¹⁴⁶ Moreau, *Contextualization*, 66,67

¹⁴⁷ Kraft “Distaste for the Combative Approach” p.140

¹⁴⁸ Michael Cassidy, “Third Way”, quoted in John Harrower, *What is Contextualisation?* Source: http://bushchurchofau.com.au/pdf/What_is_Contextualisation_Bishop_John_Harrower.pdf accessed on 17th Jun, 2013

implications in admitted truth, will it not be as the Quran can be recruited to their help? ... [T]he Muslim's Scripture has too often been undervalued by Christians for what we may perhaps call its 'Christian potential.'"¹⁴⁹ This approach should be just as applicable to the Hadith.

(b) Why this approach is applied

Some may question the value of such an approach. Is it worthwhile to expend the time and effort to examine the traditions of others, such as the Hadith of the Muslim faith? Surely Christian history and theology is a rich enough lode to quarry without bothering with other religious systems. There are pedagogical and missiological reasons for engaging with the texts of another faith.

Firstly, this may be the best way to communicate. It is an axiom of teaching to proceed from the known to the unknown. "To be meaningful to people, the gospel and the church must be expressed in cultural forms they understand and trust... the missionary must identify with another culture to communicate the gospel in ways those people understand... Theology must answer the questions they face."¹⁵⁰

Secondly, it helps Christians and others to understand Muslims. When William Carey produced a one thousand page book on Sanskrit grammar, and translated Hindu classics into English, he was criticized in England by friends of the Baptist Missionary Society which sent him.¹⁵¹ He retorted: "Those who are to be employed in propagating the Gospel should be familiar with the doctrines he is to combat and the doctrines he is to teach, and acquire a complete knowledge both of the Sacred Scriptures, and of those philosophical and mythological dogmas which form the soul of the Buddhist and Hindoo Systems."¹⁵²

Thirdly, it says something significant to the hearers. Refusing to even consider the belief systems of others may be seen at best as condescending, but at worst as a scornful dismissal of what they hold precious. Christian workers have sometimes fallen into this trap. Some mid-nineteenth century missionaries were positivists who believed that the gospel must be translated literally, expressed in identical words and symbols, or the meaning would be lost. "There was a widespread fear that the use of native symbol forms would introduce 'pagan' meanings that would lead to syncretism. Consequently, the use of local symbols was widely rejected ... Conversion involved not only following Christ, but also adopting Western cultural forms."¹⁵³

Robinson suggests an alternative: "People do have different backgrounds, preferences, and tastes. Cultures vary. Communication of any form, including communication of the gospel, requires respect for the background and sensitivity of the hearers."¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Cragg, "Islamic Theology", 197

¹⁵⁰ Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, xxi

¹⁵¹ Neill, *History*, 264

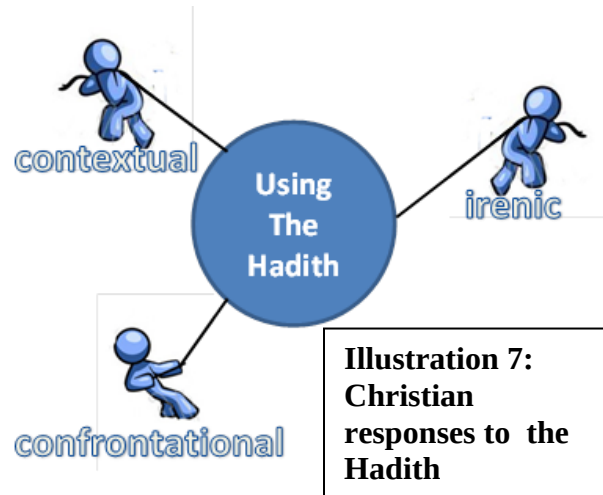
¹⁵² Walker, *Carey*, 237

¹⁵³ Hiebert, "Form and Meaning", 103

¹⁵⁴ Robinson, *Transforming*, 45

(c) Christian missional responses to the Hadith

Christians involved with Muslims in missional contexts have taken a variety of approaches, both towards Islam in general and the Hadith in particular. (see illustration 6). Pfander (1803-1865) emphasised the differences between Islam and Christianity, resulting in a more confrontational stance. The Hadith were often cited to highlight the shortcomings in the behaviour of Muhammad.¹⁵⁵ Zwemer (1867-1952), initially adversarial but later more irenic, sought ways to declare Christian truth, with Islamic teaching as the backdrop.¹⁵⁶ Cragg (b.1913) looked for similarities that could enhance dialogue.¹⁵⁷ The development of these different stances may reflect political changes from a colonial and imperialistic past evolving to the more modern multicultural and inclusivist attitudes.



Another approach has been one of contextualization. Contemporary writer Phil Parshall searched for dynamic equivalents in Islamic doctrine, practice and culture,¹⁵⁸ and he has written on the Hadith.¹⁵⁹ His analysis of the Hadith is not confrontational,¹⁶⁰ and appreciative of the good in Islam.¹⁶¹ He does not ignore the shortcomings of Islam and Muslims,¹⁶² and is equally willing to criticise Christianity and the West.¹⁶³ He seeks for ways to share Christ appropriately.¹⁶⁴ However the book shows little evidence of extensive research,¹⁶⁵ and is clearly written to appeal to a popular audience. Ultimately Parshall's approach is more informational than missional. Gudél's short article gives a justification for a missional approach using the Qur'an and the Hadith. Yet he only provides general encouragement and gives no methodology or specific examples from the Hadith.¹⁶⁶ Clearly little work has been done in this area.

2. The use of one religious system to support or promote a different one

It will be suggested in this study that the Hadith offer links to biblical truth, but the question needs to be asked: How fair or honest is it to appropriate aspects of one religious tradition to support or promote a different approach?

¹⁵⁵ Pfander, *Mizanu'l Haqq*

¹⁵⁶ e.g. Zwemer, *Moslem Christ*

¹⁵⁷ e.g. Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*

¹⁵⁸ e.g. Parshall, *Muslim Evangelism*

¹⁵⁹ Parshall, *Inside the Community* (1994) reprinted as *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions* (2002)

¹⁶⁰ Parshall, *Inside the Community*, 14,211

¹⁶¹ Parshall, *Inside the Community*, 68

¹⁶² Parshall, *Inside the Community*, 63,85

¹⁶³ Parshall, *Inside the Community*, 98-99,180

¹⁶⁴ Parshall, *Inside the Community*, 98-99,180

¹⁶⁵ He cites only 10 books in his bibliography, seven of which are of his own authorship.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph P. Gudél "Using the Qur'an and the Hadith as a bridge for sharing the gospel" in *Christian Research Journal*, volume 27, number 1 (2004) Source: <http://www.equip.org>. Accessed 12th November, 2010

(a) Examples from history

The use of elements from another culture or religion took place at a material level at the Exodus from Egypt. The gold, silver and cloth despoiled from the Egyptians¹⁶⁷ were most likely used to provide the lavish furnishings of the tabernacle.¹⁶⁸ Gifts, tribute and plunder from foreign nations were dedicated to divine service by the early kings of Israel.¹⁶⁹ In Isaiah's eschatological vision, the tribute of the pagan nations pours into Jerusalem, providing acceptable sacrifices for Yahweh's Temple.¹⁷⁰

The objection may be raised that these were simply physical objects, which can be religiously-neutral, and are significantly less central than ideas.¹⁷¹ Moses was, however, willing to heed the wisdom of his father-in-law Jethro, the Midianite priest.¹⁷² Later Moses, as he led the people of God through the wilderness, sought the guidance of Hobab, his pagan brother-in-law, to "know where we should camp in the desert". "You can be our eyes",¹⁷³ Moses told him. Borrowing from or relying on objects and concepts which were not direct divine revelation was clearly acceptable.

One famous missionary suggested other non-material appropriation. Thomas Valpy French (1825-1890) was the first bishop of Lahore in Pakistan. He appreciated the wide range and the richness of Indian literature. He queried: "Is it more profitable to Christianity ... that this store should be thrown away as valueless for the purpose of Gospel extension?" Citing Micah 4:13, 'I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth', he asks: "Is the wealth of India's literary treasures less available, less capable of consecration to the highest and holiest purposes than the merchant spoil of Tyre?... Is not the attempt to use it for the Lord's service worth making?"¹⁷⁴

The idea of using tenets of another religion to present one's own religion is well-established in the Bible. Whereas critical approaches find the contrasts with between various belief systems, contextualization searches for the similarities.

The Bible was not revealed in a vacuum. Many nations existed nearby as Holy Scripture was being revealed to the Jewish nation, and evidence of the ideas and cultural forms of these communities is found in the Bible. Biblical examples of borrowing and adaptation of ideas from other religions and traditions abound.

(b) Contextualisation in the Old Testament

Although warned against mimicking the idolatry of the nations around them, the Israelites adopted and adapted pagan forms. In some cases this led to apostasy or syncretism, but in other cases it led to a broader and deeper expression of Judaistic religion. The new form became a perfectly adequate way of operating faithfully. The anthropological distinction between

¹⁶⁷ Ex.3:21,22; 11:2,3; 12:35,36

¹⁶⁸ Ex.25:1-9. It was probably used in building the Golden Calf as well, providing an object lesson about the dangers of syncretism.

¹⁶⁹ 2.Sam.8:7-12; 1.Chr.18:7-11

¹⁷⁰ Isa.60:7; 66:19-21

¹⁷¹ Polkinghorne (*Narrative*, 3) argues that the 'material' realm is the most basic and lowest in the hierarchy of reality, and is exceeded by the 'organic' when life emerges, with the highest being the 'meaning' structures, where consciousness resides. According to Qutb (*The Islamic Concept*, 60), Plato would have agreed with this schema, as would Georg Hegel (1770-1831) who taught that Mind is real and Matter is its reflection

¹⁷² Ex.18:12-24

¹⁷³ Num.10:29-34

¹⁷⁴ Stacey, "Attitudes", 31

‘form’ and ‘meaning’ is helpful here, for a particular cultural object or activity (‘form’ or denotation) may have a different association (‘meaning’ or connotation) in another context.¹⁷⁵

The name of the Canaanite high god, *El*, is applied to *Yahweh*, the God of the Hebrews.¹⁷⁶ The Babylonian high god *‘Elahh* is similarly adopted. This Chaldean word for ‘God’ occurs as an appellation for Yahweh ninety-five times.¹⁷⁷ Abraham followed Nuzi inheritance laws in working out his family bequests.¹⁷⁸ Hittite Suzerainty treaties may have provided a template for the Mosaic law,¹⁷⁹ the Elamite Code of Hammurabi had similar content,¹⁸⁰ and close parallels existed between Jewish and Hittite sacrifice laws.¹⁸¹ Solomon’s temple appears to be based on Phoenician architecture of the same era.¹⁸²

There is also evidence of literary dependence and borrowing. The Old Testament writers were operating in a context of other documents to which they referred (Table 9).

Table 9: List of books referred to in the Old Testament

The Book of the Wars of the Lord	Num.21:14, 15
The Book of Jasher	Josh.10:13; 2.Sam.1:18
The Records of Nathan the prophet	2.Chr.9:29
The Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite	
The Visions of Iddo the Seer	
The Book of the Annals of King David	1.Chr.27:24
The Book of the Annals of Solomon	1.Kg.11:41
The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah	1.Kg.14:29; 15:7,23; 22:45; 2.Kg.8:23; 12:19; 14:18; 15:6, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17,25; 23:28; 24:5
The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel	1.Kg.11:41; 14:19; 15:31; 16:5,14,20,27; 22:39; 2.Kg.1:18; 10:34; 13:8,12; 14:15,28; 15:11,15,21,26,31; 2.Chr.20:34; 33:18
The Book of the Annals	Neh.12:23; Esther 2:23
The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Media and Persia	Esther 10:2

¹⁷⁵ Kraft, *Anthropology*, Chapter 9: Forms and meanings, p.132 ff

¹⁷⁶ Gen.14:18-22

¹⁷⁷ Between Ezra 4:24 and 7:26, and Dan.2:11 and 6:26. It also occurs once in Jer.10:11 in Aramaic, where it refers to the pagan gods who will perish.Strong’s concordance ref. H.426.

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H426&t=KJV> accessed 25th April, 2011

¹⁷⁸ Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 219 H (2) = Gen.15:2,3; p. 543 (4) = Gen.16:1-4; p.220 (3) = Gen.17:19-22

¹⁷⁹ Thompson, “Covenant (OT)” Vol 1, p.791

¹⁸⁰ Youngblood, *Heart*, 71

¹⁸¹ Rogerson & Davies, *Old Testament World*, 96

¹⁸² La Sor, *Survey*, 194 and Meyers, “Temple, Jerusalem” vol.6 pp.330-369. This is not surprising, since the builders were Phoenician (1.Kg.5:1).

Unnamed poets are also quoted.¹⁸³ In a number of situations, there seems to be direct literary accession. The Wisdom literature of Israel shows a remarkable likeness to the teaching of nearby nations. These include the Egyptian *Teaching of Amenemope*,¹⁸⁴ Babylonian *Counsels of Wisdom* from the Kassite period (1500-1100 B.C.),¹⁸⁵ Egyptian *Instructions of Vizier Ptah-hotep*,¹⁸⁶ Mesopotamian literature in Sumerian and Akkadian¹⁸⁷, and some quotes comparable to the book of Job in a Babylonian theodicy from the period c.1000 B.C.¹⁸⁸ Akhenaten's hymn to Aten¹⁸⁹ "is quite similar to Psalm 104, and some direct borrowing is possible."¹⁹⁰

The Old Testament scholar, William LaSor, sees the divine hand in all this. He speaks of "the condescension of God in utilising literary forms and legal customs as the most suitable vehicles for revealing his purposes to his children in the most easily understandable and clearly comprehensible manner."¹⁹¹

(c) Contextualisation in the New Testament

This approach continues in the New Testament. Jesus quoted well-known proverbs¹⁹² and even nursery rhymes,¹⁹³ although He clearly did not accept all popular wisdom.¹⁹⁴ Every item in the Lord's prayer has parallels in the Old Testament or Jewish literature (e.g. Ben Sirach, Pirke Aboth). Paul quoted pagan philosophers,¹⁹⁵ even calling one of them 'a prophet'.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸³ Num.21:27-30

¹⁸⁴ Eliade, *From Primitives to Zen*, 553, 554

¹⁸⁵ La Sor, *Survey*, 449

¹⁸⁶ La Sor, *Survey*, 448

¹⁸⁷ La Sor, *Survey*, 450

¹⁸⁸ La Sor, *Survey*, 452-453

¹⁸⁹ Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 369, 370. This was the work of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV who ruled c.1370-1360 B.C.

¹⁹⁰ Rogerson & Davies, *Old Testament World*, 94

¹⁹¹ Youngblood, *Heart*, 71

¹⁹² Lk.12.54; 4:23

¹⁹³ Lk.7.32

¹⁹⁴ c.f. Jn.9.2

¹⁹⁵ Acts.17.28

¹⁹⁶ Epimenedes in Titus 1.12

There are many books quoted from or alluded to in the New Testament (Tables 10 & 11)

i) Jewish non-Biblical books (Table 10)

Name of book	References	New Testament reference
Judith	8:4-6	Lk.2:37
	8:24,25	1.Cor.10:9,10
Book of Wisdom	3:5,6	1.Pe.1:6,7
	3:7	Mt.13:43
	7:26,27	Heb.1:3
Tobit	12:12,15	1.Cor.15:29; Rev.5:8; 8:3,4
Ben Sirach	5:11	Jam.1:19
Baruch	3:29	Jn.1:14;3:13,38;4:7;1.Cor.10:20
	4:9	Lk.13:29
2 Maccabeus	7:1-29	Heb.11.35b
	12:44	1.Cor.15:29
Psalms of Solomon	2:6	Rom.16:7
Ascension of Isaiah	1:9; 5:2; 5:14	Heb.11:37
Assumption of Moses		Jude 9,14
Apocalypse of Isaiah : Martyrdom of Isaiah		Heb.11:37
Apocalypse of Elijah		1.Cor.2:9; Eph.5:14
Enoch	1:9	Jude 4,6,13, 14-16
Book of Jannes and Jambres		2.Tim.3:8
Ecclesiasticus	36:20	1.Cor.6:13

ii) Greek books (Table 11)

Author	Name of work	New Testament reference
Aratus	<i>Phaenomena</i>	Acts 17:28b
Epimenidas	<i>Cretica</i>	Titus 1:12; Acts 17:28a
Menander	<i>Thais</i>	1.Cor.15:33
Euripides	<i>Bacchus</i>	Acts 26:14

iii) Unknown book:

Book of the Wisdom of God – Lk.11:49

According to Accad, there are at least 133 references or quotes from other books in the New Testament.¹⁹⁷

A Lausanne Paper concludes:

“Biblical writers were familiar with the religious and secular writings of their neighbours. Biblical writers borrowed certain expressions and concepts from other sources. So did Jesus. Borrowing did not imply total agreement with the original, which was sometimes adapted even to the extent of teaching a totally different point from the original. Paul contextualised his message to suit Greek or Jewish audiences. This would suggest a similar freedom in the use of the Qur’an.”¹⁹⁸

By analogy, we could apply a similar approach to use of the Hadith.

Some scholars have noted that the borrowing has not been only in the direction of the Bible. The Qur’an appears to have borrowed from others. Al-Suyūti, in *Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al- Qur’an* found 275 non-Arabic words in the Quran, and Jeffery has identified 118 words which were appropriated from languages other than Arabic.¹⁹⁹ Woodberry states: “what have come to be known as the ‘pillars’ of Islam are all adaptations of previous Jewish and Christian forms.”²⁰⁰ Hughes, writing a century earlier, claimed that only Judaism was accessed in this way:

“Muhammad took little of his religious system from Christianity. He was vastly indebted to Judaism both for his historical narratives and his doctrines and precepts. Islam is nothing more or less than Judaism plus the Apostleship of Muhammad. The teachings of Jesus form no part of his religious system.”²⁰¹

O’Leary refuses to come down on one side or another, but recognises that extensive borrowing did occur: “It has been disputed whether Muhammad owed most to Jewish or Christian predecessors, apparently he owed a great deal to both.”²⁰² As we shall see, there is also a significant amount of common material in the Bible and the Hadith.²⁰³ Firestone suggests that similar material in two sources need not require the supposition of direct borrowing of one from the other.

“The existence of parallels can ... be explained simply by the fact that they both derive from the same original revelation...The traditions found in the Islamic sources ... cannot be simply reduced to inaccurate reproductions of biblical sources. Like all human creations, they are indebted to an infinite series of associations with earlier and contemporaneous creations... The historical and literary evidence is consistent in supporting the existence of biblicist legends in the Arabian peninsula before the birth of Muhammad... Part of the sublimity of the Qur’an was its success in rendering biblicist traditions that had found their way into Arabia meaningful to the indigenous non-Biblicist Arab population – to provide the framework for successful diffusion... The qur’anic stories, references, and allusions to characters found in the Bible were not made up or

¹⁹⁷ Accad, *Bridges*, 26

¹⁹⁸ Lausanne, *Ministry in Islamic contexts*, 32

¹⁹⁹ Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*

²⁰⁰ Woodberry, “Contextualisation among Muslims”, 254

²⁰¹ Hughes, *Dictionary*, 236

²⁰² O’Leary *Greek Science*, 46

²⁰³ See especially Chapter 7 Part 3

adapted from biblical texts. The revelation rather drew heavily upon the corpus of monotheistic traditions extant in the Arabian hijaz in the late sixth century, which was at least recognised if not well known by most of its inhabitants. Much of it was derived from a Biblicist milieu, although some was derivative of other sources as well ... The mass of extant Biblicist and hybrid Biblicist-Arabian material represented a pool of monotheistic lore that was recognizable and available as the basis for the sacred history of a newly-evolving monotheism, Islam. It was a natural source of monotheistic wisdom in relation to which the revelations of the Qur'an would be meaningful.”²⁰⁴

Historians holding such a view would be looking for the common source material which both biblical and Islamic literature accessed.

(d) Does utilization imply dependence?

This study attempts to reverse the order chronologically, by beginning with the content of the Hadith and working backwards to the ideas of the Bible. Would this methodology make biblical teaching subject to or dependent upon the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith? Not necessarily. A properly-built edifice stands independently of the scaffolding used in its construction. Scaffolding is a temporary device used only while the structure is being erected. It is not intended to have any role beyond that. The Hadith may serve as ‘mental scaffolding’ for Muslims as they seek to understand the Bible. Some scholars have used both a physical and a

literary metaphor to express a relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible. “There are ‘stepping stones’ in the Qur'an that can lead Muslims to Christ, notably the references to Jesus himself. It is like a palimpsest written over an imperfectly erased biblical text. Our calling is to help Muslims ‘see the biblical text underneath’.”²⁰⁵ (see Illustration 8)

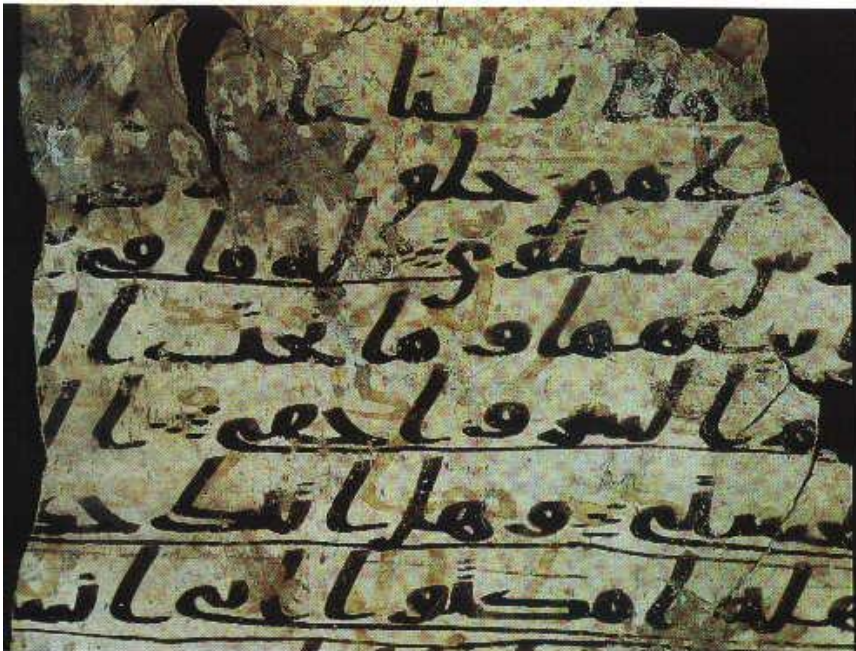


Illustration 8: Early Qur'anic palimpsest, with original text underneath. ²⁰⁶

In a like manner, the glimpses of truth found in the Hadith may

point Muslims to the full-orbed revelation found in Holy Scripture.

The concept of using a source that the speaker does not necessarily rely on or need as confirmation for what they are saying is found in the statement of Jesus to the Jews about John the Baptist. Jesus said: “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept

²⁰⁴ Firestone, *Journeys*, 8, 156, 157

²⁰⁵ Lausanne, *Ministry*, 32

²⁰⁶ Source: http://www.google.com.au/imgres?imgurl=http://www.answering-christianity.com/karim/mosque_of_sanaa_1.jpg accessed 18th April, 2011

human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.”²⁰⁷ Morris comments on these verses: “The whole emphasis of this passage is on the divine attestation of Jesus. His purpose in referring to John, then, is not to adduce further confirmation of what He already knows from God. It is to direct the attention of His hearers to that which might bring them to salvation. John’s witness, if heeded, could start them out on the path that leads to salvation.”²⁰⁸

Jesus was clear that his credentials relied on the testimony of his Father,²⁰⁹ of Jesus himself,²¹⁰ his own works (miracles),²¹¹ and the previous scriptures.²¹² Consequently he did not need any further human testimony. However the Jews seemed to need more than this, and so John the Baptist was sent to them.

Likewise there is more than sufficient revelation in the Bible for salvation.²¹³ However some Muslims, like the Jews of Jesus’ day, may need more than this to be begin to understand the gospel. The Hadith could be one of the stepping-stones in this process. But it would not be expected that the Hadith for their faith would be needed beyond that. As Paul wrote in another context: “When perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”²¹⁴

²⁰⁷ Jn 5:33-34

²⁰⁸ Morris, *John*, 326

²⁰⁹ Jn.5:32, 37; 8:18

²¹⁰ Jn.8:12-18

²¹¹ Jn.5:36; 10:25,38; 14:11

²¹² Jn.5:39,46; Lk.24:27

²¹³ See Jn.20:30,31

²¹⁴ 1.Cor.13:10.

SECTION II : FINDING CONCORD

Beginning with the positive

It is possible, from a Christian perspective, to affirm some of what Islam teaches. Zwemer noted: “To help our Moslem brethren to answer this question [“What think ye of Christ?”] we must ... lead them up to higher truth by admitting all of the truth which they possess.”²¹⁵ Some themes in the Hadith resonate clearly with biblical teaching. Several significant Christian scholars of Islam are optimistic about uncovering helpful links between Islam and Christianity. According to Kraft, Islam, despite coming later than Christianity, conformed to some pre-Christian ideals. He believed that Islam could be considered chronologically A.D., but informationally B.C.²¹⁶ Chapman challenges his readers to look at New Testament Judaism, which was the context into which Christianity was born. He then asks about Islam: “Can it sometimes be a genuine preparation for the gospel?”²¹⁷ William Temple Gairdner (1873-1924 A.D.), CMS missionary in Cairo, believed so, referring to Islam as a *preparatio evangelica*.²¹⁸ This study will consider ways in which the teaching of the Hadith may prepare Muslims for a deeper understanding about Christian belief.

In the next chapters, we will consider two potential models: concord and connection.

²¹⁵ Zwemer, *Moslem Christ*, 8

²¹⁶ Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 402.

²¹⁷ Chapman, *Cross and Crescent*, 275

²¹⁸ Kerr, “Christian Mission”, 12. This concept of *preparation evangelica* merits further study. It has been applied to other religions as well as elements of culture. However its applicability and limits should be explored, along with the issue of discontinuity. See Figure 4 for some examples and several references

Chapter 4: Positive Aspects of Muhammad's life

1. His character – a comparison with Moses

Muhammad has many similarities with the biblical Moses.²¹⁹ Both gave leadership in political, military, social and religious arenas. They brought their followers from a position of disarray and subjugation to a place of victory, freedom and development. Both had suffered opposition and rejection in their earlier years, but died as successful leaders. Both had more than one wife. According to the Hadith, they met in heaven during Muhammad's lifetime. Accounts of the *mi'rāj* (Muhammad's ascent to heaven) have Moses welcoming Muhammad as "a pious Prophet and a pious brother."²²⁰

In character, there were also some likenesses.

(a) Obedience and application of the law

The Hadith reveal Muhammad as epitomizing *murūwa* (Arab manhood). His bravery was notable,²²¹ a characteristic evident in Moses.²²² Muhammad was referred to as "the best of all the people in character."²²³ His rigorous application of the *h}udūd* (prescribed punishments) included ordering the tooth of a girl to be pulled out in *Qis}ās* (retaliation) after she slapped another girl whose tooth broke.²²⁴ He claimed that he would have commanded the amputating the hand of his own daughter Fāt}ima if she had stolen.²²⁵ The context was a legal ruling. "A woman from the tribe of Makhzum committed theft. She was brought to [Muhammad] and she sought refuge (intercession) from Umm Salamah, the wife of [the Prophet]. Thereupon Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) said: 'By Allah, even if she were Fatimah [his daughter], I would have her hand cut off.' And thus her hand was cut off."²²⁶ In a similar way, Moses called the Levites to strap on their swords and kill those, including their own brothers, friends and neighbours, who were involved in the incident of the golden calf.²²⁷ Both Israel's lawgiver²²⁸ and Islam's prophet gave the command and oversaw the execution of lawbreakers by stoning.²²⁹ Like Jeremiah,²³⁰ Muhammad was commanded by God not to pray for certain people.²³¹

²¹⁹ This comparison is also developed in Phipps, *Muhammad and Jesus*, 87-89. The frequent Muslim claim that Moses' statement in Dt.18:15 was a prophecy about Muhammad does not accurately reflect the biblical term 'a prophet like me from among your brothers'. In Deuteronomy 'from among your brothers' refers to fellow-Israelites e.g. Dt.17:15 (choose a king 'from among your brothers'), and Dt.18:1,2 (Levites would have no inheritance 'among their brothers'). Moreover Dt.18:15 is applied to Jesus in Acts.3:19-23. Jesus noted that 'Moses wrote about me' (Jn.5:46), but Muhammad made no such claim.

²²⁰ B.1:345; 4:429; 5:227

²²¹ B.4:279

²²² Ex.2:17

²²³ B.8:222

²²⁴ B.6:27, 135; 9:32. However the offended family forgave her so her tooth was spared.

²²⁵ B.4:681; 5:79; 8:778, 779

²²⁶ B.5:597; 4:681; 8:778, 799

²²⁷ Ex.32:26, 27

²²⁸ Num.15:32-36

²²⁹ B.2:413; 3:421, 860, 885; 4:829; 6:79; 7:195, 196; 8:629, 805, 806, 809, 810, 813, 814, 815, 821, 825, 826, 842; 9:303, 365, 432, 633

²³⁰ Jer.7:16; 11:14; 14:11

²³¹ B.2:359; 6:193, 194; 7:688 which refer to the revelation of Q.9:84

According to one of his enemies, Muhammad did not lie, but kept his promises.²³² Concerning the faithful God who spoke to Moses “face to face”,²³³ it is asserted that “not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses”.²³⁴ Muhammad was scrupulous about material possessions (Figure 5)

Similarly Moses

“refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”²⁴¹

Like Moses, Muhammad claimed access to the divine voice which gave him an advantage in judging the secret actions and motives of people,²⁴² but later leaders were able to judge only external actions.²⁴³ Muhammad asserted that judging justly between two people was a source of *s}adaqa* (charity).²⁴⁴ However, on one occasion, he gave the responsibility to Sa’d bin Mu’ādh to judge the treatment of the Jewish tribe Bani Quraiza, accused of betrayal, and commended him on his judgement.²⁴⁵

At times Muhammad proposed his own greatness, encouraging his followers to name themselves after him, but not to call themselves by his *kunya* (nickname, i.e. *abū l-Qāsim* ‘father of al-Qāsim’).²⁴⁶ At other times he disclosed a humbler assessment of himself. “None of you should say that I am better than Yūnus (i.e. Jonah),” he told his followers.²⁴⁷ Muhammad’s contemporaries occasionally compared him with Moses. When a Muslim and a Jew argued over which prophet was greater, Muhammad stated: “Don’t give me superiority over Moses, for the people will fall unconscious on the Day of Resurrection and I will be the first to gain consciousness, and behold! Moses will be there holding the side of Allah’s

Figure 5

Muhammad and materialism

He refused to wear a silk cloak to impress others.²³⁵ He removed a silk shirt after wearing it once, saying: “It is not the dress of Allah-fearing pious people.” He announced: “A well-dressed (soul) in this world may be naked in the Hereafter.”²³⁶ Yet he allowed two men to wear silk due to skin diseases.²³⁷ Clothing, household furnishings and wealth that distracted him from prayer were discarded.²³⁸ His lifestyle was simple, at times verging on poverty. When he died, his suit of iron armor was still mortgaged to a Jew in exchange for barley grains that Muhammad had bought on credit.²³⁹ He left behind few possessions.²⁴⁰

²³² B.1:6; 4:191, 221; 6:75; 8:277

²³³ Ex.33:11

²³⁴ 1.Kg.8:56

²³⁵ B.2:11, 69; 4:289

²³⁶ B.1:372; B.1:115

²³⁷ B.4:168, 170, 171, 172; 7:730

²³⁸ B.1:369, 370, 719; B.1:371; B.1:810; 2:511

²³⁹ B.3:282, 283, 309, 404, 453, 454, 571, 685, 686, 690; 4:165; 5:743

²⁴⁰ B.4:2, 125, 160, 330; 5:738

²⁴¹ Heb.11:24-26

²⁴² B.5:702

²⁴³ B.3:809

²⁴⁴ B.4:232

²⁴⁵ B.4:280; 5:148, 447; 8:278

²⁴⁶ B.1:110; 3:331,332; 4:435,737; 8:205, 206, 207, 208, 216, 217

²⁴⁷ B.4:624, 608, 625, 627; 6:127, 128

Throne.”²⁴⁸

(b) Generosity and care for others

Muhammad was “the most generous of all people”, even in debt settlements to his disadvantage.²⁴⁹ Food received as a gift was quickly given away.²⁵⁰ Like the Bible’s picture of ‘the noble wife’,²⁵¹ an idealized description of a certain ‘Abu Zar’ is applied by Muhammad to himself. This ‘Abu Zar’ is generous and considerate of his wife.²⁵² Islam’s prophet also encouraged a friend to reduce a debt claim, in a passage suggestive of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.²⁵³ Like Moses, Muhammad was known for never turning down a request, even when it applied to military strategy.²⁵⁴ Both were willing to take the advice of others in the application of their laws.²⁵⁵

People’s needs were placed above ritual requirements. Muhammad’s preaching and public prayer times were shortened to prevent boredom and stress in the congregation.²⁵⁶ His example was cited by others.²⁵⁷ He was perceptive of the feelings of others and criticized those who were less sensitive to their listeners’ time demands.²⁵⁸ The sense is of a shepherd concerned for the welfare of his flock, a depiction also applied to Moses.²⁵⁹

Just as Moses ascended the mountain to speak to God face to face and receive the divine law, Muhammad likewise undertook an epic upward journey. On his ascension to heaven, he negotiated with Allah the number of obligatory diurnal prayers at the advice of Moses: “Go back to your Lord (and appeal for reduction) for your followers will not be able to bear it.” Consequently they were reduced from fifty, in decrements of five, to the current five daily prayers.²⁶⁰ He ceased his lengthy night prayers lest they be considered compulsory for others.²⁶¹

In contrast to the exacting demands of Islamic ritual, it is interesting to see glimpses of freedom and spontaneity. Muhammad, for example, offered his *du‘ā* (petitions or non-compulsory prayer) while riding his camel.²⁶² Both Moses and Muhammad interceded for their people before God,²⁶³ spoke of God’s mercy,²⁶⁴ and invoked blessings on those under their care,²⁶⁵ extending even to their household utensils.²⁶⁶ When a man confessed to adultery, Muhammad tried to avoid passing sentence, initially by ignoring him and then by trying to minimize the

²⁴⁸ B. 8:524, 525; 6:162; 4:626, 610, 620; 3:594; 9:52, 524, 564

²⁴⁹ B.1:5; B.1:434; 8:448

²⁵⁰ B.7:281

²⁵¹ Prov.31:10-31

²⁵² B.7:117. Even though Abū Zar later divorced her for another woman, the first wife still saw him as better than her second husband

²⁵³ B.1:447, 460; Mt.18:23-35

²⁵⁴ Ex.18:13-16; B.2:367; B.8:109

²⁵⁵ Ex.18:13-26 and B.1:148

²⁵⁶ B.1:68, 70; 8:420; B.1:675-678,827; 8:420

²⁵⁷ B.8:349

²⁵⁸ B.4:764; 1:90,669, 670; 8:131; 9:273.

²⁵⁹ Isa.63:11

²⁶⁰ B.1:345; 5:227; 4:429; 9:608. This may be a confusion with the story of Abraham bargaining with God for the people of Sodom. Abraham also started with the number fifty, and arrived decrementally at ten. (Gen.18:22-33)

²⁶¹ B.1:696-698; 2:46; 9:393

²⁶² B.1:393; 2:114, 202, 203

²⁶³ Ex. 32:7-14; Ps.106:23; B.5:227, 612;

²⁶⁴ Dt.13:17; B.7:559

²⁶⁵ Lev.9:23; B.8:366

²⁶⁶ Dt.28:5; B.3:113, 339, 340; 4:139, 143, 7:336, 558; 8:374, 383, 705

offence.²⁶⁷ Similarly a woman who confessed to adultery was given several chances to avoid the sentence of stoning.²⁶⁸ Another man was forgiven a legally punishable sin without it being named or investigated.²⁶⁹ Muhammad's wise action in replacing the Black Stone in the Ka'ba was another example (Illustration 9)

Illustration 9: Replacing the Black Stone:

To settle the dispute about who should have the honour of placing the Black Stone in the Ka'ba, Muhammad put it on a cloak and called the tribal leaders to carry it together.²⁷⁰



(c) Humanity and humility

Muhammad is depicted as very human. He wore a ring,²⁷⁰ snored at night,²⁷¹ fainted when he worked too hard,²⁷² and was unable to sleep at night due to security worries.²⁷³ He openly expressed his emotions, including joy,²⁷⁴ dislike,²⁷⁵ disgust,²⁷⁶ anger,²⁷⁷ fury²⁷⁸ and hatred.²⁷⁹ He smiled more than laughed.²⁸⁰

Muhammad served his own household with domestic duties.²⁸¹ He covered up for a servant who dropped a dish full of food.²⁸² When a baby urinated on him, he simply washed the place with water.²⁸³ After a man was killed by an unknown assailant, Muhammad paid the *diya* (blood money or compensation) himself to avoid a bloody feud between Arab and Jewish tribes.²⁸⁴

He was not a mystic recluse, for he organized a horse-race,²⁸⁵ listened to singing with instruments²⁸⁶ and without them,²⁸⁷ and joined in spear-play in the mosque.²⁸⁸ He invited others to

²⁶⁷ B.8:813, 814

²⁶⁸ B.8:806, 810

²⁶⁹ B.8:812

²⁷⁰ B.1:630; 7:756, 765; 8:646

²⁷¹ B.1:117; 665, 666

²⁷² B.1:360 also 5:170

²⁷³ B.9:337

²⁷⁴ 50 passages in al-Bukhāri's collection mention Muhammad smiling

²⁷⁵ B.4:763; 8:124

²⁷⁶ B.8:132

²⁷⁷ B.1:19; 8:669,671; 9:273

²⁷⁸ B.8:131

²⁷⁹ B.7:844

²⁸⁰ B.6:353; 8:114

²⁸¹ B.1:644; 7:276; 8:65

²⁸² B.7:152

²⁸³ B.1:222, 223; 7:377; 8:31, 366

²⁸⁴ B.4:398; 9:36, 302

²⁸⁵ B.1:412; 4:120, 121, 122; 9:436

²⁸⁶ B.2:70,72; 4:155; 5:336

²⁸⁷ B.9:29

²⁸⁸ B.1:445; 4:155; 7:118

his wedding banquet,²⁸⁹ and had a penchant for sweet food.²⁹⁰

He is found lying flat on his back relaxing in the mosque, with his legs crossed,²⁹¹ and at another time he prayed carrying his small grand-daughter on his shoulders.²⁹² There was a lump on his back which is referred to as *al-khātim* (the seal) of Prophethood.²⁹³ A girl, despite her father's protestations, was allowed to play with this lump. It was about the size of a partridge's egg, possibly a sebaceous cyst, a mole or a birthmark.²⁹⁴

He was not above normal human afflictions. He was struck with severe illness, for Aisha reported: "I never saw anybody suffering so much from sickness as Allah's Apostle."²⁹⁵ He allowed a married female acquaintance to check his hair for head-lice when he visited her, falling asleep as she did so.²⁹⁶

Moses was acutely aware of his own limitations. He recognised his lack of eloquence, so his brother Aaron was sent with him as his spokesperson.²⁹⁷ When challenged by the people in open revolt, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in front of the assembly.²⁹⁸ Aged and tired, Moses needed a stone to sit on and supporters to hold up his arms in order for Israel to win a battle.²⁹⁹ When he came down from the mountain, Moses covered his face so the Israelites might not see the fading glory of his shining face. This may have been so that they were not distracted from his divine message, or they turned away due his dazzling visage. Moses was clearly more concerned with his people's welfare and growth in knowledge than his own appearance and reputation.³⁰⁰

Muhammad likewise was humble enough to consult others about divorcing Aisha over her contact with the young soldier S}afwān ibn al Mu'attal.³⁰¹ He also asked advice about how to deal with those who were slandering her.³⁰²

The impression of Muhammad given in some accounts of the Hadith is of a man who was unassuming, without pride or arrogance, claiming he would accept a simple invitation to eat animal trotters.³⁰³ He was described as "more shy than a virgin in her separate room",³⁰⁴ much like Moses' legendary humility.³⁰⁵ When tempted to magnify himself by showing that he had defeated a 'jinn', Muhammad reminded himself of Solomon's modesty.³⁰⁶ He warned his followers: "Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, for I am only a slave. So, call me the Slave of Allah and His Apostle."³⁰⁷ Clearly some descriptions were

²⁸⁹ B.3:437

²⁹⁰ B.7:193, 342, 504, 514, 586

²⁹¹ B.1:464; 8:302

²⁹² B.1:495; 8:25

²⁹³ B.4:305; 7:574; 8:363. Muhammad is referred to as "the seal of the Prophets" (Q.33:40). cf. Jesus' self-reference to the Son of Man on whom "God the Father has placed his seal of approval." (Jn 6:27)

²⁹⁴ B.4:305; B.1:189. Redha *Mohammad*, 38

²⁹⁵ B.7:549 also 7:550, 551

²⁹⁶ B.4:47; 9:130

²⁹⁷ Ex.4:10-16

²⁹⁸ Num.14:5

²⁹⁹ Ex.17:8-13

³⁰⁰ Ex.34:33-35; 2.Cor.2:13

³⁰¹ B.3:805; 5:462; 6:274; 9:462. Eventually a revelation came vindicating her.

³⁰² B.9:463

³⁰³ B.7:107

³⁰⁴ B.8:124, 140; 4:762

³⁰⁵ Num.12:3

³⁰⁶ B.1:450.2; 2:301; 4:634; 6:332

³⁰⁷ B.4:654

simply legends. One follower, for example, claimed that their prophet “does not touch his bed at night, being busy in worshipping Allah.”³⁰⁸

(d) Forgiveness and tolerance

Muhammad refused to take revenge for his own sake, but only when Allah’s laws were broken.³⁰⁹ A known trouble-maker,³¹⁰ a Bedouin who crept up on him and grabbed his sword in a threatening way,³¹¹ and those who stole his camels,³¹² were forgiven. He excused the trouble-maker ‘Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Salūl who opposed him because Abdullah had been deprived of kingship in Medina by Muhammad’s arrival.³¹³ He stopped his followers from killing the Jewish woman who roasted a poisoned sheep for him to eat.³¹⁴

A tribe refused to follow him, and he was urged to invoke divine retribution on them. Instead he prayed: “O Allah! Give guidance to the people of Daus, and let them embrace Islam.”³¹⁵ When the angel Gabriel offered to make two mountains fall on the people who rejected Muhammad on the day of ‘Aqaba, Muhammad’s response was: “No, but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who will worship Allah Alone, and will worship none besides Him.”³¹⁶

Muhammad made allowances for others when they were under stress or not being their normal selves (see Figure 6)

Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salūl was negotiating on behalf of his client Jewish tribe of Bani Qaynuqa’.

“[T]he apostle turned away from him, whereupon he thrust his hand into the collar of the apostle’s robe; the apostle was so angry that his face became almost black. He said, ‘Confound you, let me go.’ He answered, ‘No, by God, I will not let you go until you deal kindly with my clients’... The apostle said, ‘You can have them’.”³¹⁸

Another time a rough Bedouin grabbed a blanket that Muhammad was wearing because he wanted a share in the recent booty. The violence of the pull left a mark on the Prophet’s shoulder. “The bedouin said, ‘O Muhammad! Order for me some of Allah’s property which you

Figure 6

Muhammad & his drunk uncle

His uncle Hamza became intoxicated and had mutilated two camels which Ali intended as the wedding gift for his marriage to Fātima, the daughter of the Prophet. Ali complained to Muhammad, who went to confront Hamza.

“The Prophet started blaming Hamza for what he had done. Hamza was drunk and his eyes were red. He looked at the Prophet then raised his eyes to look at his knees and raised his eyes more to look at his face and then said, “You are not but my father’s slaves.’ When the Prophet understood that Hamza was drunk, he retreated, walking backwards went out and we left with him.”³²²

³⁰⁸ B.8:172

³⁰⁹ B.4:760; 8:777, 836

³¹⁰ B.4:720

³¹¹ B.4:158

³¹² B.4:278; 5:507

³¹³ B.6:89; 8:226, 271

³¹⁴ B.3:786. There was a wider communal complicity in this event (B.4:394; 5:551; 7:669). The poison may have been responsible for Muhammad’s eventual death (B.5:713). Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, 380 claims that the woman, named Zainab, was immediately put to death.

³¹⁵ B.4:188; 8:406

³¹⁶ B.4:454

³¹⁷ B.5:340 also 4:324

³¹⁸ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 363

have.’ The Prophet turned towards him, (smiled) and ordered that he be given something.”³¹⁹ An ecumenical and tolerant spirit was displayed several times. Muhammad stood for a passing Jewish funeral procession,³²⁰ which some scholars claim was a sign of respect,³²¹ and he prayed on hearing of the death of the Christian king of Ethiopia.³²² He gave one of his two shirts as an interment shroud for the ‘hypocrite’ leader Abdullah bin Ubayy at the request of the dead man’s son,³²³ and then prayed at the hypocrite’s funeral,³²⁴ putting his own saliva on the corpse.³²⁵ Both Moses and Muhammad employed pagan guides to lead them through the desert.³²⁶ Just like the motley group of slave and free, rich and poor, male and female, young and old, involved in the *hijra* (immigration) from Mecca to Medina,³²⁷ “many other people” accompanied Moses in the escape from Egypt.³²⁸ Davis calls this a “mixed multitude” of ethnic peoples including other Semites and native Egyptians.³²⁹ There was an openness to other cultures and races, and an acceptance of what they had to offer.

2. Muhammad’s prophethood

(a) Revelatory parallels with biblical prophets

Some descriptions of Muhammad’s episodes of inspiration appear to resonate with the experiences of biblical personalities.

Yahweh had told Aaron and Miriam: “When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions; I speak to him in dreams.”³³⁰ God spoke in dreams to many people, including Abraham,³³¹ Jacob,³³² Daniel,³³³ and Joseph.³³⁴

Muhammad experienced his first revelation as a dream in the cave in Mt Hirā.³³⁵ “The dreams of the Prophets are Divine Inspirations,”³³⁶ and a good dream is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood.³³⁷ His biographer, Ibn Ishaq, reported the Prophet saying: “I awoke from my sleep, and it was as though these words were written on my heart.”³³⁸ There was a clear link between sleep and revelation.³³⁹ Observers noted that Muhammad snored like a camel during some inspiration incidents,³⁴⁰ and at other times he was silent.³⁴¹ Just as Gabriel brought the

³¹⁹ B.8:111

³²⁰ B.2:398, 399

³²¹ e.g. Ramadhan, *Messenger*, 90.

³²² B.2:412, 417, 418

³²³ B.2:433

³²⁴ B.2:359; 6:194

³²⁵ B.2:360

³²⁶ Num.10:29-31 and B.3:464

³²⁷ Ibn Ishaq, *Sīra*, 213-218

³²⁸ Ex.12:38

³²⁹ Davis, *Moses*, 156

³³⁰ Num.12:6

³³¹ Gen.15:12ff

³³² Gen.28:12ff

³³³ Dan.7:1; 10:9

³³⁴ Mt.1:20

³³⁵ B.1:3, 140; 6:478, 479, 480; 9:111

³³⁶ B.1:818

³³⁷ B.9:112, 116, 117, 118, 144

³³⁸ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 106

³³⁹ B.4:47, 144

³⁴⁰ B.3:17

³⁴¹ B.2:544; 4:95; 5:462

revelation to Muhammad,³⁴² the law of Moses was said to be delivered by angels.³⁴³ Zechariah likewise reported that the revelation and its explanation were brought to him by an angel.³⁴⁴ To prepare him for the prophetic role, an angel purified Isaiah's lips with a live coal,³⁴⁵ just as two angels opened Muhammad's chest and cleansed the inside of his body with Zam-Zam water.³⁴⁶ The initial divine inspiration was an intensely physical experience. "The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it any more."³⁴⁷ At other times it came "like the ringing of a bell", a form which is "the hardest of all."³⁴⁸ The bodily manifestations could be transmitted to others. One companion reported: "Allah sent down revelation to His Apostle while his thigh was on mine and it became so heavy for me that I feared that my thigh would be broken."³⁴⁹

Inspiration was a frightening event for Muhammad: he described "his heart beating severely. Then he went to Khadija bint Khuwailid and said, 'Cover me! Cover me!' They covered him till his fear was over."³⁵⁰ His lips quivered during revelation,³⁵¹ he suffered from excessive perspiration,³⁵² his face turned red³⁵³ and he breathed heavily.³⁵⁴ His neck muscles were twitching with terror.³⁵⁵ Biblical prophets relate similar psychosomatic responses (see Figure 7). Behaviour seen as spiritual may be described in psychological or spiritual terms without prejudicing its aetiology.

Muhammad's swoon-like condition parallels the common response to a theophany or angelic visitation. Falling face-down was reported by Balaam,

Figure 7

Biblical prophetic manifestations

Uncontrollable trembling afflicted Daniel, Jeremiah, and perhaps Ezekiel.³⁵⁶ Jeremiah implored God: "Do not be a terror to me."³⁵⁷ Daniel's experience of revelation drained him: "I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. ... overcome with anguish ... I can hardly breathe."³⁵⁸ Habakkuk describes what might be the bodily impact of an event of divine disclosure: "I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled."³⁵⁹ Jeremiah recounts a febrile exhaustion associated with his calling: "his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot."³⁶⁰ Isaiah described his own experience: "The Lord spoke to me with his strong hand upon me."³⁶¹

³⁴² B.1:2,3; 9:111

³⁴³ Gal.3:19; Heb.2:2

³⁴⁴ Zech.1:9; 2:3; 4:1; 5:5; 6:4

³⁴⁵ Isa.6:6

³⁴⁶ B.9:608

³⁴⁷ B.1:3; 6:478, 479, 480; 9:111

³⁴⁸ B.1:2

³⁴⁹ B.4:85

³⁵⁰ B.1:3; 6:478, 479, 480; 9:111

³⁵¹ B.1:4

³⁵² B.1:2; 2:544; 4:95; 5:462

³⁵³ B.5:618

³⁵⁴ B.6:508

³⁵⁵ B.9:111

³⁵⁶ Dan.10:10,11, Jer.23:9, Ezek.12:8

³⁵⁷ Jer.17:17

³⁵⁸ Dan.10:9,16,17

³⁵⁹ Hab.3:16

³⁶⁰ Jer.20:9

Ezekiel, Daniel, Paul, and John³⁶¹ among others. But at other times, Muhammad remained standing during a revelation.³⁶²

(b) Accusations of demon possession and insanity followed by public rejection

Demon-possession was attributed to John the Baptist,³⁶³ Jesus³⁶⁴ and Muhammad.³⁶⁵ Just as the *Jinn* announced that Muhammad was a prophet³⁶⁶ and some even believed in his message,³⁶⁷ demons acknowledged that Jesus was ‘the Holy One of God’, ‘Son of God’, ‘the Christ’, and ‘Son of the Most High God’.³⁶⁸ Along with Jesus, Paul and the unnamed prophet of Jehu’s era,³⁶⁹ Muhammad was sometimes considered insane.³⁷⁰ Muhammad was warned that he would be treated with hostility by his own people,³⁷¹ as were the earlier prophets. Rejection by the public and by those in power was a common experience of Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Ezekiel, and was asserted by Jesus (‘a prophet has no honour in his own country’).³⁷²

(c) Waiting for revelation

A cycle of dumbness and renewal of speech had been reported by Ezekiel,³⁷³ perhaps mirroring the departure and return of the divine afflatus described by Islam’s Prophet. Revelation did not come at Muhammad’s beck and call,³⁷⁴ for it ceased for some long periods.³⁷⁵ The answer to a request for information or personal need could be delayed for weeks or a month, causing public embarrassment for Muhammad and marital discord with Aisha.³⁷⁶ Sometimes when he was asked “his opinion” about a matter, Muhammad simply gave an answer (e.g. about *coitus interruptus* with captured women)³⁷⁷ or refused to answer the question (about a woman who wanted to marry him),³⁷⁸ but at other times a divine revelation came upon him (e.g. about wearing perfume while performing the lesser pilgrimage).³⁷⁹

Moses, when asked by some ceremonially-unclean Israelites if they could celebrate the Passover, replied: “Wait until I find out what the Lord commands concerning you.”³⁸⁰ Jeremiah’s “word from the Lord” came ten days after a request from Johanan and the soldiers.³⁸¹ Another prophet was told to wait for the revelation to come.³⁸²

³⁶¹ Num.24:4; Ezek.1:28; Dan.8:17, 18; 10:9; Acts 9:4; Rev.1:17

³⁶² B.9:400; 6:245

³⁶³ Mt.11:18

³⁶⁴ Jn.7:20; 8:48; 10:20

³⁶⁵ Q.17:47; 25:8. The Qur’anic term is *mash}ūr* ‘bewitched’

³⁶⁶ B.5:206

³⁶⁷ B.1:740; 6:239, 443; Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 193, 194

³⁶⁸ Lk.4:34, 41/Mt.8:32/Mk.1:24; Mk.5:7

³⁶⁹ Jn.10:20; Acts.26:24; 2.Kg.9:11

³⁷⁰ Q.7:184; 37:36; 68:2; 81:22

³⁷¹ B.1:3

³⁷² Jn.4:44

³⁷³ Ezek.3.22-27; 24.25-27; 33.21,22

³⁷⁴ B.2:225; 5:494

³⁷⁵ B.9:111; 4:461. See also Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 136, 137

³⁷⁶ B.3:805; 5:462; 6:274; 9:462

³⁷⁷ B.3:432

³⁷⁸ B.7:79

³⁷⁹ B.3:17; 5:618; 6:508

³⁸⁰ Num.9:8

³⁸¹ Jer.42:7

³⁸² Hab.2:3

CHAPTER 5: POSITIVE TREATMENT & DEPICTION OF WOMEN

Women are mentioned frequently in the Hadith. ‘Woman’ or ‘women’ are mentioned in 572 and ‘Aisha’ in 368 out of the 7275 Hadiths in al-Bukhārī. This is about 13%. Lapidus proposes that Islam “enhanced the status of women and children, who were no longer to be considered merely chattels or potential warriors, but individuals with rights and needs of their own.”³⁸³ Muhammad had many dealings with women, as did Jesus. In this section, we will compare the positive ways in which Muhammad and Jesus interacted with females.

1. Key women in the lives of Muhammad and Jesus

One of the most important women in Muhammad’s life was his first wife Khadija. For Jesus a significant female was his mother Mary. There are several parallels in these relationships. Prior to Muhammad’s preaching of Islam, some women in the Meccan community exercised considerable freedom and influence. Khadija bint Khuwalid ibn Asad, a widow and a divorcee, was operating a trading company in which she employed the young Muhammad. Many Quraishis envied her riches and noble lineage.³⁸⁴

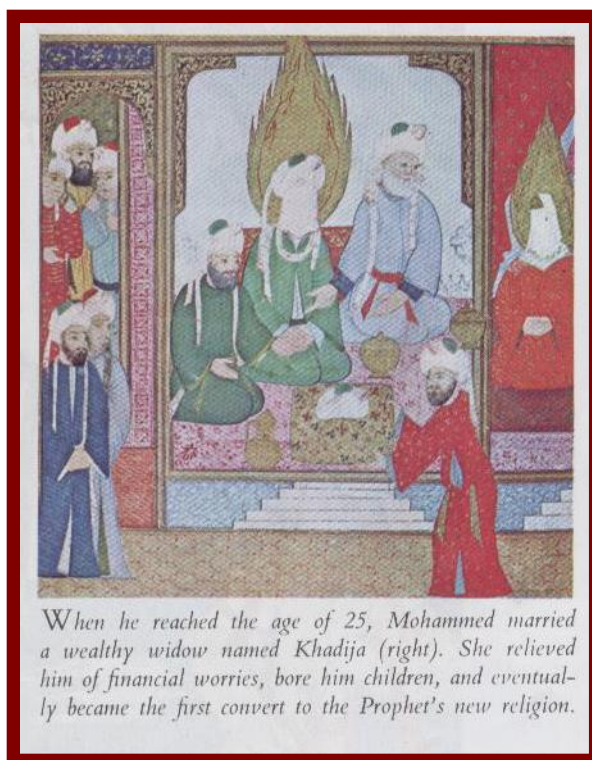
Mary came from a royal lineage, even though she was obviously poor. Both women entered into these relationships by choice. Mary was invited by the angel Gabriel to bear Jesus, and accepted this role.³⁸⁵ At age forty, Khadija proposed marriage to her twenty-five year old employee, and Muhammad became her third husband. (Illustration 9)

The loss of his own mother when he was six years old, and fifteen year age difference between Khadija and Muhammad may have made this more like a mother-son relationship. This age difference may have been approximately the same for Mary and Jesus, since first-century Jewish women usually married young.

Both Mary and Khadija faced opposition and possible danger due to their connections with Jesus and Muhammad. Mary’s pregnancy outside of marriage opened her to the risk of death under Jewish law.³⁸⁶ “A sword will pierce your own soul too,” the insightful Simeon warned her after the birth.³⁸⁷ Khadija suffered under the boycott of the early Muslims by the Quraish for two or three

Illustration 10: Muhammad’s marriage to Khadija

years before her death.³⁸⁸ Both women faced violent threats and discrimination. Mary fled from Israel to Egypt, and Khadija suffered for two or three years under the boycott of Bani Hāshim.³⁸⁹



³⁸³ Lapidus, *History*, 30

³⁸⁴ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 82

³⁸⁵ Lk.1:38

³⁸⁶ Lev.20:10-12

³⁸⁷ Luke 2:35

³⁸⁸ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 159,160. Armstrong suggests that Khadija’s death was hastened by the economic boycott of the Muslims by the Quraish, as a response to Muhammad’s preaching. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 87

The Muslims migrated from Mecca to Medina not long after Khadīja's death.

Both women were important in helping launch and sustain the public ministry of their respective men. Mary cared assiduously for the young Jesus, after accepting the great responsibility of bearing him. When the boy Jesus was lost in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph spent three days anxiously searching for him.³⁹⁰ Khadija cared for Muhammad by providing for his needs. Her business acumen and wealth allowed him the leisure of long periods of meditation in the cave at Mt Hirā, outside Mecca, where his revelations began. It was Mary's request to Jesus at the wedding at Cana that brought him to public attention through his first miracle. Khadija likewise quickly devised a method to ascertain if the spirit visiting Muhammad was good or evil.³⁹¹ She also took him to her cousin Waraqa bin Naufal, a Christian, who assured him that he was a prophet.³⁹² Mary stood with Jesus at the foot of the cross as he died. Khadija accepted Muhammad's teaching, becoming the first Muslim.³⁹³ Mary was praying with the first disciples in the upper room after the ascension of Jesus.³⁹⁴

Both women were rewarded for their devotion. The angel Gabriel described Mary as "highly favoured", for God was with her.³⁹⁵ In his dying moments, Jesus gave Mary into the care of his friend John.³⁹⁶ The angel Gabriel promised Khadija a palace made of pearl as a reward.³⁹⁷ Muhammad called her "the best amongst the women (of this nation)."³⁹⁸

2. Religiously observant women

Mary and Khadija were not the only women who were significant, valued and honored. Women were allowed to take an almost full part in the religious life of the new Muslim society. They were expected to participate in public prayers,³⁹⁹ and even woken to do so.⁴⁰⁰ Their men were told to give them permission to attend the mosque at night.⁴⁰¹ The women apparently prayed behind the men: they were ordered to remain face-down whilst ever men prostrated. As the males bowed with their waist-cloths tied around their necks, they exposed their private parts to those behind them. The women were told to keep their faces on the ground to spare them this unedifying sight.⁴⁰² "Gentleness to women" is sometimes listed as one of Muhammad's virtues.⁴⁰³ At one time, the women felt they were being neglected in favour of the men, and asked the Prophet to set aside time just for them. He did so, giving them "religious lessons and

³⁸⁹ B.2:659; 5:221; 5:580. See also Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 159-162

³⁹⁰ Luke 2:48

³⁹¹ "(S)he disclosed her form and cast aside her veil while the apostle was sitting in her lap. Then she said, 'Can you see him?' And he replied, 'No.' She said, 'O son of my uncle, rejoice and be of good heart, by God he is an angel and not a satan.' Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 107

³⁹² B.1:3

³⁹³ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 111. His ten year old nephew, Ali b. Abū Talib, accepted Muhammad's message after her, becoming the first male believer. Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 114

³⁹⁴ Acts.1:14

³⁹⁵ Lk.1:28

³⁹⁶ Jn.19:26,27

³⁹⁷ B.3:19; 5:164, 165, 167, 168; 7:156; 8:33; 9:588

³⁹⁸ B.4:642; 5:163. Despite this, she is not mentioned at all in the Qur'an and only 21 times in al-Bukhārī's Hadith.

³⁹⁹ B.1:321

⁴⁰⁰ B.1:115; 8:237. Public prayer contrasts with modern practice, where Muslim women usually pray at home. The initial requirement to pray at home (Q.33:33) applied only to Muhammad's wives, because "you are not like other women" (Q.33:32).

⁴⁰¹ B.1:824

⁴⁰² B.1:358, 778

⁴⁰³ Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam*, 79

commandments.”⁴⁰⁴ There was a spirit of enquiry: “Whenever ‘Aisha heard anything which she did not understand, she used to ask again till she understood it completely.”⁴⁰⁵

Many women were not intimidated by Muhammad. “Some Quraishi women were sitting with him and they were asking him to give them more financial support while raising their voices over the voice of the Prophet.”⁴⁰⁶ Aisha even challenged Muhammad by quoting his Qur’anic verses back at him to justify her actions.⁴⁰⁷

Jesus also taught women.⁴⁰⁸ His conversations with the woman of Samaria and the Canaanite woman showed that he was willing to discuss theological matters with women.⁴⁰⁹ He openly chatted about practical⁴¹⁰ issues, and responded positively to their urgent physical needs.⁴¹¹

3. Women as material providers

Women contributed to the material, financial and military life of the early Islamic community. One had her slave-carpenter build a pulpit for Muhammad, either at her suggestion⁴¹² or his request.⁴¹³ Female believers were required to give alms.⁴¹⁴ In battles, they brought water to the troops,⁴¹⁵ treated casualties,⁴¹⁶ and transported the wounded and killed.⁴¹⁷

Jesus also accepted women’s contributions. Among Jesus’ group traveling from village to village were women including the formerly demon-possessed Mary Magdalene, the well-connected wife of the manager of Herod’s household, and “many others [who] were helping to support them out of their own means.”⁴¹⁸ This included accepting the hospitality offered by women.⁴¹⁹

4. Responding to women’s social and emotional needs

Muhammad was sensitive to women’s needs. He said: “When I stand for prayer, I intend to prolong it but on hearing the cries of a child, I cut it short, as I dislike to trouble the child’s mother.”⁴²⁰ He forbade the Arab practice of burying unwanted infant girls alive.⁴²¹ In an attempt to treat all his wives fairly, he casts lots to determine which wife would accompany him on each journey.⁴²² On his deathbed, he asked the permission of all his wives to allow him to be moved to and remain in the house of Aisha.⁴²³ He was free in his relationships with women, for “any of the

⁴⁰⁴ B.1:101; 7:176; 9:413

⁴⁰⁵ B.1:103

⁴⁰⁶ B.8:108

⁴⁰⁷ B.4:602; 5:464; 6:213, 281

⁴⁰⁸ Lk.10:39

⁴⁰⁹ Jn.4:7-26; Mt.15:21-28

⁴¹⁰ Lk.10:40-43

⁴¹¹ Lk.7:11-17; 8:43-48

⁴¹² B.1:440

⁴¹³ B.1:439

⁴¹⁴ B.1: 97,2, 301, 822; 2:81,92,94,511,529,541,545; 6:418; 7:176,768,769,771; 9:426

⁴¹⁵ B.4:131,132; 5:393,398; 7:583

⁴¹⁶ B.1:321; 2:714; 7:583

⁴¹⁷ B.4:133,134; 7:583

⁴¹⁸ Luke 8:3; Mk.15:41

⁴¹⁹ Lk.10:38; Jn.12:2

⁴²⁰ B.1:675; 1:827

⁴²¹ B.8:480; 9:395

⁴²² B.3:766; 4:130; 6:274.

⁴²³ B.1:197; 1:634; 3:761; 5:727; 7:612

female slaves of Medina could take hold of the hand of Allah's Apostle and take him wherever she wished."⁴²⁴

Jesus likewise showed a similar concern for those with children and a freedom in relating to women. He blessed the children brought to him, even though his disciples wanted to send them away.⁴²⁵ Of the three people reported in the gospels as raised from the dead by Christ, two of them were children, and the only child of their parents.⁴²⁶ Jesus broke with social convention when he conversed alone with a woman in an open place⁴²⁷ and allowed women to wash and anoint his feet on public occasions.⁴²⁸ He chose to heal a crippled woman on the Sabbath, even though it brought him into conflict with the religious authorities.⁴²⁹

5. Religious needs and uncleanness

Muhammad catered for the religious needs of women around him. He prayed the funeral prayer for a black woman sweeper at her graveside.⁴³⁰ Women were told that they would be shielded from the hell-fire if two or three of their children died before puberty.⁴³¹

Jesus made a point of highlighting women performing religious duties. He draws attention to a poor widow who gave only two copper pennies as an example of true generosity.⁴³² Another widow is made the heroine in a story about persistent prayer.⁴³³ Female figures are used as examples of God's care. A woman sweeping her house represents God's assiduous concern for those who have gone astray.⁴³⁴ Jesus compared himself to a mother hen wanting to shelter her chicks under her wing.⁴³⁵ Clearly Jesus was comfortable with women as heroes and with feminine images.

Regarding menstrual discharges, Muslim women were in quite a different legal position to Old Testament Israelite women (see Figure 8).

⁴²⁴ B.8:97

⁴²⁵ Mk.10:13-16

⁴²⁶ Lk.8:42; Lk.7:12

⁴²⁷ Jn.4:4-42

⁴²⁸ Lk.7:36-50; Mk.14:3-9

⁴²⁹ Lk.13:10-17

⁴³⁰ B.1:328, 448, 450.1, 816

⁴³¹ B.1:101, 102; 2:340, 341, 342, 463. This may also reflect Muhammad's family situation. Khadija bore him two or three sons, who died in infancy. Of his four daughters, only Fatima outlived Muhammad. His Egyptian concubine, Mary the Copt, bore Ibrahim who also died as a baby. This Hadith suggests an interesting parallel to the puzzling verse in 1.Tim.2:15.

⁴³² Mk.12:42,43/Lk.21:2-4

⁴³³ Lk.18:1-5

⁴³⁴ Lk.15:8-10

⁴³⁵ Mt.23:37/Lk.13:34

⁴³⁶ B.1:321; 2:714

⁴³⁷ B.1:327

⁴³⁸ B.1:318

⁴³⁹ B.1:311, 312

⁴⁴⁰ B.1:303, 322, 324. This, incidentally, could be a significant discovery affecting women's health issues. The author's wife worked as a doctor in female clinics on the Arabian peninsula. Many women refused to use certain cheap and effective methods of birth control due to concern about the extra-menstrual blood 'spotting' which sometimes occurred, claiming it disqualified them from praying and fasting. This Hadith discriminates between menstrual and non-menstrual bleeding, with the latter no disqualification from religious duties. For sexually-active, married women, a further issue was their husbands' fear of defilement through contact with menstrual blood during copulation.

⁴⁴¹ B.1:306-309, 323

A Jewish female with a vaginal blood emission was unclean for as long as the bleeding continued.⁴⁴³ This was a problem for a woman in the New Testament.⁴⁴⁴ Hyssop served a cleansing role in the Old Testament.⁴⁴⁵ For an Israelite man to touch a woman in an unclean state, or to handle anything she had been in contact with made him ritually unclean until the evening, even after washing.⁴⁴⁶ Such a person would be barred from the temple.⁴⁴⁷

Islamic practice was not as strict. Although Muhammad was careful not to touch any woman while she was making her pledge of allegiance after her migration to Medina,⁴⁴⁸ he often fondled his wives during their menstrual periods⁴⁴⁹ and was touched by them,⁴⁵⁰ even sleeping in the same bed.⁴⁵¹ He also prayed beside them in bed, sometimes making physical contact during his prayers.⁴⁵²

Figure 8 Menstrual matters

During her monthly period, a Muslim woman was not permitted to go to the mosque or prayer-place,⁴³⁷ nor could she pray,⁴³⁸ yet she was not required to make up for the missed prayers.⁴³⁹ A bath scented with musk sufficed to make her fit to pray again.⁴⁴⁰ A woman with vaginal bleeding asked Muhammad: "Shall I give up my prayers?" Allah's Apostle replied: "No, because it is from a blood vessel and not the menses. So when the real menses begins give up your prayers and when it (the period) has finished wash the blood off your body (take a bath) and offer your prayers."⁴⁴¹ The same rule applied to other vaginal discharges.⁴⁴² Despite being unable to pray, menstruating women could attend the annual pilgrimage, the *Hajj*, although without participating in the full rite.⁴⁴³

6. The role of women in development of the religion

Aisha played a key part in the development of early Islam. "Muhammed had authorized Aisha, in his absence, to give religious advice, telling Muslims to 'take half of your religion from this woman'"⁴⁵³ One female commentator notes the significant role the nineteen year old widow

⁴⁴² B.1: 293, 302, 321, 325, 326

⁴⁴³ Lev.15:25

⁴⁴⁴ Mt.9:20-22/Mk.5:25-34/Lk.8:43-48

⁴⁴⁵ Lev.19:17

⁴⁴⁶ Lev.15:19-23

⁴⁴⁷ 2.Chr.23:19

⁴⁴⁸ B.6:414

⁴⁴⁹ B.1:298, 299, 300. This appears to contradict the edict of the Qur'an: "They ask thee concerning women's courses. Say: they are a hurt and a pollution: so keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. (2:222 Yusuf Ali translation – italics mine). The Arabic word for the underlined term is *a 'tazilū*, defined as 'keep away, stand aloof, leave, withdraw, retire, seclude, segregate, ...dissociate, separate, isolate [oneself]." Wehr, *Dictionary*, 610. The word *taqrabūn* 'approach' is commonly used in a sexual sense in the Qur'an e.g. Q.2:187, 223; 26:165; 27:55; 29:29

⁴⁵⁰ B.1:294, 295, 296; 7:808, 809

⁴⁵¹ B.1:297, 319, 320

⁴⁵² B.1:329, 376, 497

⁴⁵³ Brooks, *Nine Parts*, 85. Although widely quoted, the source of this tradition is difficult to locate. The earliest occurrence seems to be in the writing of Imam Zarkashi (Muhammad ibn Bahadur ibn Abdullah, Abu-Abdullah Badr al-Din al-Zarkashi), a Turkish scholar of the Shafi' school. He was born in 745/ 1324 This quote is found in his *Al-Ijaba li 'irad ma Istadrakatu A'isha ala al-Sahaba* 'Collection of Aisha's Corrections to the Statements of the Companions', pp.37,38, cited by Bennett, *Muslims and Modernity*, 141. Bennett makes no comment on the statement's veracity, but a Shia website declares: "This tradition is fabricated and had no basis in truth". <http://www.al-islam.org/ENCYCLOPEDIA/Shia1a.txt>. This is not surprising, since Shi'a Muslims often denigrate Aisha due to her opposition to Ali.

held after her husband's death. "Because she had spent so much time at Muhammad's side, she became a leading religious authority." However Brooks incorrectly reads the motives (and the figures) behind the discounting of many Hadiths sourced from Aisha: "Originally, 2,210 Hadith were attributed to her: ninth century scholars, **dismissing the word of a mere woman**, threw out all but 174."⁴⁵⁴ This is 8% of those accredited to Aisha, a far higher representation than al-Bukhāri's normal acceptance rate of 2.5% of all the Hadith he gathered. In fact, Aisha contributed more accounts to al-Bukhāri's collection than any other person, responsible for 1250 or nearly 18% of the Hadiths.⁴⁵⁵

Likewise women were important at the key events in Jesus' ministry – his death and resurrection. It was the women who wept and wailed for him on the road to Calvary,⁴⁵⁶ and stayed at the cross when most of the men had deserted Jesus.⁴⁵⁷ Women observed where he was buried,⁴⁵⁸ and women were the first witnesses of the resurrection.⁴⁵⁹

Much about women in the Bible and the Hadith can be basis for further discussion between Christians and Muslims.

⁴⁵⁴ Brooks, *Nine Parts*, 87(emphasis mine)

⁴⁵⁵ <http://islamicsystem.blogspot.com/2007/11/refutation-of-gadaffi-others-who-reject.html> accessed on 18th May, 2010

⁴⁵⁶ Lk.23:27

⁴⁵⁷ Mt.27:55,56/Mk.15:40

⁴⁵⁸ Mt.27:61/Mk.15:47/Lk.23:55

⁴⁵⁹ Mt.28:1-10/Mk.16:1-10/Lk.24:1-10

CHAPTER 6: Theological aspects

There are theological and devotional aspects found in the Hadith which strike a familiar chord with Christian teaching.

1. The nature of God

(a) *Divine omniscience*

The Hadith present God's prior knowledge of many significant events. "Keys of the unseen knowledge are five which nobody knows but Allah . . . nobody knows what will happen tomorrow; nobody knows what is in the womb; nobody knows what he will gain tomorrow; nobody knows at what place he will die; and nobody knows when it will rain."⁴⁶⁰

The Bible states that "the Lord is a God who knows."⁴⁶¹ This knowledge encompasses human hearts,⁴⁶² human needs,⁴⁶³ things done in secret,⁴⁶⁴ and the events of the future.⁴⁶⁵ There are "secret things" which belong to Yahweh alone.⁴⁶⁶

(b) *God and emotion*

The Qur'an presents Allah as being *rāḍī* (pleased) with certain people: those in Paradise, and the early Muslims.⁴⁶⁷ The Hadith extend these categories. Divine satisfaction is expressed toward a man who removed a thorny branch on the path,⁴⁶⁸ a couple who deprived themselves and their children of food in order to feed guests,⁴⁶⁹ "the repentance of his slave",⁴⁷⁰ and a man who told the truth about his past.⁴⁷¹ However a Qur'anic verse expressing God's pleasure with the seventy martyrs of Bani Salim was later cancelled.⁴⁷² Allah also laughs.⁴⁷³ At other times, the divine wrath is portrayed. Allah will be angry with those who grab land by false oaths,⁴⁷⁴ and those who tell lies.⁴⁷⁵ His anger will be strongest on the day of Judgement,⁴⁷⁶ but Muhammad's anger against something also invokes Allah's anger.⁴⁷⁷

The Bible similarly reveals a rich tableau of emotions. At various times, God is angry,⁴⁷⁸ repents,⁴⁷⁹ implying feelings of regret, is grieved,⁴⁸⁰ but also laughs,⁴⁸¹ and is pleased.⁴⁸²

⁴⁶⁰ B.2:149; 6:151, 219, 301; 9:476

⁴⁶¹ 1.Sam.2:3

⁴⁶² Acts 1:24

⁴⁶³ Mt.6:32

⁴⁶⁴ Mt.6:4,18

⁴⁶⁵ Mt.24:36

⁴⁶⁶ Dt.29:29

⁴⁶⁷ Q.5:119; 8:557; 9:88, 609; Q.9:100

⁴⁶⁸ B.1:624

⁴⁶⁹ B.6:411

⁴⁷⁰ B.8:320, 321

⁴⁷¹ B.4:670

⁴⁷² B.4:57, 69; 5:416, 417, 421

⁴⁷³ B. 1:770; 9:532.1

⁴⁷⁴ based on Q.3:77 - B.3:546, 599, 692, 839; 4:416; 8:653; 9:294,537

⁴⁷⁵ B. 4:670; 6:72

⁴⁷⁶ B.4:556; 6:236

⁴⁷⁷ B.3:648

⁴⁷⁸ Dt.1:34; Num.10:11

⁴⁷⁹ Ex.32:14 KJV; 1.Sam.15:35

⁴⁸⁰ Gen.6:6; 1.Sam.15:10

It is difficult to determine whether such descriptions are simply anthropopathic or if they reflect the true emotional life of God. Both Qur'an and Bible assert the unchangeability of God, but the passages listed here suggest that God is not totally impassive in response to different situations.⁴⁸³

(c) *Desire for repentance*

It is said that "there is none who likes that the people should repent to Him and beg His pardon than Allah" (sic).⁴⁸⁴ Isaiah records the long-suffering God who proclaims: "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations."⁴⁸⁵ God's forbearance is due to his "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."⁴⁸⁶

2. Prayers of Muhammad

(a) *Prayers of worship and submission*

The Hadith record several prayers by Muhammad. Some, with minor omissions, could easily be found in Jewish or Christian worship. They often display similar connections and progressions (see Illustration 11). The following *tahajjud* (optional evening prayer) was prayed by Muhammad:

"O Allah! All the praises are for you. You are the Holder of the Heavens and the Earth, and whatever is in them. All the praises are for You. You have the possession of the Heavens and the Earth and whatever is in them. All the praises are for You; You are the Light of the Heavens and the Earth and all the praises are for You. You are the King of the Heavens and the Earth and all the praises are for You. You are the Truth and Your Promise is the truth, and to meet You is true. Your Word is the truth and Paradise is true and Hell is true and all the Prophets (Peace be upon them) are true and Muhammad is true and the Day of Resurrection is true. O Allah! I surrender (my will) to You; I believe in You and depend on You and repent to You. With Your help I argue (with my opponents, the non-believers) and I take You as a judge (to judge between us). Please forgive me my previous and future sins and whatever I concealed or revealed. You are the One who makes (some people) forward and (some) backward. There is none to be worshipped but you."⁴⁸⁷



Illustration 11:
Connections & progressions in prayer

⁴⁸¹ Ps.2:4; 37:13

⁴⁸² Ex.33:17; 1.Kg.3:10

⁴⁸³ e.g. Q.35:43; Ps.110:4; Jam.1:17

⁴⁸⁴ B.9:512

⁴⁸⁵ Isa.65:1-2

⁴⁸⁶ 2.Pet.3:8

⁴⁸⁷ B.2:221; 9:482, 483, 534

(b) Recognition of needs

As the Muslims dug the ditch around Medina in the face of the advancing Meccans, Muhammad called upon his God, reciting poetic verses composed by ‘Abdullah Ibn Rawāḥ}a: “O Allah. Were it not for You, we would not have been guided, nor would we have given in charity, nor prayed. So, bestow on us calmness, and when we meet the enemy, then make our feet firm, for indeed, yet if they want to put us in affliction, (i.e. want to fight against us) we would not (flee but withstand them).”⁴⁸⁸

The Old Testament contains similar expressions of dependence on God for His guidance, for generous giving by His people, for encouraging prayer, and for the ability to withstand enemies.⁴⁸⁹

While on a military expedition, the Prophet prayed: “O Allah, the Revealer of the Holy Book, and the Mover of the clouds and the Defeater of the clans, defeat them, and grant us victory over them.”⁴⁹⁰ Likewise Yahweh is presented as the One who reveals his commands in a book,⁴⁹¹ moves the clouds,⁴⁹² defeats Israel’s opponents,⁴⁹³ and gives His people victory.⁴⁹⁴



(c) Prayers for forgiveness and guidance

When Muhammad’s best friend Abū Bakr asked to be taught a prayer, the Prophet recited the following: “O Allah! I have done great injustice to myself and none except You forgives sins, so please forgive me and be Merciful to me as You are the Forgiver, the Merciful.”⁴⁹⁵ There is a recognition that sin is both a discredit to oneself as well as an offence against God. Wisdom, personified in the Old Testament, proclaims to her listeners: “But if you wrong me, you damage your very soul,”⁴⁹⁶ while the repentant King David says to God: “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.”⁴⁹⁷ The Pharisees and teachers of the law, doubting Jesus’ claim to be able to pardon wrongdoing, rightly asked the question: “Who can forgive sins except God alone?”⁴⁹⁸

Illustration 12: Muhammad praying at the Ka’ba⁴⁹⁹

Muhammad was deeply aware of his own failings. He spoke of “my sins that I did in the past or will do in the

⁴⁸⁸ B.5:432, 430, 509; B.4:272, 89,90; 8:617; 9:342

⁴⁸⁹ Ps.73:24; 1.Chr.29:17, 18; 2.Chr.7:14; Ps.18:29

⁴⁹⁰ B.4:266.1

⁴⁹¹ Dt.30:10

⁴⁹² Job.37:12

⁴⁹³ Jud.20:35

⁴⁹⁴ Jud.12:3

⁴⁹⁵ B.1:796; 9:485

⁴⁹⁶ Prov.8:36 (The Message)

⁴⁹⁷ Ps.51:4

⁴⁹⁸ Mk.2:7; Lk.5:21

⁴⁹⁹ Source: http://archief.retecool.com/mirrordir/Mohammed%20Image%20Archive_files/m-kaaba.jpg

future, and also the sins I did in secret or in public.”⁵⁰⁰ Consequently he prayed for forgiveness for himself: “O Allah! Wash away my sins with the water of snow and hail, and cleanse my heart from all the sins as a white garment is cleansed from the filth, and let there be a long distance between me and my sins, as You made East and West far from each other.”⁵⁰¹ David begged God for cleansing using similar terms: “Wash me and I will be whiter than snow.”⁵⁰² The removal of sins in the Bible is declared as an accomplished action – “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” – rather than as an aspiration or unrealized hope.⁵⁰³

Other prayers reveal a very human desire not to be overcome by potential problems of earthly existence. “O Allah! I seek refuge with You from having worries, sadness, helplessness, laziness, miserliness, cowardice, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by other persons unjustly.” Similar prayers included deliverance from “reaching a degraded geriatric old age, ... the afflictions of the world and from the punishment in the grave.”⁵⁰⁴ A prayer for divine direction, called *istikhāra*, is outlined, to be used when about to embark on a new venture.

“O Allah! I ask guidance from Your knowledge, and Power from Your Might and I ask for Your great blessings. You are capable and I am not. You know and I do not and You know the unseen. O Allah! If You know that this job is good for my religion and my subsistence and in my Hereafter--(or said: If it is better for my present and later needs)--then You ordain it for me and make it easy for me to get, and then bless me in it, and if You know that this job is harmful to me in my religion and subsistence and in the Hereafter--(or said: If it is worse for my present and later needs)--then keep it away from me and let me be away from it. And ordain for me whatever is good for me, and make me satisfied with it).”⁵⁰⁵

Identical themes are found in the Bible: the request for guidance from God;⁵⁰⁶ a recognition of God’s knowledge,⁵⁰⁷ power⁵⁰⁸ and might;⁵⁰⁹ a desire for his blessings;⁵¹⁰ human inability in the face of God’s capability;⁵¹¹ God’s knowledge of the invisible,⁵¹² and of what is best for his people;⁵¹³ and satisfaction with what God has provided.⁵¹⁴

(d) Prayers of thanksgiving

Following a victory, Muhammad prayed: “None has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone, Who has no partner. All the Kingdom belongs to Him and all the praises are for Him and He is Omnipotent. We are returning with repentance, worshipping, prostrating ourselves and praising our Lord. Allah fulfilled His Promise, granted victory to His slave and He Alone

⁵⁰⁰ B.9:482, 534, 590

⁵⁰¹ B.8:379 also 8:386, 388

⁵⁰² Ps.51:1-10

⁵⁰³ Ps.103:12

⁵⁰⁴ B.4:76,77,143; 7:336; 8:374, 376, 378, 380, 381, 382, 385, 399

⁵⁰⁵ B.2:263; 9:487; 8:391

⁵⁰⁶ Ps.143:10; Eph.5:17

⁵⁰⁷ Job 37:16; Rom.11:3

⁵⁰⁸ Ex.9:16; Rom.1:20

⁵⁰⁹ 2.Chr.20:6; Phil.1:19

⁵¹⁰ Ps.119:41; 1.Cor.9:23

⁵¹¹ 1.Kg.8:27; Lk.18:27

⁵¹² Dt.29:29; Mt.6:6

⁵¹³ Prov.30:8; Mt.7:11

⁵¹⁴ Prov.19:23; Phil.4:12

defeated all the clans.”⁵¹⁵ Similar expressions of thanksgiving are found throughout the Hadith.⁵¹⁶

These accord with themes found in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. The incomparable God⁵¹⁷ is the only One worthy of worship⁵¹⁸ and has no partners or equals.⁵¹⁹ He is the great King,⁵²⁰ omnipotent,⁵²¹ receiving praises.⁵²² His people respond with repentance,⁵²³ worship⁵²⁴ and prostration.⁵²⁵ God fulfils His promises,⁵²⁶ gives victory to those who serve Him,⁵²⁷ and defeats those who oppose His people.⁵²⁸ The proper response to God’s mighty acts of mercy and deliverance is a life of praise and obedience.

(e) *List of prayers*

The Hadith record the contents of Muhammad’s prayers for a variety of occasions (Table 12).⁵²⁹

Table 12: *List of Muhammad’s prayers in al-Bukhari*

GODWARD	Recognition of Allah’s power	8:612; 1:805
	Praise	2:221, 253; 8:342
	Dependence & forgiveness	6:490, 491, 492; 9:534, 482, 590
	Forgiveness (for himself and for others)	1:760, 796; 2:221; 8:318, 319, 335, 379, 386, 388, 407, 408; 9:485
DAILY SITUATIONS	Before going to toilet	1:144; 8:334
	After meals	7:368, 369
	Before bed	9:490
	Before & after sleeping	8:324; 9:491, 492
	Before sleep	1:247; 8:323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 336, 337
	Protection while sleeping	9:580
	Evening prayer	9:482, 483
SPECIAL SITUATIONS	Before sex	1:143; 4:493, 503; 8:397; 9:493
	Guidance (<i>istikhara</i>)	2:263; 8:391; 9:523
	If in difficulty	9:523, 526
	For rain	2:126, 253
	Greeting in mosque	2:294
	Haircuts & shaving	2:785, 786
	To save friends and harm	2:120, 121

⁵¹⁵ B.4:238

⁵¹⁶ e.g. B.1:805; 2:253; 3:23; 4:514; 5:442

⁵¹⁷ Ex.8:10; Rev.19:16

⁵¹⁸ Dt.6:13

⁵¹⁹ Isa.46:5

⁵²⁰ Ps.93:5; 1.Tim.1:17

⁵²¹ Isa.40:26; Eph.1:19

⁵²² Ps.18:49; 1.Pet.2:9

⁵²³ 2.Chr.32:26; Mt.2:3

⁵²⁴ Gen.24:26; Acts.13:2

⁵²⁵ Dt.9:18; Rom.14:11

⁵²⁶ Gen.28:15; Rom.15:8

⁵²⁷ Dt.20:4; 1.Cor.15:57

⁵²⁸ Dt.4:46; Lk.1:74

⁵²⁹ Some of these themes are picked up in the prayers of the Qur’an e.g. Q.1:1-7; 2:286; 3:8,9, 191-194

	enemies	
	For life or death	7:575
	Healing	7:638, 639, 640, 646
	Prosperity & salvation	3:203; 8:398
	Victory before battle	4:266.1, 272, 317, 430, 8:617; 9:581
	Returning from battle	3:23; 5:442; 8:394

3. Eschatology

(a) Events of the end-times

Descriptions of the end-times outlined in the Hadith bear some similarities to biblical depictions of the end-times. There are many parallels in the events preceding the last day (see Table 13).

Table 13: Eschatological parallels between the Hadith and the Bible

Wars	B.4:787,788,789,790; 9:237	Mt.24:6; Mk.13:7,8; Lk.21:10
Earthquakes	B.2:146; 9:137,237	Mt.24:7; Lk.21:11
Celestial signs	B.6:159, 160; 8:513; 9:237	Mt.24:29; Acts.2:20 Lk.21:11,25; Joel 2:31
False prophets and deceivers appear among the believers	B.6:577; 9:64,65,66,237	Mt.24:11; 2.Pet.3:3,17; Mk.13:6,21,22
Idol worship will reappear	B.9:232	Rev.9:20
Affliction will result in apostasy	B.4:799	Mt.24:8-13
Declining moral standards	B.1:56; 4:808; 6:577; 7:158; 8:503,504; 9:64	Mt.24:12; 2.Thess.2:10
Believers will flee to the mountains and remote places to preserve their faith	B. B.4:798; 9:210	Mt.24:16-21; Mk.13:14-16; Lk.21:21
People will seek shelter among the rocks	B.4:176, 177, 791	Rev.6:15,16 c.f. Isa.2:10
Gog and Magog will arise	B.2:663; 4:565,566,797; 6:265; 7:215; 8:537; 9:181,249,250	Ezek.38,39; Rev.20:8
The end will come quickly and unexpectedly. People unable to complete normal household tasks	B.9:237; 8:513	Mt.24:40-44; 1.Thess.5:2; 2.Pet.3:10
The perseverance of righteous people could be in jeopardy	B.4:565,797; 9:181,249	Mt.24:22; Mk.13:20
People will desire death	B.9:231,237	Rev.9:6

Interestingly, famines forecast in the Bible are not mentioned in the Last Day scenarios in the Hadith. Perhaps they were a relatively common occurrence in Arab experience.⁵³⁰

The same major personalities are involved, including false prophets,⁵³¹ Christ and the Antichrist. The actions of *Masih ad-Dajjal* (the false Christ), mirror those of the false prophet of Revelation.⁵³² Like the biblical ‘beast’ whose fatal wound was healed, *ad-Dajjāl* was impervious to normal physical attack.⁵³³ Just as unfaithful people would accept the mark of the beast on their foreheads, the false Christ will have the word *kāfir* (unbeliever) written between his eyes.⁵³⁴ He will perform miraculous signs involving fire and water⁵³⁵ and bring the dead to life.⁵³⁶ The return of Christ is seen as inculcating a period of justice and prosperity, paralleling the millennial reign of Christ. Jesus “will descend as a just ruler and ... there will be abundance of money and nobody will accept charitable gifts.”⁵³⁷ Muhammad believed that the period between his era and the end-times would be very short,⁵³⁸ occurring within the lifetime of his companions.⁵³⁹ In both the Bible and the Hadith, God expresses His sovereign rule over creation by rolling up the heavens in His hand.⁵⁴⁰

(b) Heaven and Hell

Both the Bible and Hadith describe degrees of punishment in hell. The Hadith speak of those who will receive the “minimum punishment”.⁵⁴¹ The biblical revelation suggests that it will be more bearable for some than others.⁵⁴² Some will be beaten with many blows, and some with few,⁵⁴³ but others will be punished most severely.⁵⁴⁴

The symbol of a seed is used to describe the new life enjoyed in heaven or paradise. Following the teaching of Jesus,⁵⁴⁵ Paul wrote of the seed which must die before it can come to life. Although it is sown natural and perishable, in dishonour and weakness, it will be raised spiritual and imperishable, in honour and power.⁵⁴⁶ Likewise Muhammad spoke of those who had been rescued from the Fire. They had been “burnt and became like coal, and then they will be thrown into the river of *Al-H}ayyāt* (life) and they will spring up just as a seed grows on the bank of a rainwater stream.” The Prophet said, “Don't you see that the germinating seed comes out

⁵³⁰ Mt.24:7; Mk.13:8; Lk.21:11; B.2:55, 121, 133, 143; 3:472, 635, 670; 6:215

⁵³¹ B.4:806 c.f. Mt.24:5,11

⁵³² B.1:86, 184, 795; 2:162; Rev.16:13; 19:20; 20:10

⁵³³ Rev.13:3,12; B.2:437; 4:290.1; 8:194. Al-Bukhārī's Hadith do not mention that Christ will kill ad-Dajjal, but this is described in Muslim bk 41 no. 7015 narrated by al-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān and Muslim bk 41 no. 7023 narrated by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr

⁵³⁴ Rev.13:16, 17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4; B.2:626; 4:754; 7:795; 9:245,505

⁵³⁵ B.4:659, 684, 685, 688; 8:488; 9:597, 599, c.f. Rev.13:13; 2.Thess.2:9

⁵³⁶ B.3:106; 9:246 c.f. Rev.13:15

⁵³⁷ Rev.20:1-6; B.3:425 also 3:656; 4:567.

⁵³⁸ B.7:221

⁵³⁹ B.8:188. Some end-time prophecies seem rather strange. An example is: “Allah's Apostle said, "The Hour will not be established till the buttocks of the women of the tribe of Daus move while going round Dhi-al-Khalasa." Dhi-al-Khalasa was the idol which the Daus tribe worshipped in the Pre-Islamic Period of ignorance.” (B.9:232)

⁵⁴⁰ B.6:336; 8:526 and Heb.1:10-12

⁵⁴¹ B.8:562, 566

⁵⁴² Mt.11:22,24

⁵⁴³ Lk.12:47, 48

⁵⁴⁴ Lk.20:47

⁵⁴⁵ Jn.12:24

⁵⁴⁶ 1.Cor.15:36,37,42-44

yellow and twisted?”⁵⁴⁷

The Islamic paradise is portrayed as a place with gold and silver,⁵⁴⁸ and pearl⁵⁴⁹ similar to heaven with its crystal glass, gold and precious stones.⁵⁵⁰ It is place of unity and love, centred on the praise of God,⁵⁵¹ much as the biblical heaven is depicted.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁷ B.8:565

⁵⁴⁸ B.4:468, 469; 9:171, 536

⁵⁴⁹ B.6:402

⁵⁵⁰ Rev.4:3-6; 21:10-21

⁵⁵¹ B.4:468, 469

⁵⁵² Rev.4:6 – 5:14; 7:9-12

Chapter 7: Ethical issues

Some moral instruction in the Hadith also reveals a congruence with biblical teaching. One commentator sees little disjunction between Islam and Christianity. Renard postulates: “Non-Muslims are often surprised, even shocked, to hear that Islam’s central spiritual and ethical presuppositions are virtually identical to those of Judaism and Christianity.”⁵⁵³

1. Orientation towards others

Muslims are called to consider the well-being and benefit of others. “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.”⁵⁵⁴ This has a parallel in the Golden Rule: “Do to others what you would have them do to you.”⁵⁵⁵ In the Hadith, however, positive speech and action is directed only towards other Muslims rather than to humanity in general.⁵⁵⁶ Sincerity and truth and the love that reveals faith have their object only in those who follow the path of Islam.⁵⁵⁷

Biblical altruism is generally less discriminatory: “Do everything in love”,⁵⁵⁸ although sometimes it is more focussed: “Do good to all men, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”⁵⁵⁹ Just as Jesus taught that “it is more blessed to give than to receive”,⁵⁶⁰ and to “give to everyone who asks of you”,⁵⁶¹ Muhammad held that “the upper (i.e. giving) hand is better than the lower (i.e. taking) hand.”⁵⁶²

Such acts of benevolence must not be carried out with a begrudging heart, for Islam’s prophet stated that “[h]e who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully”,⁵⁶³ a sentiment previously expressed in the Sermon on the Mount.⁵⁶⁴ Such mercy extended to the forgiveness of debt: “If the debtor is poor, forgive him, so that Allah may forgive us”.⁵⁶⁵ The Lord’s Prayer, taught by Jesus, suggests a connection between divine and human forgiveness.⁵⁶⁶ In a repetition of an Old Testament instruction,⁵⁶⁷ runaway slaves who came to Medina were not to be returned to their masters, but allowed to remain free.⁵⁶⁸ Caring for other believers resembles the parts of one body being affected by each other,⁵⁶⁹ similar to the Pauline teaching.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁵³ Renard, *In the footsteps*, 21. He does not go quite as far as a Victorian (Aust.) judge who claimed: “Islam and Christianity are basically the same.” *Islamic Council of Victoria v Catch the Fire Ministries Inc (Final)* [2004] VCAT 2510 (22 December 2004) <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/vic/VCAT/2005/2501.html> accessed on 28th Feb, 2008

⁵⁵⁴ B.1:12. Also in Hadith Muslim *Kitab al-Iman* no.45

⁵⁵⁵ Mt.7:12. A similar concept is found in many other religions and philosophies. “The Hindus said: ‘Utter not a word by which anyone could be wounded.’ The ancient Chinese urged: ‘Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.’ Cicero of Rome said: ‘Men were brought into existence for the sake of men that they might do one another good.’” Miller, *Discipling Nations*, 130

⁵⁵⁶ B.1:9,10

⁵⁵⁷ B.1:54; B.1:16

⁵⁵⁸ 1.Cor.16:14

⁵⁵⁹ Gal.6:10

⁵⁶⁰ Acts.20:35

⁵⁶¹ Mt.5:42

⁵⁶² B.4:13,371; 8:448

⁵⁶³ B.8:42; 2:373; 9:473,474,540

⁵⁶⁴ Mt.5:7

⁵⁶⁵ B.4:687

⁵⁶⁶ Mt.6:12

⁵⁶⁷ Dt.23:15,16

⁵⁶⁸ B.7:210

⁵⁶⁹ B.8:40

2. Moral requirements

A list of directives attributed to Muhammad bears a remarkable similarity to the Ten Commandments:

“Swear allegiance to me for

1. Not to join anything in worship along with Allah.
2. Not to steal.
3. Not to commit illegal sexual intercourse.
4. Not to kill your children.
5. Not to accuse an innocent person (to spread such an accusation among people).
6. Not to be disobedient (when ordered) to do good deed.”⁵⁷¹

Lying, dishonesty, breaking promises, betrayal of trust, and quarreling in an insulting manner were seen as the signs of a hypocrite.⁵⁷² One man’s lies resulted in a long life of poverty.⁵⁷³ Seven types of people will be protected at judgement: the just ruler, the pious youth, those who pray constantly, two people who love each other for Allah’s sake, a man refusing illicit sex, a generous person, and those who weep for Allah.⁵⁷⁴ Muhammad said: “The most beloved to me amongst you is the one who has the best character and manners.”⁵⁷⁵

Other significant ways of developing and maintaining social adhesion were enjoined. (see Figure 9).

Relationships were important. Blood, property and honour were described as sacred to each other, just as the ritual slaughter day was sacred to the whole community.⁵⁸³ Leaders were to be obeyed unless they had gone seriously astray.⁵⁸⁴ Taking the initiative in mending fractured relationships was commanded by Jesus⁵⁸⁵ and commended by Muhammad.⁵⁸⁶

Figure 9

Maintaining Social Cohesion

Muslims are told to feed the poor and to greet others, whether known or not.⁵⁷⁶ Helping widows and the poor was equivalent to jihad, prayer and fasting.⁵⁷⁷ Similarly Jesus criticised those who prayed publicly while devouring widows’ houses,⁵⁷⁸ and those who tithed meticulously while ignoring justice and mercy.⁵⁷⁹

The oppressed were to be aided by Muslims, and people should be helped to fulfil their oaths.⁵⁸⁰ People were required to return lost things to their owners,⁵⁸¹ and wedding invitations must be accepted.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁰ 1.Cor.12:12-26 esp.v.26

⁵⁷¹ B.1:17

⁵⁷² B.1:32; B.1:33

⁵⁷³ B.1:722

⁵⁷⁴ B.1:629

⁵⁷⁵ B.5:104

⁵⁷⁶ B.1:11, 27; 253.2

⁵⁷⁷ B.7:265; 8:253.1

⁵⁷⁸ Mk.12:40/ Lk.20:47

⁵⁷⁹ Mt.23:23; Lk.11:42

⁵⁸⁰ B.7:104

⁵⁸¹ B.1:91; 5:603. This was similar to the Mosaic law (Ex.23:4)

⁵⁸² B.2:331; 3:625; 7:104,539,753; 9:285

⁵⁸³ B.1:67, 105

⁵⁸⁴ B.4:203; 1:100

⁵⁸⁵ Mt.5:23,24; 18:15

⁵⁸⁶ B.8:254

Beyond these outward conformities, there was a recognition that the key to personal change was the heart: “Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart.”⁵⁸⁷ Jesus said: “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”⁵⁸⁸

Reward was connected with intention – people are to be recompensed in accordance with their motives, not simply their actions.⁵⁸⁹ A man intending to kill another man, although prevented from doing so, would be sent to the hell-fire.⁵⁹⁰ Even positive actions with ulterior motives are to be judged. Muhammad spoke of people who performed the Hajj “with the intention of seeking Allah's pleasure only and not to show off.”⁵⁹¹ Those who did good things publicly to win human praise would be humiliated by Allah.⁵⁹² After describing such people in another context, Jesus said: “they have already received their reward.”⁵⁹³

The Old Testament addresses this theme when Yahweh asks the people of Israel: “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, *was it really for me* that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?”⁵⁹⁴ Just as Jesus identified adultery of the heart through lustful looks,⁵⁹⁵ the Hadith recognise that “the adultery of the eye is the looking (at something which is sinful to look at), and the adultery of the tongue is to utter (what it is unlawful to utter), and the inner self wishes and longs for (adultery).”⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁸⁷ B.1:49

⁵⁸⁸ Lk.6:45

⁵⁸⁹ B.1:1,51; 3:706; 7:8; 8:680; 9:85

⁵⁹⁰ B.1:30

⁵⁹¹ B.1:25

⁵⁹² B.8:506; 9:266

⁵⁹³ Mt.6:2

⁵⁹⁴ Zech.7:5,6 – italics mine

⁵⁹⁵ Mt.5:28

⁵⁹⁶ B.8:609; 260. This may have been cancelled by another Hadith stating: “Allah has accepted my invocation to forgive what whispers in the hearts of my followers unless they act on it or utter it.” (B.3:705). Yet this Hadith may simply be stating that temptation by Satan (who whispers into human hearts Q.7:20; 20:120) is not the same as giving in to the sinful impulsion.

3. Parallel teaching

Some Hadith narratives and statements closely resemble Jesus' instruction (Table 14)

Table 14: Parallels between Hadith teaching and Jesus' teaching

Teaching	Jesus' teaching	Hadith
The parable of the workers in the vineyard	Mt.20:1-6	B.1:532; 3:468, 469; 4:665; 6:539; 9:559 – Muslims receive double pay. B.3:471; 1:533 – Muslims receive all the wages when Jews and Christians give up early
Treasure hidden in the field	Mt.13:44	B.4:678 – has a different ending
"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."	Mt.7:18	B.2:544; 8:435 "Good never brings forth evil." Comparison with vegetation
Parable of the great banquet	Lk.14:16-25	B.9:385
Faith equal to a mustard seed	Mt.17:20; Lk.17:6	B.1:21; 8:504,565; 9:208,600, 601
"He who exalts himself will be humbled"	Lk.14:11; 18:14	Allah "brings down whatever rises high in the world" B.4:124; 8:508
"Free the captives, feed the hungry and visit the sick"	Mt.25:35,36	B.4:282; 7:103,104, 286, 552
Servant Songs applied to Muhammad ...who "shouts not in the markets,"	Isa.42:2 and Mt.12:15-19	Q.48:8; B.6:362
... "does not return evil for evil"	Isa.53:7; 1.Pet.3:9 c.f. Lk.6:29	
... "guides a crooked nation on the right path"	Isa.42:16; 45:2 and Lk.3:5	
...will "cause to open blind eyes, deaf ears and hardened hearts."	Isa.35:5; Mt.11:5/Lk.7:22; Mk.7:37	
Oaths of any kind were forbidden	Mt.5:34-37, particularly if based on physical objects (Mt.23:16-22); Isa.65:16	
"Give to anyone who asks you"	Lk.6:30	
God sends sun and rain on the good and the evil; gives good things even to the evil	Mt.5:45; 7:11	

The ‘other-worldly’ teaching of Jesus, encouraging his followers to store up treasures in heaven,⁵⁹⁷ resonates with a passage in the Hadith,⁵⁹⁸ where certain luxury goods “are for the unbelievers in this worldly life and for us in the Hereafter.” The ‘Hereafter’ is mentioned many times – wearing silk is for those with no share in the Hereafter, for a well-dressed soul may be naked in the Hereafter.⁵⁹⁹ Muhammad describes those escaping the hell-fire as like “camels without a shepherd”⁶⁰⁰ similar to Jesus’ portrayal of the harassed and helpless crowds of his day.⁶⁰¹

Jesus, according to one Hadith account, refused to see the worst in people. One Hadith reports that “Jesus, seeing a man stealing, asked him, ‘Did you steal?’ He said, ‘No, by Allah, except Whom there is none who has the right to be worshipped.’ Jesus said, ‘I believe in Allah and suspect my eyes.’”⁶⁰² The gospels contain many accounts of Jesus’ gracious responses to people who might not normally be considered worthy of such. These include the tax-collectors Matthew⁶⁰³ and Zaccheus,⁶⁰⁴ the adulterous Samaritan woman,⁶⁰⁵ the complaining and ungrateful man lying paralysed beside the pool at Bethsaida,⁶⁰⁶ and the criminal crucified alongside Jesus at Calvary.⁶⁰⁷ Jesus had a reputation as “the friend ... of sinners.”⁶⁰⁸ When challenged about mixing with such people, Jesus threw down the gauntlet to his detractors: “Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’”⁶⁰⁹

According to the Hadith, the real life is that of the Hereafter. There is no life except the life of the Hereafter. “There is no goodness except that of the Hereafter – it is ‘the real goodness.’”⁶¹⁰ “Allah has given one of His slaves the choice of receiving the splendor and luxury of the worldly life whatever he likes or to accept the good (of the Hereafter) which is with Allah.”⁶¹¹ Muhammad’s followers bemoaned their good fortune: “Worldly wealth was bestowed upon us and we were given thereof too much. We are afraid that the reward of our deeds have (sic.) been given to us in this life,”⁶¹² reflecting Jesus’ warning: “they have received their reward in full.”⁶¹³ Echoing John the Baptist,⁶¹⁴ Paul⁶¹⁵ and the writer to the Hebrews,⁶¹⁶ Muhammad counsels satisfaction with one’s financial situation: “Riches does (sic.) not mean, having a great amount of property, but riches is self-contentment.”⁶¹⁷

⁵⁹⁷ Mt.6:19,20

⁵⁹⁸ B.7:334

⁵⁹⁹ B.2:11,69; B.1:115; 2:226; 3:317,782,788; 4:289; 8:237

⁶⁰⁰ B.8:587

⁶⁰¹ Mt.9:36

⁶⁰² B.4:653

⁶⁰³ Mt.9:9-13

⁶⁰⁴ Lk.19:1-10

⁶⁰⁵ Jn.4:4-26

⁶⁰⁶ Jn.5:1-15

⁶⁰⁷ Lk.23:32-43

⁶⁰⁸ Mt.11:19

⁶⁰⁹ Mt.9:12,13

⁶¹⁰ B.4:87; 5:425; B.4:209; 5:139,140,141; 8:422,423; B.1:420; 4:88; 5:269,424,426; B.9:308

⁶¹¹ B.5:244,719

⁶¹² B.5:376

⁶¹³ Mt.6:2, 5, 16

⁶¹⁴ Lk.3:14

⁶¹⁵ Phil.4:11; 1.Tim.6:8

⁶¹⁶ Heb.13:8

⁶¹⁷ B.8:453

Paul's words of the glory of heaven⁶¹⁸ are reprised in Allah's promise: "I have prepared for My pious slaves things which have never been seen by an eye, or heard by an ear, or imagined by a human being."⁶¹⁹ Muhammad's statement: "Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler",⁶²⁰ is reminiscent of the writer to the Hebrews description of those who "admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth ... they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one,"⁶²¹ and Peter's portrayal of fellow-Christians as "aliens and strangers in the world."⁶²² Statements cautioning wealthy people, such as: "Those who are rich in this world would have little reward in the Hereafter except those who spend their money here and there (in Allah's cause), and they are few in number,"⁶²³ find a parallel in Jesus' warnings against riches.⁶²⁴ Just as Jesus said it would be hard for a rich man to enter heaven,⁶²⁵ Muhammad observed: "I stood at the gate of Paradise and saw that the majority of the people who entered it were the poor, while the wealthy were stopped at the gate."⁶²⁶ Muhammad feared that wealth would destroy his people.⁶²⁷ Comparing a poor and a rich passer-by, he said: "This (poor man) is better than such a large number of the first type (i.e. rich men) as to fill the earth."⁶²⁸ The antidote to wealth's poison was generosity (see Figure 10). At other times, there is a balance expressed between this world and the next: "O Allah! Our Lord! Give us in this world that, which is good and in the Hereafter that, which is good and save us from the torment of the Fire."⁶³⁵ Likewise Jesus

Figure 10

Wealth, Weddings and Weeping

Islam's prophet stated that "a person who practices charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given will be shaded by Allah,"⁶²⁹ a clear replica of Jesus' saying.⁶³⁰ Wedding banquets should not include the rich only, but the poor should also be invited,⁶³¹ echoing Jesus' call.⁶³² Just as Christ proclaimed, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" and "woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep,"⁶³³ Muhammad announced to his followers: "If you but knew what I know, you would laugh less and weep more!"⁶³⁴

⁶¹⁸ 1.Cor.2:9 quoted from Isa.64:4. This quotation is also used by Sufis e.g. see Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 205

⁶¹⁹ B.4:467; 6:302, 303; 9:589. These words were included in the Mahdi's letter inviting Queen Victoria in 1887 to come to Khartoum and submit to Islam following his defeat of British troops after General Gordon's death. Moorehead, *The White Nile*, 316. In doing this, the Mahdi was following Muhammad's example of calling world leaders to accept Islam e.g. Heraclius of Byzantine - B.1:6; 4:191, 221; 6:75; 8:277 and Chosroes of Persia B.1:64; 4:190; 5:708; 9:369

⁶²⁰ B.8:425

⁶²¹ Heb.11:13-16

⁶²² 1.Pet.2:11

⁶²³ B.3:573; 8:285

⁶²⁴ e.g. Lk.6:24

⁶²⁵ Mt.19:23

⁶²⁶ B.7:124

⁶²⁷ B.5:351; 8:434, 435, 456

⁶²⁸ B.8:454

⁶²⁹ B.2:504, also 1:629; 8:799

⁶³⁰ Mt.6:3

⁶³¹ B.7:106

⁶³² Lk.14:13,14

⁶³³ Lk.6:21, 25

⁶³⁴ B.7:148; 8:492, 493, 627; 2:154; 6:145; 8:627, 632

⁶³⁵ B.6:47; 8:398

promised that those who gave up “home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel” would receive a hundredfold in this life, in the world to come, eternal life.⁶³⁶ However the number experiencing this will be comparatively small. Jesus said: “But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”⁶³⁷ The Hadith puts a number on it. At the Judgement, Adam is asked to bring out the people condemned to the Fire. When Adam asks how many this would be, the divine voice replies: “Out of every thousand (take out) nine-hundred and ninety-nine (persons).”⁶³⁸ Apparently only 0.1% of the human race will escape the fire of hell.

4. Connection with God

Muhammad is portrayed as God’s unique representative on earth. The angels claimed about him: “Whoever obeys Muhammad, obeys Allah; and whoever disobeys Muhammad, disobeys Allah.”⁶³⁹ In the Qur’an, Muhammad is told to inform the people: “If you love Allah, then follow me. Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.”⁶⁴⁰

Remarkably this bold claim does not appear to be made anyone in the Bible, apart from Jesus who used similar words to describe his relationship with God, his heavenly Father. One is reminded of statements by Jesus describing this close relationship (Table 15).

Table 15: Jesus’ descriptions of his relationship with his heavenly Father

“When he looks at me, he sees the One who sent me”	Jn.12:45
“He who receives me receives the One who sent me”	Mt.10:40
“Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the One who sent me”	Mk.9:37
“Whoever accepts me accepts the One who sent me”	Jn.13:20
“When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the One who sent me”	Jn.12:44
“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”	Jn.14:9
“If you really knew me you would know my Father as well”	Jn.14:7
“He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him”	Jn.5:23
“He who hates me hates my Father as well”	Jn.15:23
“He who rejects me rejects Him who sent me”	Lk.10:16
“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”	Jn.14:21

⁶³⁶ Mk.10:29,30

⁶³⁷ Mt.7:14

⁶³⁸ B.4:567; 6:265; 8:537

⁶³⁹ B.9:385, 251

⁶⁴⁰ Q.3:31

5. Reflections

In the topics mentioned above, we find elements in the Hadith and the biblical revelation which strike a parallel chord. There are two possible errors that could result from identifying such similarities. The first is attributing a simple one-to-one correspondence. It would be easy, for example, to conclude that Muslims mean the same thing by ‘commandments’ as Jews and Christians do. A similar ‘form’ does not mean that it will have the same connotation or ‘function’ in different religious communities. Anderson notes: “The law of Moses was in fact given to a redeemed people as a way of life not to an unredeemed people as the means of redemption.”⁶⁴¹ Any notion must be interpreted within its cultural and religious metanarrative.

The opposite error would be to dismiss all such similarities as arbitrary ‘accidents’, bearing only a superficial relationship to each other. This could result in overlooking some valuable connections that could be made. Law, for example, operated in a variety of ways in the Old Testament. It lay down cultic, social and moral requirements for the community. The coming of Christ did not do away with all of these, since a variety of religious rituals, legal regulations and ethical values are still practiced in every Christian community.

⁶⁴¹ Anderson, *Christianity*, 45

SECTION III: SEEKING CONNECTIONS

Developing the constructive

There are some teachings found in the Hadith which may inform and enrich the discussion of the biblical teaching with Muslims. They move beyond the realm of simple agreement. Those aspects described as ‘concord’ in Section II reveal facets that have arrived at the **same destination** as biblical teaching, with an almost complete concurrence. However the elements in this chapter could be described as moving in the **same or a similar direction** as a Christian understanding of the gospel without yet having arrived at the same conclusions. They contain within them the seeds of something more, for they can open doors to further discussion and development. These can be springboards to biblical teaching which might not be otherwise recognised by Islam. They begin a trajectory which can find its end-point in the person and work of Christ, thus becoming a key in the Christian apostolic mission to Islam. The term ‘springboards’ is preferred over ‘bridges’, since the latter implies a definite destination and endpoint. ‘Springboards’ require a ‘leap of faith’ which may or may not result in the desired destination. Some room must be left for those Muslims and others who consider the same material and arrive at different conclusions.

A series of propositional statements from Christian theology may help us compare biblical teaching with some of the ideas found in the Hadith. They are as follows:

- Divine beneficence – God’s basic attitude towards humanity is kind and generous
- Divine holiness – in His essence, God is sacred and pure, separated from sin
- Human worth – people are in the image of God and capable of relationship with Him
- Human obduracy – all people are sinners, unable to earn God’s pleasure by their own efforts
- Human incapacity – no amount of good works will earn enough merit
- The necessity of God’s grace – humans cannot be saved without a divine work
- Proximity and Incarnation – God is near to us and able to enter into human existence
- Christ’s roles – as a sinless human, Jesus is eminently qualified as the mediator between God and humanity
- Expiation – the principle of exchange of actions, rewards, and punishments is established
- Salvation – the cross of Christ displays aspects of sacrifice, martyrdom, atonement, redemption and victory over Satan in the context of betrayed hospitality
- Intercession – Jesus stands as a mediator between God and humanity
- Faith and love – these are the means of applying salvation to ourselves
- Results of salvation – these include a new birth, cleansing, forgiveness and eternal assurance

These will be used as benchmarks for discovering the springboards that may be found in the Hadith. There are other vital elements of Christian doctrine, such as the inspiration of Scripture, the Triune nature of God, the deity of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit which are not addressed in the Hadith.⁶⁴²

Clearly neither the Hadith, nor any other Islamic documents, outline a full and complete

⁶⁴² Norman Geisler suggests the following as essential doctrines of the Christian faith (1) human depravity, (3) Christ’s sinlessness, (4) Christ’s deity, (5) Christ’s humanity, (6) God’s unity, (7) God’s trinity, (8) the necessity of God’s grace, (9) the necessity of faith, (10) Christ’s atoning death, and (11) Christ’s bodily resurrection. <http://www.equip.org/articles/the-essential-doctrines-of-the-christian-faith-part-two->

exposition of Christian teaching, otherwise they would not be Islamic. It would be naïve in the utmost to suppose that a completely Christian worldview could be constructed using only Islamic sources. However we do find some elements of the Hadith which may become springboards for Muslims to approach the truth as it has been revealed in the Bible. These elements will be described. In the subsection labeled ‘Connections with biblical themes’ at the end of each section, the lacuna between the Hadith’s concepts and biblical teaching on the topic will be identified and some ways of connecting the two will be suggested.

CHAPTER 8: The character and actions of God

1. Divine beneficence

God is described in the Hadith as the One who generates benefit out of mishap. Some one commented to Aisha when she recovered a lost necklace: “By Allah, whenever anything happened which you did not like, Allah brought good for you and for the Muslims in that.”⁶⁴³ The Christian concept is analogous: “the benevolence of God is manifested in his concern for the welfare of the creature and is suited to the creature’s needs and capacities.”⁶⁴⁴ The Bible declares that “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”⁶⁴⁵

Yet God’s desire for the welfare of His people is not necessarily reciprocated. Muhammad said: “None is more patient than Allah against the harmful saying.⁶⁴⁶ He hears from the people they ascribe children to Him, yet He gives them health and (supplies them with) provision.”⁶⁴⁷ It is reminiscent of Jesus’ description of the heavenly Father who “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” and “is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”⁶⁴⁸

2. Divine holiness

Both the Bible and the Qur’an refer to God’s holiness.⁶⁴⁹ Hannah declares: “There is no-one holy like the Lord”, and the redeemed in heaven sing: “For you alone are holy ... for your righteous acts have been revealed.”⁶⁵⁰ God takes no pleasure in evil,⁶⁵¹ and cannot even bear to look at it, let alone tolerate it.⁶⁵² Likewise in the Hadith Allah is not neutral about sin – he takes great interest. “Sins are Allah’s *Hima* (i.e. private pasture) and whoever pastures (his sheep) near it, is likely to get in it at any moment... the *Hima* of Allah on the earth is His illegal (forbidden) things. Beware!”⁶⁵³ People are warned against trespassing on this pasture, for its Owner is strict. Interestingly, a Greek word for ‘sin’ *paraptoma* used in the New Testament is sometimes translated as ‘trespass’.⁶⁵⁴ The Prophet said, “There is none having a greater sense of *Ghīra* than Allah, and for that reason He has forbidden shameful deeds and sins (illegal sexual intercourse etc.).”⁶⁵⁵ *Ghīra* is defined as “a feeling of great fury and anger when one’s honour and prestige are injured or challenged.”⁶⁵⁶ The Bible many times describes the Lord as “a jealous God.”⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁴³ B.1:332; 5:117; 7:93

⁶⁴⁴ e.g. Job.38:41; Ps.104:21; Mt.6:26. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 86

⁶⁴⁵ Romans 8:28

⁶⁴⁶ This means ‘those who speak harmfully [about Him]’

⁶⁴⁷ B.8:121

⁶⁴⁸ Mt.5:45; Lk.6:35

⁶⁴⁹ Ps.77:13; 99:9; Isa.5:16; Lk.1:49; Acts.3:14; Q.62.1

⁶⁵⁰ 1.Sam.2:2; Rev.15:4

⁶⁵¹ Ps.5:4

⁶⁵² Hab.1:13

⁶⁵³ B.3:267; 1:49

⁶⁵⁴ e.g. Rom.5:14 NIV. This term is found 23 times in the Greek New Testament. Vine, *Comprehensive Dictionary*, 1177

⁶⁵⁵ B.9:500; also 7:147, 148, 149, 150; 8:829

⁶⁵⁶ Al-Hilali & Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an*, 71

⁶⁵⁷ Dt.4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:21; Josh.24:19; Nah.1:2

3. Divine initiative

The Qur'an seems to limit Allah's activity to giving signs for humanity to see and sending prophets for humanity to hear. In the Hadith, we find an expansion of the divine role: Allah Himself actively seeks fellowship with humankind. In a passage reminiscent of Yahweh coming down to the earth in the book of Genesis,⁶⁵⁸ Allah descends from His throne towards the earth.

“Our Lord, the Blessed, the Superior, comes every night down on the nearest Heaven to us when the last third of the night remains, saying: ‘Is there anyone to invoke Me, so that I may respond to invocation? Is there anyone to ask Me, so that I may grant him his request? Is there anyone seeking My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him?’”⁶⁵⁹

Similarities are found in the teaching of Jesus about “the true worshippers (who) worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks”.⁶⁶⁰ Jesus described himself as one who ‘came to seek and save what was lost.’⁶⁶¹ Paul quotes God’s patient anguish: “All day long I held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”⁶⁶² When people respond to this heavenly initiative, there is divine joy. “Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than anyone of you is pleased with finding his camel which he had lost in the desert.”⁶⁶³ This echoes the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, and the rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.⁶⁶⁴

In a bold image evocative of the same chapter of Luke, a description in the Hadith pushes the analogy further (see Figure 11).^{665 666 667}

As with the story of the Prodigal son, the paternal-filial relationship was not based on works, but on deep affection. One day a man met Muhammad outside a mosque. “The man said, ‘O Allah’s Apostle! When will be the Hour?’ The Prophet asked him, ‘What have you prepared for it?’ The man became afraid and ashamed and then said, ‘O Allah’s Apostle! I haven’t prepared for it much of fasts, prayers or charitable gifts but I love Allah and His Apostle.’ The Prophet said, ‘You will be with the one

Figure 11

The Running Father

The Prophet said, “Allah says: ‘I am just as My slave thinks I am, (i.e. I am able to do for him what he thinks I can do for him) ... and if he comes one span nearer to Me, I go one cubit nearer to him; and if he comes one cubit nearer to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.’”⁶⁶⁵ The parallel with the father’s response to the returning Prodigal son could hardly be stronger. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”⁶⁶⁶ This is the same Lord, described in the Old Testament, who “longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion”.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁵⁸ Gen.3:8; 11:5; 18:21

⁶⁵⁹ B.2:246; 8:333; 9:586

⁶⁶⁰ Jn.4:23

⁶⁶¹ Lk.19:10

⁶⁶² Rom.10:21 citing Is.65:2

⁶⁶³ B.8:321

⁶⁶⁴ Lk.15:7, 10, 32

⁶⁶⁵ B.9:502, 627, 628

⁶⁶⁶ Lk.15:20

⁶⁶⁷ Isa.30:18

whom you love.”⁶⁶⁸

The promise of Jesus concerning each one who follows him is likewise reassuring. “My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”⁶⁶⁹

4. *Divine proximity*

Islam has sometimes struggled to balance the transcendence and immanence of God. The Qur’an hints at God’s immanence through physical images e.g. He is “closer than your jugular vein”,⁶⁷⁰ and “God stands between a man and his heart”.⁶⁷¹ Allah says “I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on me”⁶⁷² for “He is with you wheresoever you may be”.⁶⁷³ However Islam’s greatest scholar, al-Ghazālī is quick to point out that “His nearness is not like the nearness of bodies”.⁶⁷⁴

The general trend of the Qur’an is to assert God’s transcendence, emphasizing distance and difference (Table 16).

Table 16: *Qur’anic descriptions of the transcendence of Allah*

His creatures “will never compass anything of His knowledge except that which He wills.”	Q.2:255
He is “above what they attribute to Him”	Q.6:100
“no vision can grasp Him but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension yet is acquainted with all things”	Q.6:103
“there is nothing like Him”	Q.42:11
“there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him”	Q.112:4

Muhammad did not see God in a physical form during his ascension to Paradise, despite coming within two bow-lengths⁶⁷⁵— for Gabriel obscured the whole horizon.⁶⁷⁶ “Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord is a liar,” stated Aisha.⁶⁷⁷ One Muslim scholar notes: “However close a man may approach God in his journeying towards him, even in his highest ascension, man remains man and very much remote from God.”⁶⁷⁸

Yet the Hadith enlarge the idea of the nearness of God. Muhammad told his followers: “Allah is not hidden from you.”⁶⁷⁹ Whilst hiding in the cave from the searching Quraish during

⁶⁶⁸ B.9:267

⁶⁶⁹ Jn.14:23

⁶⁷⁰ Q.50:16

⁶⁷¹ Q.8:24. It may be significant that both of these verses outlining God’s intimate knowledge of a person’s inner thoughts are found in the context of judgement (i.e. Q.50:12-19 & Q.8:21-25), not love, grace and mercy.

⁶⁷² Q.2:186

⁶⁷³ Q.57:4

⁶⁷⁴ Quoted in Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God*, 31

⁶⁷⁵ Q.53:8-10

⁶⁷⁶ B.4:457, 458

⁶⁷⁷ B.6:378

⁶⁷⁸ Hamidullah, *Introduction*, 47

⁶⁷⁹ B.9:504

their escape from Mecca to Medina, Muhammad admonishes his fearful, whispering companion: “O Abu Bakr, be quiet! (For we are) two and Allah is the Third of us.”⁶⁸⁰ Prayer facilitates a special proximity: “Whenever anyone of you is in prayer, he is speaking in private to his Lord”,⁶⁸¹ and “During the prayer, Allah is in front of every one of you”.⁶⁸² When asked, “What is *Ihsan* (perfection)?” Allah’s Apostle replied, “To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you.”⁶⁸³

The Qur’an speaks of a pure apparition of God in Paradise.⁶⁸⁴ One reference notes: “...this is the Islamic version of the Christian hope one day to hear the words ‘Well done good and faithful servant,’ and acts as the seal upon the many and varied blessings of Paradise, the ultimate proof that Islam is true, as the lowly slave of Allah gazes upon the face of the Almighty Himself.”⁶⁸⁵ The sight of the full moon at night or the sun on a cloudless day provided an object lesson regarding the Muslim vision of God in paradise.⁶⁸⁶ Muhammad commented to his companions: “Certainly you will see your Lord as you see this moon and you will have no trouble in seeing Him”.⁶⁸⁷ Evidently Muhammad expected a clear view of God, for he described his own actions at the judgement: “When I see Him, I will fall down in prostration before Him.”⁶⁸⁸

5. Divine enfleshment

Although most Muslims would react strongly against the doctrine of the incarnation, the Hadith present some strong links between the divine and the human. Clearly, spiritual beings can take on human flesh. The Qur’an speaks of Mary seeing the angel who “appeared before her as a man in all respects.”⁶⁸⁹ Likewise three angels visited Abraham who set food before them.⁶⁹⁰ The Hadith report similar angelophanies. One day a man approached Muhammad and a group of Muslims. When the man left after a series of questions and answers, Muhammad said, ‘That was Gabriel who came to teach the people their religion.’”⁶⁹¹

Satan is classified as one of the *jinn*⁶⁹² and they are said to be made from smokeless fire.⁶⁹³ However when Satan was stealing food from the *Zakat* store, he was caught by Abū Huraira, who extracted some advice from Satan before letting him go.⁶⁹⁴ Muhammad also told his companions that “I caught [a *jinn*] and intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the mosque so

⁶⁸⁰ B.5:5, 259; 6:185

⁶⁸¹ B.2:305

⁶⁸² B.2:304; 8:132

⁶⁸³ B.1:47

⁶⁸⁴ Q.9:72-73; 10:26; 75:22-23

⁶⁸⁵ From the CD “World of Islam”

⁶⁸⁶ B.1:770; 9:532.1, 532.2. The inability to see God on the Day of Judgement is part of the lot of the evil-doers (Q.83:15). Interestingly, an early Muslim theologian, Ah{mad Ibn H{ā}it{ (d.230/845), used the ‘full moon’ Hadith described above to propose the divinity of the Messiah. Thomas, *Anti-Christian polemic*, 5,6. Although it is not possible to argue an Islamic position from the thoughts of a Muslim who was considered unorthodox (ibn H{ā}it{ died while under investigation for heresy), it is fascinating to see where one scholar’s quest for knowledge led him.

⁶⁸⁷ B.1: 529, 547, 770; 6:105, 374; 8:577; 9:529, 531. Despite this, the Mutazila rejected this theme, based on Q.6:103. Twelver Shi‘ites deny the beatific vision because it may imply that God has a bodily form.

⁶⁸⁸ B.9:532.3

⁶⁸⁹ Q.19:17

⁶⁹⁰ Q.51:25-28; 11:69,70

⁶⁹¹ B.6:300; 1:47

⁶⁹² Q.18:50

⁶⁹³ Q.38:76; 7:12; 15:26-27; 55:15

⁶⁹⁴ B.6:530.

that all of you might see him.”⁶⁹⁵ In another version, it is Satan who was caught and choked by Muhammad.⁶⁹⁶

Likewise Allah is presented as having or taking on some kind of physical form. When Moses approached a fire in the desert, a voice from the flames said: “I am your Lord.”⁶⁹⁷ Nazir-Ali asks: “God can show himself to Moses in the burning bush, can he not show himself to us in the man Jesus?”⁶⁹⁸

An interesting image arises from a creation narrative in the Hadith. The Prophet said: “Allah created His creation, and when He had finished it, the womb got up and caught hold of Allah whereupon Allah said, ‘What is the matter?’ On that, it said, ‘I seek refuge with you from those who sever the ties of kith and kin.’ ...”⁶⁹⁹ It is difficult to envisage how a woman’s womb could catch hold of Allah or even to understand it as a metaphor.

In accord with Bible and the Qur’an (Table 17), the Hadith mention several parts of the body attributed to God. His right hand is described as “full ... not affected by the continuous spending night and day”⁷⁰⁰ and his other hand as holding “the balance of justice.”⁷⁰¹ He holds the heavens and the earth between His hands. He is also depicted as writing in “His Book which is with Him on His Throne.”⁷⁰² The throne of Allah is also mentioned over thirty times, implying a sitting action.⁷⁰³ After the judgement, Allah will put his foot on hell to make it smaller.⁷⁰⁴ Allah is said to “turn his face” from those who turn their faces from him.⁷⁰⁵ He is one who “sees and hears”.⁷⁰⁶

At the judgement, the part of Allah’s body which Muslims recognise will be his “shin” *sāq*, which he will uncover at their request.⁷⁰⁷ Muslims are almost encouraged to speculate or visualize how Allah may appear, for Allah’s form will be “a shape nearest to the picture they had in their minds about Him.”⁷⁰⁸

Table 17: Examples of Anthropomorphic language in the Bible and Qur’an

God ...	Old Testament	New Testament	Qur’an
has a hand	Ex.7:4	Mk.16:19	Q.3:26
sees (eyes)	Gen.16:13	Mt.6:4	Q.3:163
hears (ears)	Ex.3:7	1.Jn.5:14	Q.34:50
speaks (mouth)	Ex.20:1	Heb.1:1	Q.2:253
sits on the throne	Ps.47:8	Rev.6:16	Q.7:54
has a face	2.Chr.7:14	Mt.18:10	Q.18:28

⁶⁹⁵ B.4:634; 6:332. Chiragh Ali (d.1895) asserted that ‘jinn’ does not describe a spiritual being but was the name of a Semitic tribe. Brown, *Hadith*, 244

⁶⁹⁶ B.2:301; 4:504

⁶⁹⁷ Q.20:11, 12

⁶⁹⁸ Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter*, 127

⁶⁹⁹ B.6:354; 8:16, 17, 18

⁷⁰⁰ B.6:206; 9:508,515

⁷⁰¹ B.9:509

⁷⁰² B.4:416; 9:501, 514, 518, 545, 643

⁷⁰³ e.g. B.3:594, 595; 4:48, 413, 414

⁷⁰⁴ B.9:481, 541; 6:371, 372, 373; 8:654

⁷⁰⁵ B.1:66, 463

⁷⁰⁶ B.9:484

⁷⁰⁷ B.9:532.2 c.f. Q.68:42 “the day when the *sāq* (shin) will be laid bare”.

⁷⁰⁸ B.6:105; 8:246

These have been differently interpreted throughout the ages, by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

6. Connections with biblical themes

This topic of the nature of God contains promising material for discussion between Muslims and Christians.

(a) Beneficence, reactively providing life's necessities for those in need, may be the material equivalent of a 'tolerance' which accepts the existence of the other. An aloof philanthropist who gives anonymously without personal contact may be seen as 'beneficent' (see Figure 12).

The biblical view seems more pro-active, presenting a God who understands the deeper desires of the human heart, beyond mere physical provision, and responds to those needs.⁷¹⁰ The Old Testament contains "fifteen references to God as Father, while the NT speaks of God as Father on 245 occasions, most of which are on the lips of Jesus."⁷¹¹

(b) Divine holiness is important when considering the concept of forgiveness. If sin is seen as a personal affront to God, then no amount of good works by the offender in an unrelated area will repair this relationship. There must a change of attitude and an offer of forgiveness by the one offended before the relationship can be restored. The endowment of forgiveness remains with the one offended, not with the offender.⁷¹² Paul points out the anomaly of the Gentiles and the Jews who sought for God's favour in different ways. "[T]he Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They tripped over the 'stumbling stone'."⁷¹³ That stumbling stone was Christ himself, who became the cornerstone.⁷¹⁴ The Jews who tried to win divine goodwill by their own efforts incurred God's wrath because they rejected His gift⁷¹⁵ of "a righteous son"⁷¹⁶ or "a holy child".⁷¹⁷

(c) Divine initiative The Bible is much clearer about humanity's inability to save itself. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--

Figure 12

A Marxist view of God

The Marxist Maxime Rodinson contrasts the Muslim and Christian views of God. He describes Allah as "kind, merciful and close to man, whom he warned, loved and forgave like an indulgent father. But a great gulf divided him from his creature, a gulf which nothing could fill – not even unfailing care for a people lovingly chosen; nor the Redeemer, born of himself, so sensitive to human suffering that he came to share it. His paternal love for mankind was somewhat abstract and universal, expressed in a general goodness towards humanity as a whole or towards groups of men. It was ... the busy, organizing but not particularly affectionate goodness of the head of a family."⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁹ Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 235

⁷¹⁰ Ps.103:1-14. The term 'Father' is never used of Allah in the Qur'an or the Hadith, and most Muslims would reject it totally, based on Qur'anic passages. e.g. Q.112:3

⁷¹¹ Parsons *Unveiling God*, 95

⁷¹² Mt.5:23-25

⁷¹³ Romans 9:30-32

⁷¹⁴ Eph.2:20

⁷¹⁵ 1.Pet.2:7,8

⁷¹⁶ Q.19.19 *ghulam*^{an} *zakiyy*^{an}

⁷¹⁷ Acts.4:30

not by works, so that no one can boast.”⁷¹⁸ One is reminded of the Qur’anic account of Noah’s other son who refused to enter the Ark. The son told Noah: “I will betake myself to a mountain, it will save me from the water.” Noah replied: “This day there is no saviour from the Decree of Allah except him on whom He has mercy.” The Qur’an reports that “a wave came in between them, so he (the son) was among the drowned”.⁷¹⁹ Likewise, replacing the divine provision for deliverance with self-effort will have disastrous eternal consequences. “How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”⁷²⁰

(d) Divine proximity:

Although the Hadith suggests that God can come close to people, the mystic Pope Shenouda III proposed that the beatific vision is not only an eschatological promise for Christians but a present possibility.

“Sit alone, consider and meditate, go deep into yourself and seek God. You will find Him there, in your inmost depths. You will see Him face to face and feel Him as a pouring and overflowing fount of love. Only then you will be greatly astonished and cry out in silent joy, ‘I have seen God!’”⁷²¹

In the Bible, the clear vision of God in heaven is proffered. Although Paul writes of ‘the invisible God’,⁷²² declaring that no-one has seen or can see Him,⁷²³ “certain scriptures ... indicate that the redeemed will some day see him.”⁷²⁴ There is the promise: “We shall see Him as He is.”⁷²⁵ Knowing God through personal relationship is a consistent biblical theme. “The Bible from beginning to end is the story of God wanting to share his life and his love with people.”⁷²⁶

(d) Divine enfleshment

The Bible seems a lot less circumspect in its use of terms about God’s physicality. The mere hints of a theophany in Muslim teaching become a full-blown epiphany in the New Testament. Parsons’ helpful distinction describes a ‘theophany’ as “any visible appearance of God to people, whether in the form of a vision or an actual appearance on earth”,⁷²⁷ whereas an actual appearance is designated an ‘epiphany’, which is “a conceptual building block for understanding NT christology.”⁷²⁸ He notes that for Islam “at least in eschatological terms theophanic vision is much more strongly affirmed than epiphany.”⁷²⁹ What Islam pronounces as uncertain mystery is openly proclaimed in the Christian gospel. “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by

⁷¹⁸ Eph.2:8,9

⁷¹⁹ Q.11:43

⁷²⁰ Heb.2:3

⁷²¹ Shenouda, *The Release of the Spirit*, 92

⁷²² Col.1:15, c.f. Rom.1:20

⁷²³ 1.Tim.6:16

⁷²⁴ Ps.17:15; Mt.5:8; Heb.12:14; Rev.22:4 Thiessen, *Systematic Theology*, 76. The nineteenth century apologist William St Clair Tisdall claimed that any observable appearance of God must be Christ, since the Father is invisible. St Clair Tisdall’s Persian work *Miftah al-Asrar* (Agra: no publisher, 1850), 107,108 cited in Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 12

⁷²⁵ 1.Jn.3:2

⁷²⁶ Wilson, *Christianity alongside Islam*, 81

⁷²⁷ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, xxxvii

⁷²⁸ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, xxix

⁷²⁹ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, xxxvii

angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”⁷³⁰

The Hadith hint that God may be more accessible than the Qur’an proposes. Since God may be seen, even “caught hold of” by a womb, in some way, as the Hadith declares, new possibilities are opened up. There is the potential of God condescending to limit Himself enough to be apprehended by mere human beings. (Figure 13)

The Christian theologian P.T.Forsyth wrote that God “could not put more into humanity than humanity will hold.”⁷³⁴ As Paul articulated it: “the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations... is now disclosed to the saints”.⁷³⁵

The incarnation, like the Trinity, is impossible to accept as true only if people require God to conform to their expectations of truth, rather than allowing themselves to acknowledge His truth. C.S.Lewis expressed it well: “If Christianity were something we were making up, of course, we could make it easier. But it is not.

We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with Fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about.”⁷³⁶

Figure 13 Muslims ponder the Incarnation

Akhtar begrudgingly admits the potential value of ‘God-becoming-man’: “*if* the doctrine of the Incarnation were free from certain apparently fatal logical infirmities, *then* it could provide useful theological resources, lacking in Judaism and Islam.” (italics his).⁷³¹

Another Muslim scholar recognises the superiority of the means of revelation proposed by the Bible. Hamidullah concedes: “There are several ways of establishing contact or communication between man and God. *The best would have been incarnation ...*” (italics mine).⁷³²

Christians believe that God chose what Hamidullah describes as “the best” way, and that this took place through the *kenosis* or ‘emptying’ of the divine Son of God when He became man.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ 1.Tim.3:16

⁷³¹ Shabbir Akhtar *The Final Imperative* p. 180 cited in Zebiri *Muslims and Christians*, 156

⁷³² Hamidullah, *Introduction*, 47. He goes on to say “Islam has rejected it. It would have been too degrading for a transcendent God to become man, to eat, drink, be tortured by His own creatures, and even be put to death ...”

⁷³³ Phil.2:6,7

⁷³⁴ Quoted by Jones, *Christianity Explained*, 74

⁷³⁵ Col.1:26.

⁷³⁶ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 145

CHAPTER 9: The nature of humankind

When God connects with humanity, what does He find? What is the nature of humankind based on the various religious texts?

1. *Positive ascriptions of humanity*

According to the Bible, humans are created in God's image⁷³⁷ and are thus capable of being partakers of the divine nature⁷³⁸ as well as co-workers with God.⁷³⁹ The Psalmist wonders at God's provision and care for man, and at human power and dignity.⁷⁴⁰ Humanity clearly has a noble status.

Islam likewise presents a positive assessment of humankind. Sarwar states: "the Islamic view [is] that man has always been fundamentally good."⁷⁴¹ The Qur'an says: "We created man in the best stature (mould)".⁷⁴² "We conferred on them special favors above a great part of Our Creation".⁷⁴³ Consequently the first human being was worthy of worship by the angels.⁷⁴⁴ Humans were made according to the *fitra* (nature or constitution) which God designed for them.⁷⁴⁵ Man has become bearer of the Divine trust, which the earth and the heavens and the mountains did not have the power to bear.⁷⁴⁶

One Hadith passage matches the biblical account: "The Prophet said, 'Allah created Adam in His picture (image)'".⁷⁴⁷ Kamali suggests an application: "Being created in the image of God, man seeks to emulate the divine qualities of the Creator. To be objective is, in a sense, to emulate God. Man is capable of objectivity because of the endowment in his nature of the divine qualities of impartiality and justice."⁷⁴⁸ Another Muslim scholar Kateregga notes: "The Christian witness, that man is created in the 'image and likeness of God,' is not the same as the Muslim witness. ...[F]or Islam, the only Divine quality that was entrusted to man as a result of God's breath was the faculty of knowledge, will, and power of action."⁷⁴⁹ Although he disagrees with their conclusions, he recognises that "God breathing into man His (God's) spirit is believed by some scholars to be the faculty of God – like knowledge and will, which if rightly used gives man superiority over all creation." Moreover "some modern Muslim scholars believe that the Qur'anic evidence suggests that man has a certain Godlikeness."⁷⁵⁰

The acknowledgement of this possibility is remarkable indeed. It may be this capacity

⁷³⁷ Gen.1:27; 5:1; 9:6; 1.Cor.11:7; Jam.3:9

⁷³⁸ 2.Pet.1:4

⁷³⁹ 1.Cor.3:9; 2.Cor.6:1

⁷⁴⁰ Ps.8:4-8

⁷⁴¹ Sarwar, *Islam*, 141

⁷⁴² Q.95:4

⁷⁴³ Q.17:70

⁷⁴⁴ Q.2:30,34; 6:165; 7:11; 15:28,29, 27:62, 38:71-73

⁷⁴⁵ Q.30:30. This may simply be the view that every child is naturally born a Muslim, but their parents convert them to Judaism, Christianity or Magianism (B.2:440, 441, 467).

⁷⁴⁶ Q.33:72

⁷⁴⁷ B.8:246. The Arabic phrase used in this Hadith '*ala s}ūratihī* 'according to His image' is identical with the term in the Van Dyke Arabic translation of the Bible *fa khalaq allāh al-insān 'ala s}ūratihī* (Gen.1:27). Zwemer was apparently unaware of this Hadith when he commented that Allah "has no relations to any creature that partake of resemblance. The statement in Genesis that man was created in the divine image is to the Moslem blasphemy."

Zwemer, *Doctrine of God*, 30

⁷⁴⁸ Kamali, *Textbook*, 2

⁷⁴⁹ Kateregga & Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 100,101

⁷⁵⁰ Kateregga & Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 15,21

which allows every person, no matter what their gender or status in life, to operate within a sphere of influence with some authority. Muhammad stated: “Everyone of you is a guardian and everyone of you is responsible (for his wards). A ruler is a guardian and is responsible (for his subjects); a man is a guardian of his family and responsible (for them); a wife is a guardian of her husband's house and she is responsible (for it), a slave is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible (for that). Beware! All of you are guardians and are responsible (for your wards).”⁷⁵¹ This accords with the ascription of vicegerency to humans in both the Qur’an⁷⁵² and the Bible.⁷⁵³

2. Negative ascriptions of humanity

Creation in the image of God is not the only word about humanity in the Qur’an, Hadith or the Bible. People live out their lives in a tension between extreme glory and utter depravity. According to orthodox Christian belief, people are also sinners from birth, deceitful of heart, and lacking in self-understanding.⁷⁵⁴

Some Qur’anic verses suggest that evil originates from humanity. The following twenty eight attributes are applied to people in general (Table 18). The Qur’an presents these: “Indeed humanity is ... *inn^a al’insān^a* ...” or “he is ...*innah^u* ...”, referring to humankind as a whole, without discrimination.⁷⁵⁵

Table 18: Descriptions of humanity in the Qur’an

sinful (or unjust) <i>d{alūm^{an}</i> (Q. 14:34; 9:109; 33:72)	self-sufficient <i>astaghna</i> (Q.96:7; 92:8)	ungrateful <i>kaffār^{un}</i> (Q.11:9; 14:34; 30:34; 32:10; 80:17)
despairing <i>la’ūs^{un}</i> (Q.11:9)	weak <i>d{a’i^{an}</i> (Q.4:28; 30:54)	foolish <i>jahūl^{an}</i> (Q.33:72)
careless about your Lord <i>ma gharrak birabbik^a</i> (Q.82:6)	prays for evil the prayer meant for good <i>yad’u bishsharrⁱ</i> <i>du’aahu bilkhayr</i> (Q.17:11)	violent in his love for wealth <i>lih{ubb alkhayr lashadīd</i> (Q.100:8)
unthankful <i>qalīlan ma tashkurūn</i> (Q.7:10)	ungrateful to his Lord <i>lirabbihⁱ lakanūd^{un}</i> (Q.100:6)	exultant and boastful <i>farih{^{un} fakhūr^{un}</i> (Q.11.10)
rebellious <i>yat{ga</i> (Q.96:6)	arrogant (Q.90:5-7)	quarrelsome <i>khasīm</i> (Q.16:4)
irritable <i>jazū’an</i> (Q.70:20; c.f. 30:36).	impatient <i>halūman</i> (Q.70:19).	ever hasty <i>’ajūlan</i> (Q.17:11; 21:37)
liars about the judgement <i>kadhdhabūn biddīn</i> (Q.82:9)	inclined to evil <i>amāra bissū’</i> (Q.12:53)	remains proud <i>yusirr^u</i> <i>mustakbir^{an}</i> (Q.45:8)

⁷⁵¹ B.2:18; 3:592, 730, 732; 4:14; 7:116, 128; 9:252

⁷⁵² Q.2:30; 6:165; 7:69, 74; 27:62; 35:39; 10:14,73; 7:129

⁷⁵³ Gen.1:26-30; 2:15-20

⁷⁵⁴ Ps.51:5; Jer.17:9; Rom.7:15

⁷⁵⁵ There are many additional verses which ascribe sinfulness to particular individuals, or to unbelievers who refused to accept Muhammad’s message.

turns away and becomes remote <i>a'ragh wa ni'a bijānibihi</i> (Q.17:83)	More quarrelsome than anything <i>akhthar shay jadalan</i> (18:54)	despairing when evil touches him <i>idha massahu ash-sharkān yu'sān</i> (Q.17:83)
in loss <i>fi khusr</i> (Q.103:2)	miserly <i>qatūr</i> (Q.17:100)	ingrate <i>kafūr</i> 22:66
niggardly <i>manū'an</i> (Q.70:20; c.f. 30:36).		

Based on such passages, one commentator finds support for the doctrine of original sin within the Qur'an.⁷⁵⁶ The Prophet himself bemoaned human untrustworthiness: "People are just like camels, out of one hundred, one can hardly find a single camel suitable to ride."⁷⁵⁷ There is certainly, in Muhammad's view, a cause for pessimism about humanity. He asked a contemporary: "What will be your condition when you will be left with the sediments of (worst) people?"⁷⁵⁸ He felt that his was the finest generation: "The best of my followers are those living in my generation (i.e. my contemporaries), and then those who will follow the latter... There will come after you, people who will bear witness without being asked to do so, and will be treacherous and untrustworthy, and they will vow and never fulfill their vows, and fatness will appear among them."⁷⁵⁹ Ultimately "the righteous (pious) people will depart (die) in succession one after the other, and there will remain (on the earth) useless people like the useless husk of barley seeds or bad dates."⁷⁶⁰ Already this trend was becoming apparent in a devaluation of the importance of sin. 'Anas told a later generation: "You people do (bad) deeds (commit sins) which seem in your eyes as tiny (minute) than (sic.) hair while we used to consider those (very deeds) during the life-time of the Prophet as destructive sins."⁷⁶¹ He prophesied a time when honesty would become so rare among humanity as to be remarkable.⁷⁶²

Even in paradise, with all his needs fulfilled, a man will ask for land to grow crops which he will then pile up in heaps like mountains. Allah's disgust is shown by his comment: "Take, here you are, O son of Adam, for nothing satisfies you."⁷⁶³ Human greed seems to persist beyond the grave. So does the desire for revenge. "The believers, after being saved from the (Hell) Fire, will be stopped at a bridge between Paradise and Hell and mutual retaliation will be established among them regarding wrongs they have committed in the world against one another."⁷⁶⁴ Apparently not even salvation from hell and entry into Paradise can curb these baser human instincts, according to the Hadith.

3. *The impact of Adam*

The problem appears to have begun with the disobedient action of the first humans. The punishment for this was to be cast down from paradise to earth for a period. "Therein you shall

⁷⁵⁶ Haddad, *Principles*, chapters 11 & 12

⁷⁵⁷ B.8:505

⁷⁵⁸ B.1:467

⁷⁵⁹ B.3:819, 820; 4:757; 5:2,3; 8:436, 437, 652, 686

⁷⁶⁰ B.8:442

⁷⁶¹ B.8:499

⁷⁶² B.8:504; 9:208

⁷⁶³ B.9:610

⁷⁶⁴ B.8:542

live and therein you shall die, and from there you shall be brought forth.”⁷⁶⁵ Eaton comments: “They ‘fell’ together, equal in guilt as they had been in glory.”⁷⁶⁶ The movement from height to depth is conveyed in the following verse: “We created man in the best stature (mould), then we reduced him to the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do righteous deeds.”⁷⁶⁷ Yet most Muslims are quick to deny the idea of a ‘fall’ in Islam. “There is no Fall in the Qur’an, hence there is no Original Sin. Human beings are not born sinful into this world, hence do not need to be ‘redeemed’ or ‘saved’. This is generally accepted in the Islamic tradition.”⁷⁶⁸ Barlas projects the Adam narrative back to an evolutionary pre-history. “[T]here is no qur’anic narrative about original sin or Eve’s culpability for the fall ... Indeed, there is no concept of the fall in Islam. Rather ... the expulsion of the human pair from paradise marks the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness.”⁷⁶⁹

However, Adam’s action did not involve himself only (see Figure 14).

4. *The role of Satan*

Several Hadith propose that the devil took advantage of Adam’s weakness early on. “Allah’s Apostle (peace be upon him) said: ‘When Allah fashioned Adam in Paradise, He left him as He liked him to leave. Then Iblis [the devil] roamed round him to see what actually that was and when he found him hollow from within, he recognised that he had been created with a disposition that he would not have control over himself.’”⁷⁷² Another Hadith suggests that Satan himself has filled this hollow void: “Satan circulates in the mind of a person as blood does (in his body) and ... Satan might put some (evil) thoughts in your minds...”⁷⁷³

This process appears to begin at birth: “When any human being is born, Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers”.⁷⁷⁴ The close contact continues throughout life. Every Muslim is told to wash out his nose three times each morning “because Satan has stayed in the upper part of his nose all the night”.⁷⁷⁵ Demonic interference is clearly personal and

Figure 14

Effects of Adam’s sin

Moses saw the effects of Adam’s sin being passed on to his progeny forever, when he accused Adam: “You are the one who made people miserable and turned them out of Paradise.”⁷⁷⁰ Another Hadith is even more specific: “You ... led people astray and brought them out of the Garden.”⁷⁷¹ Clearly, if Adam’s sin had not affected subsequent generations in some way, then humans would have continued to have the same free access to Paradise that Adam and his wife initially enjoyed. Their action changed the human situation forever.

⁷⁶⁵ Q.7:24

⁷⁶⁶ Eaton, “Man”, 361

⁷⁶⁷ Q.95:4-6

⁷⁶⁸ Hassan, “An Islamic Perspective”, 107

⁷⁶⁹ Barlas, “Women’s readings of the Qur’ān”, 259

⁷⁷⁰ B.6:260

⁷⁷¹ Muwatta 46:1 quoted from CD ‘The Islamic Scholar’ – Hadith – Muwatta

⁷⁷² Sahih Muslim no. 1200 narrated by Anas ibn Malik from CD Alim/Hadith/Sahih Muslim

⁷⁷³ B.3:254, 251, 255; 4:333, 501; 8:238; 9:283)

⁷⁷⁴ B.4:506

⁷⁷⁵ B.4:516

physical. One man slept through the call to prayer because “Satan urinated in his ears”.⁷⁷⁶

5. *Synthesis*

This combination of being created in the divine image and at the same time having Satan circulating in one’s blood, sleeping in one’s nose, and urinating one’s ear, makes for a strange creature. C.S.Lewis’ demonic antagonist referred to humans as “half spirit and half animal”.⁷⁷⁷ This analysis was shared by the Sheikh of al-Rabwah, Muhammad al-Demashqi (d. 727/1327). He states about man: “He is just like an animal in his lust and hunger to develop the earth; and he is like angels in knowledge, worship and guidance.”⁷⁷⁸

In a dream described in one Hadith, Muhammad encountered people whose appearance displayed the best and worst of humanity. “There we met men who, half of their bodies, look like the most-handsome human beings you have ever seen, and the other half, the ugliest human beings you have ever seen.” The reason for this form was explained to Muhammad: “they were those who mixed good deeds and bad deeds” Even more remarkable is the way in which their appearance became transformed. In the dream two (possibly angelic) visitors spoke to these half-handsome, half-ugly people: “ ‘Go and dip yourselves in that river.’ So they dipped themselves therein and then came to us, their ugliness having disappeared and they were in the most-handsome shape. The visitors said, ‘The first is the Garden of Eden and that is your dwelling place.’” Then they added: “Allah forgave them.”⁷⁷⁹ This Hadith will be discussed below.

6. *Humans: individual or corporate?*

At times in Islamic theology, there is a clear expression of Allah’s dealing with each individual on a personal level. This is found in the Hadith: “Allah has appointed an angel in the womb, and the angel says, ‘O Lord! A drop of discharge (i.e. of semen), O Lord! A clot, O Lord! A piece of flesh.’ And then, if Allah wishes to complete the child’s creation, the angel will say, ‘O Lord! A male or a female? O Lord! Wretched or blessed (in religion)? What will his livelihood be? What will his age be?’ The angel writes all this while the child is in the womb of its mother.”⁷⁸⁰ Every person has his or her unique future mapped out, according to this Hadith. At other times, there is a strong connection between Adam and humanity, as though the shared identity is the key feature. A person in hell is addressed by Allah: “While you were in the backbone of Adam, I asked you ...not to worship others besides Me, but you insisted on worshipping others besides me.”⁷⁸¹ This is based on a Qur’anic concept,⁷⁸² where the people are brought forth from the loins of Adam’s offspring.⁷⁸³

Although Abdalati claims that, in the Muslim view, “sin is not hereditary, transferable, or communal in nature”,⁷⁸⁴ the Hadith hint at a different picture. One account intimates that the first man passed some of his less noble characteristics onto his descendents. Adam in his earlier days had conferred forty of his own years upon David. Muhammad related the story: “When Adam

⁷⁷⁶ B.2:245; 4:492

⁷⁷⁷ Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 44

⁷⁷⁸ Cited in *Arab Development Report 2003*, 19

⁷⁷⁹ B.6:196; 9:171

⁷⁸⁰ B.4:550

⁷⁸¹ B.4:551; 8:562

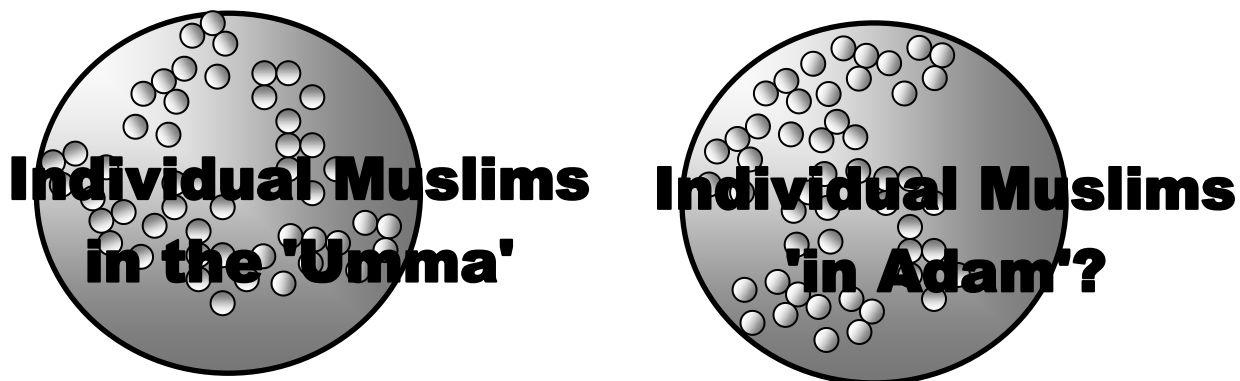
⁷⁸² Q.7:172

⁷⁸³ Al-Hilali & Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an*, 226 give an alternative translation of this as “from Adam’s loin his offspring”

⁷⁸⁴ Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, pp. 40–52.

completed his age life-span with only forty years remaining, there came to him the angel of death. Thereupon Adam said: ‘Are there not forty years left in my life-span?’ The angel said: ‘Did you not confer your son (forty years)?’ Adam denied it and so did his offspring. Adam forgot and ate (the fruit) of the tree and so his offspring also forgot; and he (Adam) sinned and his offspring sinned.”⁷⁸⁵ Clearly the first instance of an action has repercussive effects. The Prophet said, “No human being is killed unjustly, but a part of responsibility for the crime is laid on the first son of Adam who invented the tradition of killing (murdering) on the earth.”⁷⁸⁶ Adam’s wife is also implicated in subsequent human failings. Muhammad stated: “But for Eve, wives would never betray their husbands.”⁷⁸⁷ Some sense of sin being inherited or innate is implied here. This thought is not unfamiliar to Muslims. “Islamic cultures ... characteristically tend to have at least some sense of corporate responsibility for the misdeeds of others in the kinship network. Indeed the emphasis that Islamic cultures typically have on honour and shame may often mean that serious misdemeanours bring disgrace on the family, and even on the whole community for generations to come.”⁷⁸⁸ Although each person is an individual, their true identity is drawn from their corporate association with Islam, as a part of the *Umma*, or with Adam, as a part of the human race (Illustration 13). Adam’s legacy of disobedience has continued to have an effect on succeeding generations.

Illustration 13: Comparing being ‘in the umma’ with being ‘in Adam’



7. Connections with biblical themes

The shared expression ‘in His image’ in the Hadith provides a good starting point for a discussion on the nature of humanity from both Muslim and Christian perspectives. If people somehow express the image of God, then the prospect of a deeper bond with Him exists. “The image of God in humankind means that there is a basic likeness between God and humankind which creates the possibility of a personal relationship with God, and of God revealing himself to humans.”⁷⁸⁹

Although there are hints in that direction, Muslim theology in general lacks the full-orbed depiction of the human condition which is found in the Bible. People are neither very good nor very bad. The biblical description of humanity being made ‘in the image of God’ receives a single mention in the Hadith, but its meaning is not developed. At the same time the full depth of

⁷⁸⁵ Robson, *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Vol. 1 p.31

⁷⁸⁶ B.9:6; 4:552; 9:423

⁷⁸⁷ B.4:547

⁷⁸⁸ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 221

⁷⁸⁹ Chapman, *The Bible*, 24

human depravity is downplayed in the Qur'an by references to people who simply 'forgot' (*nasiya*)⁷⁹⁰ or were 'neglectful' (*ghāfil*).⁷⁹¹ The way some Muslim writers describe humanity suggests they are intentionally trying to ignore the painful evidence of human history. Shabbir Akhtar writes that "Muslims are religiously obliged to resist the tragic conclusion that man has failed in some ultimate and irreversible way". He goes on: "Muslims must, rightly or wrongly, refuse to concede the tragic failure of man on pain of having no theology left to articulate."⁷⁹² To stare distressingly obvious truth in the face can be an agonizing experience. Denial may appear to be the only option. Yet without proper diagnosis, the appropriate treatment is unlikely to be prescribed.

Some value may still be extracted from the Hadith's description above of humans performing a mixture of good and bad deeds. This portrayal would seem to be applicable to everyone in some way. Few people would admit to being perfect, and even fewer to being totally depraved. This accords with the human condition of being created in the image of God, and yet having fallen from grace.

The antidote which removed their repulsiveness in this account was immersion in water. Their bad deeds were overlooked. This Hadith brings to mind the biblical statement: "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior."⁷⁹³ Baptism as the cleansing through washing is also mentioned.⁷⁹⁴ Baptism receives a single mention in the Qur'an: "(Our religion is) the baptism of Allah; and who can baptize better than Allah?"⁷⁹⁵ However this concept is not at all developed in Muslim theology. Analyses such as that given above provide a starting point for discussions about the inner nature of people, and possible solutions to the human condition. We will look at the Hadith's analysis of the human heart below.

⁷⁹⁰ e.g. Q.6:44

⁷⁹¹ e.g. Q.7:205

⁷⁹² Akhtar, *Faith*, 161.

⁷⁹³ Tit.3:5,6. God promised the Israelities: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean." (Ezek.36:25)

⁷⁹⁴ Eph.5:26

⁷⁹⁵ Q.2:138

CHAPTER 10: The forgiveness of sins

Like the Qur'an and the Bible, the Hadith contain much information about sin and forgiveness. The Hadith contain lists of acceptable behaviour which is required,⁷⁹⁶ and actions which are forbidden.⁷⁹⁷

1. Sins incur penalties

Sin is not ignored or glossed over, for a judgment is coming.⁷⁹⁸ "Some people ... will be scorched by Hell (Fire) as a punishment for sins they have committed, and then Allah will admit them into Paradise by the grant of His Mercy."⁷⁹⁹

The requirement for entry into Paradise is that one's sins be forgiven. A single indiscretion can affect one's eternal destiny.⁸⁰⁰ Thabit reported that "a man used to raise his voice over the voice of the Prophet and so all his good deeds have been annulled and he is from the people of Hell."⁸⁰¹

The Bible is similarly clear about the dangers of disobeying God. "Everyone will die for his own sin," reported Jeremiah; "The wages of sin is death," stated Paul.⁸⁰²

2. Sins must be paid for

God's opposition to sin is a consistent theme of the whole Bible, from the judgment in the Garden of Eden to the grand assize with the ultimate destination of the evil ones in "the fiery lake of burning sulphur."⁸⁰³ A general principle is that sin must be paid for – it is not simply overlooked. Abraham asks rhetorically: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"⁸⁰⁴ Jesus set a high standard: "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."⁸⁰⁵

In the Hadith, sin may sometimes be paid for in this life. "And whoever indulges in any one of them (except the ascription of partners to Allah) and gets the punishment in this world, that punishment will be an expiation for that sin. And if one indulges in any of them, and Allah conceals his sin, it is up to Him to forgive or punish him (in the Hereafter)."⁸⁰⁶ One man was told by Muhammad that his unnamed but legally punishable sin was forgiven because he had prayed along with the Prophet and his companions.⁸⁰⁷

In the Roman Catholic concept, sin is considered as 'being in arrears' towards God. It can be paid for by performing good works or receiving indulgences through which, as a Jesuit priest expressed it, "we can make devastating inroads into our sinful debt." He concludes: "it is quite possible for any consecrated person to die with all temporal punishment for past forgiven sins

⁷⁹⁶ e.g. B.1:505

⁷⁹⁷ e.g. B.4:28

⁷⁹⁸ B.1:17; 5:232, 233; 6:419; 9:12, 37, 320, 560

⁷⁹⁹ B.9:542

⁸⁰⁰ e.g. B.4:175; 7:717

⁸⁰¹ B.4:810

⁸⁰² Jer.31:30; Rom.6:23

⁸⁰³ Rev.21:8

⁸⁰⁴ Gen.18:25

⁸⁰⁵ Mt.12:36

⁸⁰⁶ B.1:17; 5:232; 6:417; 8:775, 793; 9:320, 560

⁸⁰⁷ B.8:812

removed.”⁸⁰⁸ This aspiration would be shared by many Muslims.

The means of achieving this in Islam are manifold. They would include saying prayers five times a day,⁸⁰⁹ especially in Ramadhan,⁸¹⁰ and particularly the night of *Qadr* (predestination or decree),⁸¹¹ fasting during Ramadhan,⁸¹² performing ablutions,⁸¹³ spending for Allah’s sake,⁸¹⁴ or “even for the morsel of food which you put in your wife’s mouth.”⁸¹⁵ As the early Muslims dug the defensive trench around Medina, Muhammad prayed for their forgiveness.⁸¹⁶

The Qur’an calls such good works “a beautiful loan to God”,⁸¹⁷ which God promises to multiply many times over.⁸¹⁸ The reward for one deed can be doubled⁸¹⁹ or even multiplied ten to seven hundred times.⁸²⁰ A small good deed, such as giving a date as charity, will ascend to Allah who will bring it up for its owner as one does a baby horse until it becomes a mountain.⁸²¹

3. Sin and forgiveness as commercial transactions

Deeds will be weighed on scales on the Day of Judgement.⁸²² For reciting a certain pious phrase one hundred times, “one hundred good deeds will be written in his accounts, and one hundred sins will be deducted from his accounts.”⁸²³ Muhammad told his followers to recite “two expressions which are very easy for the tongue to say, but they are very heavy in the balance.”⁸²⁴ Both the Qur’an and the Hadith use commercial language when describing sin and forgiveness. The Promise/Threat Graph (Illustration 14) illustrates some of these principles in the Hadith. Good and bad deeds are spiritual credits or debits based on actions as one’s life progresses (the dashed line in the diagram). The account starts at ‘zero’, for humans are seen as morally neutral at birth, for all people are born as Muslims, according to the Hadith.⁸²⁵ The same applies to a convert to Islam. “His acceptance of Islam puts him squarely in the zero zone and lays out before him the arduous road of the Shari’ah ... which he has yet to tread in order to lift himself out of the zero zone by his own efforts.”⁸²⁶ A good work (Action A) attracts reward when performed.⁸²⁷ As Muhammad described it: “any good deed which you will do for Allah’s Sake, will upgrade and elevate you.”⁸²⁸ Reward and forgiveness are often bracketed together. A fighter’s martyrdom

⁸⁰⁸ McAuliffe, “Forestalling the pains of purgatory”, 291. This concept is still widely believed and practiced. See <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm> accessed 8th Jan, 2011

⁸⁰⁹ B.1:504, 506

⁸¹⁰ B.1:36

⁸¹¹ B.1:34

⁸¹² B.1:37

⁸¹³ B.1:161

⁸¹⁴ B.1:53

⁸¹⁵ B.1:53, 576; 5:693; 8:384, 725

⁸¹⁶ B.5:424, 425

⁸¹⁷ Q.5:12

⁸¹⁸ Q.2:245

⁸¹⁹ B.1: 97.1; 4:255, 655

⁸²⁰ B.1:40; 8:498; 9:592

⁸²¹ B.2:491; 9:525.2

⁸²² B.6:206; 9:508

⁸²³ B.8:412

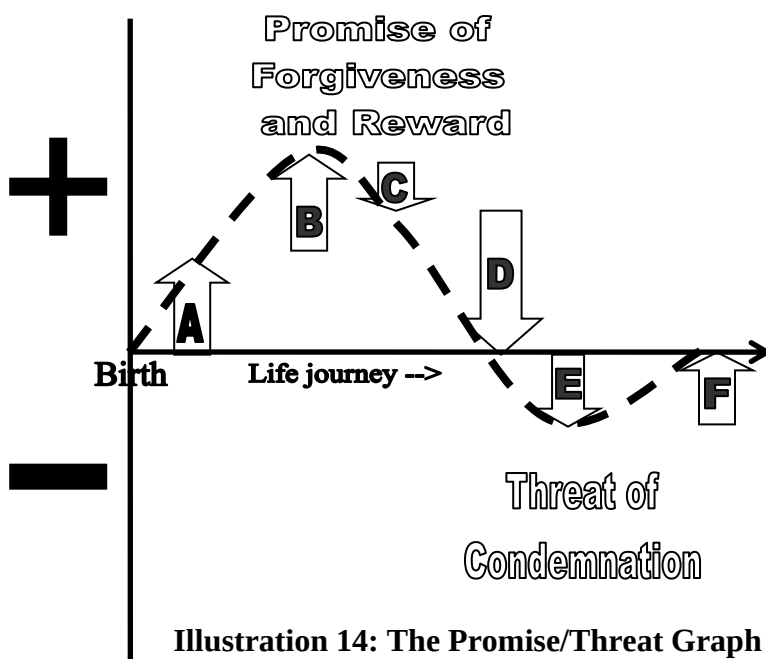
⁸²⁴ B.8:415, 673; 9:652

⁸²⁵ B.2:440, 441, 467

⁸²⁶ Al-Faruqi, *Ethics*, 226

⁸²⁷ B.7:572

⁸²⁸ B.6:693,273



immediately after he embraced Islam was described as “a little work, but a great reward.”⁸²⁹ Good works, such as worshipping only Allah, result in avoidance of punishment.

Further good works accumulate (i.e. Actions A + B), generating a surplus of merit. A man providing food for his wife would be rewarded. Simple actions, such as giving half a date in charity or saying a “good pleasant word” would help protect one from the fire.⁸³⁰ Certain recited phrases are heavy on the weighing scales.⁸³¹ All purchases

accrued merit, but for some unexplained reason, construction projects did not. “A Muslim is rewarded (in the Hereafter) for whatever he spends except for something that he spends on building.”⁸³² Yet whoever builds a mosque on earth, “Allah would build for him a similar place in Paradise”.⁸³³

Unacceptable actions (Action C) decrease any accrued merit. Some deeds involve a small loss. Keeping a dog for other than hunting or guarding accrued a daily loss of two *Qirats* (1/3 of a *dirham*).⁸³⁴ Other actions cancel all previous merit (Action D),⁸³⁵ e.g. whoever oppresses another will have his good deeds taken from him⁸³⁶ as will a slave who befriends some one without his master’s permission.⁸³⁷ Sins of omission operate in this sphere: “Whoever leaves the ‘Asr prayer, all his (good) deeds will be annulled.”⁸³⁸ Thus neglecting to do what is required has the same negative effect as performing a forbidden action.

Any sin (Action E) moves the actor towards condemnation, for “every soul is delivered to ruin by its own acts.”⁸³⁹ However this too can be cancelled out (Action F), e.g. “good deeds remove (annul) the evil deeds (small sins).”⁸⁴⁰ Whoever recited a certain short prayer one hundred times a day “will be forgiven all his sins even if they were as much as the foam of the

⁸²⁹ B.4:63

⁸³⁰ B.8:547, 548, 568

⁸³¹ B.8:673

⁸³² B.7:576

⁸³³ B.1:441

⁸³⁴ B.7:390

⁸³⁵ B.2:532; 6:62

⁸³⁶ B.3:629

⁸³⁷ B.8:747; 3:94; 4:397, 404; 9:403

⁸³⁸ B.1:528

⁸³⁹ Q.6:70; 34:50

⁸⁴⁰ B.1:504; 6:209 c.f. Q.11:114; 4:31

sea.”⁸⁴¹ Life’s trials, such as sickness, could result in cleansing from some sins.⁸⁴² Since the plague was seen as a punishment from Allah, those in a land afflicted by plague were advised not to leave it.⁸⁴³ Presumably to remain and receive unmerited punishment in this life was better than fleeing and receiving punishment merited by one’s sins in the hereafter.

The biblical perspective reveals sin as more insidious and persistent. It is not simply a ledger fluctuating between red and black, with a bottom line that can ultimately be balanced by hard work and good behaviour. Sin indicates a universally-experienced distortion within the human spirit. The Preacher of Proverbs asks: “Who can say, ‘I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin’?”⁸⁴⁴ The answer is resoundingly negative – no-one, neither Jew nor Gentile or even the Apostle Paul himself, could attain the high standards of a pure and righteous God: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”⁸⁴⁵

4. *The unforgivable sin*

The Bible’s sole reference to unforgiveable sin relates to those who were saying of Jesus: “He has an evil spirit.”⁸⁴⁶ It involves attributing the work of Christ to demonic origins.

Although most Muslims would claim that the only unforgivable sin in Islam is *shirk* (associating other deities with Allah),⁸⁴⁷ the Hadith list other sins which are unforgivable. These include withholding water from travelers when you have a surplus, pledging obedience to a Muslim ruler only for worldly gain, and making a false oath while bargaining after the ‘As}r prayer.⁸⁴⁸ Claiming falsely to be some one’s son would bar one from Paradise.⁸⁴⁹ On another occasion, Muhammad warned against presumption. “Whoever performs the ablution as I have done this time and then proceeds to the mosque and offers a two-*Rak’at* [bowing and prostrating] prayer and then sits there (waiting for the compulsory congregational prayers), then all his past sins will be forgiven.” However the value of one’s prayers could be nullified by a simple action like breaking wind after ablutions.⁸⁵⁰

Even after assuring his followers that performing prayers perfectly would result in the forgiveness of all past sins, Muhammad immediately negates this assurance by adding: “Do not be conceited (thinking that your sins will be forgiven because of your prayer).”⁸⁵¹ The chances of success appear to be slim. At the Judgement, Adam is asked to take out from all humanity those people condemned to the Fire. When Adam asks how many this would be, the divine voice replies: “Out of every thousand (take out) nine-hundred and ninety-nine (persons)”⁸⁵²

⁸⁴¹ B.8:414

⁸⁴² B.9:562

⁸⁴³ B.9:104

⁸⁴⁴ Prov.20:9

⁸⁴⁵ Rom.3:10-12 quoting Ps.14:1-4; 53:1-3; Eccl.7:20

⁸⁴⁶ Mk 3:28-30

⁸⁴⁷ based on Q.4:48, 116, B.7:850; 8:507. Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, 23–40.

⁸⁴⁸ B.3:838

⁸⁴⁹ B.8:758, 759

⁸⁵⁰ B.9:86

⁸⁵¹ B.8:441

⁸⁵² B.4:567; 6:265; 8:537

5. Unstable identity of those who sin

Moreover the Hadith complicate matters by altering the definition of a believer. One day Muhammad announced a word from Allah: “In this morning some of my slaves remained as true



Illustration 15:
Switching between
‘believer’ and ‘non-
believer status’

believers and some became non-believers.”⁸⁵³ Those who attributed the recent rain to a star became unbelievers, whilst those who gave the credit to Allah remained believers. A man who wanted to kill a disbeliever who then converted to Islam in the heat of

battle was told by Muhammad that “you would be in the position in which he was before he said the sentence.”⁸⁵⁴ Those who kill other Muslims “become disbelievers”.⁸⁵⁵ Another time the Prophet said:

“When an adulterer commits illegal sexual intercourse, then he is not a believer at the time he is doing it, and when a drinker of an alcoholic liquor drinks it, then he is not a believer at the time of drinking it, and when a thief steals, then he is not a believer at the time of stealing, and when a robber robs, and the people look at him, then he is not a believer at the time of doing robbery.”⁸⁵⁶

It appears that one moves in and out of faith by their belief and actions – good or otherwise (Illustration 15). Commenting on this saying, Ibn Abbas claims that repentance returns the person to faith.⁸⁵⁷ There seems to be no stability of identity. One’s spiritual status is transformed quickly, contingent on one’s actions. Nasr comments: “The life of the Muslim moves like a winding road toward a mountain top, vacillating from one side to another between rigor and mercy, fear of God’s retribution and trust in His forgiveness.”⁸⁵⁸ The overall impression is of religious undulation and uncertainty.

6. Uncertain outcome for those who sin

Even if a person avoided the major sins, how could they know if their good deeds would outweigh their bad deeds? On his death-bed, the Caliph ‘Umar was reminded of his great accomplishments, but even these did not seem enough.

“A young man came saying, ‘O chief of the believers! Receive the glad tidings from Allah to you due to your company with Allah’s Apostle and your superiority in Islam which you know. Then you became the ruler (i.e. Caliph) and you ruled with justice and finally you have been martyred.’ ‘Umar said, ‘I wish that all these privileges will counterbalance (my shortcomings) so that I will neither lose nor gain anything.’”⁸⁵⁹

In another account, he stated: “If (at all) I had gold equal to the earth, I would have

⁸⁵³ B.1:807; 2:148; 5:468

⁸⁵⁴ B.9:5

⁸⁵⁵ B.8:187; 9:7,8

⁸⁵⁶ B.3:655; 7:484; 8:763, 801

⁸⁵⁷ B.8:800.2

⁸⁵⁸ Nasr, “God”, 318

⁸⁵⁹ B.2:475; 5:50, 254

ransomed myself with it from the punishment of Allah before I meet Him.”⁸⁶⁰ This was despite Muhammad’s assurance that ‘Umar would enter paradise.⁸⁶¹ When one of the *muhājirūn* (immigrants from Mecca) died in Medina, a fellow Muslim claimed that Allah had blessed the deceased. Muhammad corrected him: “As regards Uthman, by Allah, he has died and I really wish him every good, yet, by Allah, although I am Allah’s Apostle, I do not know what will be done to him.”⁸⁶²

7. Connections with biblical themes

Muslim and Christian understandings differ on sin, how God responds to it, and how to repent. For Muslims, according to Rodinson,

“sin was a fault, a disobedience, a mark of ingratitude, an omission brought about by an unjustified preference for the goods of this world. It never elicited from God the laments of the betrayed lover, weeping to see faithless man reject his love, which run through all the pages of the Old and New Testaments. Such a piteous appeal for the love of a weak creature would be inconceivable coming from the Master of the worlds of the Koran, who reaches the uttermost limits of his goodness in himself deigning to love and to forgive.”⁸⁶³

Although it never quite reaches to the levels of biblical revelation, one particular story in the Hadith illustrates a kind of ‘softening’ in Allah.

“The Prophet said, “Amongst the men of Bani Israel there was a man who had murdered ninety-nine persons. Then he set out asking (whether his repentance could be accepted or not). He came upon a monk and asked him if his repentance could be accepted. The monk replied in the negative and so the man killed him. He kept on asking till a man advised to go to such and such village. (So he left for it) but death overtook him on the way. While dying, he turned his chest towards that village (where he had hoped his repentance would be accepted), and so the angels of mercy and the angels of punishment quarrelled amongst themselves regarding him. Allah ordered the village (towards which he was going) to come closer to him, and ordered the village (whence he had come), to go far away, and then He ordered the angels to measure the distances between his body and the two villages. So he was found to be one span closer to the village (he was going to). So he was forgiven.”⁸⁶⁴

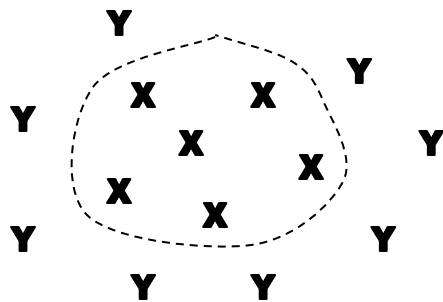


Illustration 16: a ‘bounded’ set

The connections with the story of the Prodigal Son⁸⁶⁵ and the repentant thief on the cross⁸⁶⁶ are patent. God does not require good works in order for sin to be forgiven. “By observing the law, no-one will be justified.”⁸⁶⁷ In this Hadith narrative, God intervenes in the physical world to save the undeserving man. As the Bible says: “It is God who justifies.”⁸⁶⁸ Yet He does so according to standards of justice – the fortunate man was heading towards, and was

⁸⁶⁰ B.5:41

⁸⁶¹ B.5:42; 8:235; 9:367

⁸⁶² B.3:852

⁸⁶³ Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 235

⁸⁶⁴ B.4:676

⁸⁶⁵ Lk.15:11-32

⁸⁶⁶ Lk.23:39-43

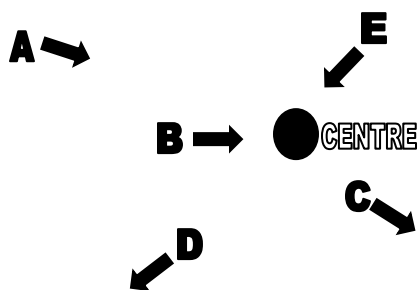
⁸⁶⁷ Gal.2:16

⁸⁶⁸ Rom.8:33

one span closer to, the village where he hoped his repentance would be accepted. The only requirement was the most basic turning towards God.⁸⁶⁹ Are there any implications in this to help Christians involved in ministry to Muslims?

Some involved in cross-cultural ministry have struggled with these issues, and have developed various responses, including how they view conversion. There are two basic approaches to conversion and affiliation.⁸⁷⁰ The first is expressed in the term ‘bounded sets’ (Illustration 16) where objects (in this case, people) are defined by their position in relation to the boundary. Any person is either ‘inside’ (X) or ‘outside’ (Y) the set. The key element is their location. From a spiritual perspective, this might include membership of the church, etc. Those inside the set have been accepted as members of the set because they fulfill certain criteria. It is based on a one-time static analysis.

Illustration 17: a ‘centred’ set



A second way of viewing conversion is through the paradigm of ‘centred sets’ (Illustration 17). The focus of this model is not a boundary line but the centre. The defining issue is not current proximity to the centre, but rather movement towards the hub (i.e. A, B & E), rather than away from it (C & D). It is a more dynamic situation, since the positions will change over time.

According to some Hadith, the performance of a sufficient number of good works is no guarantee of entry to Paradise: the better indicator of ultimate success was orientation towards the goal. The stories of

the repentant killer of the Hadith who “turned his chest”, the returning prodigal son who “came to his senses ... got up and returned to his father”, and the thief on the cross beside Jesus all depict people who are re-aligning their lives towards the centre, even though they may be ‘a long way off’ and can boast no good works to merit any acceptance. They had all come to a point of ‘conversion’ without earning it by their righteous deeds. This is crucial to the topic at hand. As Richard Peace observed: “how we conceive of conversion determines how we do evangelism.”⁸⁷¹

There are different understandings of how to turn back to God. Rodinson contrasts Muslim and Christian understandings. For a Muslim, “the sinner’s repentance was much more the regretful acknowledgement of a mistake, an unfortunate oversight, than the anguished desolation of a creature who, craving love, has momentarily strayed or failed to see the offer of a boundless affection until too late.”⁸⁷² Another writer reminds us that “repentance is not the first step towards grace, but a response to grace.”⁸⁷³

The task of evangelism and assessing the spiritual status of those being addressed is a risky venture, for what is at stake is one’s eternal destiny. “It will be said to the people of Paradise, ‘O people of Paradise! Eternity (for you) and no death,’ and to the people of the Fire, ‘O people of the Fire, eternity (for you) and no death!’”⁸⁷⁴ The Bible likewise refers to heaven⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁶⁹ The Qur’an, however, suggests a certain arbitrariness about Allah in response: “He forgives whom he pleases and He punishes whom He pleases” (Q.5:18).

⁸⁷⁰ Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*

⁸⁷¹ Peace, *Conversion*, 286

⁸⁷² Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 236

⁸⁷³ Adam, *Hearing God’s Words*, 28

⁸⁷⁴ B.8:553, 552, 556

⁸⁷⁵ 1.Thess.4:17; 1.Cor.9:25

and hell⁸⁷⁶ as places of eternal abode.

So what is the role of good works? Can they be used to win one's acceptance before God? Some Hadith suggest that this is not always the case, as the next chapter shows.

⁸⁷⁶ Lk.16:26; Jude 1:13; Rev.20:10

CHAPTER 11: The inadequacy of works

1. *Actions are not a clear sign of one's final destiny*

Actions are an unclear indication of a person's ultimate fate, for, as the Prophet said: "your deeds will not make you enter Paradise."⁸⁷⁷ Israr Khan concedes that "the tradition does not give any credit to good deeds at all."⁸⁷⁸ Muhammad stated: "A man may do what seem to the people as the deeds of the dwellers of Paradise but he is from the dwellers of the Hell-Fire and another may do what seem to the people as the deeds of the dwellers of the Hell-Fire, but he is from the dwellers of Paradise."⁸⁷⁹

This concurs with two of Jesus' sayings. He announced to his disciples: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"⁸⁸⁰ yet the criminal crucified beside him was told: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."⁸⁸¹

2. *Muhammad's works did not guarantee his entry to Paradise*

Significantly, the Prophet himself expressed uncertainty about his personal destiny. He was so fearful of the possibility of hell-fire that he repeatedly implored Allah about it.⁸⁸² Aisha reported him "seeking refuge with Allah from the punishment in the grave in every prayer he prayed."⁸⁸³ He regularly entreated: "O Allah! I seek refuge with You from the punishment of the Fire, the afflictions of the grave, (and) the punishment in the grave."⁸⁸⁴ His death-bed prayer was: "O Allah! Excuse me and bestow Your Mercy on me and let me join with the highest companions (in Paradise)."⁸⁸⁵ Due to performing *ruqya* (reciting Qur'anic verses over the sick),⁸⁸⁶ Muhammad had apparently disqualified himself from being among the 70,000 Muslims guaranteed Paradise "who will neither have any reckoning of their accounts nor will receive any punishment".⁸⁸⁷

After a vision, he noted: "Hell became so near to me that I said, 'O my Lord, will I be among those people?'"⁸⁸⁸ At a funeral discussion about the ultimate state of the deceased, Muhammad admitted to his followers: "By Allah, though I am the Apostle of Allah, yet I do not know what Allah will do to me, nor to you."⁸⁸⁹ This accords with his statement in the Qur'an to

⁸⁷⁷ B.8:471, 474

⁸⁷⁸ Khan, *Authentication*, 57. Because this conflicts with the Qur'an's teaching about good works (Q.2:25, 82, 277; 3:57; 4:57, 122,173; 11:23; 14:23; 18:107; 22:14, 23, 50, 56; 29:58; 31:8; 32:19; 42:22; 47:12; 85:11, etc), Khan rejects the authenticity of this hadith

⁸⁷⁹ B.5:514. The similarity to Ezek.33:12-16 may be more apparent than real, for the element of repentance is missing in the Hadith's account.

⁸⁸⁰ Mt.7:22,23

⁸⁸¹ Lk.23:43

⁸⁸² B.1:795; 2: 159, 164, 458, 459; 4:76, 77; 6:320; 8:375, 376, 377 The Qur'an presents this uncertainty as a common issue (Q.26:51; 26:82; 66:8), despite affirming that those who believe "have assurance in the hereafter" (Q.2:4; 31:4).

⁸⁸³ B.2:454

⁸⁸⁴ B.1:795; 2:459; 4:76, 77; 6:230; 8:375, 376, 377, 378, 381, 385, 386, 387, 388

⁸⁸⁵ B.7:578

⁸⁸⁶ B.7:640, 642

⁸⁸⁷ B.8:549, 479; 7:648; 8:549, 550

⁸⁸⁸ B.1:712; 3:552

⁸⁸⁹ B.5:266; 2:334, 335; 9:131, 145

his followers: “nor do I know what will be done with me or with you.”⁸⁹⁰

Once he confidently stated:

“Whosoever will meet Allah without associating anything in worship with Him will go to Paradise.” When asked if this should be announced publicly, he averred: “No, I am afraid, lest they should depend upon it (absolutely).”⁸⁹¹

Despite this, he informed certain individuals that they would enter Paradise,⁸⁹² including Thābit bin Qais,⁸⁹³ Fāt}ima,⁸⁹⁴ ‘Umar,⁸⁹⁵ ‘Ukasha bin Muh}sin⁸⁹⁶ and a man who was killed as a martyr.⁸⁹⁷ After Haritha was killed in the battle of Badr, Muhammad assured the young soldier’s mother that “he is in

Paradise.”⁸⁹⁸ He also reported Allah’s statement that a blind person would enter paradise in compensation for the loss of his eyes.⁸⁹⁹ Paradise was also guaranteed for those who could “guarantee (the chastity of) what is between his two jaw-bones and what is between his two legs (i.e. his tongue and his private parts).”⁹⁰⁰ On another occasion, Muhammad noted the futility of good works to obtain salvation, even for himself (see Figure 15).

The echo from Eph.2:8,9 is deafening: “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast.” One is reminded of the divine prophecy found in Isaiah: “I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you.”⁹⁰³ Paul builds on this concept: “a man is not justified by observing the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” He informs Timothy that God saved us “not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace”.⁹⁰⁴ For Christians, good works are a consequence of salvation, not the cause of it.⁹⁰⁵

Figure 15

Muhammad uncertain of Paradise

Abū Huraira reported: “I heard Allah’s Apostle saying, “The good deeds of any person will not make him enter Paradise.” (i.e. None can enter Paradise through his good deeds.) They (the Prophet’s companions) said, “Not even you, O Allah’s Apostle?” He said, “Not even myself, unless Allah bestows His favor and mercy on me.”⁹⁰¹ Aisha concurred: “The Prophet said, “Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and receive good news because one’s good deeds will not make him enter Paradise.” They asked, “Even you, O Allah’s Apostle?” He said, “Even I, unless and until Allah bestows His pardon and Mercy on me.”⁹⁰²

⁸⁹⁰ Q.46:9

⁸⁹¹ B.1:131 also 4:108

⁸⁹² Many Muslims know of *al-`Ashara al-Mubasharîn bi-l-Janna* (‘the ten promised Paradise’) but these are not recorded in al-Bukhari. These are listed in the Hadith of Abu Dawūd 2191.

⁸⁹³ B.4:810

⁸⁹⁴ B.4:819

⁸⁹⁵ B.5:42

⁸⁹⁶ B.7:606; 8:549, 550

⁸⁹⁷ B.5:377

⁸⁹⁸ B.8:558, 572

⁸⁹⁹ B.7:557

⁹⁰⁰ B.8:481

⁹⁰¹ B.7:577

⁹⁰² B.8:474

⁹⁰³ Isa.57:12

⁹⁰⁴ 2.Tim.1:9

⁹⁰⁵ Gal.2:16 ; Tit.3:7,8

3. The relationship between faith and works

An indicator of the relationship between faith and works would be a death-bed conversion. A religious system such as Christianity based on faith-alone would recognise the salvific efficacy of such a last-minute commitment. The thief on the cross beside Jesus is the classic example.⁹⁰⁶ However a works-based religious system such as Islam, if strictly applied, should question it, since the person would be unable to perform any good works to save themselves. Muhammad worked hard to convince his dying uncle Abū Talib to pronounce the *shahāda*, promising to intercede for his uncle if he accepted Islam.⁹⁰⁷ He also stated that all one's previous good works would be counted.⁹⁰⁸ However these still might not have been enough to save his uncle from the hell-fire.

4. Connections with biblical themes

The Bible is unequivocal about the basis of salvation: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.**"⁹⁰⁹ Jesus was emphatic: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."⁹¹⁰ Paul writes very clearly: "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace."⁹¹¹

The Muslim uncertainty about salvation casts the Christian understanding of hope in a positive light. Writing about Indonesian Muslims who have come to faith in Christ, Greenlee notes that "assurance of salvation remains the most significant reason for the conversions, even among those informants who fervently exalt the power aspects of the Gospel."⁹¹²

On one occasion, Muhammad seemed to grasp the important distinction between works performed to earn merit in order to gain one's salvation, and those performed out of gratitude for a salvation that had already been won. "The Prophet used to offer night prayers till his feet became swollen. Somebody said to him, 'Allah has forgiven you, your faults of the past and those to follow.' On that, he said, 'Shouldn't I be a thankful slave (of Allah)?"⁹¹³ Prayer becomes an expression of gratefulness to God, rather than an exercise to gain religious merit. Muhammad spoke of God's "screening" work with believers. "Allah will bring a believer near Him and shelter him with His screen and ask him: 'Did you commit such-and-such sins?' He will say: 'Yes, my Lord.' Allah will keep on asking him till he will confess all his sins and will think that he is ruined. Allah will say: 'I did screen your sins in the world and I forgive them for you today', and then he will be given the book of his good deeds."⁹¹⁴ One is reminded of the biblical

⁹⁰⁶ Lk.23:43

⁹⁰⁷ B.2:442; 5:223; 6:295; 8:762

⁹⁰⁸ B.1:78; 2:517; 3:423; 8:21

⁹⁰⁹ Rom.10:9 - emphasis mine. The Bible is not universalistic regarding salvation i.e. that all people will be saved. There are conditions to be fulfilled. The primary action of faith (see Jn.6:28, 29) must be accompanied by deeds which illustrate the faith (Jam.2:14). These deeds will play some role in the judgement process (see Mt.25:37 ff.; Rev.20:12). There seems also to be the potential of falling away (Lk.9:62; Heb.6:4-6)

⁹¹⁰ John 5:24

⁹¹¹ Rom.11:6

⁹¹² He is citing Bard Lokken Knapstad, "Show us the Power: A Study of the Influence of Miracles on the Conversion Process from Islam to Christianity in an Indonesian Context" M.A. thesis (Oslo: Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, 2000) in Greenlee, "How is the Gospel Good News for Muslims?"

⁹¹³ B.6:360; 8:478. The Qur'an states to the Jews: "We forgave you so that you might be grateful" (Q.2:52)

⁹¹⁴ B.3:621; 6:207; 8:95, 96; 9:605

statement: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.”⁹¹⁵

However this teaching about assurance raises the question of justice and equity. Is sin simply overlooked by God, or does some price need to be paid? Are atonement and/or expiation necessary, or even possible? The next section addresses these important questions.

⁹¹⁵ 2.Cor.5:19

CHAPTER 12: Avoiding punishment for one's sins

1. *The Qur'an disavows human atonement but the Hadith affirms it*

The Qur'an appears to deny some core Christian beliefs. Yusuf Ali claims that "the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement [is] rejected by Islam."⁹¹⁶ According to the Qur'an, each person is responsible for his or her own sin: "Whoever earns a sin, he earns it only against himself."⁹¹⁷ "And whatever of misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned."⁹¹⁸ The equation appears to be simple: Good is rewarded⁹¹⁹ and evil is punished.⁹²⁰ Good and bad deeds only benefit or disadvantage the person who did them: "Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul".⁹²¹ The impression given is of a simple and clear correspondence between an action and its consequence, between a person's good or bad behaviour and his or her reward or punishment (Figure 16).

Figure 16: The APPARENT TEACHING OF ISLAM

A person performs a GOOD deed ➡ That person receives the appropriate REWARD

A person performs a BAD deed ➡ That person receives the appropriate PUNISHMENT

Deeds will be weighed on scales on the Day of Judgement, and every soul is *yubsal* (delivered) by what it has earned. Any form of substitution is disallowed.⁹²² Those who offer to bear the sins of others are liars, and will bear their own sins and other loads besides.⁹²³ Moreover the transferral of guilt is prohibited. "And whoever earns a fault or a sin and then throws it on to someone innocent, he has indeed burdened himself with falsehood and a manifest sin."⁹²⁴ Yusuf Ali reiterates his point: "There can be no vicarious atonement."⁹²⁵ In this chapter we will deal with bad deeds and punishment.

2. *Some sinful actions would be overlooked*

The principle of punishment being visited upon those who sinned was not always carried out. Some pagans who converted to Islam were burdened by their shameful history of murder and sex, particularly when they heard a verse recited describing these as unacceptable acts.⁹²⁶ They said, "O Muhammad! Whatever you say and invite people to, is good: but we wish if you could inform us whether we can make an expiation for our (past evil) deeds." As a result, the following verse was revealed: "Say: O My slaves who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah."⁹²⁷

When a man was accused of being a hypocrite, Muhammad ascertained that he had

⁹¹⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: English translation*, 268, n.663

⁹¹⁷ Q.4:111; 6:164

⁹¹⁸ Q.42:30

⁹¹⁹ Q.2:286; 4:124

⁹²⁰ Q.2:281; 4:123; 53:31

⁹²¹ Q.41:46; 17:7,15; 45:15

⁹²² Q.29:12

⁹²³ Q.29:13

⁹²⁴ Q.4:112

⁹²⁵ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: English translation*, 1643, n.5113

⁹²⁶ Q. 25:68

⁹²⁷ Q.39:53; B.6:334

recited the first sentence of the *shahāda*, and then pronounced: “Nobody will meet Allah with that saying on the Day of Resurrection, but Allah will save him from the Fire.”⁹²⁸

The avoidance of punishment was, however, conditional on not doing evil after accepting Islam. A man said: " ‘O Allah's Apostle! Shall we be punished for what we did in the Pre-Islamic Period of ignorance?’ The Prophet said, ‘Whoever does good in Islam will not be punished for what he did in the Pre-Islamic Period of ignorance and whoever does evil in Islam will be punished for his former and later (bad deeds).’ “⁹²⁹

At another time, this general ruling received a more specific response.

“Allah’s Apostle said, ‘Someone came to me from my Lord and gave me the news (or good tidings) that if any of my followers dies worshipping none (in any way) along with Allah, he will enter Paradise.’ I asked, ‘Even if he committed illegal sexual intercourse (adultery) and theft?’ He replied, ‘Even if he committed illegal sexual intercourse (adultery) and theft.’ “⁹³⁰

In this case, no penalty for these illicit actions is described. Others who had avoided certain sins (such as cauterization, treatment by recitation of Qur’anic verses and seeing evil omens) and had put their trust in the Lord alone “will neither have any reckoning of their accounts nor will receive any punishment.”⁹³¹ A man committed a sin twice, and asked for forgiveness each time and received it.

“Then he remains without committing any another sin for a while and then commits another sin (for the third time) and says, 'O my Lord, I have committed another sin, please forgive me,' and Allah says, 'My slave has known that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for it. I therefore have forgiven My slave (his sin), he can do whatever he likes.’ ”⁹³²

Figure 17: Sins may escape punishment without expiation
A person performs an EVIL deed → That person is NOT PUNISHED

Sins which did not become evident in public may be forgiven or punished at the divine discretion, for “whoever commits any of those sins and Allah does not expose him, then it is up to Allah if He wishes He will punish him or if He wishes, He will forgive him.”⁹³³

3. Punishment for a bad deed can be paid for by expiation

However it is possible that a person might perform a bad deed and the deed is not overlooked, yet the sinner does not incur a penalty for that deed. This happens through the process of expiation. The verb *kaffar* (expiate) occurs 15 times in the Qur’an.⁹³⁴ It is significant that, as a verb, only Allah expiates the evil which believers have done. “Whoever believes in Allah and performs good deeds, He will expiate him from his sins and will admit him to Gardens.”⁹³⁵ It is always a divine and never a human initiative. The noun *kaffārah* (expiation)

⁹²⁸ B.9:71

⁹²⁹ B.9:56

⁹³⁰ B.2:329, 330; 3:573; 4:445; 7:717; 8:285, 450, 451; 9:579

⁹³¹ B.8:549, 479; 7:648

⁹³² B.9:598

⁹³³ B.9:320

⁹³⁴ Q.39:35; 5:65; 47:2; 2:271; 3:193, 195; 4:31; 5:12; 8:29; 29:7; 39:35; 48:5; 64:9; 65:5,8

⁹³⁵ Q.64:9

three times.⁹³⁶ As a noun, however, it is the action that can be taken by individuals to remove some of their sins.

The Hadith strengthens this second meaning. Fifty-four accounts in al-Bukhārī mention *kaffar* or *kaffārah*, but in the Hadith it becomes human activity which can expiate sin. In fact, “every (sinful) deed can be expiated”.⁹³⁷ “A man’s afflictions (i.e. wrong deeds) concerning his relation to his family, his property and his neighbors are expiated by his prayers, giving in charity and enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil.”⁹³⁸ Saying the five daily prayers regularly annulled evil deeds,⁹³⁹ as did performance of the ‘*Umra* (shorter pilgrimage).⁹⁴⁰ Sometimes the payment of money was required. The sin of encouraging others to gamble could be cancelled by giving some money in charity.⁹⁴¹ “The *Kaffarah* for having intercourse with menstruating women is one dinar if the blood is completely red and half a dinar when the blood is (somewhat) yellow.”⁹⁴² The penalty for murder was death: “*al-qīl* {s{āṣ} (the Law of Equality in punishment) is prescribed for you in case of murder”.⁹⁴³ However an alternative is permitted. If the killer was forgiven by the relatives of the deceased, he could purchase his own life through compensatory *diya* (blood money).⁹⁴⁴ The murderer’s life could be saved by the payment of a price. Over fifteen Hadith deal with this practice.⁹⁴⁵

Although certain rituals were mandatory, they could be circumvented if some reparation was made. Fasting, despite being compulsory,⁹⁴⁶ might be replaced by feeding a needy person instead.⁹⁴⁷ The term used is *fidya* (ransom), and it applied for those unable to complete the *Hajj* or *Umra*.⁹⁴⁸ It is defined as “compensation for a missed or wrongly practiced religious obligation (like in *hajj*), usually in the form of money or foodstuff or offering (animal by slaughtering it).”⁹⁴⁹ Shaving one’s head before *Hajj* to deal with head-lice was seen as an transgression – the required payment included feeding the poor or offering a sacrifice.⁹⁵⁰

Some sins were expiated by reversing the action or rectifying the damage caused. The Prophet said, “Spitting in the mosque is a sin and its expiation is to bury it.”⁹⁵¹ Allah’s Apostle said: “Whoever amongst you swears, (saying by error) in his oath ‘By Al-Lat and Al-‘Uzza’ [the names of two pagan idols], then he should say, ‘None has the right to be worshipped but Allah’.”⁹⁵²

At other times, there was no apparent connection between the sin and the expiatory action. One man, for example, was admitted to Paradise for giving water to a thirsty dog.⁹⁵³ In

⁹³⁶ Q.5:45, 89, 95,

⁹³⁷ B.9:629

⁹³⁸ B.4:786; 1:503; 2:516; 3:119; 9:216

⁹³⁹ B.1:506

⁹⁴⁰ B.3:1

⁹⁴¹ B.6:383; 8:128, 645

⁹⁴² from CD Islamic Scholar/Hadith/Mishkat

⁹⁴³ Q.2:178. This is the application of *lex talionis* “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc” as in Ex.21:23-25

⁹⁴⁴ Q.2:178, 4:92; 17:33

⁹⁴⁵ e.g. B.1:111, 112; 4:283

⁹⁴⁶ e.g. Q.2:183

⁹⁴⁷ Q.2:184

⁹⁴⁸ Q.2:196

⁹⁴⁹ Al-Hilali & Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an*, 866

⁹⁵⁰ Q.2:196 and B.5:504; 6:42; 7:604

⁹⁵¹ B.1:407

⁹⁵² B.8:645

⁹⁵³ B.1:174; 3:551, 646; 8:38

another version of the story it is a Jewish prostitute who is forgiven for the same act.⁹⁵⁴ A man who had performed no good deeds asked his family to burn his body when he died and crush and scatter the ashes, out of fear of Allah. So Allah forgave him.⁹⁵⁵ Aisha “manumitted forty slaves as expiation for her [Broken] vow.”⁹⁵⁶ This was an illustration of Muhammad’s pledge: “If I take an oath to do something and later on I find something else better than the first one, then I do what is better and make expiation for my oath.”⁹⁵⁷

Sin could even be expiated passively, by an unintended and undesired event. “No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that.”⁹⁵⁸ Any sickness would annul sins.⁹⁵⁹ Losing two or three children would protect a Muslim man or woman from the fire of hell.⁹⁶⁰ In fact, too easy a life could mean that one’s rewards were being given early, in this life rather than the next.⁹⁶¹ A shorter and more difficult life might indicate that “they did not take anything from their rewards in this world”.⁹⁶²

Figure 18: The Principle of Expiation
A person performs a BAD deed → The person is able to avoid a penalty by expiating that deed

Moreover the Hadith do not affirm the general Qur’anic adage that sin is always punished and good is always rewarded. The Hadith points out other ways punishment was avoided for sins committed. These are outlined here.

4. Sins could be passed on to others

In the Qur’an, those who led others astray would carry not only their own ‘*awzār*’ (burdens) but also the ‘*awzār*’ of those they had misled.⁹⁶³ There is also a saying attributed to Abel about his brother Cain coming to attack him: “If you do stretch your hand against me to kill me, I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you, for I fear Allah; the Lord of the worlds. Verily, I **intend to let you draw my sin on yourself** as well as yours.”⁹⁶⁴ Yusuf Ali suggests an interpretation of these verses: “the unjust murderer not only carried on himself the burden of his own sin, but also the burden of his victim’s sins. The victim, in suffering a wrong or injustice, is forgiven his own sins.”⁹⁶⁵ In fact, the burden of sin continues to be piled on Cain throughout history, according to the Hadith. “None is killed unjustly, but the first son of Adam will have a part of its burden.”⁹⁶⁶

Bad deeds and good ones were conveyable to other people. “Whoever has wronged his brother, should ask for his pardon (before his death), as (in the Hereafter) there will be neither a

⁹⁵⁴ B.4:538, 673

⁹⁵⁵ B.4:659, 684, 685, 688; 8:488; 9:597, 599

⁹⁵⁶ B.8:98; 4:708

⁹⁵⁷ B.8:618 – 622; 8:708, 709

⁹⁵⁸ B.7:545, 544, 550, 551

⁹⁵⁹ B.7:560, 564, 565, 566, 571

⁹⁶⁰ B.2:341; 8:650; 9:413

⁹⁶¹ B.2:364, 365; 5:237, 253, 376, 378, 408

⁹⁶² B.2:366; 5:237, 253, 378; 8:455

⁹⁶³ Q.16:25; 29:13

⁹⁶⁴ Q.5:28,29 (emphasis mine)

⁹⁶⁵ Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, 251 n.732

⁹⁶⁶ B.9:423, 6; 4:552

Dinar nor a Dirham [two types of Arab currency]. (He should secure pardon in this life) before some of his good deeds are taken and paid to his brother, or, if he has done no good deeds, some of the bad deeds of his brother are taken to be loaded on him (in the Hereafter).”⁹⁶⁷

In some cases of *diyya* (blood-money for killing a person), the payment was a male or female slave to be given to the family of the murdered person.⁹⁶⁸ In these instances an innocent slave paid for the crime of the murderer by suffering bondage in the household of the murdered person. This principle is outlined in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Sins may result in transference of punishment

A person performs an EVIL deed → A DIFFERENT person receives the punishment

5. Sins could be expiated by the action of an innocent person

Sometimes it happened that the innocent could willingly pay the price for the guilty. A man who indulged in sexual intercourse with his wife when he should have been fasting was told by Muhammad to do several things, including freeing a slave, to expiate his sin. He was unable to fulfill any of the requirements. Consequently Muhammad gave him a basket of dates to distribute to the poor as expiation. Since the man knew no family poorer than his own, Muhammad told him to keep the dates for himself. Apparently the man’s sin was expiated by his action of giving the basket of dates to his own poor family, even though he did not pay for the dates himself. The innocent Muhammad, by forgoing his dates, paid for the sin of the guilty man who broke the fast.⁹⁶⁹ When Abdullah bin Sahl was murdered by an unknown assailant, Muhammad himself paid the one-hundred camels worth of *diyya* (blood-money) to the victim’s family.⁹⁷⁰ If a guilty of killing some-one had no financial resources or was unable to pay the *diyya* or blood-debt, others, including relatives and friends, could pay this money on behalf of the killer.⁹⁷¹ Clearly an innocent person could pay the price for the sins of others.

Figure 20: A volunteer may take on the punishment for another's sin

A person PERFORMS a BAD deed → An INNOCENT person PAYS THE PENALTY

6. Connections with biblical themes

‘Expiation’ or ‘atonement’ is found in the Old Testament nearly 120 times both as a noun (Heb. *kippur*) and a verb (Heb. *kaphar*). It refers to a ‘covering’ or ‘appeasement’ (either physical or spiritual), and invariably refers to the sacrifice system established by God, where an animal died in the place of a sinner. The sacrifices were a divine provision whereby the judgement against sin could be averted by the shedding of blood. The New Testament mentions ‘expiation’ four times, and always in the context of the death of Christ.⁹⁷²

⁹⁶⁷ B.8:541

⁹⁶⁸ B.9:41, 42.1, 42.2, 45, 420

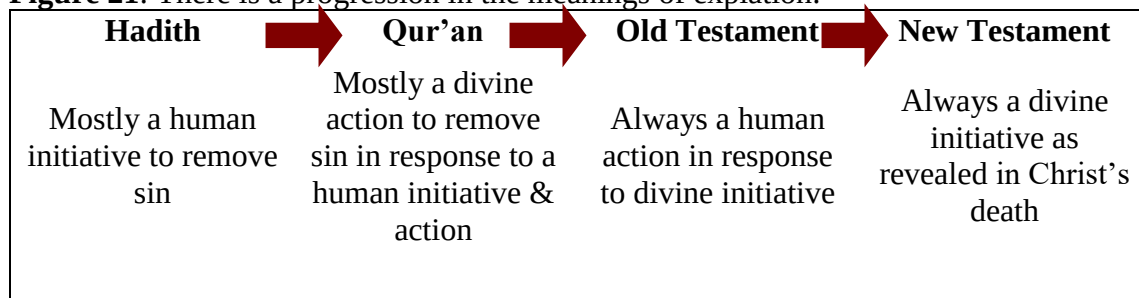
⁹⁶⁹ B.3:156-158, 772; 7:281; 8:110, 185, 700, 701, 702, 8111.1, 111.2

⁹⁷⁰ B.4:398; 8:164; 9:36,37

⁹⁷¹ B.9:44,45

⁹⁷² Rom.3:25 (Gk. *hilasterion*) & Heb.9:5 – referring to Old Testament atonement as a picture of Christ’s sacrifice; 1.Jn.2:2; 4:10 (Gk. *hilasmos*)

Figure 21: There is a progression in the meanings of expiation:



This is an anomaly: the Hadith generally moves closer to the biblical view in some ways. The Hadith principle that a person can commit a sin without the person paying the punishment for it (see Figure 17) finds an echo in the Bible. It points to the “blessed” man, described in the Psalms, “whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered... whose sin the LORD does not count against him”.⁹⁷³ Sometimes reparation for a sin might be paid, as in the case of theft or extortion.⁹⁷⁴ (see Figure 18)

Rather than exacting a justly-deserved punishment against the offended, God is praised as One who “does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.”⁹⁷⁵ This does not mean that the sins are simply ignored, for the punishment must be borne by another (Figure 19). The prophecy of Isaiah described an innocent one who paid the price for the evil deeds of others. He “was pierced for our transgressions ... crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.”⁹⁷⁶ Citing this passage, Peter wrote of Jesus: “He himself bore **our** sins in **his** body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by **his** wounds **you** have been healed.”⁹⁷⁷ (Figure 20) Peter points out the exchange principle that was operating: “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷³ Ps.32:1-2

⁹⁷⁴ Ex.22:1; Lk.19:8

⁹⁷⁵ Ps.103:10

⁹⁷⁶ Isa.53:5

⁹⁷⁷ 1.Pet.2:24 (emphasis mine)

⁹⁷⁸ 1.Pet.3:18

CHAPTER 13: Gaining Reward

Every deed and its implications are not as inevitably linked as is sometimes supposed. Just as a bad deed did not always lead to punishment, a clear one-to-one correspondence of a good action leading to its inevitable positive consequence is not always evident. The Hadith provide other perspectives which open up new possibilities.

1. Non-completion or inadequate completion of a good deed was sometimes acceptable

Simply preparing for and intending to carry out an obligation would be counted as equivalent to fulfilling that duty if one was prevented from doing so.⁹⁷⁹ A man was told by Muhammad that he would be rewarded for his intention to give gold coins in charity, even though he never gave them.⁹⁸⁰ A person's circumstances, both personal and physical, may mean that they could receive the reward of a full Hajj, despite not completing it.⁹⁸¹ When pilgrims performed their Hajj rituals out of sequence, potentially cancelling their reward, Muhammad comforted them with: "Do it (now) and there is no harm."⁹⁸² One commentator concludes from these events that "[t]he 'intent' of the believer ... is of more account than his doing."⁹⁸³

Figure 22: Incomplete good deed may bring reward

A person inadequately completes a GOOD deed ➡ That person STILL receives the appropriate REWARD

2. A person could gain a reward from the action for others

A non-beneficiary could perform an action to benefit others. Muhammad sacrificed a sheep⁹⁸⁴ and cows⁹⁸⁵ on behalf of his wives. Some of his companions were given a sheep to sacrifice for themselves.⁹⁸⁶ A woman who selflessly gave food in charity would be rewarded, but the same reward would be received by her husband who earned the money to buy the goods, as well as by the shopkeeper who sold her the goods.⁹⁸⁷ A man would receive half the reward of his wife's charitable giving from his wealth, if she did so without his orders.⁹⁸⁸ Clearly, rewards could be accounted to those vaguely associated with and even unconscious of the good deed. Likewise animals could win merit for their owners. The horse of a *mujāhid* (Muslim fighter) could earn reward for its rider by consuming food and drink: even its footsteps when grazing and the dung and urine it produced would be counted.⁹⁸⁹

Figure 23: Rewards for good deeds are transferable

A person carries out a GOOD deed ➡ A DIFFERENT person receives the appropriate REWARD

⁹⁷⁹ B.2:703, 704. Muhammad said over the corpse of the martyred shepherd Al-Aswad that "he has with him now his two wives from the dark-eyed houris," despite "never having prayed a single prayer" because he had only recently accepted Islam. Ibn Ishaq *Sira*, p.519

⁹⁸⁰ B.2:503

⁹⁸¹ B.2:631; 3:86

⁹⁸² B.1:83

⁹⁸³ Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, 218

⁹⁸⁴ B.2:767, 778

⁹⁸⁵ B.1:293; 4:201; 7:455

⁹⁸⁶ B.3:679

⁹⁸⁷ B.2:506, 518, 520, 521

⁹⁸⁸ B.7:123, 273

⁹⁸⁹ B.4:44,105, 112; 6:486; 9:454

Moreover rewards were transferable over time. All good deeds performed before becoming a Muslim would be counted.⁹⁹⁰

3. A living person could pay in substitution for a dead person

Islamic law allows for transferral of economic debt: *Hawālah* is “the transference of debt from one person to another. It is an agreement whereby a debtor is released from a debt by another becoming responsible for it.”⁹⁹¹ In many cases, a debtor had died leaving behind no finances, so others undertook to do what the deceased could no longer do for himself.⁹⁹² Business could be carried by proxy, with another person acting as the representative of the buyer or seller when authorized to do so.⁹⁹³

This was also permitted for spiritual debts, by analogical connection. When a woman asked about the acceptability of fulfilling her dead mother’s vow to perform the *Hajj*, Muhammad inquired: “If your mother had been in debt, would you have paid her debt?” She said, “Yes.” He said, “So you should pay what is for Him as Allah has more right that one should fulfill one’s obligations to Him.”⁹⁹⁴ Another woman was allowed to perform *Hajj* on her sick father’s behalf,⁹⁹⁵ and several did so in the place of those who had died.⁹⁹⁶ A relative was permitted to fast on behalf of a dead person,⁹⁹⁷ and guardians were required to make up missed days of fasting for the deceased.⁹⁹⁸ Unfulfilled vows could be carried out on behalf of the deceased.⁹⁹⁹

Although the Qur’an forbids the posthumous payment of *sadaqa*,¹⁰⁰⁰ Muhammad allowed this when people wanted to give alms on behalf of the dead.¹⁰⁰¹ The deceased who benefited from it would shield the givers from the hell-fire.¹⁰⁰² Moreover, the living could and did pray for the dead. Muhammad was commanded to do so,¹⁰⁰³ and was often found praying at funerals.¹⁰⁰⁴ This implies that one can intercede for others, who cannot pray for themselves. In fact, some would come out of the fire through the intercession of others,¹⁰⁰⁵ particularly of Muhammad.¹⁰⁰⁶ Islam’s prophet had claimed this right for himself¹⁰⁰⁷ and his followers were told

⁹⁹⁰ B.1:78; 2:517; 3:423; 8:21. Conversely, oaths made in the pre-Islamic period had to be fulfilled (B.4:372)

⁹⁹¹ Al-Hilali & Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an*, 868. *Hawalah* is also a financial transfer system often used in money-laundering for criminal or terrorist purposes. See <http://www.interpol.int/public/financialcrime/moneylaundering/hawala/default.asp> accessed 8th Jan, 2011

⁹⁹² B.3:486-495

⁹⁹³ B.3: 496-512

⁹⁹⁴ B.9:418

⁹⁹⁵ B.2:589; 5:682; 8:247

⁹⁹⁶ B.3:77-79

⁹⁹⁷ B.3:174

⁹⁹⁸ B.3:173, 174. This was despite another Hadith: Yahya related to me from Malik that he had heard that Abdullah ibn Umar used to be asked, “Can some one fast for some one else, or do the prayer for some one else?” and he would reply, “No one can fast or do the prayer for anyone else.” Cited in Muwatta 18:43 from CD The Islamic Scholar/Hadith/Muwatta

⁹⁹⁹ B.4:23 ; 8:689, 690; 9:90.1

¹⁰⁰⁰ Q.63:10,11

¹⁰⁰¹ B.2:470; 4:19, 22,24

¹⁰⁰² B.2:499

¹⁰⁰³ Sahih Muslim 4:2127 from CD The Islamic Scholar/Hadith/Muslim

¹⁰⁰⁴ (e.g. B.2:403-408, 411, 412

¹⁰⁰⁵ B.8:563

¹⁰⁰⁶ B.8:571

¹⁰⁰⁷ B.1:331, 429; 2:553

to pray for it to be given to Muhammad.¹⁰⁰⁸ This would be Muhammad's one invocation that would be "definitely fulfilled by Allah."¹⁰⁰⁹

It appears, then, that most of the main pillars of Islam can be performed by some one for the benefit of others (Table 19).

Table 19: The Pillars of Islam fulfilled by others

<i>Shahada</i> for others	✗	Not possible
Prayer for the dead	✓	This is <i>du'a</i> , not <i>s}alāt</i> B.2:403-408, 411, 412
Fasting for the dead	✓	B.3:174, 173
Giving alms for the dead	✓	B.2:470; 4:19, 22,24; 2:499
Performing <i>Hajj</i> for the dead	✓	B.9:418; 2:589; 5:682; 8:247; 3:77-79

This principle is outlined in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Rewards for good deeds are transferable to the dead

A LIVING PERSON does a GOOD DEED → A DEAD PERSON receives the REWARD

4. A single action could have positive eternal consequences

Some actions apparently expiated all of a person's sins. For example, Muhammad refused to execute Hatib who had betrayed him by relaying information to the Prophet's enemies. Hatib had fought alongside the Prophet in the battle of Badr. Muhammad said: "Maybe Allah looked at the Badr warriors and said, 'Do whatever you like, as I have granted Paradise to you,' or said, 'I have forgiven you.'" ¹⁰¹⁰ All of a worshipper's past sins could be forgiven if his 'Amen' at the completion of prayers coincided with that of the angels. ¹⁰¹¹ Such a process may have applied to Muhammad himself, for it was said that his past and future sins had been forgiven. ¹⁰¹² Despite this, Muhammad continued to pray for such forgiveness. ¹⁰¹³ Blindness carried the special divine promise that if the afflicted person "remains patient, I will let him enter Paradise in compensation". ¹⁰¹⁴ The reward of *Hajj Mabru*r (the one accepted by Allah) "is nothing except Paradise" ¹⁰¹⁵ – the same promise extended to the first Muslims to undertake a naval expedition or if he was among the first Muslims to invade Caesar's city. ¹⁰¹⁶ A single act of memorizing the ninety-nine names of Allah would allow entry to Paradise. ¹⁰¹⁷ Muhammad spoke of forty such deeds which could result in Paradise for those who performed them. ¹⁰¹⁸ Figure 25 describes this principle.

Figure 25: Effects of a single good deed may be everlasting

A person carries out a SINGLE GOOD deed → RESULTS of that deed are ETERNAL

¹⁰⁰⁸ B.1:588; 6:243

¹⁰⁰⁹ B.9:556

¹⁰¹⁰ B.5:319,572; 4:251,314; 6:412,413; 8:276; 9:72

¹⁰¹¹ B.1:747, 748, 749, 762; 4:446, 451; 6:2; 8:411

¹⁰¹² B.1:19; 6:3; 7:1; 8:570; 9:507, 532.3

¹⁰¹³ B.2:221; 9:482, 590

¹⁰¹⁴ B.7:557

¹⁰¹⁵ B.3:1

¹⁰¹⁶ B.4:175

¹⁰¹⁷ B.3:894; 9:489

¹⁰¹⁸ B.3:800

5. The positive action of one person could have beneficial implications for many others

The concept of the *fard* } *kifāyah* (sufficiency duty) occurs in Islamic theology. “It is a collective duty – an obligation which, if performed by one person, suffices for the rest; as it does not have to be performed essentially by all.”¹⁰¹⁹ The opposite is *fard* } *‘ayn* or *fard* } *wājib* (obligatory duty) – a requirement which every individual must perform e.g. daily prayers and fasting.¹⁰²⁰ ‘Umar, for example, is described as “the door” holding back the affliction which threatened the Islamic community.¹⁰²¹ This principle is summarised in Figure 26.

Figure 26: Effects of a good deed may be extended to others

The POSITIVE action of ONE person → BENEFITS for MANY OTHERS

This links with some modern-day versions of Islam. According to Johnson, South Asian Muslims “see themselves as linked to others in a deep way, particularly with leaders. As Muslims they had considered linkage with the prophet Muhammad as the means of salvation.”¹⁰²²

6. Rewards and punishments could cross the life/death boundary

Punishment now means no punishment later, for sins expiated for in this life would not be punished in the next. “And if one of you commits any of these sins and is punished in this world then that will be his expiation for it”.¹⁰²³ Sins could also be expiated in this life by suffering the legal punishment for that action.¹⁰²⁴ This explains why a man confessed his illegal sexual intercourse to Muhammad and accepted the judgement of stoning,¹⁰²⁵ so he would not have to face the punishment for his sin in hell (see Figure 27).

Figure 27: Temporal actions can have eternal effects

A SIN is paid for IN THIS LIFE → It receives NO PENALTY in THE NEXT LIFE

7. Connections with biblical themes

The six principles outlined above can be pointers to biblical teaching. The Hadith propose that non-completion of a spiritual goal does not necessarily disqualify the actor from reward (Figure 22). The apostle Paul explains his own incomplete path of discipleship: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me ... I press on towards the goal ...”¹⁰²⁶ Intention and purpose are an important step towards, and at times as crucial as, actual completion of one’s aspiration. The Psalmist speaks of God’s paternal lenience: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he

¹⁰¹⁹ Al-Hilali & Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an*, 866

¹⁰²⁰ This has been applied to *jihād*, but scholars have differed as to whether fighting was *fard* } *kifāyah*, or *fard* } *wājib*. An example was Q.9:122, where some Muslims would fight, and others stay behind. Firestone, *Jihad*, 60,61. Al-Ghazālī applied *fard* } *kifāyah* to scientific research. It was a community obligation but did not need to be carried out by every individual. Anwar, Sabieh “Is Ghazālī really the Halagu of Science in Islam?”, *Monthly Renaissance* (October 2008), 18 (10), <http://www.monthly-renaissance.com/issue/content.aspx?id=1016>,

¹⁰²¹ B.2:516; 9:216; 1:503

¹⁰²² Callum Johnson “Of Status and Salvation: Views on Isa as Masih from South Asia” quoted in Greenlee “How is the Gospel Good News for Muslims?”

¹⁰²³ B.5:232; 1:17; 8:793

¹⁰²⁴ B.1:17; 6:417; 8:775, 793, 817; 9:320, 560

¹⁰²⁵ B.7:195,196; 8:806, 810, 814; 9:280

¹⁰²⁶ Phil.3:12,14

remembers that we are dust.”¹⁰²⁷

For those incapable of becoming good enough to save themselves, God provides an alternative way (Figure 23). In Roman Catholic theology, one’s accrued benefit can be passed on to others when individuals “contribute generously to the spiritual treasury of the Church by acquiring much more expiatory wealth than they themselves need.”¹⁰²⁸ However most Protestant Christians would reject this concept, and hold that only Christ can perform this service. From a Christian perspective, the holiness attained by Christ can be transferred to others. He prays to his heavenly Father for his followers: “Sanctify them (Gk. *Hagiazō* lit. ‘make them holy’) by the truth ... For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”¹⁰²⁹ Paul announces that “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”¹⁰³⁰

The Hadith imply that the good works of one person can be transferred to the benefit of another (Figure 26). However from a Christian perspective, there are many assumptions that are implicit or explicit in this scheme. It presupposes that the relationship between God and humanity is positive or at least neutral, and that these actions are possible to perform, and that they will be accepted by God.

By contrast, Paul reminds humanity of its parlous state before God. Rather than being in a position to offer services for others that would be acceptable to God, people are, apart from His mercy, spiritually lifeless. “As for you, **you were dead** in your transgressions and sins, ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when **we were dead** in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.”¹⁰³¹ God’s love is shown by his gracious response to those who are spiritually unresponsive to him. In a very real sense, as the Hadith hint, good works can cross the life/death barrier, but here it is to the benefit of the spiritually-dead (Figure 24).

A solitary feat by one person could have eternal consequences for many (Figure 25). It is clear that a single act, as opposed to a “long obedience in the same direction”¹⁰³² could have a salvific outcome in the biblical context. Isaiah contrasts a multitude of people who make many wrong choices with one individual’s act of obedience and dedication which absorbs all these sins. “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”¹⁰³³ The writer to the Hebrews declares that “by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”¹⁰³⁴ This has implications for the Christian understanding of the comprehensive significance of the death of Christ.¹⁰³⁵ In a prophetic word, the high priest Caiaphas declared to the Jews about Jesus: “It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”¹⁰³⁶ This is a helpful pointer to Christ’s ‘federal headship’, in which his salvific action results in benefit for all those who are “in Christ”.¹⁰³⁷ Under ‘federal headship’, the leader is responsible for the welfare (or

¹⁰²⁷ Psalms 103:13-14

¹⁰²⁸ McAuliffe, “Forestalling the pains of purgatory”, 291

¹⁰²⁹ Jn.17:19

¹⁰³⁰ 2.Cor.5:21

¹⁰³¹ Eph.2:1,4,5; Col.2:13 (emphasis mine)

¹⁰³² Friedrich Nietzsche’s term, used as the title of the book by Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

¹⁰³³ Isa.53:6

¹⁰³⁴ Heb.10:14

¹⁰³⁵ 2.Cor.5:14

¹⁰³⁶ Jn.11:50

¹⁰³⁷ e.g. 2.Cor.5:17

otherwise) of the whole nation. The Qur'an speaks of the close identification of the life and death of an individual with that of the whole world.¹⁰³⁸ The Bible presents this as a way of looking at humanity. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive".¹⁰³⁹ One person is taken as the representative of all humanity – either Adam in the old humanity, or Christ in the new humanity. People will be affected, negatively or positively, by the actions of the one with whom they are identified. Rom.5:12-21 elaborates on this.¹⁰⁴⁰

This strikes a chord with the collectivist attitude of the early Arabs:

"The clan defined the mental universe of the Bedouin. ..[W]ithout the clan, the individual had no place in the world, no life of his own. The language of the Bedouins offered no way to express the concept of individuality or personality. The term *wajh* (face), although applied to the chief, was really a concept designating the persona of the group rather than the individuality of the shaykh [leader] as a person."¹⁰⁴¹

An insult given to the leader was an insult to the whole clan, and an honour bestowed on the leader dignified all who followed him. However it placed great store on the actions of the leader. When the Byzantine emperor Heraclius was challenged in Muhammad's letter to him to accept Islam, the threat was made: "but if you reject this, you will be responsible for the sins of all the people of your kingdom".¹⁰⁴² The prophet Isaiah spoke of the Suffering Servant in such terms: "he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed... the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all... For he bore the sin of many."¹⁰⁴³

Jesus applied a similar approach on his teaching about sin. "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."¹⁰⁴⁴ Dealing with sin requires radical action. The most radical response to sin was the death of Christ.

Christ's death took place at a point in history. Could it apply across all historical ages? The Bible suggests that this event was not bounded by time. "Revelation's description of [Jesus] as the lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev.13:8) [indicated] that his death had significance beyond the earthly chronology in which it had occurred."¹⁰⁴⁵ Paul writes that God's grace "was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed".¹⁰⁴⁶ Jesus is designated as a priest like Melchisedek "[w]ithout father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life",¹⁰⁴⁷ "but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God

¹⁰³⁸ Q.5.35

¹⁰³⁹ 1 Cor 15:22

¹⁰⁴⁰ The idea is developed by Irenaeus in *Contra Haeresium* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.i.html> accessed 1st Dec, 2010 and Augustine's *City of God* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iii.html> accessed 1st Dec, 2010

¹⁰⁴¹ Lapidus, *History*, 14

¹⁰⁴² B.4:187; 6:75

¹⁰⁴³ Isa.53:4,5,6,12

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mt.5:29,30; 18:9,9/Mk.9:43-47

¹⁰⁴⁵ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 220. One Hadith indicates that suffering continues in the body after death. (Muslim 30:96)

¹⁰⁴⁶ 2.Tim.1:9,10

¹⁰⁴⁷ Heb.7:3

through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”¹⁰⁴⁸ He died “not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world”.¹⁰⁴⁹ On the basis of the coming death of the promised Redeemer, previous sins were not penalised. “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because ***in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished***-- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”¹⁰⁵⁰ As the pre-existent and eternal Son of God, Jesus exercised a ministry which has implications beyond historical time.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Heb.7:24,25

¹⁰⁴⁹ 1.Jn.2:2

¹⁰⁵⁰ Rom.3:25,26 (emphasis mine)

CHAPTER 14: Pictures of the Cross

1. The sinlessness of Christ

(a) *Descriptions of Christ's sinlessness*

Christ is understood in the Islamic texts as being without fault from the moment of his birth. The angel Gabriel declared to Mary: "I am but a messenger from your Lord to give you a boy most pure."¹⁰⁵¹ The expression "most pure" means blameless, guiltless and sinless according to the Muslim scholars al-Baidawi,¹⁰⁵² al-Tabari and al-Zamakhshari.¹⁰⁵³ The classical commentator Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1209) stated: "Faultless (*zakiyyan*) means three things: First, that he is without sin; secondly that he grew in integrity, as it is said that he who has no sin is chaste and in the growing plant there is purity; thirdly, he was above reproach and pure."¹⁰⁵⁴ The Hadith strongly hint at Christ's sinlessness since he was spared the Satanic touch at birth. "The Prophet said, 'When any human being is born, Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed, for he touched the placenta-cover instead.'"¹⁰⁵⁵ Another account has an aetiological focus: "No child is born but that, Satan touches it when it is born where upon it starts crying loudly because of being touched by Satan, except Mary and her Son."¹⁰⁵⁶

This contrasts with the boy Muhammad whose chest was split open by the angels and his heart cleansed.¹⁰⁵⁷ When Muhammad describes the people's search for mediators on the Day of Resurrection, each prophet outlines their incapability for the task due to their sins which are listed. Even of Islam's prophet, it is said: "Allah forgave your early and late sins." However, only one is described as sinless: "Jesus will not mention any sin."¹⁰⁵⁸ Abū Huraira reported: "I heard Allah's Apostle saying, 'By Allah! I ask for forgiveness from Allah and turn to Him in repentance more than seventy times a day.'"¹⁰⁵⁹

(b) *Connections with biblical themes*

Jesus challenged his contemporaries: "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"¹⁰⁶⁰ The Bible affirms his sinlessness.¹⁰⁶¹ This is important in Christian thinking.

Firstly it reflects the divine holiness which God-in-the-flesh fully exhibits.

Secondly, the sinlessness of Christ placed him beyond Satan's power. Adam's sin brought all of his offspring under the dominion of Satan, who is variously described as "the prince of this world"¹⁰⁶² or "the god of this age"¹⁰⁶³ and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air",¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁵¹ Q.19.19

¹⁰⁵² He uses the term *T}āhir min ul-dhunūb* 'pure from sins'. al-Baidawi, *Anwār al-tanzīl*, 9. This could also be understood in the context of *ismah* 'faultlessness' which is seen to apply to all prophets. See the extended discussion in <http://www.almujtaba.com/articles/aqaed/000018.html> (accessed 11th Dec, 2011)

¹⁰⁵³ al-Masih, *A Question*, 13

¹⁰⁵⁴ Al-Fadi, *Person of Christ*, 10

¹⁰⁵⁵ B.4:506

¹⁰⁵⁶ B.6:71

¹⁰⁵⁷ B.1:345; 5:227; 9:608

¹⁰⁵⁸ B.6:236

¹⁰⁵⁹ B.8:319

¹⁰⁶⁰ Jn 8:46

¹⁰⁶¹ Heb.4.15; 1.Jn.3.7; 2.Cor.5:21

¹⁰⁶² Jn.14:30

whose kingdom is “the dominion of darkness.”¹⁰⁶⁵ John notes that “the whole world is under the control of the evil one”.¹⁰⁶⁶ As the promised “seed” of the woman,¹⁰⁶⁷ born of a virgin,¹⁰⁶⁸ Jesus came into the world in a manner which eschewed the stain of sin. He entered human life and lived beyond the influence of the devil. He demonstrated this by overcoming Satan’s temptations,¹⁰⁶⁹ and casting out demons with authority.¹⁰⁷⁰ Jesus came to regain what Adam had lost. Some scholars¹⁰⁷¹ have suggested that the Qur’an has a distant echo of the doctrine of the second Adam:¹⁰⁷² “Truly the likeness of Jesus, in God’s sight, is as Adam’s likeness”,¹⁰⁷³ just as Adam is described in the Bible as “a pattern of the One to come”.¹⁰⁷⁴

Thirdly Christ alone was qualified to be the sinless sacrifice,¹⁰⁷⁵ “the lamb without blemish or defect”.¹⁰⁷⁶ The Qur’an rightly claims: “No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.”¹⁰⁷⁷ Jesus alone had no burden of personal sin to bear, so he was able to bear the sin-burden of others.¹⁰⁷⁸

It should be noted that the Hadith present some antagonism towards the cross. Aisha commented: “I never used to leave in the Prophet’s house anything carrying images or crosses but he obliterated it.”¹⁰⁷⁹ When Jesus returns, he is said to “break the cross”.¹⁰⁸⁰ This may be related to the Qur’an’s apparent denial of the crucifixion.¹⁰⁸¹ This verse is, however, capable of several interpretations.¹⁰⁸²

2. Sacrifice & Ransom

(a) Sacrifice

Sacrifice is mentioned 155 times in al-Bukhāri’s collection. Topics addressed include the necessity and sanctity of sacrifice,¹⁰⁸³ timing of the ritual and consecration¹⁰⁸⁴ of those performing the sacrifice,¹⁰⁸⁵ grades of sacrifices,¹⁰⁸⁶ acceptable sacrifices,¹⁰⁸⁷ and the preparation of the

¹⁰⁶³ 2.Cor.4:4

¹⁰⁶⁴ Eph.2:2

¹⁰⁶⁵ Col.1:13

¹⁰⁶⁶ 1.Jn.5:19

¹⁰⁶⁷ Gen.3:15

¹⁰⁶⁸ Isa.7:14

¹⁰⁶⁹ Lk.4:1-13

¹⁰⁷⁰ Lk.4:36

¹⁰⁷¹ Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim*, 32 ; Guillaume, *Islam*, 196; Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, 12,69

¹⁰⁷² 1.Cor.15:20-28,45-49; Rom.5:12-19

¹⁰⁷³ Q.3:59

¹⁰⁷⁴ Rom.5:14

¹⁰⁷⁵ Heb.9:14

¹⁰⁷⁶ 1.Pet.1:19 cf. Ex.12:5

¹⁰⁷⁷ Q.17:15; 6:164; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38

¹⁰⁷⁸ 1.Pet.2:24

¹⁰⁷⁹ B.7:836

¹⁰⁸⁰ B.3:425, 656; 4:657

¹⁰⁸¹ Q.4:157

¹⁰⁸² See, for example, Elder “Crucifixion”, 242-258

¹⁰⁸³ e.g. B.1:67

¹⁰⁸⁴ Head-shaving of those performing sacrifice as a part of the Hajj ceremony may be related to the Nazirite vows of the Old Testament (Num.6:8-11) or purification rites mentioned in the New Testament (Acts.21:24)

¹⁰⁸⁵ e.g. B.1:84

¹⁰⁸⁶ B.2:6

animals.¹⁰⁸⁸ *Aqiqa*, the sacrifice of an animal at the birth of a child, parallels the Jewish practice.¹⁰⁸⁹ A common saying was: “May my parents be sacrificed for you”.¹⁰⁹⁰ No Hajj would be valid without a sacrifice,¹⁰⁹¹ and non-fulfilment of a ritual requirement (e.g. shaving one’s head after Hajj) could be atoned for the slaughter of a sacrificial animal.¹⁰⁹² Clearly sacrifice played a significant role in the early Muslim community. It conveyed the concept of exchange, where the death of a living creature accrued benefit to the person on whose behalf the offering was made.

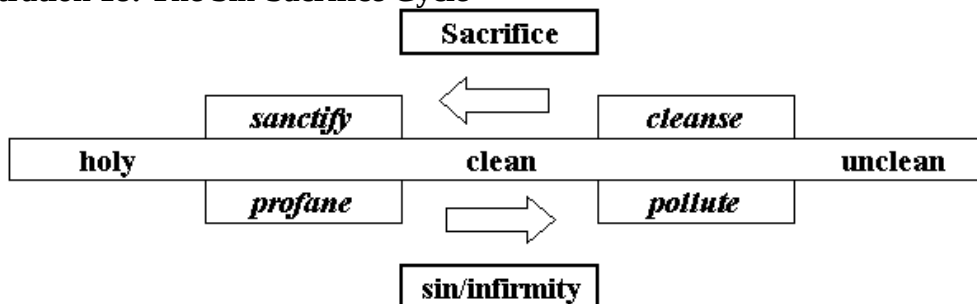
(b) The Ransom theme

Another motif in the Hadith is that of ransom. During raids and battles in the early years of Islam, captives and prisoners-of-war were often taken. They were either kept as slaves, or sold back to their original tribes for ransom. Both holding enemy captives for ransom and paying for the release of Muslim captives was legislated for Muslims¹⁰⁹³ and encouraged by Muhammad.¹⁰⁹⁴ He provided money from foreign tribute to redeem Muslim captives.¹⁰⁹⁵ Rather than simply accepting their captivity or depending only on their ability to escape, these captives relied on others to pay a price in order for them to be set free.

(c) Connections with biblical themes

The sacrificial system receives substantial coverage in the Old Testament. Key elements included the violent and premature death of a living being to atone for the sins of those presenting it. Sacrifice was a means of dealing with the pollution and uncleanness brought by sin. It returned the beneficiary to a position of sanctity and holiness (see Illustration 18)¹⁰⁹⁶. In the New Testament, Jesus’ death is presented as the sacrifice which atones for human sin.¹⁰⁹⁷

Illustration 18: The Sin-Sacrifice Cycle



He is described as “the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”¹⁰⁹⁸ Jesus

¹⁰⁸⁷ B.2:75

¹⁰⁸⁸ e.g. B.2:617

¹⁰⁸⁹ B.7:380; Lk.2:23,24

¹⁰⁹⁰ e.g. B.1:711

¹⁰⁹¹ B.2:191

¹⁰⁹² B.7:604

¹⁰⁹³ e.g. B.1:111; 9:40,50

¹⁰⁹⁴ e.g. B.3:714; 4:284; 5:535; 7:286

¹⁰⁹⁵ B.1:413; 4:284

¹⁰⁹⁶ Diagram taken from “Sacrifice in the Old Testament <http://christianthinktank.com/cross2.html> Accessed 9th December, 2010

¹⁰⁹⁷ Rom.3:25; Eph.5:2; Heb.9:26 et al.; 1.Jn.2:2; 4:10

himself spoke of his flesh which he would “give for the life of the world”,¹⁰⁹⁹ and claimed that he would lay down his life for others.¹¹⁰⁰

Ransom is another of the images used of the death of Christ.¹¹⁰¹ By doing for humanity what they could not do for themselves, Jesus’ death is seen as efficacious in liberating people from bondage to Satan.¹¹⁰² The release of captives was promised in the Nazareth Manifesto,¹¹⁰³ and experienced personally by the convicted criminal Barabbas at the Passover.¹¹⁰⁴ The only mention of the foundational verb *fada* (ransom) in the Qur’an¹¹⁰⁵ describes the work of God who ransomed Abraham’s son with a ‘mighty sacrifice’.¹¹⁰⁶ The connection between Abraham’s offering of his son and the death of Christ as the Son of God has been made by several scholars.¹¹⁰⁷ Ransom and redemption are key elements in understanding the death of Christ.¹¹⁰⁸

3. Other Pictures of the Cross

Substitutionary atonement, sacrifice, and ransom/redemption are not the only depictions of the meaning of the cross found in the Bible. There are several representations which have parallels in the Hadith.

(a) *Betrayed hospitality*

In Arab culture, both host and guest must be honoured and respected by the other. To abuse the hospitality of others is a heinous act, as exemplified by the oft-repeated story of the treacherous men of ‘Ukl tribe.¹¹⁰⁹ For his part, the host must provide for and protect his guests whatever the cost.¹¹¹⁰ Several Hadith speak of the importance of offering generous hospitality,¹¹¹¹ a trait exhibited by Muhammad¹¹¹² and Abū Bakr.¹¹¹³ Allah is the perfect host, munificently preparing a place of welcome for the faithful in Paradise.¹¹¹⁴ Neglecting to invite visitors to stay is seen as culpable,¹¹¹⁵ for “your guest has a right on you”.¹¹¹⁶ Protection of one’s guests from their enemies became an issue when Muhammad signed a treaty with the Quraish.

“When Suhail bin Amr agreed to the treaty (of Hudaibiya), one of the things he stipulated then, was that the Prophet should return to them (i.e. the pagans) anyone coming to him

¹⁰⁹⁸ Jn.1:29

¹⁰⁹⁹ Jn.6:51

¹¹⁰⁰ Jn.10:11,15

¹¹⁰¹ Mt.20:28/Mk.10:45; 1.Tim.2:5; Heb.9:15

¹¹⁰² Col.2:13-15; Heb.2:15

¹¹⁰³ Lk.4:18

¹¹⁰⁴ Mt.27:15-26/Mk.15:6-15/Lk.23:18-25

¹¹⁰⁵ the noun *fidya(t)* is mentioned three times (Q.2:184, 196; 57:15) and derivative verbs Form III *fāda* (Q.2:85) and Form VIII *iftada* (Q.2:229; 3:91; 5:36; 10:54; 13:18; 39:47; 70:11) occur occasionally

¹¹⁰⁶ Q.37:107

¹¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Reuven Firestone “Merit, Mimesis, and Martyrdom: Aspects of Shi’ite Meta-historical Exegesis on Abraham’s Sacrifice in Light of Jewish, Christian, and Sunni Muslim Tradition” J Am Acad Relig (1998) 66(1): 93-116 available on <http://jaar.oxfordjournals.org/content/66/1/93.full.pdf> accessed 1st Dec, 2010

¹¹⁰⁸ See Lewis, *Glory*, 286-295

¹¹⁰⁹ B.1:234; 2:577; 4:261; 6:250; etc

¹¹¹⁰ The importance of hospitality and honour in Bedouin culture is detailed in Patai *The Arab Mind*

¹¹¹¹ B.3:641; 8:162

¹¹¹² B.1:3

¹¹¹³ B.3:494

¹¹¹⁴ B.1:631.

¹¹¹⁵ B.3:476; 6:251

¹¹¹⁶ B.3:195, 196

from their side, even if he was a Muslim; and would not interfere between them and that person. ***The Muslims did not like this condition and got disgusted with it.*** Suhail did not agree except with that condition. So, the Prophet agreed to that condition and returned Abu Jandal to his father Suhail bin ‘Amr.”¹¹¹⁷

This was in clear contravention to the mores of Arab hospitality. Muhammad himself had taught that “[a] Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. So he should ...[not] hand him over to an oppressor”.¹¹¹⁸ After a new convert to Islam, Abū Basir, fled from Mecca to Medina, Muhammad surrendered him to the Quraish. He escaped again, but refused to return to live among the Muslims in Medina since Muhammad would have delivered him again to the Meccans.¹¹¹⁹ The asylum that was required and expected by social custom was not provided.

(b) The warrior’s victory over oppressive powers

The Hadith identify a conflict between humanity and the spiritual powers. Although Muhammad one time claimed to have choked Satan,¹¹²⁰ he lived in constant fear of the devil¹¹²¹ and was bewitched with a spell¹¹²² that lasted for a year.¹¹²³ “The Evil Eye is a fact,” he declared.¹¹²⁴ This was a sphere in which Muhammad could not gain victory.

(c) An act of martyrdom

Martyrdom is highly esteemed in Islam. Dying “in the way (or cause) of Allah” assures entrance to Paradise,¹¹²⁵ a promise reiterated in the Hadith.¹¹²⁶ Martyrs are not considered as dead, but still alive.¹¹²⁷ Throughout the Hadith, martyrdom is glorified. Umar prayed for it,¹¹²⁸ and Muhammad prophesied that Umar and Uthman would be martyrs.¹¹²⁹ Muhammad expressed his own wish for multiple martyrdoms,¹¹³⁰ a desire he claimed would be shared by all those who had sacrificed their lives.¹¹³¹ He prayed that he would be in the company of the martyrs after his death.¹¹³² He invoked evil on those who killed them,¹¹³³ and pledged to be a witness for some martyrs on the Day of Resurrection.¹¹³⁴ When Muhammad unsuccessfully asked creditors to excuse a martyr’s debts, he prayed a blessing on the deceased man’s property so the debts could be paid.¹¹³⁵ Since the al-Ans}ar tribe contributed the most martyrs, they will have superiority on

¹¹¹⁷ B.3:874, 683; 5:496- emphasis mine

¹¹¹⁸ B.3:622; 9:83

¹¹¹⁹ B.3:891, 683; 5:496

¹¹²⁰ B.2:301

¹¹²¹ B.4:590

¹¹²² B.4:490

¹¹²³ Ibn Ishaq *Sirat*, 240 fn 1

¹¹²⁴ B.7:827, 828

¹¹²⁵ Q.2:154; 3:157, 158; 3:169; 3:195; 4:72; 4:100; 22:58; 47:4-6; 4:66, 67

¹¹²⁶ B.1:35; 4:72, 352, 386; 5:318, 377; 9:555, 621

¹¹²⁷ Q.2:154; 3:169

¹¹²⁸ B.3:114

¹¹²⁹ B.5:24, 35, 46, 49

¹¹³⁰ B.1:35; 4:54, 216; 9:332, 333

¹¹³¹ B.4:53, 72

¹¹³² B.6:110

¹¹³³ B.4:299, 395; 5:422; 8:403

¹¹³⁴ B.2:427, 428, 431, 436

¹¹³⁵ B.3:580,773; 4:40; 5:383

the day of Resurrection.¹¹³⁶

Interestingly, death in battle for Islam was not the only form of martyrdom: other options included death by plague,¹¹³⁷ drowning, abdominal disease, being buried alive by a falling building¹¹³⁸ and when protecting one's own property.¹¹³⁹ The reward for one man's martyrdom was forfeited because he had taken some booty illegally.¹¹⁴⁰ Another Muslim, mortally wounded fighting for Islam, was pronounced by Muhammad as destined for the hell-fire for committing suicide to end his pain.¹¹⁴¹ Angels shield the corpse of the martyr with their wings,¹¹⁴² and the martyrs were buried unwashed, with their blood and wounds evident.¹¹⁴³ Muhammad did not pray funeral prayers for them,¹¹⁴⁴ presumably because they had gone straight to Paradise, and needed no intercession. However on one occasion he prayed the funeral prayer for some martyrs eight years after they died.¹¹⁴⁵ On the Day of Resurrection, the wounds of Muslim warriors will flow again, and their blood will smell like musk.¹¹⁴⁶ In Paradise martyrs receive superior accommodation, above "the common believers".¹¹⁴⁷

(d) Connections with biblical themes

The New Testament also portrays the hospitality/rejection/betrayal theme. As a host, Jesus served his guests¹¹⁴⁸ and later shielded them from their enemies.¹¹⁴⁹ He is presented as the perfect guest, for he went around doing good,¹¹⁵⁰ even protecting the reputation of his hosts and providing for the needs of the other guests.¹¹⁵¹ Despite this, he was not always welcomed or treated honourably. The motif of violated hospitality codes in refusing to receive an honoured guest is found in all four gospels.¹¹⁵² There is also the ignominy of "handing over" a guest to his enemies.¹¹⁵³ This is used "to underline the seriousness and corporate shame that resulted from the rejection of Jesus."¹¹⁵⁴ Witherington notes that the "strong and polemical language" in Acts.3:13-14 aims to bring people "to the point of repentance by a 'shock and recognition' technique and then to open them up to reception of the restoration and blessings promised in Christ."¹¹⁵⁵ A recurring theme in Acts is: "You handed him over/ killed/crucified/put him to death ... but God raised him up".¹¹⁵⁶ The cross is presented as human sin in betraying the guest who came down

¹¹³⁶ B.5:405

¹¹³⁷ B.4:680; 7:628, 629, 630; 8:616

¹¹³⁸ B.1:624, 688; 4:82,83

¹¹³⁹ B.3:660

¹¹⁴⁰ B.5:541

¹¹⁴¹ B.8:603, 604

¹¹⁴² B.2:336, 381; 5:406

¹¹⁴³ B.2:430, 431, 436; 5:406

¹¹⁴⁴ B.2:431; 5:406, 411

¹¹⁴⁵ B.4:795; 5:374; 8:434

¹¹⁴⁶ B.1:238; 4:59; 7:441

¹¹⁴⁷ B.2:468; 4:49, 64; 5:318; 8:558, 572

¹¹⁴⁸ Jn.13:1-17

¹¹⁴⁹ Jn.18:8

¹¹⁵⁰ Acts 10:38

¹¹⁵¹ Jn.2:1-10

¹¹⁵² Jn.1:1-11;14; Mt.21:33-46/Mk.12:1-12/Lk.20:9-19

¹¹⁵³ Acts.3:13, as well as fourteen references in the gospels. In a recognition of divine sovereignty in the death of Christ, Jesus is spoken of as being "handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts.2:23)

¹¹⁵⁴ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 118

¹¹⁵⁵ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 135 n.84

¹¹⁵⁶ Acts.2:23,24; 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39,40; 13:28-30

from heaven, but the resurrection is God's vindication of his anointed one. The Hadith makes no mention of Christ's resurrection, but it does refer to some men who were brought back to life three days after they died in order to hear Muhammad's words of judgement.¹¹⁵⁷ Jesus explained that he was leaving the earth in order to prepare the rooms in his Father's house, and would return to collect his guests.¹¹⁵⁸

The Bible also presents the cross as a conquest over the hostile evil powers that had enslaved humanity.¹¹⁵⁹ "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."¹¹⁶⁰ Just before his death, Jesus proclaimed: "Now will the prince of this world be driven out."¹¹⁶¹ Jesus is presented as the warrior who goes to fight on behalf of his oppressed people, building on the God-as-Warrior theme of the Old Testament.¹¹⁶² The human debt of disobedience, which was being used by the powers as a means of controlling men, was cancelled by Jesus' death on the cross. Like a hero who exposes the cowardice of a bully by standing up to him in front of everyone, Jesus had disarmed the powers and principalities, making a public spectacle of them, by his triumph on the cross.¹¹⁶³ Unlike the hireling who fled from the attacking wolf, the good shepherd stood his ground, and lay down his life for his sheep.¹¹⁶⁴ However in this apparent defeat was victory. The angel in John's vision of heaven announced that the lamb, which looked as if it had been slain, had triumphed.¹¹⁶⁵ The resurrection of Christ is crucial to this scenario. In having absorbed the worst that Satan could hurl against him, Jesus stood up again, for he had "destroyed death."¹¹⁶⁶ Through his death, Christ was able to "destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil".¹¹⁶⁷ Then the triumphant question is asked: "Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?"¹¹⁶⁸

Some see Jesus' crucifixion as a martyrdom – a voluntary and violent death for a cause.¹¹⁶⁹ He had outlined his motive: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."¹¹⁷⁰ He was clear that his life was freely given. "No-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord".¹¹⁷¹ Unlike the early Muslim martyr Khubaid who deprecated his

¹¹⁵⁷ B.5:314

¹¹⁵⁸ Jn.14:2,3

¹¹⁵⁹ This view of the work of Christ has been championed by Aulen, *Christus Victor*

¹¹⁶⁰ 1.Jn.3:8

¹¹⁶¹ Jn.12:31.

¹¹⁶² See, for example, Richard Nysse "Yahweh is a Warrior" in *Word and World* 7/2 (1987) Source: http://www2.luthersem.edu/Word&World/Archives/7-2_Search_for_God/7-2_Nysse.pdf accessed 19th December, 2010. The Christ-as-warrior theme is developed in an eschatological setting in the book of Revelation. He is portrayed as riding on a white horse (Rev.19:11) and making war (Rev.19:11; 17:14), with a double-edged sword issuing from his mouth (Rev.1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15)

¹¹⁶³ Col.2:13-15. Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 119

¹¹⁶⁴ Jn.10:11-13

¹¹⁶⁵ Rev.5:5,6

¹¹⁶⁶ 2.Tim.1:10

¹¹⁶⁷ Heb.2:14

¹¹⁶⁸ 1.Cor.15:55

¹¹⁶⁹ This view of the atonement, the 'Moral Influence' theory, sees Christ's death as an act of obedience which impacts those who hear about it. It was championed by Peter Abelard (AD 1079-1142). See Alister McGrath "The Moral Theory of the Atonement: An Historical and Theological Critique" *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1985), 38: 205-220 from <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=3369988> Accessed on 1st Dec, 2010

¹¹⁷⁰ Jn.15:13

¹¹⁷¹ Jn.10:18

oppressors with: “O Allah, kill them all without exception”,¹¹⁷² Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of his executors.¹¹⁷³ According to the Qur’an¹¹⁷⁴ and the Bible,¹¹⁷⁵ Jesus ascended to heaven, and is alive now, as the Muslim martyrs are said to be. Referring to Rev.5:6, Parsons notes: “The popular Muslim belief that the resurrected body in heaven will have the wounds and disfigurements of the earthly body, makes Revelation’s portrait of the lamb looking as if it had been slain, a particularly striking image for a contextualised christology.”¹¹⁷⁶ Significantly, it is the wounds of the resurrected Christ, proof of the passion, which elicit from the doubting Thomas his exclamation of faith: “My Lord and My God!”¹¹⁷⁷

These pictures of the atonement present different views of the death of Christ, being more active or passive (Illustration 19).

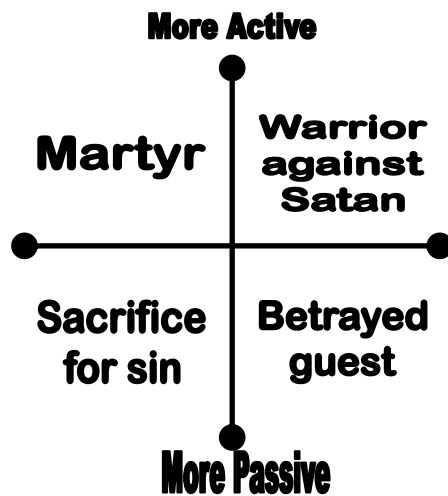


Illustration 19:
Representation of different
views of the death of Christ

If Christ’s death has such redemptive and transforming power, then how is it appropriated to others? How can people tap into its benefits?

¹¹⁷² B.4:281; 5:325, 412

¹¹⁷³ Lk.23:34

¹¹⁷⁴ Q.3:55; 19:33

¹¹⁷⁵ Mk.16:19; Acts.1:9

¹¹⁷⁶ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 119

¹¹⁷⁷ Jn.20:28

CHAPTER 15: Appropriating the Cross

1. The task of intercession

(a) *Intercession in Islamic texts*

The Qur'an repeatedly denies the possibility of a *shafti* (mediator or intercessor),¹¹⁷⁸ particularly for those who did not fulfill all of Islam's requirements.¹¹⁷⁹ This mediatorial task belongs to God alone.¹¹⁸⁰ However there is the possibility of permission from God¹¹⁸¹ to one "whose word is acceptable to Him".¹¹⁸²

The Hadith widen the categories considerably. Angels intercede for those who are praying.¹¹⁸³ People could ask God to forgive the sins of a dead person.¹¹⁸⁴ The Muslims asked God for rain, through the agency of Muhammad's uncle al-'Abbās.¹¹⁸⁵

Muhammad took on the role of intercessor, praying for others to be forgiven.¹¹⁸⁶ This was extended to the Day of Resurrection, when he claimed that he would intercede for others.¹¹⁸⁷ Sometimes this process is elaborated, with the people of the earth hastening from one prophet to another. Each prophet describes his inadequacy for this task and sends them to the next prophet. Muhammad is the final link in the chain and he makes intercession for his people.¹¹⁸⁸ However his intercession would be limited. In the case of his uncle Abū T}ālib who died as an idol-worshipper despite the Prophet's entreaties, Muhammad was uncertain. "Perhaps my intercession will be helpful to him on the Day of Resurrection so that he may be put in a shallow fire reaching only up to his ankles. His brain will boil from it."¹¹⁸⁹ He reported that those who had committed sins such as illegally taking booty would receive no aid. "When they say 'O Allah's Apostle! Intercede with Allah for me,' ... I will reply, 'I can't help you, for I have conveyed Allah's Message to you.'"¹¹⁹⁰ Muhammad's intercession was limited to deserving Muslims only. Clearly not every request would be granted: "For every Prophet there is one invocation which is definitely fulfilled by Allah."¹¹⁹¹

It could be thought that neither Muhammad nor anyone else has a role in intercession at all. He repeatedly admonished his tribe, family, wife and daughter to save themselves because "I cannot save you from Allah's punishment".¹¹⁹² One editor notes that "[t]his Hadith indicates that one can only ask Allah for help directly or through his performed good deeds. But to ask Allah through dead or absent prophets, saints, spirits, holy men, angels etc. is absolutely forbidden in

¹¹⁷⁸ Q.6:51,70,94; 31:13; 40:18; 74:48

¹¹⁷⁹ Q.74:48

¹¹⁸⁰ Q.6:70; 32:7; 83:19

¹¹⁸¹ Q.10:3

¹¹⁸² Q.20:109

¹¹⁸³ B.1:620, as long as the person praying does not break wind! B.1:466

¹¹⁸⁴ B.1:55

¹¹⁸⁵ B.5:59

¹¹⁸⁶ e.g. B.4:135

¹¹⁸⁷ B.1:331, 429; 2:553; 6:242, 243

¹¹⁸⁸ B.6:3, 236; 8:570; 9:507,601

¹¹⁸⁹ B.5:224; 8:569

¹¹⁹⁰ B.2:485; 4:307

¹¹⁹¹ B.9:566

¹¹⁹² B.4:16; 6:294

Islam and it is a kind of disbelief.”¹¹⁹³ The editor’s comment does not accord with the many Hadiths above which describe such an intercession.

There is a clear distinction between human intercession and divine intercession as the following Hadith outlines. Muhammad said:

“Then the prophets and Angels and the believers will intercede, and (last of all) the Almighty (Allah) will say, ‘Now remains My Intercession.’ He will then hold a handful of the Fire from which He will take out some people whose bodies have been burnt, and they will be thrown into a river at the entrance of Paradise, called the water of life...Those people will come out (of the River of Life) like pearls, and they will have (golden) necklaces, and then they will enter Paradise whereupon the people of Paradise will say, ‘These are the people emancipated by the Beneficent. He has admitted them into Paradise **without them having done any good deeds and without sending forth any good (for themselves).**’” (emphasis mine).¹¹⁹⁴

This is pure salvation by grace. Good works have played no part – it all depends on the action of God. However it presents Allah’s intercession as a last resort. It is much like a final plea for clemency before execution, as practiced in many Muslim countries, to the president or king when all the legal avenues have failed. Allah comes into play only at the end of the day, when all the heavy lifting of a lifetime of personal good works and the post-death intercession by others have proved insufficient. This is quite different from the biblical view of God who takes the initiative from the very beginning. For Christians, salvation is a plan “that God had destined for our glory before time began.”¹¹⁹⁵ Paul writes of the God “who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”¹¹⁹⁶

(b) Connections with biblical themes

A significant reference in the Hadith about intercession appears to be inspired by the biblical cry of Jesus for forgiveness for his tormentors:¹¹⁹⁷ “I saw the Prophet talking about one of the prophets whose nation had beaten him and caused him to bleed, while he was cleaning the blood off his face and saying, ‘O Allah! Forgive my nation, for they have no knowledge.’”¹¹⁹⁸ One of the three efficacious post-death mediatorial roles is “a pious son, who prays for ... the deceased.”¹¹⁹⁹ The Bible presents Jesus as the perfect Son of God¹²⁰⁰ who “always lives to intercede” for those “who come to God through him”.¹²⁰¹ Those who sin are comforted with the description of the advocate, the “one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”¹²⁰² He would be the ideal “interpreter” which every person will desire on the Day of Resurrection, for the Hadith inform us that “[t]here will be none among you but will be talked to by Allah on the Day of Resurrection, without there being an interpreter between him

¹¹⁹³ B.4:671

¹¹⁹⁴ B.9:532.2

¹¹⁹⁵ 1.Cor.2:7

¹¹⁹⁶ 2.Tim.1:9

¹¹⁹⁷ Lk.23:34

¹¹⁹⁸ B.4:683

¹¹⁹⁹ Sahih Muslim 766, as related by Abū Huraira

¹²⁰⁰ Heb.2:10; 5:9; 7:28

¹²⁰¹ Heb.7:25

¹²⁰² 1.Jn.2:1

and Him (Allah).¹²⁰³ Jesus is uniquely fitted for this role: “For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”¹²⁰⁴ In a remarkable convolution and concentration of responsibilities at the grand assize, Jesus is sometimes presented as the defense attorney, main witness and presiding judge.¹²⁰⁵

2. The primacy of faith and love over works

(a) *Faith and love in the Hadith*

According to the above section “the inadequacy of works”, human actions, either good or bad, are not a reliable indicator of a person’s status before God, nor of one’s ultimate destiny.¹²⁰⁶ Several Hadith propose that this function is performed by faith and love. Some accounts clarify the Muslim definition of *īmān* (faith). Faith is so powerful that even a small amount can save one from hell.¹²⁰⁷ After the judgement, Allah will say: “Take out (of the Fire) whoever has got faith equal to a mustard seed in his heart.”¹²⁰⁸ Faith is described as a complex entity, consisting of more than sixty branches or parts.¹²⁰⁹ It is further defined in a statement by Muhammad:

“Whoever possesses the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of faith : (1) The one to whom Allah and His Apostle becomes dearer than anything else. (2) Who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah’s sake, (3) Who hates to revert to Atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be thrown into the fire.”¹²¹⁰

(b) *Connections with biblical themes*

This Hadith has three statements, which will be discussed in turn.

(1) The first statement shows that faith requires a basis, although it could be an incorrect basis. People, for example, could attribute natural phenomena such as rain to either Allah or to a star.¹²¹¹ Yet faith is more than *assensus*, intellectual agreement, for there is generally an affective element involved. Borg claims that the Latin roots of the word *credo* ‘I believe’ (i.e. *cre* + *do*) combine to mean ‘I give my heart to’.¹²¹² Muhammad said: “There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart.”¹²¹³ It may be significant that it was Muhammad’s chest, not his head, which was opened and cleaned by the angel Gabriel, before being filled with wisdom and love.¹²¹⁴ “The heart is the self at its deepest level, a level below the intellect...Prior to the seventeenth century, the word ‘believe’ did not mean believing in the truth of statements or

¹²⁰³ B.8:547

¹²⁰⁴ 1.Tim.2:5

¹²⁰⁵ Jesus as advocate: 1.Jn.2:1; Jesus as witness: Mt.10:32; Jesus as Judge: Jn.5:27; Mt.25:31-46

¹²⁰⁶ B.4:430, 549; 8:593, 594; 9:546

¹²⁰⁷ B.1:21, 42

¹²⁰⁸ B.8:565; 9:660, 601

¹²⁰⁹ B.1:8

¹²¹⁰ B.1:15

¹²¹¹ B.2:148

¹²¹² Borg, *The Heart of Christianity*, 40 . However this claim has been disputed, and labelled as a “folk etymology”. <http://creedalchristian.blogspot.com/2010/11/what-credo-means.html> Accessed 14th Dec, 2011

¹²¹³ B.1:49

¹²¹⁴ B.1:345. However Yusuf Ali conflates the two with his comment: “The breast is symbolically the seat of knowledge and of the highest feeling of love and affection.” Yusuf Ali *The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, 1755 n.6188

propositions ... Grammatically, the object of believing was not statements but a person.”¹²¹⁵ This is captured somewhat in the first statement: to hold Allah and His apostle as “dearer than anything else”. When a man was asked what he had prepared for the Day of Judgement, he said, “Nothing, except that I love Allah and His Apostle.” The Prophet observed: “You will be with those whom you love.”¹²¹⁶ The stress has moved from the performance of good works to a relationship of love. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus replied that it was to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, ... soul, ... mind, ... and ... strength.”¹²¹⁷ Yet the suggestion of placing of Muhammad, a mere man, alongside of God as the object of undivided love would seem to negate the Islamic concept of *tawhīd*. Jesus Christ, “being in very nature God”¹²¹⁸ would seem to be a better alternative.

(2) The second statement, about the one “who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah’s sake”, hints at a kind of love approaching the biblical *agape*. It is not based on physical attraction (*eros*), friendship (*philia*) or affection (*storge*).¹²¹⁹ The love described in this Hadith is simply “for Allah’s sake”. It suggests a dispassionate commitment for a higher reason. Jesus challenged his hearers about who and how they should love: “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”¹²²⁰ This Hadith suggests an undeserved and even unrequited love. It opens the possibility for a redeeming love that extends even to its enemies – a love which is at the heart of the gospel (Rom.5:8).¹²²¹ Faith is not, like fatalism, a weak and passive response in the face of uncertainty, but a strong active expression of love.¹²²²

(3) The third statement describes a person “who hates to revert to Atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be thrown into the fire.” This presents faith as a commitment that will not be turned aside. The believer will not look back.¹²²³ This is faith as *fidelitas*, a single-minded dedication. It requires a turning-away from other possible contenders. Jesus declared that his followers’ adherence to his teaching superseded obedience to their parents and attachment to their own families.¹²²⁴ Borg describes it thus: “Christian faith means loyalty to Jesus as Lord, and not to the seductive would-be lords of our lives, whether the nation, or affluence, or achievement, or family, or desire.”¹²²⁵ Likewise Muhammad stated: “None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father and his children ...and all mankind.”¹²²⁶ When ‘Umar, after some prompting, declared to Muhammad: “You are dearer to me than my own self,” the Prophet affirmed him with the statement: “Now you are a believer.”¹²²⁷ This is deep personal faith focussed on an individual, not on an idea.

¹²¹⁵ Borg, *The Heart of Christianity*, 40

¹²¹⁶ B.5:37; 8:192

¹²¹⁷ Mk.12:30/Lk.10:27/Mt.22:37

¹²¹⁸ Phil.2:6

¹²¹⁹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*

¹²²⁰ Luke 6:32

¹²²¹ More extensive treatments of the love of God in the Qur’an can be found in Zwemer, *The Moslem Doctrine of God* and Farid Mahally “A study of the word “love” in the Qur’an” *Hubb Allah fi al-Qur’an* from <http://www.answering-islam.de/Main/Quran/Themes/love.htm> accessed on 30 Jan 2007

¹²²² Gal.5:6

¹²²³ Lk.9:62

¹²²⁴ Mt.10:37/Lk.14:26; Mt.12:50/Mk.3:35/Lk.8:21

¹²²⁵ Borg, *The Heart of Christianity*, 33

¹²²⁶ B.1:13,14

¹²²⁷ B.8:628

3. The Transformed life

Both the Hadith and the Gospel expect that a life lived in faith will result in a change. It may be expressed in several ways.

(a) A new nature

Accompanying true faith is repentance, a theme referred to several times in the Qur'an.¹²²⁸ The Hadith reiterates this: the recipient of forgiveness is "the one who regrets (his crime)."¹²²⁹ The result is a faith which seems to impart a new nature, for "a believer never becomes impure."¹²³⁰ A transformation, which moves one to a different level of existence, has taken place, resulting in total and permanent purity.

(b) Being born anew – the offer of a clean start

Muhammad said, "Whoever performs Hajj for Allah's pleasure and does not have sexual relations with his wife, and does not do evil or sins then he will return (after Hajj free from all sins) **as if he were born anew.**"¹²³¹

(c) Close connection with God

One passage describes a close and intimate connection with God attained through devotional exercises. "And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing *Nawāfil* (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so ***I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks***; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e. give him My Refuge)."¹²³²

(d) Remade in a new image

Muhammad said: "Whoever will enter Paradise will be of the shape and image of Adam",¹²³³ for Adam was made in the image of God. To Muslims, this transformation is an eschatological aspiration – something to be hoped-for.

(e) Connections with biblical themes

The Bible provides more detail or moves along from these statements found in the Hadith. There is the promise of a new nature, a clean start, and personal transformation leading to a deeper connection with God.

It is said of a follower of Christ that "he has been cleansed from his past sins".¹²³⁴ Jesus told his disciples: "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."¹²³⁵ Baptism symbolizes this cleansing, but it is more than that. "[T]his water symbolizes baptism that now

¹²²⁸ Q.2:160; 3:89; 19:60; 20:82; 25:70

¹²²⁹ B.5:194

¹²³⁰ B.1:283

¹²³¹ B.2:596; 3:45,46 (emphasis mine)

¹²³² B.8:509 (emphasis mine)

¹²³³ B.8:246

¹²³⁴ 2.Pet.1:9

¹²³⁵ Jn.15:3

saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹²³⁶ From a Christian perspective, the death and resurrection of Christ is key in this process, for “by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy”.¹²³⁷ His sacrifice has initiated this radical cleansing process. “The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”¹²³⁸ The Bible affirms this as the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, both in the Old¹²³⁹ and New¹²⁴⁰ Testaments. In Christian teaching, the physical departure of Christ from the earth was antecedent to the coming of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁴¹

A new birth is, for Christians, a soteriological necessity. Jesus declared: “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”¹²⁴² However it is not achieved by the performance of commendable deeds or by avoiding iniquity: it remains a sovereign act of God. A later generation of Christians was assured: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”¹²⁴³

Biblical teaching also describes God acting and working through his people. Isaiah describes Israel as attributing her entire good work to her Lord: “all that we have accomplished, You have done for us.”¹²⁴⁴ Christians are spoken of as “fellow workers with God,”¹²⁴⁵ sharing the same yoke and burden.¹²⁴⁶ They can accomplish God-appointed tasks by His “power that is at work within us”,¹²⁴⁷ “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”¹²⁴⁸ More than this, they can become “partakers of the divine nature”.¹²⁴⁹ Jesus speaks of himself as the vine, with his followers as the branches. He tells them: “Apart from me, you can do nothing.”¹²⁵⁰

For Christians, this transformation is a process which can begin now. Paul assures his readers that we “with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, [and] are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”¹²⁵¹ because we “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”¹²⁵²

For Muslims, the ultimate goal seems to be to fulfil the law, and so please Allah, encouraged by a system of punishments and rewards. For Christians, the goal is communion with God, encouraged by God’s enabling grace which results in personal transformation. As one writer puts it: “my inability to keep God’s commandments is where my faith starts, not where it

¹²³⁶ 1 Peter 3:21

¹²³⁷ Heb.10:14

¹²³⁸ Heb.9:22

¹²³⁹ Ezek.36:26

¹²⁴⁰ 2.Cor.3:18

¹²⁴¹ Jn.16:7

¹²⁴² Jn.3:3

¹²⁴³ 1.Pet.1:23

¹²⁴⁴ Isa.26:12

¹²⁴⁵ 1.Cor.3:9; 2.Cor.6:1

¹²⁴⁶ Mt.11:28-30

¹²⁴⁷ Eph.3:20

¹²⁴⁸ Phil.2:12-13

¹²⁴⁹ 2.Pet.1:3,4

¹²⁵⁰ Jn.15:5

¹²⁵¹ 2 Cor. 3:18

¹²⁵² Col. 3:10

ends.”¹²⁵³

4. Assurance of the believer

(a) Islamic teaching

Although Muhammad was unable to have any assurance for himself to enter Paradise,¹²⁵⁴ he pronounced it to Abū Bakr, Umar, Uthman,¹²⁵⁵ and others. Some Muslims would deny this possibility. Ismail Faruqi states that “unlike Christianity, Islamicity is never a fait accompli. Islamicity is a process. It grows, and it is sometimes reduced. There is no time at which the Muslim may carry his title to paradise, as it were, in his pocket. Instead of 'salvation', the Muslim is to achieve felicity through unceasing effort.”¹²⁵⁶

(b) Connection with biblical themes

This assurance is an end-point of Christian faith, the logical finale of a Christ-based trajectory. It is therefore not surprising that Islamic teaching based on the Qur'an and the Hadith should not arrive at this conclusion. This is one of the areas of greatest disconnect between Muslim and Christian theology. For Christians, assurance of eternity with God is an outcome of Christ's work on their behalf rather than of their own effort. Jesus asserted that “whoever has my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”¹²⁵⁷ Jesus' follower John affirmed this: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”¹²⁵⁸

¹²⁵³ Dalby, *Healing the Masculine Soul*, 99

¹²⁵⁴ See Chapter 11 Part 2

¹²⁵⁵ B.8:235; 9:217, 367

¹²⁵⁶ Al-Faruqi, "Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wa", 391

¹²⁵⁷ Jn.5:24

¹²⁵⁸ 1.Jn.5:13

PART THREE: USING THE HADITH IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is much in the Hadith outlined which intersects with Christian teaching. A careful practitioner could use these to raise significant issues with Muslims. In the context of Muslim-Christian engagement, the Hadith can be a valuable set of tools to be utilised in a variety of ways. They can be used to promote Muslim-Christian dialogue, by emphasizing the elements of concord. They can also establish connections, by allowing the good news of Jesus Christ to be presented through the medium of the Hadith. Each of these will be dealt with in turn.

CHAPTER 16: Dialogue with Muslims

Dialogue establishes a two-way discussion between proponents of different viewpoints. This involves willingness to both speak and to pay attention to what others are saying. When the child Jesus was found in the temple, he was “sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions.”¹²⁵⁹ New opportunities for such listening and asking questions are now arising. The 2007 ‘Common Word’ initiative¹²⁶⁰ marks a significant development in Muslim-Christian relations and a noteworthy mind-shift. John Esposito brands it as “a historic event”, stating that “if you look at the history of Islam and the Muslim world, this is really the first time that we have an initiative where Muslims have collectively come together and agreed to what binds them to Christians”.¹²⁶¹ Many Christians have responded positively to these overtures, as is shown in the form of statements on the Common Word website.¹²⁶² Others, such as John Piper, have stood against this initiative, noting that some public responses have lacked clarity on what Christians believe.¹²⁶³ Christians will need to be clear about their goals before entering into such dialogue.

The ‘Mini-Consultation on Reaching Muslims’, held in Pattaya, Thailand (1980) under the auspices of the Lausanne movement, divided dialogue into three types, based on its goals.

(a) Discursive dialogue is “a conversation conducted to convince another party of the truth (e.g. Acts 17:2; 18:4)”.

(b) In “dialogue on religious experience... members of different faiths seek to share their particular religious experiences with one another.”

(c) “Secular dialogue” discusses “ways in which greater communal understanding can be developed, how common action can be taken to correct various social evils, and how followers of different faiths can co-operate in the task of community development and national reconstruction.”¹²⁶⁴

Each method has a different focus: objective truth, or personal experience, or combined action. Dialogue, then, may have three objectives: to convince others of one’s own beliefs, to comprehend their understanding of the truth, or to cooperate with them in implementing the truth in practical ways (Table 20).

¹²⁵⁹ Lk.2:46

¹²⁶⁰ <http://www.acommonword.com/>

¹²⁶¹ <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=21957&lan=en&sid=1&sp=0> accessed on Feb 21, 2011

¹²⁶² <http://www.acommonword.com/index.php?lang=en&page=responses> accessed on Feb 21, 2011

¹²⁶³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTY-9FY13kw> accessed 20th April, 2011. Another response from the Uniting Church of Australia can be found on

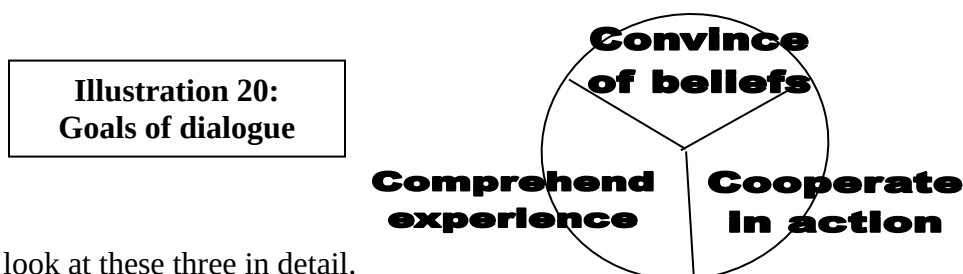
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/rof/images/stories/resources/acommonwordresponse.pdf> accessed 11th Dec 2011

¹²⁶⁴ Lausanne Occasional Papers “Christian Witness to Muslims” No. 13 – Thailand Report, 22

Table 20: Varieties of dialogue

Type of dialogue	Aim	Focus
Discursive	Convince	Belief
Religious experience	Comprehend	Experience
Secular dialogue	Cooperate	Action

These three elements can be represented diagrammatically (Illustration 20)



We will look at these three in detail.

1. Discursive dialogue

Dialogue between Muslims and others took place early in the establishment of Islam. The Hadith describe the interaction between Muhammad and the Christian delegation which came from Najran.¹²⁶⁵ Much more detail of this meeting is given in the earliest biography, the *Sirat Rasūl Allah*, which was compiled by Ibn Ishaq and edited by Ibn Hisham. From this text we learn that sixty riders came, that the conversation lasted several days, and that serious theological discussions took place. Each side sought to present its own point of view and to listen to the replies of the other.¹²⁶⁶ However there are several factors which need to be taken into account as we engage in dialogue. Some of these are potential pitfalls, while others are possible stepping-stones to enhance the discussion.

(a) Evangelism and da'wa should not be confused with 'proselytisation'

Islam, like Christianity, began with public proclamation. Just as Jesus announced the coming of the Kingdom of God to the Jews,¹²⁶⁷ Muhammad preached to the Arabs in the marketplaces of Mecca.¹²⁶⁸ The Hadith is clear that the sermons of Islam's Prophet concealed nothing of what was revealed to him,¹²⁶⁹ and Jesus told his disciples that "everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."¹²⁷⁰ Just as Jesus sent out the twelve¹²⁷¹ and the seventy-two,¹²⁷² so Muhammad designated twelve men to lead in Medina¹²⁷³ and sent seventy reciters of the Qur'an from the tribe of Bani Salim to the tribe of Bani Amir at Najd to proclaim Islam to them.¹²⁷⁴

Proclamation of one's faith as a part of dialogue, however, can be controversial. The

¹²⁶⁵ B.5:663, 664; 9:360

¹²⁶⁶ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 270-277

¹²⁶⁷ e.g. Mk.1:15

¹²⁶⁸ B.4:724; 5:201

¹²⁶⁹ B.6:136; 9:622, explaining Q.5:67

¹²⁷⁰ Jn.15:15

¹²⁷¹ Mt.10:5/Mk.3:13/Lk.9:1

¹²⁷² Lk.10:1

¹²⁷³ Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat*, 204

¹²⁷⁴ B.2:116; 4:57, 299; 5:414, 416, 417, 422

WCC Muslim-Christian encounter at Chambesy, Switzerland, in 1979, insisted that dialogue should never be used for “proselytisation”.¹²⁷⁵ Significantly, they did not use the term ‘evangelism’, the normal Christian term for sharing one’s faith, nor ‘*da’wa*’, the Muslim equivalent, but opted for the pejorative term ‘proselytisation’. One writer contrasts the “proper invitation to share one’s faith” over against the “exploitative or subtly coercive techniques or proselytism”¹²⁷⁶ and another announces that “we do not support proselytism or any other form of coercion or inducement.”¹²⁷⁷ Kerr refers to “the distorting malpractice of proselytism” where the “Arabic *igtinas* implies ‘snaring’ as of an animal in a hunt.”¹²⁷⁸ If proselytisation is defined as the use of deception, duress or incentive to cause people to change their religion, then all reasonable Christians and Muslims would agree that it is never appropriate. Any declaration of faith should take place in an open atmosphere of “gentleness and respect.”¹²⁷⁹ People should have the freedom to accept the views of others without expecting favour, or to reject them without experiencing fear.

(b) The use of Islamic sources indicates respect

The use of the Hadith as a connection to the gospel can convey the importance which the Christian evangelist places on the Muslim hearer. Islamic tradition is taken seriously and valued, and the gospel is presented in terms which imply dignity, esteem and an attitude of acceptance of Muslim people. This is in stark contrast to an approach which ignores Islamic beliefs and traditions, and seeks to engage Muslims based on Christian-only terminology and paradigms, deeming all Muslim sources as worthless.

(c) The Hadith can be an aid in understanding biblical inspiration

As an example of this approach, we can consider a way in which the Hadith may be used to help Muslims understand the Christian concept of biblical inspiration. When Muslims begin to read the Bible, they are often perplexed. They encounter a text which may have variant readings listed in the footnotes, and multiple and differing accounts of the same event e.g. the creation of man (Gen.1 and Gen.2).¹²⁸⁰ “How could this book be from God?” they ask. The New Testament seems even more confusing. Instead of the one *Injeel* (gospel) mentioned in the Qur’an, they find four gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. “Which one is the real gospel?” they ask. Part of the problem arises from their perception of revelation.

Most Muslims (and many Christians, as well) think in terms of Jesus as equivalent to Muhammad, since both are seen as the founders, spokesmen and as prophets for their religions. The Muslim writer Charles Le Gai Eaton questions this: “The Christian, if he wishes to understand Islam, must resist the temptation to compare Muhammad with Jesus, for these two

¹²⁷⁵ Nazir-Ali, *Islam: A Christian Perspective*, 148

¹²⁷⁶ T.Michel “Rights of Non-Muslims in Islam: An Opening Statement” cited in Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, 61

¹²⁷⁷ Swartley, “Course Introduction”, xxvi

¹²⁷⁸ Kerr, “Islamic *da’wa* and Christian Mission”, 163

¹²⁷⁹ 1.Pet.3:15

¹²⁸⁰ The Qur’an, of course, contains many parallel accounts, including the creation (Q.7:54 [in six days] and Q.41:9-12 [in eight days]), Satan’s fall (Q.2:34; 7:11-18; 17:61; 18:50; and 20:116); the sin of Adam and his wife (Q.2:35-39; Q.7:19-25; and Q.20:120-123), the story of Noah (Q.7:59-64; and 11:25-49); the birth of John the Baptist (Q.3:38-41 and Q.19:1-15; and the birth of Jesus (Q.3:42-48 and 19:16-34). There are some differences between the various accounts.

had entirely different roles in the scheme of things.”¹²⁸¹ Moreover the Bible is equated with the Qur’an, for both are holy books. Wilfred Cantwell-Smith has suggested that a better parallel would be Jesus as corresponding to the Qur’an.

“Muslims and Christians have been alienated partly by the fact that both have misunderstood each other’s faith by trying to fit it into their own pattern. The most usual error is to suppose (on both sides) that the roles of Jesus Christ in Christianity and of Muhammad in Islam are comparable . . . If one is drawing parallels in terms of the structure of the two religions, what corresponds in the Christian scheme to the Quran is not the Bible but the person of Christ - it is Christ who is for Christians the revelation of (from) God”¹²⁸²

Interestingly, Nasr refers to the Qur’an as “the central theophany (divine manifestation) of Islam.”¹²⁸³

Davis moves beyond this to present further equivalents: “The (central) place occupied by Christ in the Christian religion belongs in Islam to the Qur’an as the very Word of God. Muhammad’s position is roughly parallel to that of Paul or the Apostles, and the nearest equivalent to the New Testament is not the Qur’an, but the Hadith ...”¹²⁸⁴ This can be depicted in a table: **Table 21: Contrasting views of revelation**

	Christian view	Muslim view
Primary revelation is ...	Jesus Christ	the Qur’an
Witnesses to the revelation are ...	the Apostles (including Paul)	Muhammad
Record or explanation of the revelation is in ...	the Bible	the Hadith

(d) Comparing Jesus and the Qur’an

Several factors support this point of view. Both Jesus and the Qur’an are seen by their respective religious communities as “the word of God” coming down from heaven, directly from God.¹²⁸⁵ To take their physical forms on earth, they were temporarily ‘hosted’ by human intermediaries (Mary and Muhammad), who were simply means of transmission, and did not have any impact on the divine nature or essence of Jesus or the Qur’an. Just as Jesus is described as “the word cast into Mary”,¹²⁸⁶ so the Qur’an could be seen as the word cast into Muhammad. Both Jesus and the Qur’an (in the form of the “preserved Tablet” which is believed to be in heaven) are seen as eternally pre-existent.¹²⁸⁷ Both proclaim their perfection.¹²⁸⁸ Both are presented as the final divine revelation.¹²⁸⁹ Both testify to transmitting the very words of God,¹²⁹⁰

¹²⁸¹ Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man*, 96

¹²⁸² Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, 17-18.

¹²⁸³ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/487666/Quran> accessed on 21st June, 2011

¹²⁸⁴ Davis, *Christ and the World Religions*, 104

¹²⁸⁵ Jn.6:51; Q.20:113

¹²⁸⁶ Q.4:171

¹²⁸⁷ Jn.1:1; Q.85:22

¹²⁸⁸ Jn.8:46; Q.18:1

¹²⁸⁹ Heb.1:3; Q.5:3

¹²⁹⁰ Jn.8:28; Q.55:2

and are preserved and protected by God.¹²⁹¹ Both are seen as unique to their religions— Jesus is the only begotten son,¹²⁹² while the Qur'an is described as “inimitable”,¹²⁹³ for its detractors are challenged to produce a comparable *sura*. When asked to perform a miracle, Muhammad could point only to the Qur'an.¹²⁹⁴

(e) Comparing the Bible and the Hadith

A comparison of the Bible and the Hadith likewise finds many parallels. Each record has multiple accounts of certain events, yet with some differences. These discrepancies may involve slight changes in the order of events, or minor details may be included or omitted. Clearly the various elements of the content have come through different channels of transmission. The science of transmission is claimed to be highly developed within Islam, and the gospel writer Luke admits to accessing a multiplicity of sources.¹²⁹⁵ Some details reflect the character and background of the transmitter. Luke the physician includes clinical history details of those Jesus healed,¹²⁹⁶ but diplomatically omits information which was critical of the medical profession.¹²⁹⁷ Aisha, the young wife of Muhammad, provides particulars from their bedroom,¹²⁹⁸ as well as criticism of his anti-women comments.

Whereas the Qur'an is seen a direct *wahy* (revelation) from God in the manner of a typewriter or fax transmission, both the Bible and the Hadith sanction some human involvement in their collation. Ali ibn Mohammed Al-Jurjani (d. 816/1413) describes it as follows: “A Sacred Hadith is, as to the meaning, from Allah the Almighty; as to the wording, it is from the Messenger of Allah.” Ali Ibn Sultan Muhammad Al-Qari, the Hanifi jurisprudent (d.1016/1605) spoke of Muhammad's role in the following terms: “Allah ... entrusted to him the expressing of it in such words as he wished.”¹²⁹⁹

(f) Criticism of this view

Although the list of correlations between Jesus and the Qur'an, the Apostles and Muhammad, and the Bible and the Hadith has much to commend it, it also suffers from difficulties. It is true that the primary revelation is Jesus Christ, but the apostles were more than simply witnesses. They were the recipients of revelation and some of them went on to become writers of gospels and epistles. The biblical concept of inspiration is of “men [who] spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”.¹³⁰⁰ Each of the New Testament writers has a personal style and unique vocabulary which distinguishes them from the others. There is clearly more personal input involved in this than was allowed to Muhammad with his mechanical ‘typewriter-like’ transmission of the words of the Qur'an. Similarly, Mary was more than just a ‘means of entry’ of the Son of God into the world, since Jesus took his humanity from her. The comparison between the Bible and the Hadith has been criticised by Temple Gairdner, who found more differences between the textual histories of the Hadith and Gospels than he found

¹²⁹¹ Jn.7:30; Q:15:9

¹²⁹² Jn.1:18

¹²⁹³ Q.2:23

¹²⁹⁴ Q.21.3,5,10

¹²⁹⁵ Lk.1:3

¹²⁹⁶ e.g. Lk.8:42

¹²⁹⁷ Mk.5:26, c.f. Lk.8:43

¹²⁹⁸ B.3:247

¹²⁹⁹ Ibrahim & Johnson-Davies, *Forty Hadith Qudsi*, 8

¹³⁰⁰ 2.Pet.2:21

similarities.¹³⁰¹ The Hadith, as important as they are to Muslims, are still considered a ‘second-class’ revelation, whereas Christians consider the Bible to be the inspired word of God. Moreover, it is inevitable that Jesus and Muhammad should be compared, since both are seen as the founders of major religions. Consequently both are seen by their respective traditions as the epitome of human existence and have become the objects of devotion and piety.

2. Religious experience dialogue:

In this form of dialogue, the focus is on how one’s faith impacts oneself in an existential way. The goal is to identify faith’s effects on feelings and responses. Muhammad, in an act of emotion and understanding, once announced to his followers: “Today a pious man from Ethiopia has expired. Come on to offer the funeral prayer.”¹³⁰² The “pious man” was the Christian Abyssinian king, bearing the title “Najashi”, who had provided refuge for the persecuted Muslims.¹³⁰³ He was “a king who would not tolerate injustice”¹³⁰⁴ so Muhammad felt that his people would be safe there. Here it was Muhammad’s positive feelings about the Ethiopian ruler that came to the fore, allowing him to bridge the theological differences between them. A number of key issues need to be kept in mind to enhance this kind of dialogue.

(a) Interfaith dialogue

The Hadith can be a helpful starting-place for dialogue, since they identify some common ground that exists between Islamic and Christian worldviews. This can be a useful tool to build understanding of the other’s faith journey. Nazir-Ali calls this “interior dialogue, [where] each partner will need to understand the ways in which spiritual experiences are interpreted by the other.”¹³⁰⁵ This could happen through a series of inter-faith discussions. A comparison of similar events in the lives of Muhammad and Moses and other prophets¹³⁰⁶ could be a good starting point for members of Christian and Muslim communities to evaluate their own modern-day similarities. The use of personal narrative is a key methodology in this approach. It is at the level of lived experience that hearts can meet and relationships be built.

Inter-faith dialogue may also delve into issues such as the ultimate fate and eternal destiny of the human race. The hadith passages which discuss eschatology¹³⁰⁷ and heaven and hell¹³⁰⁸ could be applied in this context.

(b) Interfaith worship

For some, the common ground discovered in “religious experience dialogue” can be expressed in inter-faith worship. The Hadith present a picture of God which has some compatibility with a Christian understanding of the divine, and these commonalities may be recognised. These include the view of divine omniscience, divine emotions and the desire for repentance.¹³⁰⁹

¹³⁰¹ Gairdner, "Moslem Tradition and the Gospel Record. The Hadith and the Injil"

¹³⁰² B.2:406, 412; 5:220

¹³⁰³ B.3:494; 4:364; 5:212, 215, 216, 245, 539; 7:698

¹³⁰⁴ Ibn Ishaq *Sirat*, .146

¹³⁰⁵ Nazir-Ali, *Islam: A Christian Perspective*, 145

¹³⁰⁶ See Chapter 4 Parts 1 & 2

¹³⁰⁷ See Chapter 6 Part 3 (a)

¹³⁰⁸ See Chapter 6 Part 3 (b)

¹³⁰⁹ See Chapter 8

Likewise, many of the supplications of Muhammad could be included as part of interfaith worship, alongside Christian prayers.¹³¹⁰ Other prayers which could also be used in this context have been identified.¹³¹¹

One should not suppose that the existence of such parallels indicates that interfaith worship should be entered into without serious thought that ignores the significant differences between Islam and Christianity. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden define dialogue as “being open to other religions, to recognize God’s activity in them, and to see how they are related to God’s unique revelation in Christ.”¹³¹² They do not infer that this openness should lead to syncretism rather, “[t]he goal of dialogue is to affirm the Lordship of Christ over all life in such a way that people within their own context may recognize the relevance of that Lordship to them and discover it for themselves.”¹³¹³ For many evangelical Christians, involvement in interfaith worship would be seen as the first step onto a dangerous and slippery slope.

3. Secular dialogue

The ethical teachings of the Hadith lend themselves to a third approach, “secular dialogue”, which Zebiri has called ‘the dialogue of needs’. She sees it as focussing on “areas of practical co-operation such as social justice and ecological issues.”¹³¹⁴ The Catholic church envisages this possibility with its statement during the Vatican Council in 1964:

“Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this Council urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.”¹³¹⁵

Anglican bishop Nazir-Ali speaks of such collaboration in Pakistan when Christian medical teams implemented an immunisation program for Christian and Muslim children in *busti* (slum) areas. The team’s arrival was announced to the public through the loudspeakers of local mosques.¹³¹⁶ Chapman points out that “Muslims and Christians have been able to work side by side in South Africa in their opposition to apartheid.”¹³¹⁷ There is a call for such teamwork from the Muslim side by Sardar in an article entitled “The Ethical Connection: Christian-Muslim Relations in the Postmodern Age”¹³¹⁸ where he calls for “a joint ethical endeavour by Muslims and Christians” in the face of “the forces of atheism, secularism and materialism, resulting in a desire to join ranks and co-operate constructively with Christians as fellow theists.”¹³¹⁹

¹³¹⁰ See Chapter 6 Part 2

¹³¹¹ For an analysis of Muslim prayers, see Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* and Padwick, “The Language of Muslim Devotion,” 5-21, 98—110, 194—209, as well as the anthology by Cragg, *Alive to God*

¹³¹² Samuel & Sugden, “Dialogue”, 122. This is dialogue for the purpose of more effectively proclaiming Christ, rather than dialogue to enable Christians to discern truth which is lacking in what has been revealed to them.

¹³¹³ Samuel & Sugden, *Dialogue with Other Religions*, p. 122.

¹³¹⁴ Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face*, 33, 34

¹³¹⁵ *Nostra Aetate* quote from Speight, *God Is One: The Way of Islam*, 101-102.

¹³¹⁶ Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers*, 86

¹³¹⁷ Chapman “Christian Perceptions of Islam”, 103

¹³¹⁸ Sardar “The Ethical Connection: Christian-Muslim Relations in the Postmodern Age”

¹³¹⁹ Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians*, 173, 181

(a) Bases and activities for secular dialogue

The shared bases for such cooperation are summarised below. Activities which could be undertaken by Muslims and Christians at organisational, communal and/or individual levels are outlined.

Table 22: Bases for secular dialogue

THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL BASES		
God is merciful to those who are merciful to others	B.2:373; 7:559; 8:26	Mt.5:7
Wish for others what you want for yourself	B.1:12	Mt.7:12
Giving is better than receiving	B.4:13, 371	Acts.20:35;Mt.5:42

Both Islam and Christianity set high standards of individual and communal behaviour for their adherents. According to the Hadith, Muhammad made the statement: “The most beloved to me amongst you is the one who has the best character and manners.”¹³²⁰ Jesus advised his followers: “Let your light so shine before men that they give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”¹³²¹ Muslims and Christians can stand together on many public and private morality issues, to raise the general standards of social behaviour, with a particular emphasis on how one’s actions affect others. These could be undertaken through joint advertising or awareness-raising campaigns

Table 23: Examples of moral issues

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MORALITY ISSUES		
Truth-telling	B.1:17; 8:116	Eph.4:15
Respect for others’ reputations	B.1:17	Rom.13:7
Respect for others’ property	B.1:17	Mt.25:14-30
Returning lost property	B.1:91	Ex.23:4
Care of children	B.1:17	Mt.18:6/Mk.9:42/Lk.17:2
Sexual purity	B.1:17	Mt.5:28; Heb.13:4
Obedience to leaders	B.4:203	Heb.13:17; 1.Pet.2:13,14

Zebiri notes that it is in the area of public morality that Islam can find a relationship with other faiths. She suggests that the Qur’an appears to “offer a rationale for competing religions: ‘For each We have appointed a divine law and traced-out way. Had God willed He could have made you one community. But [He wished] to try you by that which he has given you; so vie with one another in good works’ (5:48).”¹³²² This accords with the biblical command: “Outdo one another in showing honour.”¹³²³

There are also bases for common action in certain areas. Social needs affect all communities: cooperation, rather than competition, is the best way forward. The Hadith and the Bible enumerate some areas where such collaboration could take place.

¹³²⁰ B.5:104

¹³²¹ Mt 5:16

¹³²² Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians*, 16

¹³²³ Rom.12:10

Table 24: Potential areas for action

POSSIBLE SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVITIES		
Feeding the poor	B.1:11, 17	Mt.25:35,36
Caring for the oppressed	B.7:104	Mt.25:35,36
Freeing the captives – legal advocacy	B.4:282	Lk.4:18
Visiting the sick	B.7:103	Mt.25:35,36
Forgiving debts	B.4:687	Mt.6:12
Care of orphans	B.2:544	Jam.1:27
Treatment of women	B.4:642; 5:163	1.Pet.3:7

Other Christians would see such cooperation on a theological basis as a betrayal of both religious traditions, for it ignores what they see as significant differences between Islam and Christianity. Instead they would prefer any collaboration to take place on the basis of shared humanity without any reference to spiritual values, otherwise confusion may result.¹³²⁴

(b) Contentious issues raised in dialogue

As relationships between Christians and Muslims deepen through contact and combined activities, a space is constructed to discuss more difficult matters. Issues of painful contention between Muslims and Christians, particularly in the way that each group treats the other, can be raised. A pressing matter is religious freedom for Christians in Islamic contexts. Although Muslims are allowed to congregate openly, build mosques, propagate their religion and even receive government funding for Islamic programs and institutions in Western countries which have a Christian majority and heritage, these same rights are rarely extended to Christian communities in Muslim-majority countries. No Christian churches, for example, are currently allowed in Saudi Arabia or Yemen.¹³²⁵ This is based on Muhammad's command in the Hadith to "expel the pagans from the Arabian peninsula".¹³²⁶ Before putting this into action, the second Caliph checked the source of the saying. "Umar ibn al-Khattab searched for information about that until he was absolutely convinced that [Muhammad] had said, 'Two deens [religions] shall not co-exist in the Arabian Peninsula,' and he therefore expelled the Jews from Khaybar."¹³²⁷ Christian freedom to propagate their religion among Muslims is severely limited by the Hadith's prohibition on conversion. Muhammad had commanded: "Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him."¹³²⁸ Thus freedom of choice in the matter of faith is not allowed to Muslims.

Many Muslims in the West and elsewhere suffer from stereotyping and racism, following the events of September 11, 2001. They feel that they bear the burden of collective guilt for the actions of some of their members. Dialogue with Christians and others is an appropriate place to air these concerns. Muslim women, particularly if they wear a *hijab*, are often seen as oppressed

¹³²⁴ I am grateful to Mark Durie for this insight. See <http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/32061.htm> accessed 17th June, 2013

¹³²⁵ Apart from the pre-existing churches built by the British in Aden

¹³²⁶ B.4:288, also 4:393; 5:716

¹³²⁷ Hadith Muwatta 45:18

¹³²⁸ B.9:57; also 4:260; 9:17, 271

or even unintelligent. Some of the material outlined under “the positive depiction and treatment of women”¹³²⁹ could form a good basis for discussion about these matters. It is important that both Muslims and Christians have an opportunity to speak with others about the matters that are affecting their communities.

¹³²⁹ See Chapter 5

CHAPTER 17: Discussion with Muslims

The Bible is concerned to engage with other worldviews as much as possible. The Genesis writer, for example, “employs certain terms and motifs, partly taken from his ideologically incompatible predecessors and partly chosen in contrast to comparable concepts in ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, and fills them in his own usage with new meaning consonant with his aim and world-view.”¹³³⁰

In the Hadith, we find similar links which may be used.

1. *The nature of God*

The Hadith speak of a God who is good, holy, and active, who desires to be near His people.¹³³¹ Allah is not simply a distant and invisible being who is pure power. He is portrayed as benevolent, bringing good out of evil, yet with a strong sense of anger against sin. The possibility of a divine enfleshment is hinted at. He comes down nightly to seek those who desire him. He runs towards those who walk towards him, and is joyful at their repentance. Allah is depicted as very near, especially at times of prayer.¹³³² These passages are laden with potential springboards for discussion about the nature and action of God. They move beyond a divine aloofness suggested by the Qur’an and towards the Bible’s depiction of God’s proximity, beneficence and initiative. More importantly they present an almost physical image of the God who comes down towards the earth, calling, virtually pleading for people to turn to Him, seeking them out like a man who found a lost camel in the desert, and running full of joy towards the lost and repentant soul. This connects with the biblical idea of the good shepherd looking for the lost sheep, or the loving father running out to welcome the prodigal son. There is the suggestion that God “can locally manifest his presence”, an important precursor to consideration of the incarnation.¹³³³ The use of such direct and active descriptions reminds us of Kenneth Cragg’s call to the church to “break free of ‘substance’ metaphors that set Christology/theology in the realm of abstract metaphysics, and bring it firmly into the concrete ‘operation’ of divine energy to save.”¹³³⁴

The progression in thought is detailed in this table:

Table 25: Progression through the various texts

Qur’anic view	Hadith view	Old Testament view	New Testament view
God never appears physically	God will be visible in Paradise	God appears from time to time	God appears in the flesh
No theophany	Eschatological theophany	Occasional theophany	Incarnation

The Bible is also clear that “without holiness no-one will see the Lord”.¹³³⁵ This raises the question of human nature and the eschatological imperative of how such holiness may be attained.

¹³³⁰ Hasel, “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels”, 20

¹³³¹ See Chapter 8, Part 1 & 2

¹³³² See Chapter 8, Part 4

¹³³³ Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 191

¹³³⁴ Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim*, 166

¹³³⁵ Heb.12:14

2. The nature of humanity

Although the Islamic view of humanity as expressed through the Qur'an and the Hadith reaches neither the heights nor the depths of the Christian understanding, there is common teaching about human origins which define human nature. People are described as created in the image of God, and Muslim scholars differ about the meaning of this phrase. These scholars may deny the concept of a "Fall" in Islam, but the Hadith outline some serious problems within human nature.¹³³⁶ People are simultaneously magnificent, created in God's image,¹³³⁷ yet miserable, burdened by their sin.¹³³⁸ They are constituted of the dust of the earth, indicating a downward gravitational pull in a moral sense. Yet they are enlivened by the divine afflatus, the very breath of God himself, indicating the heights from which they have come, and to which they could return. This makes humans capable of standing before God, but at the same time their sin excludes them from his presence. Humans are treated at times individually and at times corporately, but always bearing some resemblance to their forbear Adam.¹³³⁹ Adam's sin affected future generations in various ways including a propensity towards sin.¹³⁴⁰

3. The need for forgiveness

In the hadith, sin is serious in God's sight, for it separates people from God. All sins will incur debts or penalties which must be paid, hence the frequent use of commercial analogies.¹³⁴¹ Although there are many actions that can earn forgiveness for one's sins, the chances of achieving an ultimate positive balance do not look encouraging. Every Muslim, according to the Hadith, totters between the promise of forgiveness and reward, based on his or her good works, and the threat of condemnation, due to his or her sins. Muslims are given a variety of ways of expiating their sins, but the definition of the "unforgiveable sin" grows wider. This is combined with the news that a believer loses his or her status as a believer when they sin, suggesting an unstable identity. The result is an uncertain outcome for those who sin.¹³⁴²

Fortunately there are some positive biblical connections associated with the ideas in the Hadith, and this leads to some missiological implications about how to view Muslims on the path to faith in Christ.¹³⁴³ The hadith hint, and the Bible affirms, that good works are questionable in their efficacy, and not sufficient to assure one's eternal destiny in paradise. Even the Prophet himself admitted this.¹³⁴⁴ Clearly some other means of approach to God is needed. God's unmerited mercy becomes crucial, and this strongly connects with some biblical themes.

4. Issues of atonement

Although the Qur'an appears to endorse a simple equation of reward or punishment for doing good or evil,¹³⁴⁵ the Hadith give teaching and examples which challenge such black-and-white categories. However the Hadith show that there is not a simple one-to-one correspondence

¹³³⁶ Gen.2:7; Q.15:28,29

¹³³⁷ See Chapter 9, Part 1

¹³³⁸ See Chapter 9, Part 2

¹³³⁹ See Chapter 9, Part 6

¹³⁴⁰ See Chapter 9, Part 3

¹³⁴¹ See Chapter 10, Part 3

¹³⁴² See Chapter 10, Part 6

¹³⁴³ See Chapter 10, Part 7

¹³⁴⁴ See Chapter 11, Part 3

¹³⁴⁵ See Chapter 12, Part 1

between bad deeds and punishment, because

- sins may be overlooked completely
- an alternative punishment may be designated
- the sin may be allocated to some one else
- some one may choose to pay the penalty for another's sin
- there is no penalty in the next life if a sin is paid for in this life¹³⁴⁶

Similarly there is no simple correspondence between good deeds and reward, because

- a good work may not be completed, yet it still gains a reward
- a person may receive a reward from the good actions of some one else
- a living person may perform a good work to the benefit of a dead person
- a single good act may have positive outcomes for many people with eternal results
- A solitary action by one person could have everlasting consequences for many others.¹³⁴⁷

Moreover the rewards and punishments could cross the life/death boundary – they are not chronologically determined.¹³⁴⁸ The Hadith contain many references to sacrifice, where the death of a living being profits the person on whose behalf the offering was made.¹³⁴⁹ Similarly, the idea of ransom or redemption, where another person pays the price for a captive to be released, is found in the Hadith.¹³⁵⁰

Whilst Islam in theory denies the possibility of some one paying for the deeds of another, in actual fact, this is presented as a reality. But more than this, Islamic teaching recognises the inadequacy of human actions actually fulfilling the divine requirements, for “every soul will come pleading for itself on that Day”.¹³⁵¹ Obviously some external help is being sought.

It is clear from the above references that a person could receive the benefits of some act which they had not performed, or avoid the disadvantages normally due to non-completion of a requirement. However something else must be provided in exchange, or the required action carried out on their behalf by some one else. This concept is mentioned seventy-nine times in the Bible, both in the Old Testament¹³⁵² and the New Testament.¹³⁵³ This has great implications for explaining the death of Christ as a substitutionary atonement.

5. Connections with biblical themes

The Qur'an proclaims: “And whoever earns a fault or a sin and then throws it on to someone innocent, he has indeed burdened himself with falsehood and a manifest sin.”¹³⁵⁴ This would seem to ‘cut the nerve’ of the substitutionary atonement: a guilty person cannot cast their sins onto some one innocent. However, as outlined above, the ‘substitutionary principle’ is applied every time a person makes expiation for their sins. Instead of receiving the penalty prescribed for that sin, the guilty person is able to avoid the penalty by doing something else. In every case, this requires some kind of sacrifice – either of wealth (feeding a certain number of

¹³⁴⁶ See Chapter 12

¹³⁴⁷ See Chapter 13, Parts 1 - 5

¹³⁴⁸ See Chapter 13, Part 6

¹³⁴⁹ See Chapter 14, Part 2, Section (a)

¹³⁵⁰ See Chapter 14, Part 2, Section (b)

¹³⁵¹ Q.16:111

¹³⁵² e.g. Gen.22; Deut.10:16; Lev.4:21-35; 17:11

¹³⁵³ e.g. Matt.20:28; 26:28; Mk.14:24; Lk.22:19-20; Jn.6:51; 10:11

¹³⁵⁴ Q.4:112

poor persons, freeing a slave)¹³⁵⁵ or of blood (killing an innocent sheep, goat, cow or camel).¹³⁵⁶ In the latter case, the innocent and unwilling sacrifice victim pays for the guilty person's sin. The difference is that Christ willingly took it upon himself: "I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."¹³⁵⁷

William St Clair Tisdall suggests that the one who acted on behalf of humanity would need to be free of any burden of his own. "God's law teaches that man owes him a duty of perfect devotion and man's failure to attain this results in him being in debt to God. However, as every creature owes a duty of absolute obedience to its creator, no creature can have any surplus merit, to pay the debt of another creature. Therefore only God can be the saviour, for only he can pay another's debt."¹³⁵⁸ Significantly, both Islamic teachings and the Bible point towards one man who carried no debt of sin.¹³⁵⁹

6. Other pictures of the cross

Sacrifice, atonement and redemption are not the only representations which can be applied to the cross of Christ. The Hadith outline the responsibility of the host who must provide asylum for his guests when they are under threat. Jesus can be depicted as the guest who should have received sanctuary, yet was betrayed to his enemies and then killed. This may be a potent depiction in Middle Eastern and other cultures where corporate shame has more cogency than individual guilt.¹³⁶⁰ For the truculent Arabs, a battle scenario could be described with the Warrior Christ going out to face the spiritual enemies of Satan and death, and being vindicated by his final victory.¹³⁶¹ But in the process, Christ loses his life as a martyr on the cross. He is a willing victim who lays down his life for a noble cause – the salvation of humanity – for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".¹³⁶² Christ's betrayal and martyrdom becomes even more tragic in the context of his sinlessness – he was pure and spotless for all of his life.¹³⁶³ All of these elements are, in their own way, key to understanding the full meaning of the death of Christ.

7. Christ as mediator and intercessor

The Qur'an is somewhat equivocal about the role of a mediator or intercessor. However the Hadith provide much more detail and open up new categories. Sometimes Muhammad claimed this function for himself, but at other times he appeared to deny it. Yet there is a clear and definitive divine intercession, where God Himself acts positively and powerfully on behalf of those who have no basis to commend themselves – this is a sign of pure grace. In the Bible Jesus is presented as the ideal mediator who intercedes to his heavenly Father for those who come to him.¹³⁶⁴

¹³⁵⁵ e.g. B.5:478

¹³⁵⁶ e.g. B.1:293

¹³⁵⁷ Jn.10:17, 18

¹³⁵⁸ as summarised by Parsons, *Unveiling God*, 12

¹³⁵⁹ See Chapter 14, Part 1

¹³⁶⁰ See Chapter 14, Part 3, Section (a)

¹³⁶¹ See Chapter 14, Part 3, Section (b)

¹³⁶² 1.Tim.1:15

¹³⁶³ See Chapter 14, Part 1

¹³⁶⁴ See Chapter 15, Part 1

8. The primacy of faith and love over works

Faith and love can be shown to be more important than works, which are task-oriented and goal-centred. Scientific ‘belief’ may be seen as impersonal, focused on theories, data and facts. It is cerebral and impassive, and attempts to be entirely objective.¹³⁶⁵ True faith involves the whole person – heart, mind, and will. Faith can be *assensus* or belief, but it is focused on relationships, where meaning and significance is drawn from and attached to the other. Some of the Hadith bring out this emphasis. This is particularly important from a Christian consideration which posits that “God is love”.¹³⁶⁶ Biblical faith is a response to that love. Consequently, “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”¹³⁶⁷ Faith can also be *fidelitas*, commitment or dedication, for it places its object far above all other contenders.¹³⁶⁸

9. The transformed life

The result of this dedicated faith is a transformed life, characterized by cleansing, purity and holiness. It is like the imparting of a new nature, resulting from a second birth. God himself seems to be acting within the person, and each one starts to take on the shape and image of Adam. For each of these concepts found in the Hadith, there is a more definite and stronger biblical parallel which can be propounded. Rather than being an eschatological possibility, the Christian scriptures present them as a current reality. This new start, or second birth, brings a closer connection with God, with a divine working within and the outward expression of God’s character.¹³⁶⁹

10. Assurance of the believer

The logical outcome on such a path is an assured place with God in heaven forever. Neither the Qur’an nor the Hadith are very clear about this – even the Prophet Muhammad expressed uncertainty about his own eternal destiny. For Christians, however, this assurance is explicitly outlined and described.¹³⁷⁰

11. Criticism of these uses of the Hadith

It could be claimed that this use of the Hadith is reading back into the text that which is not there. This question can be answered in several ways.

Firstly, every text is subject to interpretation, and each interpretation draws a different trajectory from the others, resulting in diverse conclusions. Muslims themselves have found a variety of meanings within their sacred texts. They have not always agreed with each other on how to understand the Qur’an. The verse “The Hour has drawn near and the moon has been cleft asunder”,¹³⁷¹ for example, has been variously interpreted. It has been seen as a miracle performed by Muhammad when the Meccans asked him for a sign,¹³⁷² or as a naturally-occurring lunar

¹³⁶⁵ In fact, science is not totally objective, for “scientific theories are [not] a mere description of experimental facts ... facts are theory laden and theories are formulated on the basis of certain philosophical assumptions.” Iqbal, *Islam and Science*, 296

¹³⁶⁶ 1.Jn.4:8,16

¹³⁶⁷ Gal.5:6

¹³⁶⁸ See Chapter 15, Part 2

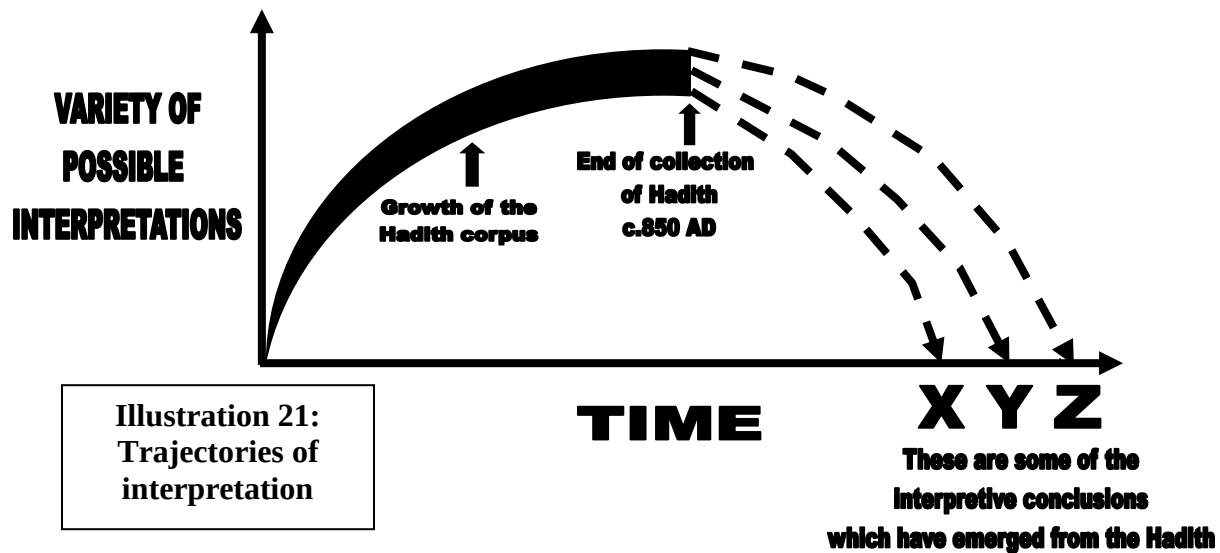
¹³⁶⁹ See Chapter 15, Part 3

¹³⁷⁰ See Chapter 15, Part 4

¹³⁷¹ Q.54:1

¹³⁷² B.6:390 cited in Al-Hilali & Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an*, 725

eclipse in the Prophet's time,¹³⁷³ or as a scientific prophecy fulfilled when American astronauts landed on the moon in 1969 and dug up soil samples, thereby 'clefing' the moon,¹³⁷⁴ or as an eschatological sign in the sky at the final judgement.¹³⁷⁵ This one verse has been attributed to past, current and future events. Ironically Yusuf Ali adds a fifth possible interpretation: "the phrase is metaphorical, meaning that the matter has become clear as the moon"¹³⁷⁶ The Hadith likewise have been interpreted differently by a range of groups, leading to variant conclusions or trajectories (X, Y, Z in Illustration 21).



Modern Muslim feminists¹³⁷⁷ have been able to uncover meanings and provide interpretations which have eluded "patriarchalist" male exegetes for centuries. Using the same materials, Jihadist Muslims¹³⁷⁸ draw completely different conclusions from those who proclaim that "Islam means peace".¹³⁷⁹ Sufi practitioners have garnered support for their *tariqas* ('methods') by using the Hadith.¹³⁸⁰

In the light of these factors, it is likely that new directions of study in the Hadith will

¹³⁷³ See <http://muslimvilla.smfforfree.com/index.php?topic=1082.0;wap2> accessed Feb 14, 2011. This could be based on the forty references to eclipses in al-Bukhārī's Hadith

¹³⁷⁴ http://www.harunyahya.com/books/faith/Allahs_miracles_of_the_quran/Allahs_miracles_of_the_quran4.php accessed on Feb 12, 2011

¹³⁷⁵ Muhammad Asad writes: "it is practically certain that the above Qur'an-verse does not refer to [a miracle in the Prophet's time] but, rather, to a future event: namely, to what will happen when the Last Hour approaches." <http://muslimvilla.smfforfree.com/index.php?topic=1082.0;wap2> accessed Feb 14, 2011

¹³⁷⁶ Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: text, translation and commentary*, 1454

¹³⁷⁷ See, for example, Mernissi, "Women's Rights in Islam", 112-126

¹³⁷⁸ See Mustafa Mashhur "Jihad is the way" in *The Laws of Dawa* Vol.5 (trans. Itamar Marcus & Nan Jacques Zilberdick) http://palwatch.org/STORAGE/special%20reports/Jihad_is_the_way_by_Mustafa_Mashhur.pdf accessed Feb 12, 2011

¹³⁷⁹ See Afroz Ali *Jihad – the Australian Context* <http://alghazzali.org/resources/articles/jihad2.pdf> Accessed Feb 12, 2011

¹³⁸⁰ Based on B.1:110, in which Muhammad stated that Satan cannot impersonate him in a dream, all of the fifteenth century Sufi masters claimed that Muhammad had appeared to them in a dream and commanded them to start a new Method or *tariqa*. (Trimingham, *Sufi Orders*, 190)

continue to emerge, resulting in conclusions which may be mutually exclusive. This study is a further contribution to the field. Some of the lines of exegesis taken in this study may not be acceptable to many Muslims. They will object to the clearly Christian analysis which has been applied to the Hadith. This study seeks connections with Islamic texts for a missional purpose. Such a goal and its methodology may be rejected by many Muslims. This is to be expected. It is also clear that not all of the material in the Hadith will be suitable for this goal. The Hadith contain some aspects which are inimical to a Christian understanding of the world.¹³⁸¹ The Hadith, like the Qur'an, present a range of views on a variety of topics – neither of these documents is univocal. The comments by Muslim journalist Irshad Manji about the Qur'an - that it is “a bundle of contradictions”, is “profoundly at war with itself”¹³⁸² and has “wild mood swings”¹³⁸³ - could just as easily be applied to the Hadith.

This phenomenon allows a commentator to pick up on one stream and follow it to a certain conclusion, whilst admitting that there are other streams which could lead to completely different outcomes. Sometimes Muslim writers raise potential lines of investigation, such as the comment by Hamidullah that “incarnation would be the best” way of God revealing Himself.¹³⁸⁴ Islam itself has identified a possible issue, but does not itself give an answer to this expressed need.

Many of the themes of the Bible can be found in the Hadith. Clearly the Hadith (and Islam in general) do not contain a full-orbed presentation of the good news as found in Christ, otherwise they would be a restatement of Christian teaching, rather than the building blocks of a different religion. However the Hadith do contain many springboards providing a connection with biblical themes. Kraft points out that we need to “approach [non-Christians] with the Gospel in terms of what their perception of reality is, rather than in terms of our understandings.”¹³⁸⁵ Some tenets found in the Hadith are like seeds which can flower into a fuller expression of the good news of the gospel. They are a launching pad for further exploration by Muslims and Christians together.

Can such common ground be a fruitful place? Steve Bell tells the story of an Egyptian man. “[E]ven the prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an became stepping stones facilitating Ahmed's journey to Christ. It had become clear to him that Jesus' moral and spiritual authority was total and that what he demanded from Ahmed was not some new external observance alongside his Islam but the redirecting of it.”¹³⁸⁶

12. How to use this material

There is a variety of ways in which this material may be shared with Muslims and the wider community. The ideas and connections expressed in this study need to be debated at the academic level. Opportunities could be taken for discussion through university colloquia or public fora. They could be written up as journal articles or presented as papers for interfaith seminars. With the increasing number of Islamic chairs in Western universities, often funded from Arab or Muslim-majority countries, new openings have been created for such academic exploration. Yet the material should not remain the reserve of scholarly debate. It is important

¹³⁸¹ This is outlined in my other book entitled “Challenging Islamic Traditions”

¹³⁸² Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today*, 36

¹³⁸³ Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today*, 51

¹³⁸⁴ See Chapter 8, Part 6

¹³⁸⁵ Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 5

¹³⁸⁶ Bell, *Grace for Muslims?*, 37

that it be used in practical applications. Many missionaries and cross-cultural workers are seeking new ways to inject biblical truth into their contacts with Muslims. The Hadith provide an ideal starting point for such discussions. The material in this study could be adapted for booklets and pamphlets to be distributed and discussed. It would find a place among contextualised approaches,¹³⁸⁷ such as translations of the Bible in Qur'anic style.¹³⁸⁸ The 'insider movement' utilises indigenous forms and materials as a vehicle for the Christian faith.¹³⁸⁹ The Qur'an has been used in dialogue with and outreach to Muslims,¹³⁹⁰ as have the Camel Method,¹³⁹¹ and the Five Pillars of Islam.¹³⁹² The Hadith could have a similar application.

Nor need its application be restricted to literary methods. The rate of illiteracy is very high in Arab countries,¹³⁹³ as well as other Muslim-majority countries. The result is that a significant proportion of the Muslim world consists of oral, rather than literate, communicators. "Information must come to oral communicators through stories, parables, poems, ballads, and similar types of formats. Format is the key for them."¹³⁹⁴ The Hadith are mostly in narrative form which is ideal for oral communicators. Significantly, 75% of the Bible is also in narrative form,¹³⁹⁵ allowing important linkages between the Hadith and the Bible to be constructed.

¹³⁸⁷ Trotter, *Sevenfold Secret*; Bible passages in Chapman, *The Pillars of Religion in the Light of the Tawrat, Zabur and Injil*; Malek, "Allah-u Akbar Bible Lessons: Aspects of Their Effectiveness in Evangelizing Muslims"

¹³⁸⁸ Goble & Munayer, *New Creation Book for Muslims* and the life of Christ in Qur'anic style in *Sirat al-Masih bi-Lisan Arabi Fasih*. For a comparison of this style with existing Arabic Bible translations, see Owen, "A Classification System for Styles of Arabic Bible Translations," 8-10. For reactions to it, see Schlorff, "Feedback on Project Sunrise (Sira), 22—32.

¹³⁸⁹ Travis & Travis, "Contextualisation among Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists"

¹³⁹⁰ Accad, *Building Bridges*

¹³⁹¹ Greeson, *The Camel – How Muslims are coming to Christ*

¹³⁹² Woodberry, "Contextualisation among Muslims: Reusing Common Pillars"

¹³⁹³ *The Arab Development Report 2003*

¹³⁹⁴ James B. Slack *The Ways People Learn* <http://www.search.com/reference/Orality> accessed Feb 22, 2011

¹³⁹⁵ Tom Steffen cited by Brown, "Communicating God's message in an Oral Culture", 126

CHAPTER 18 - CONCLUSION

The Qur'an has only 6200 verses and remarkably little legal or practical detail. If Islam is to fulfil its claim to be an all-emcompassing rule of life for all Muslims at all times, a significant volume of extra material is needed to cover every possible situation and contingency that might arise. The Hadith provide this service, making it a necessary provision for Muslims, to enable them to structure their lives. Moreover a discourse can be found in the Qur'an and the Hadith which justifies its existence and application. In general, these documents are still widely accepted as authoritative within the house of Islam. In the *madrasas* of Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, and in mosques and prayer rooms throughout the world, these stories of the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad are recounted on a weekly basis. They inform the minds, dictate the habits and inspire the lives of the vast majority of the followers of Islam. It is unlikely that the Hadith will lose its popularity and power in the near future. Muhammad remains for most Muslims the supreme example for emulation. Riots and killings by Muslims as a result of the 2005/6 'Muhammad cartoons'¹³⁹⁶ and the 2011 movie clip "Innocence of Muslims"¹³⁹⁷ show that Islam's founder is still able to rally much support on the Muslim street. Islam, for its part, is on the march. A high population growth, making it the fastest growing major religion in the world, the wealth flowing in from Middle Eastern oil, along with widespread migration to the West for education and employment have given Muslims an increasing confidence and opportunity to proclaim their religion. Much of their inspiration comes from the *diktats* and methods found in the Hadith.

However Christian mission also continues to expand, with increasing contact with Muslims in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, as well in the West. The relative lack of success of mission *vis-à-vis* the house of Islam in the past suggests a need for new approaches. This situation calls for courage and creativity. The Hadith can be a culturally-appropriate tool to be employed in the encounter with Muslims by the followers of Jesus Christ. The Hadith lend themselves to a variety of applications, depending on the context. When looking at the Hadith through the lenses of concord and connections, many links with biblical truth can be discerned.

Through dialogue with Muslims, Christians can find material in the Hadith with which they agree. There are elements of theology, devotion, ethics, and history which could produce topics for fruitful discussion. In these post-9/11 days of the purported clash of civilizations, it is important to recognise those issues which constitute common ground. The shared humanity of Muslims and Christians requires that these be taken seriously. A positive Muslim analysis of the life of Muhammad, taken from the Hadith, provides material for an analysis of values and areas of further discussion. Some Christians would feel comfortable to move beyond this to shared worship or devotional exercises based on a mutual understanding of God. Others may want to limit this to discussions about personal religious experience. The devotional material within the Hadith provides a good starting point. Christians seeking partners to bring change in their community can find among Muslims some who will cooperate in political and social campaigns based on shared concerns and values outlined in the Hadith.

Yet this should not lead to a naïve dismissal of the differences between Muslim and Christian belief. Some of the Hadith reveal significant gaps between Islam and Christianity.

¹³⁹⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11236158> accessed on 8th May, 2011

¹³⁹⁷ <http://www.ibtimes.com/%E2%80%98innocence-muslims%E2%80%99-protests-death-toll-rising-pakistan-794296> accessed 23rd April, 2013

These are not to be ignored – they should be admitted and addressed. The possibility of critical approaches to Islam, such as have been practiced throughout history, is opened up. Yet even this debate can be carried out in a non-destructive way that both illustrates and commends the gospel. This calls for both frankness and maturity.

Islam, like any religious or philosophical system, contains echoes of the truth. A shared geography and history means that many vestiges of Judaism and Christianity remain embedded within Islam. These are to be sought out and explored. The Hadith's view of the dignity of humankind (made in the image of God), as well as human weakness and sin, forms a basis for fruitful anthropological conversations. In this, as in many other topics, the Hadith seems to present a development beyond the Qur'an's representation of these matters. Likewise the Hadith's appraisal of the primacy of faith, the forgiveness of sins, and the inadequacy of works challenge some traditional and widespread Islamic works-based views of salvation. It is important that the cross, God's solution to human sin, be presented to Muslims.

Issues such as the mediatorial principle, substitution, sacrifice, and ransom, as well as the sinlessness of Christ, are found in the Hadith. They can serve as launching pads which cause us to look beyond the Hadith to the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. There are other pictures of the atonement hinted at in these documents, such as recognising the shame of betrayed hospitality, and rejoicing in the victory of a brave warrior who is tragically killed in battle as a martyr, yet later miraculously raised from the dead. The new life that results from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life can arise out of these discussions from the Hadith.

Both of these approaches, dialogue and development, will require different expressions of Christian character. Dialogue calls for humility, in being willing to accept the truths that others might bring. Development calls for discernment, in determining the ways that God's message can be contextualised for a new situation.

In February 2011 as Christians and Muslims stood together in Tahrir Square in Cairo calling for President Hosni Mubarak to resign, flags and other symbols with the cross and the crescent together were often displayed. (Illustration 22)



Illustration 22: The Cross and Crescent flag in Tahrir Square, Cairo, February 2011

This was not the first time that such symbolism has been used.

Early last century, Egyptian Muslims and Christians combined to oppose the British occupation of their land. In the flag used by these nationalistic Egyptians, US missiologist Dudley Woodberry finds a parable of the relationship between Islam and Christianity. "The cross within the crescent on the flag of the Egyptian independence movement of 1919 was emblazoned on a black background much as the crescent moon stands against the dark night sky. The crescent moon reflects light and beauty but not at the center where it is empty and dark. In the emblem the cross fills that void." (Illustration 23)



Illustration 23: The Cross and Crescent flag used in Egypt in 1919

Through this analogy, Woodberry suggests that, just as the moon dimly reflects the light of the sun, Islam bears a reflection of Christ, the Light of the World. Just as the centre of the crescent moon is dark, it is the cross of Christ that can fill Islam's empty void.¹³⁹⁸ Is it possible that the Hadith might yet prove to be one of the keys in facilitating such a process?

¹³⁹⁸ Woodberry, "Missiological Issues in the Encounter of Emerging Islam"

APPENDIX:**List of topics in al-Bukhari's hadith and Number of Accounts in each topic**

TOPIC	LOCATION	NO.	CUMULATIVE
1. Revelation	Vol 1 Bk 1 nos 1-6	6	6
2. Belief	Vol 1 Bk 2 nos 7- 55	43	49
3. Knowledge	Vol 1 Bk 3 nos 56- 136	61	110
4. Ablutions (<i>Wud}{ū}</i>)	Vol 1 Bk 4 nos 137-247	111	221
5. Bathing (<i>Ghusl</i>)	Vol 1 Bk 5 nos 248-292	45	266
6. Menstrual Periods	Vol 1 Bk 6 nos 293-329	37	303
7. Rubbing hands and feet with dust	Vol 1 Bk 7 nos 330-344	15	318
8. Prayers (<i>S}{alāt}</i>)	Vol 1 Bk 8 nos 345-471	127	445
9. Virtues of the Prayer Hall (<i>Sutra</i> of the <i>Mus}{alla}</i>)	Vol 1 Bk 9 nos 472-499	28	473
10. Times of the Prayers	Vol 1 Bk 10 nos 500-576	77	550
11. Call to Prayers (<i>Adhān</i>)	Vol 1 Bk 11 nos 577-698	122	572
12. Characteristics of Prayer	Vol 1 Bk 12 nos 699-832	134	608
13. Friday Prayer	Vol 2 Bk 13 nos 1-63	63	671
14. Fear Prayer	Vol 2 Bk 14 nos 64-68	5	676
15. The Two Festivals (' <i>ayd</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 15 nos 69-104	36	712
16. <i>Witr</i> Prayer	Vol 2 Bk 16 nos 105-118	14	726
17. Invoking Allah for Rain (<i>Istisqā'</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 17 nos 119-149	31	757
18. Eclipses	Vol 2 Bk 18 nos 150-172	23	780
19. Prostration During Recital of Qur'an	Vol 2 Bk 19 nos 173-185	13	793
20. Shortening the Prayers (<i>At-Taqs}{īr}</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 20 nos 186-220	35	828
21. Prayer at Night (<i>Tahajjud</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 21 nos 221-288	68	896
22. Actions while Praying	Vol 2 Bk 22 nos 289-328	40	936
23. Funerals (<i>Al-Janā'iz</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 23 nos 329-483	155	1091
24. Obligatory Charity Tax (<i>Zakāt</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 24 nos 484-578	95	1286
25. Obligatory Charity Tax After Ramadaan (<i>Zakāt ul Fit}{r}</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 25 nos 579-588	10	1287
26. Pilgrimage (<i>H}{ajj}</i>)	Vol 2 Bk 26 nos 589-823	235	1522
27. Minor Pilgrimage (' <i>umra</i>)	Vol 3 Bk 27 nos 1-32	32	1584
28. Pilgrims Prevented from Completing the Pilgrimage	Vol 3 Bk 28 nos 33-46	14	1598
29. Penalty of Hunting while on Pilgrimage	Vol 3 Bk 29 nos 47-90	44	1642
30. Virtues of Madinah	Vol 3 Bk 30 nos 91-114	24	1666
31. Fasting	Vol 3 Bk 31 nos 115-225	111	1777
32. Praying at Night in Ramadaan (<i>Tarawīh</i>)	Vol 3 Bk 32 nos 226-241	16	1793

33. Retiring to a Mosque for Remembrance of Allah (<i>I'tikāf</i>)	Vol 3 Bk 33 nos 242-262	21	1814
34. Sales and Trade	Vol 3 Bk 34 nos 263-440	178	1992
35. Sales in which a Price is paid for Goods to be Delivered Later (<i>As-Salam</i>)	Vol 3 Bk 35 nos 441-460	20	2012
36. Hiring	Vol 3 Bk 36 nos 461-485	25	2037
37. Transference of a Debt from One Person to Another (<i>Al-H}awāla</i>)	Vol 3 Bk 37 nos 486-495	10	2047
38. Representation, Authorization, Business by Proxy	Vol 3 Bk 38 nos 496-512	17	2064
39. Agriculture	Vol 3 Bk 39 nos 513-540	28	2092
40. Distribution of Water	Vol 3 Bk 40 nos 541-569	29	2131
41. Loans, Payment of Loans, Freezing of Property, Bankruptcy	Vol 3 Bk 41 nos 570-607	38	2169
42. Lost Things Picked up by Someone (<i>Luqat}a</i>)	Vol 3 Bk 42 nos 608-619	12	2181
43. Oppressions	Vol 3 Bk 43 nos 620-662	43	2224
44. Partnership	Vol 3 Bk 44 nos 663-684	22	2246
45. Mortgaging	Vol 3 Bk 45 nos 685-692	8	2254
46. Manumission of Slaves	Vol 3 Bk 46 nos 693-739	47	2301
47. Gifts	Vol 3 Bk 47 nos 740-804	65	2366
48. Witnesses	Vol 3 Bk 48 nos 805-854	50	2416
49. Peacemaking	Vol 3 Bk 49 nos 855-873	19	2435
50. Conditions	Vol 3 Bk 50 nos 874-895	22	2457
51. Wills and Testaments (<i>Was}āyā</i>)	Vol 4 Bk 51 nos 1-40	40	2496
52. Fighting for the Cause of Allah (<i>Jihād</i>)	Vol 4 Bk 52 nos 41-323	283	2879
53. One-fifth of Booty to the Cause of Allah (<i>Khums</i>)	Vol 4 Bk 53 nos 324-412	89	2968
54. Beginning of Creation	Vol 4 Bk 54 nos 413-542	130	3108
55. Prophets	Vol 4 Bk 55 nos 543-658	116	3224
56. Virtues and Merits of the Prophet and his Companions	Vol 4 Bk 56 nos 659-841	183	3407
57. Companions of the Prophet	Vol 5 Bk 57 nos 1-119	119	3526
58. Merits of the Helpers in Madinah (<i>Ans}ār</i>)	Vol 5 Bk 58 nos 120-284	164	3691
59. Military Expeditions led by the Prophet (<i>Al-Maghāzi</i>)	Vol 5 Bk 59 nos 285-749	465	4156
60. Prophetic Commentary on the Qur'an (<i>Tafsīr</i> of the Prophet	Vol 6 Bk 60 nos 1-501	501	4657
61. Virtues of the Qur'an	Vol 6 Bk 61 nos 502-582	81	4738
62. Wedlock, Marriage (<i>Nikāh</i>)	Vol 7 Bk 62 nos 1-62	62	4800
63. Divorce (<i>Talāq</i>)	Vol 7 Bk 63 nos 63-262	200	5000

64. Supporting the Family	Vol 7 Bk 64 nos 263-285	23	5023
65. Food, Meals (	Vol 7 Bk 65 nos 286-375	90	5113
66. Sacrifice on Occasion of Birth (`Aqīqa)	Vol 7 Bk 66 nos 376-383	8	5121
67. Hunting, Slaughtering	Vol 7 Bk 67 nos 384-451	68	5189
68. Al-Adha Festival Sacrifice (Ad}āhi)	Vol 7 Bk 68 nos 452-480	29	5218
69. Drinks	Vol 7 Bk 69 nos 481-543	63	5281
70. Patients	Vol 7 Bk 70 nos 544-581	38	5319
71. Medicine	Vol 7 Bk 71 nos 582-673	92	5411
72. Dress (al-libās)	Vol 7 Bk 72 nos 674-852	179	5590
73. Good Manners and Form (Al-Adab)	Vol 8 Bk 73 nos 1-245	245	5835
74. Asking Permission (al-ista'idhān)	Vol 8 Bk 74 nos 246-316	71	5906
75. Invocations (ad-Du'wāt)	Vol 8 Bk 75 nos 317-420	104	6010
76. To make the Heart Tender (Ar-Riqāq)	Vol 8 Bk 76 nos 421-592	172	6182
77. Divine Will (Al-Qadar)	Vol 8 Bk 77 nos 593-617	25	6207
78. Oaths and Vows	Vol 8 Bk 78 nos 618-698	91	6298
79. Expiation for Unfulfilled Oaths	Vol 8 Bk 79 nos 699-715	17	6315
80. Laws of Inheritance (Al-Farā'id})	Vol 8 Bk 80 nos 716-762	47	6362
81. Limits and Punishments set by Allah (H}udūd)	Vol 8 Bk 81 nos 763-793	31	6393
82. Punishment of Disbelievers at War with Allah & His Apostle	Vol 8 Bk 82 nos 794-842	49	6442
83. Blood Money (Ad-Diyat)	Vol 9 Bk 83 nos 1-52	52	6494
84. Dealing with Apostates	Vol 9 Bk 84 nos 53-72	20	6514
85. Saying Something under Compulsion (Ikrāh)	Vol 9 Bk 85 nos 73-84	12	6526
86. Tricks	Vol 9 Bk 86 nos 85-110	26	6552
87. Interpretation of Dreams	Vol 9 Bk 87 nos 111-171	70	6622
88. Afflictions and the End of the World	Vol 9 Bk 88 nos 172-250	79	6701
89. Judgments (Ah}kām)	Vol 9 Bk 89 nos 251-331	81	6782
90. Wishes	Vol 9 Bk 90 nos 332-351	20	6802
91. Accepting Information Given by a Truthful Person	Vol 9 Bk 91 nos 352-372	21	6823
92. Holding Fast to the Qur'an and Sunnah	Vol 9 Bk 92 nos 373-468	96	6919
93. Oneness, Uniqueness of Allah (Tawh}īd)	Vol 9 Bk 93 nos 469-652	<u>184</u>	<u>7103</u>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

The Translation of the Meanings of Sahīh Al-Bukhari Arabic-English, 9 vols Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan (trans) (Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers and Printers, 1997)

Al-Hilali, Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din and Muhammad Muhsin Khan *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English language* (Madinah, K.S.A.: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an, 1427 A.H.)

Ali, Abdulla Yusuf *The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975)

Ali, Abdulla Yusuf *The Holy Qur'ān: English translation of the meanings and Commentary* (Al-Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'ān, 1413 H.)

Ibn Ishaq *Sirat Rasul Allah* trans.as *The Life of Muhammad* trans. A. Guillaume (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Books and Articles

Abdalati, Hammudah, *Islam in Focus* (Beltsville, Md.: Amana Publications, 1998)

Accad, Fouad *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1997)

Adam, Peter *Hearing God's Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 2004)

Akhtar, Shabbir *A Faith for All Seasons: Islam and Western Modernity* (London: Bellew Publishing, 1990)

Al-Baidawi, Nasr ud-din Abi Saeed *Anwār al-tanzīl wa Asrār al-ta'wīl* (5 vols) (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996)

Al-Fadi, Abd *The Person of Christ in the Gospel and the Koran* (Rikon, Switzerland: The Good Way, 1975)

Al-Faruqi, Ismail *Christian Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas* (Montreal: McGill University Press 1968)

Al-Faruqi, Ismail "Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wa" in *International Review of Mission*, Volume LXV, No. 260, October, 1976 (pp.391-409)

Al-Faruqi, Ismail R., *Islam* (Beltsville, Md.: Amana Publications, 1998)

- Al-Kalby, Kais *Prophet Muhammad: the last Messenger in the Bible* (Bakersfield, CA: American Muslim Cultural Association, 1991)
- Al-Masih, Abd A *A Question that demands an Answer* (Rikon, Switzerland: The Good Way, 1993)
- Al-Sheba, Abdurrahman *Muhammad The Messenger of Allah* (Riyadh: Islamic Propagation Office in Rabwah, 2005)
- Anderson, J.N.D. *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (London: Tyndale, 1970)
- Anderson, Norman *Islam in the Modern World: A Christian Perspective* (Leicester: IVP, 1990)
- The Arab Development Report 2003* (Amman: UNDP, 2003)
- Armstrong, Karen *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (London: Harper, 2006)
- Aulen, Gustaf *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (trans. A.G.Herbert) (MacMillan: New York, 1977) Reprinted: Wipf and Stock, 2003)
- Azami, Habib Ur Rahman *The Sunnah in Islam* (London: U.K. Islamic Academy, 1995)
- Azami, M.M. *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1977)
- Barlas, Asma “Women’s readings of the Qur’ān” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- Bell, Steve *Grace for Muslims?* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2006)
- Bennett, Clinton *In Search of Muhammad* (London: Cassell, 1998)
- Bennett, Clinton *Muslims and Modernity: An Introduction to the Issues* (London: Continuum, 2005)
- Borg, Marcus *The Heart of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003)
- Boyce, Mary “Organisational story and storytelling: a critical review” in *Journal of Organisational Change Management* 9 no 5 (1996) pp.5-23
- Brooks, Geraldine *Nine Parts of Desire* (New York: Anchor, 1995) Republished by Bantam Books, 2008
- Brown, Daniel W. *Rethinking tradition in modern Islamic thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

- Brown, Jonathon A.C. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2009)
- Brown, Rick "Communicating God's message in an Oral Culture" in *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21:3 (Fall 2004) pp.122-127
- Burton, John *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994)
- Caner, Ergun Mehmet and Emir Fethi Caner *Unveiling Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002)
- Chapman, Colin *The Bible Through Muslim Eyes* (Cambridge: Grove, 2008)
- Chapman, Colin "Christian Perceptions of Islam: Threat, Challenge or Misunderstood Ally?" *Evangelical Review of Theology* Volume 20 · Number 2 · April 1996
- Chapman, Colin *The Cross and the Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam* (London: IVP, 1995) Revised 2007
- Chapman, Colin *The Pillars of Religion in the Light of the Tawrat, Zabur and Injil* (Beirut: The Bible Society, 1984)
- Childs, Brevard *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) Reprinted by Augsburg Books, 2010
- Clark, Charles *Islam – Religions of the World* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 2002)
- Collins, Francis *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006)
- Cragg, Kenneth *Alive to God: Muslim and Christian Prayer* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970)
- Cragg, Kenneth A. "Islamic Theology: Limits And Bridges" pp.196-207 in Don McCurry (ed). *The Gospel and Islam: a Compendium* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1978)
- Cragg, Kenneth *Jesus and the Muslim* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985) Reprinted by OneWorld Publications, 1999
- Cragg, Kenneth *Muhammad and the Christian – a question of response* (London: Dalton, Longman and Todd, 1984) Reprinted by OneWorld Publications, 1999
- Dalby, Gordon *Healing the Masculine Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003)
- Davis, C. *Christ and the World Religions* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970)
- Davis, John J. *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986 2nd ed.)

Dickinson, Eerik "Ibn al-S{alāh{ al-Shahrazūrī and the isnād" in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122.3 (2002) 481-505

Durie, Mark *The Third Choice: Islam, Dhimmitude and Freedom* (Melbourne: Deror Books, 2010)

Eaton, Charles Le Gai, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985)

Elder, E.E. "The Crucifixion in the Koran" *The Muslim World* vol.13 Issue 3 (July 1923)

Eliade, Mircea *From Primitives to Zen* (London: Collins, 1967) Reprinted by Harper and Row, 1977

Firestone, Reuven *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Firestone, Reuven *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990)

Gairdner, William Temple "Moslem Tradition and the Gospel Record. The Hadith and the Injil," *Moslem World*, 5 (1915), pp. 349-379

Goble, Phil and Salim Munayer, *New Creation Book for Muslims* (Pasadena: Mandate Press, 1989)

Greenlee, David "How is the Gospel Good News for Muslims?" in Evelyne Reisacher (ed.) *Rethinking our Assumptions: Toward a New Christian Understanding of Muslims* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008)

Greeson, Keith *The Camel – How Muslims are coming to Christ* (Richmond, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2007)

Guillaume, Alfred *Islam* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1954) Reprinted 1990

Guillaume, Alfred *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955) Reprinted 1998

Haddad, Salim *The Principles of Belief in the Qur'an and the Bible* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance, 1992)

Hakim, Khalifa Abdul *Islamic Ideology* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1961, 3rd ed.) Reprinted 1993

Hamidullah, Muhammad *Introduction to Islam* (Paris: Centre Culturel Islamique, 1957) Reprinted by Apex Press, 1980

Hansen, Carol D. & William M. Kahnweiler “Storytelling: An Instrument for Understanding the Dynamics of Corporate Relationships” in *Human Relations* (1993) 46:1391-1409

Hasel, Gerhard F. “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels” in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972) 1-20

Hassan, Riffat "An Islamic Perspective" in Jeanne Becher *Women, Religion and Sexuality* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990)

Hiebert, Paul *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994)

Hiebert, Paul *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2nd ed. 1983) Reprinted 1990

Hiebert, Paul “Form and Meaning in the Contextualisation of the Gospel” in Dean Gilliland (ed.) *The Word among Us* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989) Reprinted by Wipf & Stock, 2002

Ibrahim, Ezzeddin and Denys Johnson-Davies *Forty Hadith Qudsi* (Beirut: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1980) Reprinted by Rabab, 1993

Iqbal, Muzaffar *Islam and Science* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002)

Jeffery, Arthur *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938)

Jones, L.Bevan *Christianity Explained to Muslims* (Calcutta: YMCA, 1938) Reprinted 1952

Juynboll, G.H.A. “Hadith and the Qur’an” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an* 5 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2002)

Kamali, Mohammad Hashim *A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of H}adīth* (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2005)

Kang, C.H. and Ethel R. Nelson *The Discovery of Genesis: How the Truths of Genesis were found hidden in the Chinese Language* (St Louis: Concordia, 1979)

Kateregga, Badru D.and David W.Shenk *Islam and Christianity a Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) Reprinted by Herald Press, 1997

Kerr, David “Christian Mission and Islamic Studies: Beyond Antithesis” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Jan 2002) 26:8-13

Kerr, David A. “Islamic *da’wa* and Christian Mission: Towards a comparative analysis” in [*International Review of Mission*](#) (2000) [Volume 89, Issue 353](#), pp.150-171

Khan, Israr Ahmad *Authentication of Hadith: Redefining the Criteria* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2010)

Khan, Muhammad Muhsin *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic/English, 9 vols, Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari, 1974)

Kraft, Charles *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (New York: Orbis, 1996)

Kraft, Charles *Christianity in Culture* (New York: Orbis, 1979) New edition, 2005

Kraft, Charles "My Distaste for the Combative Approach" in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 18.3 (July, 1982), pp.138-41

Kutty, E. K. Ahmed "The Six Authentic Books of hadith", *The Muslim World League Journal*, April-May 1983

Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) Second Edition, 2002

La Sor, William et al *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996 (2nd Ed.))

Lausanne Paper *Ministry in Islamic contexts* (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, Nicosia, 1995)

Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960) Reprinted 2010

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1943) Reprinted by HarperCollins, 2009

Lewis, C.S. *The Screwtape Letters* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1942) Reprinted 2009

Malek, Sobhi W, "Allah-u Akbar Bible Lessons: Aspects of Their Effectiveness in Evangelizing Muslims" (D, Miss. dissertation, Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986)

Manji, Irshad *The Trouble with Islam Today* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2005)

McAuliffe, C.S.J. "Forestalling the pains of purgatory" in *Review for Religious* 5: 289-296 (1944), 291

Mernissi, Fatima "Women's Rights in Islam" in Charles Kurzman (ed.) *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Meyers, Carol "Temple, Jerusalem" in David Noel Freeman (ed.) *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 vols (New York : Doubleday, 1992)

Miller, Darrow *Discipling Nations* (Seattle: YWAM, 1998) 2nd edition, 2001

Moorehead, Alan *The White Nile* (London: Harper & Row, 1960) Reprinted by HarperCollins, 2000

Moreau, A. Scott *Contextualization in World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012)

Morris, Leon *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1971)

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein “God” in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.) *Islamic Spirituality Foundations* (New York: Crossroad, 1991)

Nazir-Ali, Michael *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1987) Reprinted by Wipf & Stock, 2007

Nazir-Ali, Michael *Islam: A Christian Perspective* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983)

Neill, Stephen *A History of Christian Missions* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1964) Reprinted 1987

O’Leary, De Lacy *How Greek Science passed to the Arabs* (New Delhi: Goodword books, 1949, reprinted 2001)

Owen, David “A Classification System for Styles of Arabic Bible Translations,” *Seedbed* (P.O. Box 96, Upper Darby, PA 19082) 3 (1988), 8-10

Padwick, Constance E. *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer Manuals in Common Use* (London: SPCK, 1961) Reprinted 1969

Padwick, Constance E. “The Language of Muslim Devotion,” *The Muslim World*, 47 (1957): 5-21, 98—110, 194—209

Parshall, Phil *Bridges to Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983) Reprinted by Authentic Publishing, 2006

Parshall, Phil *Inside the Community: Understanding Muslims through Their Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994) Reprinted in 2002 as *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions: A Guide for Christians*

Parshall, Phil *Muslim Evangelism: Contemporary Approaches to Contextualization* (Waynesboro: Gabriel, 2003)

Parsons, Martin *Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture* (Pasadena: William Carey, 2005)

Patai, Raphael *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973) Updated edition, 2007

- Peace, Richard *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999)
- Peters, George W. “An Overview of Missions to Muslims” in Don McCurry (ed.) *The Gospel and Islam* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1978)
- Peterson, Eugene A *Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, Ill; Intervarsity Press, 2000)
- Pfander, C.G. *The Mizanu’l Haqq: Balance of Truth* 1835 – revised and updated by W. St Clair Tisdall in 1910 (Villach, Austria: Light of Life, 1986)
- Phipps, William E. *Muhammad and Jesus: a Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teachings* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2003)
- Polkinghorne, Donald *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988)
- Pritchard, J.B. (ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)
- Qutb, Sayyid *Islam and Universal Peace*. (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1977) Reprinted 1993
- Qutb, Sayyid *The Islamic Concept and its characteristics* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1991)
- Rahman, Fazlur *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 2nd Ed.
- Ramadhan, Tariq *The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad* (London: Penguin, 2007)
- Redha, Mohammad *Mohammad: the Messenger of Allah* trans. Mohmoud Salami (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob Al-ilmiyah, 2005)
- Renard, John *In the footsteps of Muhammad: Understanding the Islamic Experience* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992)
- Richardson, Don *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1984) 3rd edition, 2005
- Richardson, Don *Peace Child* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1974) 4th edition, 2005
- Richardson, Don *The Secrets of the Koran* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003)
- Robson, J. “Hadīth” in Bernard Lewis et al. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* New Edition, 11 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1971)

- Robson, James *Mishkat al-Masabih* 2 vols (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1975)
- Robinson, Anthony *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003)
- Robinson, Neal *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1991)
- Rodinson, Maxime *Mohammed* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971) Reprinted by Tauris Parke, 2002
- Rogerson, John and Philip Davies *The Old Testament World* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989) 2nd edition, 2005
- Ronan, Charles E., and Bonnie B. C. Oh (eds) *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582-1773* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988)
- Samuel, Vinay & Chris Sugden, “Dialogue with Other Religions – An Evangelical View”, in Samuel, Vinay and Chris Sugden (eds) *Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984)
- Sardar, Z. “The Ethical Connection: Christian-Muslim Relations in the Postmodern Age” in *ICMR (Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations)*, 2, 1991
- Sarwar, Ghulam *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings* (London: The Muslim Educational Trust, 1980) Reprinted 2000
- Sayyid, S. *A Fundamental Fear* (London: Zed books, 2003)
- Schlorff, Samuel “Feedback on Project Sunrise (Sira): A Look at ‘Dynamic Equivalence’ in an Islamic Context,” in *Seedbed* (1987) no. 2, 22—32
- Shenouda III: H.H. Pope *The Release of the Spirit* (Cairo: Dar el Tebaa, 1990)
- Siddiqui, Muhammad Zubayr *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993) Reprinted by Suhail Academy, 2001
- Siddiqui, Ataullah *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997)
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) Reprinted by New American Library, 1959
- Speight, R. Marston *God Is One: The Way of Islam* (New York: Friendship Press, 1984) Reprinted, 1989
- Stacey, Vivienne “Attitudes to Other Faiths” in Mario di Gangi (ed.) *Perspectives in Mission* (Ontario: BMMF, 1985)

Swartley, Keith “Course Introduction” in Keith Swartley (ed.) *Encountering the World of Islam* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2004)

Taylor, W.R. “Al-Bukhari and the Aggada” in *Muslim World XXXIII* (1943), pp.191-202

Terry, John Mark “Approaches to the evangelization of Muslims” in *Evangelical Missionary Quarterly* (April 1996) Vol. 32, No. 2

Thiessen, Henry C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998)

Thomas, David *Anti-Christian polemic in early Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Thompson, J.A. “Covenant (OT)” in G.Bromiley (ed) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Eerdmans, Michigan, 1979)

Travis, John & Anna “Contextualisation among Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists: A Focus on Insider Movements” in Charles Kraft (ed.) *Appropriate Christianity* (William Carey Library Publishers, 2005).

Trimingham, J. S. *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) Reprinted 1998

Trotter, Liliás *The Way of the Sevenfold Secret* (Cairo: Nile Mission Press, 1926) Reprinted 1933

Vine, W. E. *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.) Reprinted by Hendrickson, 1989

Voll, John Obert *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Essex: Longman, 1982) 2nd edition, 1994

Watt, Montgomery *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970)

Walker, F. Deauville *William Carey: Father of Modern Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980)

Wehr, Hans *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* edited by J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Spoken Language Services, 1976)

Wild, Stefan “Political interpretation of the Qur’ān” in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Wilson, John W. *Christianity alongside Islam* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2010)

Woodberry, Dudley “Contextualisation among Muslims: Reusing Common Pillars” in Dean Gilliland (ed.) *The Word Among Us: Contextualising Theology for Today* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989) Reprinted by Wipf & Stock, 2002

Woodberry, Dudley “Missiological Issues in the Encounter of Emerging Islam” in *Missiology* 3 no.1 (January 2000) pp.19-34

Woodberry, Dudley “When Failure is Our Teacher: Lessons from Mission to Muslims” in *International Journal of Frontier Missions* vol.13:3, July-Sept 1996, 121

Youngblood, Ronald *The Heart of the Old Testament* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1998 (2nd ed.)

Zebiri, Kate *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997)

Zwemer, Samuel *The Moslem Christ* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1912)
Reprinted by BiblioBazaar, 2010

Zwemer, Samuel M. *The Moslem Doctrine of God* (New York: American Tract Society, 1905)
Reprinted by Advancing Native Missions, 2010