

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

THE CLEAR RELIGION SERIES - PART **7**
EXCERPTED FROM (WHO DESERVES TO BE WORSHIPPED?)



NO DOUBT THIS LIFE IS AN EXAMINATION
WHICH NEEDS YOUR FULL CONSIDERATION
AS TO WHAT YOU WILL TAKE TO
YOUR FINAL DESTINATION?
ONLY TRUE BELIEF AND GOOD DEEDS ARE
YOUR WAY TO SALVATION
(Muhammad Sherif)

MAJED S. AL-RASSI

EDITED BY ANN RONAYNE
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HONORIFIC PHRASES IN THIS BOOK

(the Exalted): used after the mention of God/Allah to express:
Glorified and Exalted is He

(bpuh): *Blessings and peace be upon him*; used after mention of
the Prophet Muhammad

(pbuh): *Peace be upon him*; used after mention of any prophet or
after mention of Angel Gabriel


(May Allah be pleased with him): used after mention of a male
Companion of the Prophet

(May Allah be pleased with her): used after mention of a female
Companion of the Prophet




ABOUT THE WORD ‘LORD’

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is ‘master’ or ‘ruler’, and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: ‘the lord of the mansion’ or ‘*Lord So-and-So*’ (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God-Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah-not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.



ABOUT THE WORD ‘ALLAH’

Although the English word ‘God’ has often been used interchangeably in this book with the word Allah, there is a difference. ‘Allah’ is the word in Arabic that is translated as ‘God’. However, ‘Allah’ has a much more precise meaning than ‘God’. ‘Allah’ is not merely an Arabic term for the word ‘god’. Instead, the root word of the word ‘Allah’ is *ilah*, which means ‘a god’. There are countless numbers of made-up ‘gods’, but only One True God worthy of worship, Whose name is Allah. The word ‘Allah’ literally means ‘the worshipped’, or ‘the God’. Allah is, thus, the proper name for the **only Being that is worthy of worship in truth**, the True Creator of the universe. By saying ‘Allah’, Muslims are, in essence, negating every other entity which people wrongfully worship, while affirming worship to Him alone. The name ‘Allah’ is how God Almighty has referred to Himself in the Quran, and how Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) also referred to Him. Therefore, in this work, the term ‘Allah’ will often be used in reference to this One and Only God Who is worthy of worship.



INTRODUCTION

Many books have been glorified and respected by people throughout the ages and centuries. Some were considered important enough to be preserved so that people might benefit from them; moreover, a culture might use books to pass on knowledge in order to maintain the character of a specific nation, whether the books are good or bad - or a combination of the two.

In the case of scriptures that Allah (the Exalted) revealed to the people, human beings have attempted to preserve them. In spite of this, we now have numerous different versions of the same book, which indicates a failure of the preservation attempt.

No one can deny that Allah revealed the Torah and the Gospel to Prophets Moses (peace be upon him) and Jesus (pbuh) respectively. But today, can any of their followers put their fingers on a specific version of the Old Testament or the New Testament and say definitively that this is the word of God as revealed to Prophet Jesus or Moses? I leave the answer to the respected reader.

When it comes to the Quran, though, the entire Muslim community (of more than one and one-half billion Muslims) testifies to the preservation of the across the centuries.

This little booklet sheds light on various proofs that the scripture revealed to Jesus has since been altered extensively, whereas the Quran is wholly preserved and hence is the only reliable source of divine teachings in the hands of people today - the only one that can be described as 'the word of God'.

Before we start, I would like to thank Dr Bilal Philips and Brother Muhammad bin Abdullah Caraballo, who gave me the opportunity to learn and quote from their books.

With this short introduction, I leave you to peruse this book.

Kind regards,

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IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

Revealed scriptures form the enlightenment which the messengers received to show their people the right path to Allah. All the revealed books call to the worship of Allah alone, and they forbid the worship of anything in place of, or in addition to, Him. They contain guidance for humankind in all aspects of life. They define right and wrong, and they offer human beings a complete system of beliefs and practices to govern all their affairs. The Creator alone knows best what is beneficial for His creation and what is not. Thus, the divine laws contained in those scriptures command and prohibit various acts and substances in order to protect the human spirit, human body, and human society from harm. Human beings need to abide by Allah's commandments, as documented in His revealed books, in order to fulfil their potential by living a righteous life.

The original texts of the revealed books do not differ from each other in their main doctrinal principles. However, due to the differences among nations in terms of time and place, there were some differences in the practical teachings (laws) of the scriptures, according to the wisdom of Allah. Their basic message, however, remains the same.

Muslims believe in the previous books as mentioned in the Quran: the Scripture of Abraham (pbuh), the Torah of Moses (pbuh), the Psalms of David (pbuh), and the Gospel of Jesus (pbuh). The following verse from the noble Quran emphasizes the fact that belief in all the previous scriptures sent by Allah is an integral part of the Islamic belief system:

{Say [O believers]: We have believed in Allah and what has

been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.} (*Quran 2: 136*)

Long before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), all of these scriptures had been either lost or irrevocably corrupted by later generations, over the centuries, with myths, superstitions, idolatry, and irrational philosophical beliefs. The existing forms of those scriptures contain contradictions and hence cannot be described as Allah's revelation.

The Bible, for example, is composed of many books written by various authors. The scripture that was revealed to Jesus (pbuh) has undergone so many changes that today we have the four well-known Gospels instead of one Gospel.

These were written between 40 and 115 years after Jesus (peace be upon him) had left and are based on documents that have been lost. The Gospel according to Mark was the first one written in Rome, at least 40 years after the disappearance of Jesus (peace be upon him). The Gospel according to Matthew was written in the Greek Language about 90 years after Christ. The Gospel according to Luke was written in Greece approximately 80 years after Christ. These three Gospels are called Synoptic because they originate from the same lost document and they have a lot in common. The Gospel according to John, on the other hand, has deep differences with the Synoptic Gospels. It is in this Gospel of John where the Divinity and pre-existence of Jesus (peace be upon him) was mentioned,

even though Jesus himself never claimed this. This Gospel was written between the years 110 and 115 CE.¹

Analysis of these Gospels reveals the following:

1. There exist no written documents dating from the period of Jesus' lifetime that record his sayings, actions, or lectures.
2. The Gospels were written 40-115 years after Jesus' 'disappearance' and were based on documents that have since been lost. As a consequence, there was manipulation of the content.
3. The historical record of the Gospels points to the fact that they were written by people who never knew, saw, heard, or met Jesus. (They are named as Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, although their actual identities are not known.) What they narrated as the Gospels was actually based on what they heard from the preceding generations. This points to the fact that the original message revealed to Jesus, which was in his possession, did not exist later (after his ascension). Otherwise, there would be no need for people to write it.
4. The Gospels were written in Greek, whereas Jesus (pbuh) spoke Aramaic; since they do not record his original speech, they cannot be the words of Allah.
5. For at least 100 years after the Gospels were written, they did not have any canonical authority. During this time, writers from different sects changed them in order to suit their own agendas.
6. The clearest evidence of biblical distortion is the revision of

1 Abdul Razak, *Study Guide, Comparative Study - Islam and Christianity*.

the Bible to the extent that every edition is different from the previous one.

7. There is a lack of authentication in documenting the original text of the Bible.
8. The present Gospels, seen as a whole, are full of contradictions.¹

These factors have been brought up here in order to demonstrate that the Gospel of Jesus (pbuh), meaning his original message that was revealed by Allah, has not reached us in its original form. It can be affirmed that the four Gospels included in today's Bible cannot be considered equivalent, or even similar, to the inspired message given to Jesus (pbuh). Based on these historical facts, these four Gospels should be treated as historical writings, like the other books in the New Testament, not as the true scripture (word of Allah) that was revealed to Jesus.²

DISTORTION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Moving to the Old Testament texts, there are many verses that describe the Lord with weak and negative attributes. Some of them are even curses! This clearly indicates that the Old Testament cannot be the word of God because the Lord would not undermine Himself in the books He revealed to His people. The Lord is perfect, and hence His book must be perfect and free from contradictions.

In the twelve passages cited below, a series of nine examples prove conclusively to the sincere researcher that the current Old

1 Source for points 1-7: Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam*, 14-15.

2 At one time, there were a number of Gospels, but only four are accepted as part of today's Bible. Some scholars believe that these were chosen by the First Council of Nicaea, convened by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 325 CE.

Testament is not the true Old Testament, the revelation that was in Jesus' hands. It is the word of 'men', not the word of 'God', the Lord.¹

1. Here it says that the Lord acted as if he had slept and drunk wine! If this verse is true, then who controlled the universe while He acted this way?

Then the Lord **awoke** as from sleep, like a strong man shouting because of **wine**. (Psalm 78:65)

2. Here it says that the Lord will not hear. This is not an appropriate characteristic for Allah.

Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you **will not hear**? (Habakkuk 1:2)

3. Here it says that the Lord forgets.

How long, O Lord, Will you **forget** me forever? (Psalm 13:1)

4. Here the Bible says that the Lord was not strong enough to displace some people because their chariots were made of iron.

And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but **he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron**. (Judges 1:19)

5. Here it attributes more negative characteristics to the Lord.

Therefore will I lament and howl: I will go **stripped and naked**: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and a mourning like the ostriches. (Micah 1:8)

1 The great researcher Ahmed Deedat had a book titled *50,000 Errors in the Bible*, which is available online.

6. These two verses say that the Lord got tired after creating the heavens and earth and then had to rest. This attribute fits the human being, not the Lord, Who is the Most Strong.

...In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day **he rested** and was refreshed. (Exodus 31:17)

And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. (Genesis 2:2)

But the following verse contradicts the previous two verses:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. **He does not faint or grow weary**; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)

7. Here it says that the Lord will sound the trumpet. Is this fit for the Lord?

...The Lord God **will sound the trumpet** and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. (Zechariah 9:14)

8. Here it implies that the Lord has failed and is hurt.

For thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am slinging out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and I will bring distress on them, that they may feel it.” Woe is me because of my hurt! My wound is grievous. But I said, “Truly this is an affliction, and I must bear it.” My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken; my children have gone from me, and they are not; there is no one to spread my tent again and to set up my curtains. (Jeremiah 10:18-20)

9. Psalm 89:38-46 describes the Lord acting badly against Jesus!

³⁸ But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed.

³⁹ You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust.

⁴⁰ You have breached all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins.

⁴¹ All who pass by plunder him; he has become the scorn of his neighbours.

⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his foes; you have made all his enemies rejoice.

⁴³ You have also turned back the edge of his sword, and you have not made him stand in battle.

⁴⁴ You have made his splendor to cease and cast his throne to the ground.

⁴⁵ You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame.

⁴⁶ How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?

10. Here is the cursing of a prophet (Balaam) in the Bible! Could this be the word of God? Could it happen that God sends a prophet and then rebukes him for his transgressions and then accuses him of not being in his right mind?

but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:16)

11. Genesis 19:30-38 narrates a very wicked story about a prophet (Lot). According to this, his daughters got him drunk and then had sexual relations with him while he was unaware of it; they both bore children as a result. Even a very indecent person would not do this.
12. Here is a Biblical curse for the Prophet Solomon:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. (1 Kings 11: 1-6)

There are hundreds of verses in the Bible which are against logic and common sense.

BIBLICAL PROOFS OF THE BIBLE'S DISTORTION

The Old Testament itself clearly testifies that it was altered by humans. God (Allah) is quoted as saying:

How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us’? But behold, **the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.** (Jeremiah 8:8)

WHO DISTORTED THE BIBLE (OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS)?

Dr Bilal Philips has explained:

About five years after the end of Jesus' ministry, a young rabbi by the name of Saul of Tarsus, who claimed to have seen Jesus in a vision, began to change Jesus' way. Paul (his Roman name) had considerable respect for Roman philosophy and he spoke proudly of his own Roman citizenship. His conviction was that non-Jews who became Christians should not be burdened with the Torah in any respect. The author of Acts 13:39 quotes Paul as saying: And by him every one that believes is freed from everything which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses. It was primarily through the efforts of Paul that the Church began to take on its non-Jewish character. Paul wrote most of the New Testament letters (epistles), which the Church accepts as the official doctrine and inspired Scripture. These letters do not preserve the Gospel of Jesus or even represent it, instead, Paul transformed the teachings of Christ into a Hellenic (Greco-Roman) philosophy.¹

Based on these facts, it can easily be concluded that the Bible in its present form is no more than a collection of historical books written by various writers over many years. The accounts of the life of Jesus were written after his ascension, by men who never met him. (They are named as Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, although their actual identities are not known.) These are partial accounts, which contradict each other and have no authentication. The current version(s) of the Bible does not represent the original revelations and cannot be described as the word of God (Allah).

1 Philips, *The True Message of Jesus Christ*, 52-53.

Many Christians have found that when they do research to discover the true teachings of God, the Bible cannot answer their questions. Dr David Liepert is a Canadian physician who began learning about Islam in order to convince Muslim co-workers that his Christian beliefs represented the truth. As he combed through the Bible, however, he was surprised to find that it did not contain the evidence for his beliefs that he had assumed was there. After a great deal of soul-searching, and extensive research into Islam, he realized that it had the strongest evidence supporting it, and he embraced Islam as the true religion. His story is described in his book *Choosing Faith*.

Although the original revelations were not preserved and have been replaced with the current Bible (including the four Gospels attributed to Luke, Matthew, John, and Mark), the Old and New Testaments still contain some remnants of the original truth. The Quran confirms these parts, because it confirms the truth and denies all falsehood. Islamic teachings set out a criterion for either accepting or rejecting passages from the Bible, as described in the following verse:

{And We have revealed to you [O Muhammad] the book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the scripture and as a criterion over it...} (*Quran 5: 48*)

This verse emphasizes two main aspects of the Quran:

1. The Quran confirms only those teachings or passages of the previous scriptures whose meaning have remained intact.
2. The Quran is the final, complete, authoritative, and authentic revelation from Allah. It is the final arbiter and the only criterion to correct any inaccuracy or misinterpretation which might have occurred in the transmission of scriptures

throughout the ages. It helps us to discover, expose, and disclose human additions to, or interpolations of, previous revelations. Indeed, one of the names of the Quran is *al-Furqan* (the criterion which distinguishes between right and wrong, truth and falsehood).

It follows, therefore, that Muslims have no reason to reject the essence of any passage in the Bible if such a passage is confirmed by the Quran. For example, we read in the New Testament a reiteration of one of the Ten Commandments:

Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: **The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**’ (Mark 12:29)

Muslims who read this passage in the Bible can find no objection to its essence. After all, the Quran confirms:

{Say: He is Allah, [Who is] One.} (*Quran 112: 1*)

{They have certainly disbelieved who say, “Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary,” while the Messiah has said, “O Children of Israel, worship Allah, **my Lord and your Lord.**” Indeed, he who associates others with Allah - Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.} (*Quran 5: 72*)

If, however, Muslims read in the Bible (or in other previous scriptures, for that matter) accusations of major moral sins levied against great prophets, or doctrines which are totally negated in the Quran, they can accept only the Quranic version as the original unadulterated truth, revealed by Allah.

DISTORTING REVELATIONS IS THE BIGGEST SIN

The Quran has emphasized, in more than one verse, that distorting Allah’s revelation is a severe sin.

{So woe to those who write the ‘scripture’ with their own hands, then say: This is from Allah-in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.} (*Quran 2: 79*)

AN IMPORTANT NOTE

It should be noted that those who followed the scriptures in their pure and unadulterated forms, and then died before hearing the message of Islam, are considered to be on the right religion; they will have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgement.

REVELATION OF THE QURAN

Following the distortion of the previous scriptures, Allah, the Most Compassionate, did not leave human beings to go astray without an unadulterated reference. Indeed, He revealed the Quran as the final revelation to humankind, and He promised to preserve it for all time. It is the word of Allah, which He revealed to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) through the angel Gabriel (pbuh). It was revealed in parts (fragments) of different lengths over a period of twenty-three years. Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) recited the revelation to his Companions, who wrote it down during his lifetime on palm leaves, parchment, animal bones (the shoulder-blades of camels made a good writing surface), and flat stones. When he recited it to them, he indicated precisely where each revealed section belonged within the body of the complete revelation. In addition, the Quran was memorized by hundreds of Prophet Muhammad’s Companions. One year after the death of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) in 632 CE, the first caliph, Abu Bakr (d. 634 CE, may Allah be pleased with him), instructed the Prophet’s Companions to collect the whole Quran in one volume. Later, the third caliph, Uthman (d. 656 CE, may

Allah be pleased with him), prepared several copies from the original text and sent them to the major centres of the Islamic civilization. One of these reproductions can still be found in Istanbul, Turkey.

From that time onwards, for more than 1400 years, the same Quranic text has been in use, with the exact same wording, order, and language (Arabic). Not a single word of its 114 chapters, 6200 verses, and approximately 80,000 words has been changed since it was revealed.¹ Indeed, Allah has promised to preserve it forever:

{Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian.} (*Quran 15: 9*)

Just ponder over the fact that the Quran, in its entirety, is memorized by millions of people, regardless of age, sex, social class, or ethnicity! It is the only book that has been thus preserved, not only on the shelf but in the hearts of humankind.

The Quran supersedes all previous scriptures. Allah has said to Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) about it:

{And We have revealed to you [O Muhammad] the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the scripture and as a criterion over it...} (*Quran 5: 48*)

An essential point to understand about the Quran is that it is a miracle in terms of both its revelation and its content. Since the time of its revelation, there have been those who denied the divine and miraculous nature of the Quran, saying that Muhammad (bpuh) was either taught by others or that he wrote it

1 This refers to the original Arabic Quran. There are differences in its translations because they are merely interpretations of its meaning by different individuals.

by himself! In order to counteract this claim, Allah has presented a challenge to the whole of humankind:

{And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our slave [Muhammad], then produce a chapter the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.} (*Quran 2: 23*)

This is one of the prophecies which the Quran accurately foretold, for no one, from the time of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) until this day, has been able to produce the like of one chapter or even one verse of the Quran. As such, Muslims do not need any other scriptures to base their faith on, either fully or partially. The Quran remains clear and easily understood by anyone who has a good command of the Arabic language, and even when the meanings of its words are translated into any of the world's other languages, all of its legal injunctions and instructions are clear.

THE ENTIRE QURAN IS A PROCLAMATION OF MONOTHEISM

1. Some of the verses inform us about Allah: His names, attributes, acts, and speech. Those verses indicate the Oneness of Allah with respect to His most excellent names, essence, and perfect attributes.
2. Other verses point to the necessity of worshipping Allah alone, without any associate or partner, and of renouncing the worship of anything other than Him. These verses indicate the focus of worship and the necessity for people to single out their Lord in their intentions, when requesting His help and when turning to Him in repentance, for example.
3. The Quran also contains injunctions and prohibitions; doing something that has been enjoined or refraining from what

has been prohibited is the fulfilment and perfection of the affirmation of the Oneness of Allah.

4. The Quran includes stories and information about prophets and other righteous people of true and sincere belief. It tells about their immediate rewards in the life of this world as well as the immense rewards reserved for them in the hereafter.
5. The Quran also contains stories about those who associate partners with Allah. It describes their punishment in this life and the punishment they are promised in the hereafter. These are the just deserts for those who deviate from the affirmation of Allah's Oneness.

THE PROPHET'S TEACHINGS

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) are the second source of Islamic knowledge, after the noble Quran. They explain and elaborate on the Quranic verses. They also explain, in minute detail, the manner of worship as performed by the Prophet (bpuh). The Prophet's statements provide further clarification and details as to how to fulfil what Allah has ordered and refrain from what He has forbidden. These teachings have been meticulously collected and reported by the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with all of them).

PRESERVATION OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

Preventing Islamic teachings from alteration does not stop at the preservation of the Quranic text; it is also forbidden to introduce into the Prophet's guidance (by saying or writing) anything that is contrary to its premise, values, or teachings.

The Prophet (bpuh) said:

«Whoever introduces into this matter (the Islamic teachings)

something that does not belong to it, shall find it rejected.»

(Recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

«One of the Prophet's Companions said: The Prophet (bpuh) gave us a highly effective admonition, such that many of us were tearful and felt our hearts shudder.

Someone said to him: O Messenger of Allah! This sounds like the admonition of someone bidding his audience farewell. Please outline for us what you recommend.

The Prophet (bpuh) said: I urge you to always remain conscious of Allah (God-fearing), and to listen to and obey your leaders, even if the leader is an Abyssinian slave. Any of you who lives long will witness much strife and conflict, so hold tight to my way and the way followed by the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.¹ Hold on to it and bite it with your molars (do not let go of it), and steer away from any innovation (in religious affairs and laws), for such innovations are deviations (from the right path).» (An authentic hadith recorded by Ibn Hibban, Abu Dawood, and Tirmidhi)²

Thus, in matters of religion, one is not permitted to change fundamental principles of Islamic teachings. Whatever is contrary to them is wrong and unacceptable. With this strict protection, Islam has been kept as it was revealed, pure from myths and superstitions as well as from changes that reflect the whims of people and leaders.



-
- 1 He meant specifically the four caliphs who came after him.
 - 2 hadith: a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers.

FEATURES OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

Allah has made the message of Islam easy to understand and to follow. He annulled some previously prescribed rites and practices, while he affirmed others, according to His wisdom. As a result, the Islamic creed and law are suited to people's spiritual, psychological, social, and economic needs, for all of humankind and for all eras. Islamic teachings have the following unique features:

1. RATIONALITY

The truth should be clear and obvious. It should be so simple that anyone is capable of seeing it, and this clarity is the most compelling feature of Islam. One should not have to work through a series of complicated logical proofs in order to derive a fundamental principle, only to arrive at something that he or she is unsure of-yet this is often the case with other religions or philosophies.

2. PERFECTION

Since Allah is perfect, His teachings must also be perfect and free from any contradiction or error. The Quran challenges its readers to find any errors in it if they do not believe it is really from Allah:

{Then do they not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.} (*Quran 4: 82*)

Dr Maurice Bucaille, a French surgeon, found many scientific facts mentioned in the Quran that were not known by humans at the time Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) was conveying these verses to those around him. Dr Bucaille wrote, "I could not find

a single error in the Quran.”¹ As a result of his findings, he left Christianity and embraced Islam.

3. CLARITY

Allah is the Most Compassionate. He therefore guides people through clear and simple revelations that are free of myths, superstitions, and mysteries.

4. SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY AND ACCURACY

It is not surprising to find in the Quran, and in the statements of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), information that has only recently been discovered by modern science. This indicates that the Quran is the word of Allah and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger. On the other hand, the religious views which the church presented concerning God, the Bible, and the individual’s relation to God forced people into an unfortunate choice: either science or God. Many educated people have concluded that one cannot be a scientist or an educated person and be a true Christian at the same time. Many philosophers and scientists, and the majority of lay people, have lost hope of reconciling religion and science; thus, the ideology of secularism was developed and has since flourished. This dichotomy would not have arisen if the original scripture that was revealed to Jesus (pbuh) had not been distorted. Islam, the pure religion, raises no contradictions whatsoever between religion and science. This is naturally obvious because both religion and true scientific knowledge are from the same source: Allah, the Exalted, who does not contradict Himself.²

1 Bucaille, *The Quran and Modern Science*.

2 For more information on the many scientific facts that are referenced in the Quran, see *The Quran and Modern Science* by Dr Maurice Bucaille and *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* by I. A. Ibrahim (available online at www.islam-guide.com).

5. PROPHETIC FULFILMENT

Many of the events prophesied in the Quran and in the Prophet's statements have come to pass. This is further proof that Islam is not a man-made religion, because it would be unimaginable for an uneducated man who was living isolated from other civilizations to make up such prophecies; they must have been revealed to him by Allah.

6. MODERATION

In Islam, there is no conflict between spiritual and worldly life. Rather, it provides a balance among all aspects of human life, taking into account the needs and wants of individuals and society. Therefore, secularism, materialism, monasticism, and extreme asceticism are all rejected by Islam, which provides a middle way to achieve harmony and balance between the spiritual and material needs of people. This is why Allah has called the Muslim nation a:

{...just community [moderate nation]...} (*Quran 2: 143*)

7. COMPREHENSIVENESS

Islamic teachings provide people with definite guidelines to follow in all aspects of life: spiritual, individual, social, moral, political, economic, and so on.

8. UNIQUENESS

Some have claimed that the Quran is man-made; Allah challenges them to:

{...produce a chapter the like thereof...} (*Quran 2: 23*)

Indeed, the entire Quran-its language, its elegance, its miraculous

nature-is unparalleled. The ancient non-Muslim Arabs tried to construct a verse yet failed, even though their language and poetry were very highly developed in that era. Even many recent non-Muslim scholars admit that the Quran is one of the greatest books known to humankind. This point ultimately leads to the fact that Muhammad (bpuh)-the illiterate-was a true prophet to whom the Quran was revealed.

9. JUSTICE

All of humankind descended from one man and one woman (Adam and Eve). Islam teaches that the criterion by which all human beings are judged is righteousness, not the colour of their skin or their status in society. In the view of Allah, the best person is the most righteous. A verse of the glorious Quran reads:

{...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...} (*Quran 49: 13*)



A WHISPER

Some people are not able to find the truth because of their blind commitment to their beliefs. Their tenacious adherence is usually not based on an intellectual understanding of the teachings but on powerful cultural and emotional influences. Because they were brought up in a particular family or society, they firmly cling to the beliefs of that group, believing that they are upholding the truth.

There are others who are convinced about the religion of Islam and are mentally ready to embrace it. However, when they contemplate the drastic changes it will bring to their lives, changes that might not please their families and communities, they hesitate, and even after taking the decision, they sometimes go back and change their minds later.

It is whispered in their ears that no matter how much money, prestige, status, and power an unbeliever may have possessed in this life, he or she will never have enough to buy entrance into paradise. In the hereafter, the poorest inhabitant of Earth who has testified to the truth of Islam will be far happier and more dignified than the richest person who did not accept the message of Islam.

Rejecting Allah's message is the biggest sin that one can commit. For this reason, while the soul is still in his or her body, the wise individual should take this opportunity; he or she is still alive to accept Allah's message before it is too late. The time for repentance is limited because once death arrives, it is no longer possible to obtain forgiveness.¹ Allah has mentioned: {[For

1 Compiled from Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam*.

such is the state of the disbelievers] until, when death comes to one of them, he says: My Lord, send me back that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind. No! It is only a word he is saying...} ¹ (*Quran 23: 99-100*)

Religion is, without question, the most important aspect of a person's life, for it determines whether or not a person is rightly guided. It follows, therefore, that choosing the true faith is the most important personal decision one must make, and this decision needs to be based on clarity and total conviction. When it comes to matters of religion and creed, nothing must be left to chance because the one who is truly guided-as opposed to the one who is not-will surely find eternal happiness in the hereafter!

Having been presented with the previous proofs, we should use our intellect to analyse and reason. A crossroad has been reached, and Allah (Glorified is He) calls on all people to follow the clear, straight road and avoid all the murky, dubious ones. The right path has now become distinct from the wrong path, as Allah has mentioned:

{There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in *taghoot*² and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.} (*Quran 2: 256*)

It is my duty and responsibility, as a resident of this great planet, and as one who has submitted my free will to the law and

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- 1 The unbelievers will ask for a 'second chance' when they see the angels ready to punish them, but it will be too late; they were given the time, the intellect and the guidance, but they neglected it for years until time ran out.
 - 2 *taghoot*: idols; everything evil that is worshipped.

commandments of the Supreme Being, to urge all human beings to stay away from the worship of false deities-to stop putting their faith in statues, sphinxes, figures, amulets, talismans, horseshoes, and any other objects that have been manufactured by humans or created by God. After first repenting, a person should submit completely to the will of Allah, the Only God of the universe.





BEST DECISION THEY EVER MADE

Islam is often called the fastest growing religion, and each person who embraces Islam has a unique story and unique reasons. Despite widespread misconceptions about women in Islam, a growing number of women are finding that Islam is the true religion and the best way of life. Ann Ronayne's story is below; she welcomes emails from readers and can be reached at ann.ronayne1@gmail.com.

“Me? Go live in Kuwait? No way!” That was my reaction when my manager tried to persuade me to take a position in Kuwait. But I was to learn that {...the command of Allah is a decree of predestiny that is ever fulfilled.} (*Quran 33: 38*)¹

I was born and raised in suburban Washington, D.C. in a Catholic family, and I attended Catholic schools. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church made major changes in its teachings in an attempt to be more modern; it tried to focus more on positive aspects and de-emphasize what was considered negative: punishment, regulations, abstinence from certain foods at certain times, etc. (Even so, Catholics in the West routinely ignored many of the rules that still existed, such as the prohibitions on contraceptives.) The Mass, which had always been said in Latin, was said in English instead. The nuns who taught us replaced their habits (modest dress) with modern clothes. Our religion classes had never involved reading the Bible, but now, instead of focusing on religious beliefs, they involved discussion of social issues and singing a lot of contemporary folk songs, as did the new Masses. It seemed strange that so much of what

1 This translation is taken from Hammad, *The Gracious Quran*.

we had been taught as the truth was now completely changed. Still, when we prepared for our first Holy Communion, we were taught that the bread that the priest was putting in our mouths was the actual body of Jesus (which would bleed if we were to bite it). For these and many other reasons, I doubted my religion and rejected it from a young age.

My decision was only confirmed as I learned more. If the trinity was such an important concept, why hadn't Jesus explained that clearly (and repeated it over and over again)? If God wanted to forgive us, He could have done that without coming to Earth Himself and being crucified to atone for our sins. Was it Jesus the man or Jesus the God who died on the cross, and how can God - Who has no beginning or end - die? If God did send His son (who was also God?) down to Earth to guide us, why would He neglect to give us the message during his thirty-three years, so that the truth had to be discovered and given to us later by Paul, who never even met Jesus?! If Christianity were the true religion, why didn't Jesus himself live and teach it?

For many years, I considered myself an atheist or an agnostic, but I was never concerned with choosing a label. I thought it was enough that I tried to be a good person, and I felt that nonbelievers actually did more good works because they didn't depend on any supernatural being for help. I never felt that I was searching for answers about the purpose of life or about religious beliefs.

After the Gulf War, I was working as a computer consultant when my company was offered a position in Kuwait which was perfect for me. My initial reaction was that I had no desire to go and work in a place where I thought women were treated

as second-class citizens; after all, I had the usual stereotypes about women in a place like Kuwait. The manager on location assured me that the working environment was professional and that there were many bright women in the organization, including those who would be my supervisor and manager. I was eventually persuaded to take the contract for one year, thinking that it would be an adventure.

I soon learned that all of the stereotypes I had brought with me were wrong.

My colleagues were always friendly and respectful, and it occurred to me that it was almost the only environment I'd ever worked in where I saw no evidence of sexual harassment—not even any off-colour jokes or racy calendars hanging in cubicles. (It was certainly different from the atmosphere I'd experienced in the US military.) The women working with me were university graduates and were not shy about speaking out, and most chose to wear Islamic dress. Advertisements did not use women's bodies to sell products.

I was impressed to see the bonds among families and members of the society in general. When one colleague lost his pay check, all of the men quickly pitched in until they had collected the same amount of money for him. People also gave generously to the needy, both locally and globally.

When someone's mother called and said she needed something, the person would leave work to take her to the doctor or get what she needed. If a man's uncle died, all the men attended the funeral prayer; if a woman's aunt died, all the women went to visit her to give their condolences. When someone married or had a baby or recovered from an operation, an extensive

network of family members, friends and colleagues shared that experience. Hospital rooms were large and even furnished with sofas and chairs to accommodate all the visitors.

The attitude towards the elderly was different from what I was used to, since extended families lived together, with several generations in one house; the children who didn't live in the same house came to visit often, if not daily. Grandparents had children and grandchildren living with them and were not left to live and die alone, or sent to nursing homes (which don't even exist). Older women were highly respected; they did not feel the need to make themselves look young and beautiful in order to gain self-esteem. Taking care of one's elderly parents was seen as a blessing and an opportunity for doing good deeds, rather than a burden, and care of one's parents is emphasized in the moral system of Islam. (This is not to say that non-Muslims in the West don't care about their parents, but there are different priorities and expectations. There is usually more of an emphasis on nuclear families and independence, with the elderly themselves not wishing to be a burden on their families.) In general, dealing with difficult situations was seen as a test and not a cause for despair. Taking one's own life was rare and also forbidden because only Allah has that right.

When the month of Ramadan came around, I was amazed by the idea that one billion Muslims around the world were fasting together-abstaining from food and drink every day from long before sunrise until the sun set. I joined them in fasting the entire month, although I had no intention of becoming Muslim and didn't experience the spiritual recharge that I would feel later as a Muslim.

At the time, I knew little about Islam, and I'm embarrassed to say now that I considered it a backwards religion which would only appeal to the ignorant masses. As I slowly realized that the stereotypes I had brought with me were all wrong, I became curious about the religion. As I learned more, I discovered that Islam was the reason for the moral system I had witnessed, and that these positive social aspects had been part of Islamic societies throughout the centuries. Even small things that had struck me—such as greetings given among strangers when one entered an elevator or an office—had their basis in Islamic teachings.

I got a Quran translation and some other books and began reading. Over and over again, I was surprised at what I found—and perhaps more by what I didn't find. I found a belief system which was rational and uncluttered, and I didn't find the oppression of women or terrorism that I had expected. I was attracted by the emphasis on social justice and standing up against oppression.

Obviously, the key question about religion is deciding whether or not it is true. Since this decision must rely on faith to some extent, how can we really know? One factor is the credibility of the sources; in the case of Islam, the most important source is the Quran.

I was struck by its scientific accuracy, demonstrated by statements which describe scientific phenomena that were not discovered until recently. I learned that the Islamic world had made major contributions to scientific knowledge and was the seat of civilization and learning while Europe was in the Dark Ages. Logically, I knew that an illiterate seventh century Arab could not have written this book himself. I began to question

my idea that there was no Creator-that the intricate systems that made up the universe and its life forms could have developed randomly or that we were born, lived, and died with no purpose.

I was impressed that the Quran had never been changed over the years, so that the Quran we read today (in its original Arabic) is exactly the same as that revealed to Muhammad (bpuh) and passed on to his followers 1400 years ago. All Muslims memorize parts of it, and there are millions of people around the world who have memorized it in its entirety, so even if every copy disappeared today from the face of the earth, it would be easily recorded again. I couldn't help but to contrast that with the Bible, a collection of books written by various people over time; different Christian sects do not even agree on which books are included, and in some cases, scholars do not even know who wrote the books. We do not have the original sources, and there are different versions of the later sources. There are many contradictions, and the New Testament actually rejects many of the teachings of the Old Testament.

I was surprised to find out that Islam had the same roots as Judaism and Christianity, and that Muslims believed in the same prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them all).

I began to understand why Muslims loved Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) so much, and I wondered why I never knew anything about him... never even knew that he was a historical figure about whom so much was known, and whose gravesite is known and visited. Authentic narrations from those who were closest to him describe him as a modest, truthful man who stood up for justice and against oppression.

I used to walk along the beach at night, looking up at the moon and stars and reflecting on Allah's creation, as the Quran recommended. I became convinced that the Quran must have been a message from God, but it took me a while to actually accept Islam... yet it was so rational and simple in its essence: one God, one Creator of the universe and everything in it, Who offered us guidance to make the best of our lives in this life and the next. Obviously, there are more details, but this sums up the Islamic beliefs, and one who accepts this is essentially a Muslim.

The concept seemed so pure and logical, especially when compared to the concept of the trinity, which cannot be explained rationally. There are three Gods, but they are one God? Jesus is both fully divine and fully human, so that he is all powerful yet experiences hunger and thirst and other physical needs? Moreover, this uncomplicated main principle of Islam - that there is one God - is repeated over and over again in the Quran, in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh), and in the prayers of ordinary Muslims. If the trinity were the true essence of God, wouldn't it have been clearly explained and mentioned over and over again?

In Islam, God is just; He does not hold any of us accountable for the sins of another, which we had nothing to do with.

There is no concept of original sin or of a crucifixion required to redeem all of us from that original sin perpetrated by someone else.

Of course, there were aspects that made me reluctant to make such a momentous change in my life. For example, although I understood the purpose and the benefits of Islamic dress, I couldn't imagine wearing it myself until I attended a Ramadan

dinner at an organization for English-speaking Muslim women and met dozens of Western women who had converted to Islam, and who felt proud to dress this way.

For all the reasons mentioned above, and under no pressure from anyone, I came to the conclusion that the Quran was the word of God, and that Islam was the true religion.

On the day that I decided I was ready to officially declare my Islamic faith, I asked a co-worker to help me do so officially. There is actually no requirement to say this publicly or to get any kind of certificate; the declaration of faith is simply a matter of testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad (bpuh) is his Messenger. It was a very moving experience, since I was essentially starting life over again, with a clean slate. It was undoubtedly the best decision I've ever made.

When we returned to the office, I went back to my desk and resumed work. It didn't occur to me that this was anything but a personal decision, and no one even knew that I was considering it... but my friend informed everyone, and to my surprise, I received congratulations from well-wishers for the rest of the day. That evening, she invited me to her aunt's house, and with only a few hours' notice, her mother, sisters, aunts, and cousins (most of whom I'd never met before) had a party for me, complete with gifts of Qurans, prayer dresses, gold, etc. Over the next days and weeks, I received dozens of gifts from co-workers (some of whom I had never met), friends, and acquaintances. I was very blessed, for I know that others who embrace Islam sometimes encounter many hardships.

In my feminist years, we spoke of 'sisterhood', but this was my

introduction to true sisterhood. Muslim women considered me their sister, simply for the sake of Allah (God). Over the years, I've met so many amazing Muslim women of all nationalities and classes and educational backgrounds, and in our gatherings, we often talk about how blessed we are and how different our lives are from what many people think. It's hard to describe the feeling of standing in prayer, shoulder to shoulder with so many different women, knowing that we are sisters in Islam whether or not we even know each other.

It took me several weeks to build up the courage to wear the hijab (Islamic headscarf), but I found it liberating in a way that I hadn't expected. I was worried when I travelled to the U.S. wearing the hijab soon after becoming Muslim, but I needn't have been. Everywhere I went, I was greeted by other Muslims with the Islamic greeting *Assalamu alaykum* (Peace be upon you). I felt welcomed as a part of the worldwide Muslim community, and the hijab was what made that possible; if I wasn't wearing it, other Muslims would not have recognized that I was also Muslim and would not have offered those greetings.

I don't mean to claim that the Muslim community is some sort of utopia. Certainly, there are problems, but the problems are not from Islam; on the contrary, they are due to ignorance and rejection of Islamic beliefs and practices. The reality is that Islam does not need a reformation; Muslims do.

OTHER MUSLIMS WHO WERE FORMERLY CHRISTIANS

There are many Christian women and men from all backgrounds who have embraced Islam. The following is just a small sample of well-known contemporary Muslims who sincerely studied

Christianity before rejecting it in favour of Islam. They were chosen because their stories (as well as their books, articles, and videos) are easily accessible online in English.

Dr Jerald Dirks is an American former Methodist deacon (minister) with a Master's in Divinity from Harvard University and a PhD in Psychology from the University of Denver. The more he studied the Bible, the more he realized that he could not accept Christian teachings, and the more he dreaded going back to preaching what he knew was not true. When he took his questions to other ministers whom he respected, some of them admitted (behind closed doors) that they agreed with him, but they could not abandon their religion without breaking up their families and cutting off their livelihoods. Dr Dirks, along with his wife Debra, realized that Islam was the religion that actually followed the message brought by Jesus (pbuh) and other Prophets of God. Read more about them at <http://www.jeralddirksanddebradirks.com/>.


Yusha (Joshua) Evans was attending a Bible College in the southern United States, learning to read the Bible in Hebrew and Greek and intending to become a Christian missionary or minister. After reading the Bible cover-to-cover six or seven times, he was left wondering at the inaccuracies and inconsistencies he noticed. He left Christianity and began searching for the truth, but no religion satisfied him until he found Islam. See more about him at <https://yushaevans.com/>.

Aminah Assilmi (d. 2010, may Allah have mercy on her) was an American Baptist who found herself in a class with some Arab Muslims and decided to try to convert them to Christianity. When her attempts failed, she asked for a copy of their Quran

so that she could read it and show them the error of their ways. After one and a half years of research, she ended up embracing Islam instead.

Dr David Liepert is a Canadian anaesthesiologist who started studying Islam with the intention of showing his Muslim colleagues that they were wrong and that Christianity was the truth. He sought to prove this by studying the Bible and trying to answer his own questions... yet he couldn't find the evidence to support his beliefs. His story is narrated in *Choosing Faith: Rediscovering the Commonalities Between Christianity & Islam*, which is available online at <http://www.choosingfaith.com/>.

Idris Tawfiq (d. 2016, may Allah have mercy on him) was a British writer and broadcaster who touched the hearts of many. He had a degree in English Language and Literature and taught in both the UK and Egypt. He also had a degree in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome; before embracing Islam, Idris was a Roman Catholic priest.



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APPENDIX

For Further Information about Islam

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- islamhouse.com/en/ (thousands of free books)
- iera.org/shop/ (free downloads)
- iiph.com



GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS¹

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>abu</i> (or <i>abi</i>) | father (of) |
| hadith | a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (bpuh) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers |
| hijab | veil ordained by Allah for believing women |
| Ramadan | the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting |
| taghoot | idols; everything evil that is worshipped |



1 If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book.

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