

**MUHAMMAD**  
**(A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC)**  
**Sopron 2005**  
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## **INTRODUCTION:**

All of us have had discussions with Muslims concerning our different beliefs. If your experience has been like mine, in order to dialogue convincingly with a Muslim, you have had to bring up the thorny question concerning the foundation for his or her beliefs. And in order to speak to those foundations, you have had to speak to the issue concerning the founder (as far as the Muslim-world is concerned) for those beliefs.

According to Muslim Tradition (as opposed to historical and scientific evidence) Islam was created by Allah, but the final and truest revelations of Islam were "passed down" (Nazil) to humanity via the angel Jibril (Gabriel), to Muhammad. Muhammad, therefore is the final authority for Allah's revelation here on earth.

Consequently, if we are to dialogue with a Muslim it is imperative that we begin with the expounder for their beliefs, Muhammad. It is he who takes on the mantle of the "seal of the prophets," the final and greatest spokesman for God.

But where is the proof for such a title? How is he any different from any other man or thinker or statesman who came before; or after, for that matter? In Isaiah 41:21-23 we find a challenge to those who claim to come in the name of the Lord. Isaiah writes:

"Present your case," says the Lord. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. "Bring in your [proofs] to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them, and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so that we may know you are gods."

Like Isaiah in his day, we make the same challenge today, asking Muslims to provide us with proof for Muhammad's prophethood. Let us then see the case for their argument.

### **[I] IS MUHAMMAD A PROPHET?**

Muslims point to not just one proof but to a number of areas, which they feel, substantiate their claim to Muhammad's prophethood. It would be helpful to look at these areas, and come to some conclusion as to whether they are legitimate claims for his prophethood.

#### **[A] THE MUSLIM POSITION:**

The name Muhammad, like Ahmed, means "the Praised One." It is more than likely that this was not his initial name, but was the name attributed to him later on in life once he became the recognized prophet to the Arabs. Scholars believe that his childhood name was "Amin," named after his mother "Amina" who died when he was 6 years old.

His father was called "Abdullah," but Muhammad never knew him as he died before he was born. After the death of his mother Muhammad was brought up by his grandfather, and following his death by his uncle, Abu Talib. In his youth Muhammad travelled widely with camel trading caravans. It is at this point, according to Muslim Tradition, that certain things happened to him which were indicators of his special status among men.

#### **[1] A Supernatural Witness points to Muhammad's Prophethood**

When he was three years old, two angels came and took out his heart from his chest, cleaned it with ice water, put it back and left. In doing so they supposedly prepared him for his mission on earth.

Another story which comes via Muslim Tradition mentions that after the death of his grandfather Abdu-Mutalib, Muhammad went to visit a Catholic monk with his uncle Abu-Talib. It is reported that the monk saw a cloud specifically protect Muhammad from the sun.

It was then that he knew that he would be someone special.

At the age of twenty-five he married Khadijah, a widow fifteen years his senior, who was also his employer. The marriage was a happy one, and two boys and four girls were born to them, though the two boys did not live to a mature age. Khadija died after twenty-five years of marriage to Muhammad. During that time Muhammad never took another wife.

In 612 C.E. Muhammad became withdrawn and frequently went for meditation to Mt. Hira, which is situated close to Mecca. Here, according to tradition he had his first revelation.

In the Mishkat-ul-Massabih, vol.IV, pp.356-357 we read about this first revelation as reported by Aisha, Muhammad's favorite wife:

The first revelation which began to be revealed to the Apostle of Allah was a correct dream in sleep. He did not see a dream but it came like the morning dawn. Thereafter loneliness became dear to him and he used to seclude himself to the cave of Hira and engaged therein in deep devotion (and it is divine service) for many nights before he went to his house and provided himself with food therefor. Then he would return to Khadija and take provision for the like of them (nights) until the truth came unto him while he was in the cave of Hira. The angel appeared before him and said, "Read." He said, "I cannot read." He narrated: Then he took me and pressed me hard till there came great exhaustion on me; thereafter he let me off and said, "Read." I replied, "I cannot read." Then he took me and pressed me hard for the second time until there appeared a great exhaustion on me; thereafter he let me off. He said, "Read." I said, "I cannot read." Then he took me and pressed me a third time till there appeared a great exhaustion on me; thereafter he let me off. He said, "Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught with the pen, taught man what he knew not." Then the prophet returned therewith, his heart was trembling and he went to Khadijah and said, "Wrap me up, wrap me up." Then they wrapped him until the dread went away from him.

Like anyone who had been grabbed by an angel (some traditions say he was grabbed by the throat), he became frightened and ran home to his wife, who had her own rather interesting means of delineating whether he was telling the truth or not. She put him on each of her hips and asked him if he still saw the angel, to which he said yes. Then she disrobed in front of him and asked him again, and when he said no, she then believed he was receiving authentic revelations.

Khadija then took him to a Nestorian monk in Mecca, named Waraqa ibn Nofal, who was translating the book of Matthew into Arabic at the time. He, upon questioning him, confirmed that Muhammad was indeed a prophet. Unfortunately this monk must not have translated Matthew 24:24 by this time. Had he done so, Muhammad may never have taken the route of prophethood.

These above accounts, according to Muslim Tradition, are how Muhammad obtained his authority to begin his ministry, and how he received credibility as a prophet of God, and more than that, as the penultimate prophet of God, the "seal of all the prophets" (according to Sura 33:40).

There are other alleged "proofs" which Muslims point to which substantiate his claim to prophethood:

### **[2] The Illiterate Creator of the Qur'an points to his Prophethood**

Muslims claim that Muhammad was illiterate. They reason: "How can an illiterate man compose a book like the Qur'an?" By this they imply that the authorship for the Qur'an

could not have been done by one who could not read, so consequently its composition is a miracle, since it must have come from Allah. They conclude, therefore, that the miracle of the Qur'an affords Muhammad the right to claim prophethood.

To better understand this argument, we need to refer to the passage which speaks of his illiteracy. In Sura 7:157 we read:

Those who follow the Apostle, 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.

In order to understand what the words 'unlettered prophet' really mean, we have to take a look at the Arabic text. In the Arabic it says, an-nabiyyal-ummi. Nabi is easy to translate. It means prophet. That is pretty clear. The word 'ummi,' however, is not so clear. To discern its meaning we need to refer to another verse in the Qur'an which uses it. We find it used in Sura 62:2, which says:

It is He who has sent amongst the Unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom.

Who are the 'unlettered' in this text? Yusuf Ali's commentary makes it quite clear who these unlettered are. He says in footnote no.5451, "The Unlettered; as applied to a people, it refers to the Arabs, in comparison with the People of the Book, who had a longer tradition of learning, but whose failure is referred to in verse 5 below. As applied to individuals, it means that Allah's Revelation is for the benefit of all men, whether they have worldly learning or not." The word ummiyyun used in Sura 62:2 is the plural form of ummi found in Sura 7:157. Therefore what we find is that the word ummi was used for people who did not have the scriptures, in contrast to the Jews and Christians. To put it simply, they were "unscriptured." Muhammad considered himself to be the prophet to the unscriptured, a prophet to those who had no Book, no revelation; in other words, to the Arabs. Therefore Sura 7:157 cannot be used as proof that Muhammad was illiterate.

What we can say is that more than likely Muhammad was literate. He was responsible for Khadija's caravans, had travelled widely, and must have kept records of his transactions.

The Hadith of Ibn Sa'd alludes to the fact that he wrote. Ibn Sa'd states, The prophet, may Allah bless him, fell ill on Thursday. Thereupon he, i.e., Ibn 'Abbas began to weep and say: 'Woe be to this Thursday! What a Thursday!' The illness of the prophet, may Allah bless him, became severe: he said: 'Bring an ink-pot and something [paper or papyrus or any material used for writing] to write on. I shall [write for you] a document and you will never be misguided. (Ibn Sa'd, p.302)

This entire argument, however, is rather moot if one considers that the Qur'an which is in our possession today is not the original revelation which was revealed via Muhammad to his followers. In fact, according to tradition, it is the work of Muhammad's secretary Zaid ibn Thabit, who finally compiled it 14 years after Muhammad's death, during the reign of Uthman. Where, then, is the miracle in that?

From an historical perspective the argument falls even further into disrepute, as many historians believe that very little of the Qur'an was actually written by Muhammad, but was rather the result of an evolving set of polemical writings which became canonized in the 9th-10th century, 200-300 years after the life of Muhammad. Can we claim this a miracle?

The further one uncovers the facts, the further it becomes clear that the Qur'an is not the miracle which Muslims like to point to as proof for Muhammad's credibility as a prophet.

### **[3] Propheying points to his Prophethood**

Another proof of his prophethood, according to Muslims, stems from the fact that Muhammad prophesied events in the future, which then came to pass later on. Only a prophet of God could know what was going to happen in the future, and therefore Muhammad must be a prophet. Yet, the only 'real' prophecy recorded, which Muslims attribute to Muhammad is that found in Sura 30:1-4, where it is written:

A.L.M. The Roman Empire has been defeated. In a land close by; but they (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious. Within a few years. With Allah is the decision, in the past and in the future: on that day shall the Believers rejoice.

This passage refers to the defeat of the Byzantines in Syria by the Persians under Khusran Parvis (in A.D. 615), six years before the *Hijra*.

The defeat of the Persians should take place soon- "in a small number of years." In light of this prediction, Abu-Bakr undertook a bet with Ubai-ibn-Khalaf that this prediction would be fulfilled within three years. But he was corrected by Muhammad, who stated that the "small number" is between three and nine years (Al-Baizawi).

Muslims tell us that the Byzantines overcame their enemies within seven years. However, the fact is that the Byzantines defeated Persia in AD 628 (Al-Baizawi's commentary). That was twelve years after the prediction of Muhammad. Consequently, this passage does not qualify as a prophecy, particularly as the time between the prophecy and fulfillment was far too short, and in addition the event was easily predictable. The odds were only 50/50.

The other 'prophecies' which Muslims point to refer to Muhammad's victories and those relating to the Qur'an itself. It is nearly impossible to establish whether these prophecies were said before their fulfillment. Besides, like the previous example, they were either easily predictable, or just war-propaganda. In this event George Bush might be called a prophet too, for he predicted that the Gulf-coalition would win the war with Iraq.

### **[4] Miracles point to his Prophethood**

Muslims also claim that Muhammad performed miracles, and this is further proof that he was a prophet. Interestingly, despite this claim by Muslims, the Qur'an, whose authority they refer to, denies that Muhammad performed any miracles.

Take for instance Sura 17:90-93. Here Muhammad is challenged to perform miracles to prove his credibility, and he responds by admitting that he is only a man, an apostle. There are other similar Suras which speak about the challenge for a sign by unbelievers, followed by Muhammad's angry retort that he was merely a "warner," a "guide," and a "bearer of glad tidings." (refer to Suras 2:118-119; 6:37 and 124; 13:7; and 17:59).

The Hadith, on the other hand, reports a number of miracles which Muslims are quick to point to as further proof for Muhammad's authority. In Mishkat IV page 411 we read:

The prophet was looking while riding upon his mule like one eagerly longing to kill them. He said: 'This was when the blood boiled in veins.' Thereafter he took some pebbles and threw them at the faces of the infidels and then said: 'Be routed, by the Lord Muhammad.'

And in Mishkat IV pages 419-420 we read:

Anas reported: A man wrote to the prophet that he turned an apostate from Islam and joined the infidels. The prophet said: 'Verily the earth will not accept him.' Abu Talhah informed me that he had come to the land wherein he died. He found him thrown outside. He said: 'What is the matter with him?' They said: 'They buried him several times but the earth did not accept him.'

But probably the most popular miracle which has been passed down by the hadith and fomented by Muslims even today, is the splitting of the moon by Muhammad. It is recorded in Sahih Muslim IV, pg.1467:

This hadith has been transmitted on the authority of `Abdullah b. Mas'ud (who said): We were along with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) at Mina that moon was split up into two. One of its parts was behind the mountain and the other one was on this side of the mountain. Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said to us: `Bear witness to this.'

The splitting up of the moon is not simply a fable from the Hadith, but is alluded to in the Qur'an as well. Sura 54, which is titled "The Moon," begins by saying, "The hour (of judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder..." From the context it is obvious that this was meant to be a sign, but people rejected it as such and in their desire to create some supernatural proof for their faith interpreted it word-for-word. Even today you will hear Muslims claim that the American astronauts, upon landing on the moon took pictures of a large crack, or fissure on the moon's surface, which is what remains from Muhammad's split.

These reports, for Christians, sound very much like the legendary stories of the New Testament Apocrypha. Though they are well-meaning reports, they are often very fanciful in character. However, they lack one simple ingredient: authenticity.

The Apocrypha primarily dates from the 2nd century C.E. (i.e. 70-170 years after the death of Jesus). The Hadith, on the other hand, was compiled approximately 250-300 years after the **Hijra**. Before that time all material and stories were passed down from generation to generation by oral tradition. Is it no wonder, then, that with each passing generation more was added to the story in order to enhance the image and character of the prophet?

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Can we, therefore, say that these four proofs put forward by the Muslims give validity to Muhammad's claim as a true prophet? I think not. Yet, according to Muslim Tradition these stories are all that are needed to give Muhammad the title "Rasu-ul-Allah."

I dare to differ. From our discussion above it is clear that the early supernatural witnesses are probably apocryphal additions from later Muslim Traditions, while the claim for Muhammad's illiteracy, though debatable, considering his background and vocation, misses the point entirely, since (according to the new research coming out of SOAS) the Qur'an was never written by him anyway. His claim of prophesying, furthermore, is as valid a claim as either you or I could give, considering he never went beyond a 50/50 odds. And the miracles attributed to him are so incredulous that they speak more to the times of the later tenth century polemical traditions than those of the seventh century Arabic isolation.

Obviously the Muslims will need to come up with better defenses than these for substantiating Muhammad's prophethood. Yet that is not all, for we as Christians are also interested in the question of prophethood. It is and always has been in our best interest to delineate who exactly is a true prophet, for we have been warned to be watchful for false prophets who will come our way (Matthew 24:24). Let's then look at some of the criteria which our scriptures give us for describing a true prophet.

## **[B] THE CHRISTIAN POSITION:**

Let me begin by asking you a question. How would you define a prophet? Better yet, how would you know one if you saw him, or her? Would he or she be someone who is learned, perhaps wearing a beard (if a male), perhaps dressed in a white robe, and carrying a staff, with fiery eyes and booming voice, speaking with "thees" and "thous"? That is how Hollywood has portrayed a prophet. But is this the criteria God has given for a prophet? Is this the type of man God has chosen to represent Him on earth, to carry His message to the

world?

What I would like to do now is try to answer the question of who, according to the scriptures, exactly qualifies to be called a prophet? Surely, if God had sent individuals to be His representatives on earth, He would have given us criteria by which we could recognize them, a means by which we could know who truly was His and who truly was not. Let's then go to the scriptures, His revelation to us, to find who God delineates as a true prophet.

### **[1] Who Qualifies as a true Prophet of God?**

**(Amos 3:7) Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets.**

Both Muslims and Christians would agree with this verse from Amos. God uses prophets to fulfill His purposes on earth. At times individuals are used to prophecy specific events (such as Miriam, Balaam, and Saul in the Old Testament, and Anna in the New Testament-Luke 2:36). The office of a prophet, however, is a specific task given to only certain chosen men. Many of us know the names of the more famous prophets, such as: Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Yahya (John the Baptist) and so on... Muslims would add to our list of prophets another name, that of Muhammad, whom they believe is the final and greatest of all prophets. According to the Qur'an, we read,

**(Sura Al Ahzab 33:40) Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets.**

Today we need to ask how it is that these men have come to have the office of prophet? What gives them the authority for calling themselves prophet? When we go to the scriptures we find that God delineated as qualifications for the office of prophet four categories:

- 1) A PROPHET MUST BE BORN IN THE PROPHETIC RACE,
- 2) HE MUST SPEAK IN THE NAME OF GOD,
- 3) HIS MESSAGE MUST CONFORM TO THE MESSAGE WHICH HAS GONE BEFORE, AND
- 4) THERE MUST BE VERIFIABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO THE PROPHET'S PREDICTIONS.

Let's go through each of these four categories one-at-a-time.

#### **(a) A PROPHET MUST BE BORN IN THE PROPHETIC RACE**

To begin with, a prophet must be born within the line or race of the prophets. The Bible speaks specifically what this line is. In Genesis 12:1-3, we see that this refers to the family of Abraham (see also Galatians 3:8), and then carries on through his son Isaac (Genesis 17:2,7-8,15-21; 21:10-12; 22:2). The Qur'an, in Sura Al `Ankabut 29:27, also speaks specifically of this prophetic line, saying: "and we bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob, and We establish the Prophethood and the Scripture among his seed" (also Sura Al Jathiyah 45:16).

As we continue on in Genesis 25:23,31-33; 26:1-2 we find that the alliance passes to Jacob, who is subsequently named Israel (also Genesis 28:13-15; 32:28). Further on, in Genesis 49:1-4,8-10, this alliance passes on to Judah. In fact, as we continue throughout the Old Testament we find that God's work on earth runs uniquely through the line of Isaac and Jacob. It is their lineage alone that God uses for His work on earth. Even in the Deuteronomy 18 where Moses promises a prophet like unto him, it says specifically that the prophet would come "from among your own brothers," an Israelite of the line of Jacob.

Continuing this theme further we read in 2 Samuel 7:4-16 and Psalms 89:35-38 that God's alliance with humanity passes to David, and is finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ 1,000 years later (see Matthew 22:42).

Nowhere in any of those passages do we find any other line mentioned or acknowledged as being chosen for the office of prophethood.

**(b) A PROPHET MUST SPEAK IN THE NAME OF GOD**  
**(=YAHWEH or JEHOVAH)**

Secondly, a prophet of God must speak in the name of God, the unique name which He gave His creation to use. What exactly is that name? Traditionally it was known as the "Tetragrammaton" (YHWH). Today we spell it Yahweh or Jehovah depending on which vowels are used. This is the Hebrew name for God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (in Exodus 3), consisting of the four consonants YHWH. We don't know what vowels were used as it was never spoken audibly, due to the fact that it was regarded by the Jews as too sacred a name to be pronounced.

In Exodus 3:1-6, 13-15, where God talks to Moses at the burning bush, we find God referring to Himself as "I am" which in Hebrew means "YAHWEH," or in English 'The One Who Is'. This is very significant. What God is saying here is that this name signifies His complete self-existence, that He has no dependence upon any other. Being self-existent, He cannot but be self-sufficient, and therefore, all-sufficient. No-one can claim to be self-existent but God, and thus no-one can claim this name. It is uniquely His.

God continues by saying that "this is my name for ever," signifying that it is His eternal name, the name which only God can take for Himself, and the name by which the Jews in Egypt would recognize Him (see also Ps.72:17-19 and Rev. 1:8,17).

One can now see why the Jews in Palestine were so angry when Jesus made the same claim, calling Himself the "I am" in John 8:24,58. They naturally picked up stones to kill Him, as He had dared to take this name of God for Himself, and this was blasphemous, a sin which deserved the punishment of death by stoning.

Muslims are not familiar with the historical context of this name, nor the significance of its meaning, therefore they laugh when they hear Jesus referring to Himself as "I am" in John 8. It would be helpful to take them back to the Exodus 3 passage of the burning bush, since it is a story which exists in the Qur'an as well.

If we were to take a survey of the names for God found in the Bible and the Qur'an, we would find a rather interesting contrast. The General name for God in Hebrew is Elohim, which is mentioned 2,550 times. In Arabic it is Allah. The Descriptive name for God in Hebrew is Adonai, meaning Lord, and is mentioned only 340 times. In Arabic the equivalent is Rabb. But the Specific and Personal name for God in Hebrew, the name which God Himself asked Moses to use when referring to Him, is Yahweh, which means "the One who Is." This name is repeated 6,823 times in the Old Testament alone! Look it up for yourself.

(note: in our English translation, Yahweh can be identified easily. Every time the word "LORD" is capitalized, that signifies Yahweh). Thus all of the ancient Biblical prophets speak of God using this name. However, this name for God is not used even once in the Qur'an, and has no equivalent in the Arabic language, the language Muslims claim God speaks.

**(c) A PROPHET'S MESSAGE MUST CONFORM TO PREVIOUS REVELATION**

A third qualification of a prophet concerns his message. A prophet's message, in order to be credible must conform to the revelation which God had revealed before. God's word must remain consistent, in other words unchanging, otherwise it becomes useless, a tool in the hands of corrupt rulers and would-be prophets, bending and swaying with the whim of succeeding generations.

The unchangeability of God's word is often repeated in the scriptures. In Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 5:17-18; 24:35; and Revelation 22:18-20 we find warnings not to change or delete God's Word. God's Word must remain constant. In Psalms 89:35 we read that God cannot contradict His word.

The Qur'an, as well, agrees with this directive in Suras Al An'am 6:34 and Yunus 10:64. In Sura Qaf 50:28-29 Allah is quoted as saying: "I had already in advance sent you warning; the Word changes not." In fact, the Qur'an claims that it was sent to guard the former revelations (Al Ma'idah 5:47-51). Thus, that which the prophets revealed cannot be contradictory. If it is, it must not be trusted.

There are, however, many Qur'anic stories which contradict the Biblical account (the revelation which came before). We don't have time to go into all of them here, but perhaps it would be helpful to just relate a few of the more relevant ones:

**1) Many contradictions are found concerning Abraham:**

- a) Abraham's father is wrongly called Azar, instead of Terah (Al An'am 6:74 vs. Genesis 11:26).
- b) He did not raise his descendants in the valley of Mecca, but in Hebron (Genesis 13:14-18).
- c) His hometown was not called Mecca but Ur in Chaldea. Even the secular-Ebla tablets found in Syria recently give proof for this (see Genesis 11:31).
- d) He wandered through Haran, not Arabia, and he went to Canaan, not to Mecca's valley. The Ebla tablets prove this as well (Genesis 11:31 & 12:5)
- e) He was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, and not Ishmael, as the Lord was to make His covenant with the Son brought about by His making, and not the son of the Egyptian slave, Hagar (see Genesis 17:18-21 & 22:2).
- f) There is no record that he and Ishmael went to Arabia and built the Ka'ba in Mecca, though he did spend some time in Egypt (Genesis 12:10).

**2) Muslims assume that the Arabs are Ishmael's descendants.**

- a) Yet, according to the best historical records, the first father of the Arabs was Qahtan or Joktan. Some of his sons names are still found in geographical locations in Arabia today, names such as Sheba, Hazarmaveth, Ophir, and Havilah.
- b) Furthermore, Abraham's nephew Lot is another ancestor of the Arabs; as is Jacob's twin brother Esau, the father of the Edomites and the Moabites.
- c) Finally, Keturah, Abraham's third wife, had six sons who all became forefathers of Arabs (i.e. Sheba and Dedan, located in Yemen)(Genesis 25).

**3) Other errors are found in the Qur'an which contradict the Biblical account:**

- a) In the Qur'an Mary is recorded as the sister of Aaron and the daughter of Imran, as well as the mother of Jesus (Sura Maryam 19:28). Yet, the Mary of the Qur'an depicted as the mother of Jesus is 1,570 years removed from the Mary, the sister of Aaron (also referred to Miriam in the Bible).
- b) Haman, which is not an Egyptian name but Babylonian, is mentioned as the Wazir of the Pharaoh in Suras 28:5; 29:38; 40:25,38, yet the book of Esther correctly lists him as an official of king Xerxes, in Babylon.
- c) The Qur'an presents a confused and often contradictory view of the Holy Spirit. It is called God's own breath (15:29), the angel Gabriel (19:17), and the divine inspiration (16:2).

These are only some of the examples we could give, but they do point out that there are very real problems concerning the conformity of God's revelation relating to these two scriptures.

**(d) A PROPHET'S PREDICTIONS MUST BE VERIFIABLE**

The final qualification of a prophet deals with the veracity of the prophet's message, whether what he says can be verified. A prophet shows his authenticity by predicting events which can be verified by witnesses. Those predictions which cover the longest duration are the most relevant and valuable for us, and therefore we tend to focus on them. Yet, according to the principle which is announced in Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Isaiah 43:9; and John 13:18-

21, it is important that there are other predictions which are short-term, which can be verified by contemporary's of the prophet. These predictions serve to identify him immediately as a prophet, and so give credibility to the longer, future predictions.

When we take the example of Moses, we find that his prediction of the death and defeat of the Egyptian army was immediately fulfilled (Exodus 14:13-14,27-28). The same can be said of the prophet Isaiah, who prophesied that God would hold back the sun for ten steps (or hours) to permit Hezekiah to defeat his Assyrian enemy. It was fulfilled the same day (Isaiah 38:5-8). Another prophecy by Isaiah, concerning the rout of 185,000 of Sennacherib's soldiers came to pass the next morning (in Isaiah 37:21-38).

Imagine if you had been with Moses or Isaiah at the time these prophecies were fulfilled. How would you have felt? I'm sure your estimation for these two men would have increased dramatically. That was one of the reasons for these prophecies. It gave immediate credibility to him who was making the prophecy.

Someone could say that it is simple to predict a victory or defeat of an enemy; as one has a 50% chance of being correct. Therefore other predictions were required to substantiate the claim of the prophet, especially for later generations who did not have the ability to know the prophet first-hand. In Deuteronomy 28:1,15,64-66, and 30:1,4-5, Moses offers a prophecy concerning God's blessings and curses for the Children of Israel, depending on whether they obeyed or not. These curses were fulfilled far into the future, centuries later and consequently did not benefit those who initially heard the prophecy.

A prophecy by Isaiah to Hezekiah, concerning the captivity and enslavement of his descendants by the rulers of Babylon was fulfilled 150 years later, in 606 B.C. (Isaiah 39:6-7).

Even the prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon was fulfilled 200 years later. In fact some believe its fulfillment continues on until today (read Isaiah 13:1,19-20).

Babylon was destroyed in 539 B.C., 200 years after the prophecy was made by Isaiah. Interestingly, however, up until now, 2,500 years later, no-one has ever tried to live there. The Arabs even refuse to stay overnight, yet they know nothing of this prediction since it does not exist in the Qur'an.

Finally we come to another prophecy which some believe is being fulfilled in our lifetime (see Isaiah 11:11-12). This prediction was given by Isaiah in 750 B.C., over 140 years before the first dispersion which occurred in 606 B.C. We know from historical records, and the scriptures that the first return was in 536 B.C. History also tells us that the second dispersion was in 70 C.E., while, according to some, the second return began towards the beginning of this century, in 1900, and continues till today.

These prophecies are especially helpful for us today, thousands of years later, as we, in hindsight can see the authenticity of Moses's and Isaiah's calling. Due to the fact that what they said so long ago has been fulfilled and are even now being fulfilled, what they say on other matters then takes on added credibility, because we know that they are truly men of God, who are being used by Him.

Since God's fingerprint can be evidenced in those fulfilled prophecies, His fingerprint can then be ascribed to the other claims which these men of God assert.

An interesting point needs to be interjected here; why were there so many verifications given by God for Isaiah? The reason must be that he has a unique place among all the prophets, because it is he who predicts, more than any other prophet:

1) the coming of Jesus (prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6, and fulfilled in Matthew 1:22).

2) It is Isaiah who predicts Jesus's death (prophesied in Isaiah 35:4-5 & 53:1-12, and fulfilled in Luke 7:18-22, 24-27).

3) And finally, it is Isaiah who predicts Jesus's resurrection (prophesied in Isaiah

53:11, and fulfilled in Luke 18:33; 24:6-7).

There was no doubt that these were truly prophets of God, as they spoke of things which only God could have known, both immediately so that the people of their time could identify them as prophets, and in the long term so that we today can acknowledge the hand of God in their lives and ministry.

## **[2] Which of these Biblical Qualifications does Muhammad Demonstrate?**

The question then must be asked: which of these four Biblical qualifications does Muhammad demonstrate? Was he born in the prophetic race, did he speak in the name of God, did his message conform to the message which had gone before, and was there any verifiable accomplishments to the prophet's predictions?

### **(a) Was he born in the line of the Prophets?**

To begin with, we must ask the question whether he was born in the line of the prophets? Sura 29:27 mentions that prophethood and the scriptures came uniquely through the seed of Isaac and Jacob (Sura 45:16 concurs with Sura 29).

There are no Muslims, that I am aware of, who believe Muhammad was a descendant of Isaac. While there is an ongoing discussion concerning the veracity of the claim for Muhammad's descendance through Ishmael, this view is, nonetheless, widely held by Muslims today. Yet, this is a moot point, since according to both the Bible and the Qur'an, all the prophets came in the line of Isaac, fulfilling the promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:20-21, that only through Isaac, and not Ishmael would the alliance with the Lord be fulfilled.

### **(b) Did he speak in the name of "the eternal," YAHWEH?**

Secondly, did Muhammad speak in the name of God, using that name which God gave as a signature for His authority, the name Yahweh? Though the term YHWH was used 6,823 times in the Bible, it is not used once in the Qur'an, and perhaps was not even known by Muhammad, since if he was supposedly illiterate in his own language, Arabic, it is hardly likely that he would have been able to read Hebrew.

Yet, is it not curious that Muhammad, the "seal of the prophets," he who was commissioned to bring the 'final revelation' did not even know the name of the God by whom he was commissioned? Is it not also curious that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Moses and David would go to the trouble of revealing His unique name in the Hebrew language, which was then passed down from generation to generation, up to the present day, yet somehow this name was forgotten or never revealed in the language which Muhammad claimed was God's special language, Arabic?

Moses could speak to the Israelites in Egypt with credibility because he spoke in the name of God. Why then did Muhammad presume that the descendants of those Israelites living in Medina would accept him as their prophet if he didn't even know the true name of God?

Would you accept my authority as a teacher of Christian apologetic, if I never once mentioned the name of God, nor even knew that the name existed? Of course not!

A prophet, by definition is one who comes with a message which is not his own (the Arabic word for prophet, *Rasul* means "the sent one"). Consequently, in order to give meaning to the message, there needs to be a sender, a person who created the message, whose signature goes along with the message to identify it as coming from Him. If I did not know who it was who sent me, my message would certainly lose its credibility. If I spoke as a Christian yet did not know the name of Jesus Christ, I would be a pretty miserable creature, and not worthy of my vocation.

In much the same way Muhammad's message completely loses its credibility since he

was never even aware of the name of the sender, *Yahweh*, the One Who Is.

Consequently, if Muhammad did not even know the name of God, nor was God's true name even used in the language of Muhammad, then how could he claim to be truly from God?

**(c) Did Muhammad's revelation conform to the message which had preceded him?**

Thirdly, did Muhammad's revelation conform to the message which had preceded him via the former prophets? We have seen that there are many contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible, the most damaging of which concern who Jesus is, and the reason for His mission on earth.

Both the Bible and the Qur'an agree that God's word cannot change, and certainly must not contradict that which has gone before. Why then do we find all these contradictions?

If Muhammad is responsible for receiving these contradictory revelations from God, does it not put suspicion on his veracity as a true prophet? Certainly it does. If God had got the story right through the thousands of generations from Abraham to Jesus, with each successive prophet agreeing with and verifying that which had preceded him, then why all of a sudden did God get it so wrong less than 700 years later with the prophet Muhammad?

Neither Muslims nor Christians would blame God for the contradictions. The blame must be placed on the messenger. Either all the previous prophets got it wrong, or the one who came at the end did. It beggars belief to think that for thousands of years the Jewish prophets were consistently revealing corrupted stories which all agreed in content, with not even once trying to correct the seeming errors; yet, finally, the last prophet got it right, and brought the message back to what God had intended all along. It reminds me of the mother, who watching her son in a parade whispers over to her friend, "Oh look, everyone's out of step but my Johnny boy!"

If a prophet's message goes against previous predictions, he then can no longer qualify as a true prophet.

**(d) Were any of Muhammad's predictions verifiable within his lifetime?**

And finally, were any of Muhammad's predictions verifiable within his own lifetime? Although Muhammad, on occasion, predicted the victory of Islam in the battles which were fought in Arabia, there are no other precise predictions which we know of which demonstrate that his authority came from God (the victory of a battle has a 50-50 chance of being correct, or not). In fact, this was a cause for concern even for Muhammad, who, numerous times in the Qur'an mentions the distrust by others of his inability to produce a miraculous sign which would substantiate his authority (see Suras 10:21, 13:7 & 13:27).

There is little evidence from our scriptures which show that Muhammad had authority to claim prophethood. He was not born into the line of Jacob, nor did he speak in the name of Yahweh, nor did his revelations conform to the message which preceded him, and his predictions were not verifiable.

What, then, must be our conclusion? In Matthew 24:24-25 we read "...false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect...See I have told you ahead of time." In Deuteronomy 18:19-22 we find an even stronger warning:

If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come

true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

### **[II] QUESTIONS CONCERNING MUHAMMAD'S PROPHETHOOD**

In this paper we have been asking the question of whether Muhammad could qualify as a true prophet of God. We posed the Muslim positions that he could: because of the supernatural witness to his prophethood during his early childhood, because of the fact that he delivered the Qur'an though he was illiterate, and because both his prophecies and miracles pointed to his prophethood.

After presenting rebuttals to all four of these positions we followed up with four criteria of our own, taken from scripture, to ascertain what God considers the qualities of the office of a prophet are. These were that he must be born in the prophetic race, that he must speak in the name of Yahweh, that his message must conform to previous revelations, and that his predictions must be verifiable. We concluded that Muhammad could not qualify in any four of these categories.

Now we take that same argument further, and ask some disturbing questions as to whether Muhammad could qualify to be a true prophet of God, not just for the Arabs, but for the world as a whole. We begin, then, with that very point. Was Muhammad called to be a prophet for the whole world, or was his calling only limited to that of Arabia?

#### **[A] WAS MUHAMMAD A SPECIFIC OR UNIVERSAL PROPHET?**

When we read the Qur'an we find that Muhammad understood himself at first to be a warner to Arabia in the succession of the Biblical prophets. It is evident from these passages in the Qur'an that he considered his duty was that of bringing the same message which can be found in the Bible, but now within the Arabic language. The Taurat was a book for the Jews, the Injil a book for the Christians, and now the Qur'an was a book for the Arabs. This was his initial understanding.

Let us look at some of the earlier suras which seem to point out that Muhammad's specific task was simply to warn, and at the same time reveal Allah's word in not just any language, but specifically the Arabic language:

**Sura 2:119**= "Verily, We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner: but of thee no question shall be asked of Companions of the Blazing Fire."

**Sura 14:4**= "We sent an apostle except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them."

**Sura 17:93**= "Say: `Glory to my Lord! am I aught but a man, an Apostle?"

**Sura 26:195,196**= "In the perspicuous Arabic tongue. Without doubt it is (announced) in the mystic Books of former peoples."

**Sura 27:91**= "For me, I have been commanded to serve the Lord of this City, Him Who has sanctified it and to Whom (belong) all things: and I am commanded to be of those who bow in Islam to Allah's Will,"

**Sura 42:7**= "Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur'an: that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her,"

**Sura 43:3**= "We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom)."

**Sura 46:12**= "And before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy; and this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right."

As we continue on through the Qur'an we find that this position changes. He becomes not just a prophet for the Arabs, with simply an Arabic Qur'an, but enlarges on this idea to now become the universal and the final prophet for all people.

**Sura 33:40**= "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets, and Allah has full knowledge of all things."

**Sura 34:28**= "We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not."

While in Mecca, at least, where the former Suras quoted above were written, Muhammad considered himself as a warner to the Arab peoples. This position contradicts the claim by Muslims today that Muhammad was always a universal messenger for all peoples in all times.

The term "Arabic Qur'an" (in Suras 42:7; 43:3 and 46:12-above) seems to presupposes that there was at least one other Qur'an. This more than likely is referring to the Hebrew and possibly the Greek "Qur'an" (which are the Old and New Testament). Muslims would not say that they are invalidated by the Arabic Qur'an, but are rather confirmed by it.

There is a problem, however. An Arabic Qur'an was not announced in "the mystic books of the former peoples" (Sura 26:196). To say the least, there is no such book available today which speaks of this "Arabic Qur'an," in contrast to the former "Qur'ans." Neither was it known at the time of Muhammad, as we have many manuscripts in our possession with which to verify if such an announcement had been made.

So, initially Muhammad was only a messenger for the Arab people. He saw the polytheism which were pervasive in Arabia, and sought to eradicate it with the 'messages' he was receiving via the angel Gabriel.

Why then, did he go universal? There are those who believe this probably came about due to his successes on the battle-field. As his prominence grew, so did his authority over people who were not necessarily Arab. In other words, his supernatural monotheistic message, had to keep pace with the natural polytheistic reality on the ground. Suras 33:40 and 34:28 provided him with the authority to do so.

A more likely scenario is that the later redactors of the Qur'an imposed this universal application on Muhammad, once the borders of Islam had reached beyond the *Hijaz* (Arabia). Without eradicating the Suras which speak of his specific Arabic mission, they simply imposed this new category while applying the law of abrogation to the former Suras.

## **[B] WAS MUHAMMAD A PROPHET OF THE JEWS?**

The second question we ask is whether Muhammad was a prophet to the Jews? In Medina were a number of Jewish groups called the Kahinan. They were the wealthiest inhabitants of Medina, and lived in fortified forts surrounding the city. There were three principle tribes living in Medina (according to Muslim Tradition): the Kaynuka, the al-Nadir, and the Kurayza. They all had good relations with the Jews of the north (especially in Khaybar).

During his first year in Medina Muhammad devoted considerable attention to the Jewish inhabitants there, describing himself as their prophet, who could be placed in the long line of prophets.

To appease them, he adopted many of their religious observances. Some of these were: 1) keeping the 10th of Muharram as a fast day, much like the Yom Kippur fast, 2) performing the 3-daily prayer rituals (versus the two Salats kept by Muhammad before the

Hijra, while still in Mecca), 3) the weekly community worship services in the early afternoons on Fridays (following the Jewish Sabbath day of preparation). Note: this also made common-sense since Friday was the market day, the day when the largest number of people would have been in Medina. And finally, 4) Muhammad also adopted the north-facing Qibla, the practice of facing Jerusalem when praying.

It soon became clear, however, that the Jews in Medina were not going to accept Muhammad's claim to prophethood. These were for a number of reasons, which we can find in Sura 17:90-93. The Jews would not accept an Arabic speaking prophet. They had never accepted Jesus as a prophet, and he was an Aramaic speaking Jew! So why should they change now? Their principle request, as we can derive from Sura 17, was that Muhammad present them with a few "superfluous" miracles.

In Sura 3:183 and 184 the Jews ask for a sign similar to that of Elijah for proof of his prophethood. Muhammad retorts that this has always been the way with previous prophets. In Suras 2:118-119; 6:37,124; 13:7; 17:59 the Jews also ask for a sign, to which Muhammad responds that even if a sign were given, like those of the earlier prophets, they would not believe it.

Since Muhammad did not proffer them with a sign, the Jews refused to accept him as their prophet. The opposition of the Jews of Medina to Muhammad appears to have had a significant impact on the shaping of Islam, for it was precisely at that time and apparently in direct response to the Jews' rejection of him that the nascent Muslim community took on a pronounced national character through the adoption of various elements from ancient Arabian worship. This occurred in the 2nd year of the Hijra, and was signaled by the change of direction for the Qibla. Instead of facing Jerusalem, the prayers were now to be carried out facing Mecca. Here we find a break with Muhammad's Jewish roots, and a symbolic statement that Islam was now venturing on an Arabic course.

This nationalization of Islam gave Muhammad a certain legitimation and broadened his authority in the eyes of the Arab world. Instead of worshipping or adopting a foreign god, which had been the case for most of their pre-Islamic history, Muhammad could now offer a universally accepted god, who was uniquely adapted to the indigenous community. This not only elevated the status of the Arab people, whose allegiance Muhammad needed to continue his military campaigns, but it elevated the status of Muhammad as the mouthpiece of the true God. It also enhanced Muhammad's vision to introduce his heightened concept of god for the whole civilized world.

Muhammad stepped forward as the restorer of the religion of Abraham that had been distorted by the Jews and Christians. Abraham now became the great Hanif and not a Jew or a Christian. He now took the honour as the 'first Muslim,' "a person fully surrendered to the one true God," according to Suras 2:135; 3:67,95; 6:161; and 16:123.

Abraham and his son Ishmael, who the rest of the world regarded as having come from Ur of the Chaldeas, were now perceived to be the Arab's direct ancestors, and were now considered to have founded the Meccan sanctuary and the rites celebrated there.

Muhammad's task, therefore, was to restore the ancient rites to their original monotheistic state, as they had been corrupted by the intervening polytheists.

note: it is highly unlikely that Muhammad was acquainted with the idea of the connection between Abraham and the Ka'ba before the Hijra since this relationship occurs nowhere in the numerous Meccan passages that treat the significance of the Ka'ba. This apparent evolution in Muhammad's theology seems to have been created by his relationship with the Jews.

What then, of the Jews who remained under Muhammad's jurisdiction? They, needless to say, did not accept many of these new revelations concerning their own God. What was to be done with them? Let's see what Muslim Tradition tells us.

In 624 C.E., Muhammad routed a group of 900 Meccans with only a force of 300 at the battle of Badr. This battle became of the utmost significance for the history of Islam. Muhammad saw in the victory a powerful confirmation of his belief in the one true God (Suras 3:123; 8:17,65), and in his own call.

Word got around to the outlying areas of this defeat of the Meccans. Upon his return to Medina, Muhammad began to besiege the outlying Jewish tribe of the Kaynuka (Sura 59:14). Some say that he did so because they had not supported him when he decided to face the Meccans. The Jews were forced to abandon their fort and move north to other Jewish settlements leaving their possessions behind.

In 625 C.E., the Meccans sent a force of 3,000 and defeated Muhammad at the battle of Uhud, wounding Muhammad. But with his eloquence, he endeavored to raise the morale of his followers by exhortations and censure alike (Sura 3:118ff). His authority was inevitably hurt, and he took out much of his anger on the Jewish tribe of Banu `l-Nadir. They could not withstand his wrath, and he banished them to Khaybar to the north, leaving behind their weapons, gold, and silver which was reserved for Muhammad alone (Sura 59:7ff).

In 627 C.E. Muhammad managed to keep an army of 10,000 Meccans at bay by building a trench around Medina (referred to as the "Battle of the Trench"). Once the frustrated Meccans finally left, Muhammad declared war on the last Jewish tribe in Medina, the Kurayza. Unlike the other Jewish families before them, they were given no clemency. According to Ibn Hisham, all the men, numbering between 600-900 were beheaded and their property was divided among the Muslims, while the women and children were taken as captives (for further reading, refer to Christians Ask Muslims by Gerhard Nehls).

The expulsion or elimination of these three Jewish tribes brought Muhammad closer to his goal of organizing an umma strictly on a religious basis. Many Muslims today contend that the Kurayza brought upon themselves their own destruction, as they were treacherous towards Muhammad and refused to accept his authority. According to the Qur'an, however, their only sin was that they "defied God and his messenger" (Sura 59:4). They were eliminated, it seems, simply because they remained neutral.

note: if we take the annihilation of the Kurayza tribe as a precedent, considering it was given authority by Muhammad himself, is it no wonder that so many non-Muslims in the world today shudder with apprehension at the thought of a Muslim domination of their state? Muslims will speak often of the rights of the non-believers within a Muslim Khilafa, yet, when observing the above examples, one wonders where those rights begin and the `rights for self-expression' end? Is this why propagation of one's belief is illegal in many Muslim lands today? Will blasphemy also be prohibited, and punishable by death?

The question which we asked was whether Muhammad was a prophet of the Jews? We see that initially he attempted to be their prophet, incorporating many of their religious practices into those of his own. We would expect a prophet to do this.

They demanded that he prove his prophethood with signs. The Qur'an contends that these were of a miraculous nature. We have no way of knowing if this was all that they asked. It is likely that the Jews would have wanted to know whether his prophecies corroborated with those of their own.

It is obvious from the historical account, as well as the Qur'anic account that Muhammad was not able to provide either of the two, and consequently he was rejected by the Jews.

Instead of changing his beliefs, Muhammad decided to fight against the Jews. This we see vividly through his expulsions and executions of the three major tribes of Medina, using them as a scapegoat for the defeat of Uhud. What is more significant, however, is that all their riches were taken by himself and his followers. These were the wealthiest inhabitants of Medina, therefore, by taking their possessions they not only enriched

Muhammad, but enhanced his image amongst the other Arabs.

Because of his actions, it is quite likely that Muhammad would not be acknowledged as a prophet of the Jews, both then in Medina, and currently today in the 20th century. It also now helps us to understand the great gulf which exists between Jews and Muslims currently.

### **[C] WAS MUHAMMAD A PROPHET TO THE CHRISTIANS?**

We now come to the Christians. Was Muhammad a prophet to the Christians? Initially, according to Muslim Tradition, the Christians carried favour with Muhammad. We can see this attitude in Sura 5:82-86.

In this passage Muhammad mentions that the Jews and pagans were the furthest from the believers, while the Christians were "the nearest among them in love..." This, according to Sura 5, was because they were men of learning who had renounced the world and were not arrogant (possibly referring to the Monks whom Muhammad had contact with earlier in his life). He goes on to say that when the Christians heard his message they accepted it with tears, and immediately counted themselves amongst the believers.

Obviously, we would have a problem with this definition of a Christian. What Muhammad is speaking of here are not Christians, as we know them, but individuals who have either conceded to him out of fear for their lives, or have converted out of Christianity and become Muslims. It would be difficult to believe that Christians could make such statements about their beliefs towards Muhammad and still call themselves Christian. These individuals have truly rejected their earlier faith.

The supposed affinity with Christians was, nonetheless, short-lived. The Qur'an gives the impression that there was a gradual deterioration in the Muslims relationship towards the Christians, in Sura 57:27. Those who followed Jesus the son of Mary had been called on "to seek for the Good pleasure of Allah," but, according to this Sura, they soon became rebellious transgressors.

If we were to read other Suras which pertained to Jews and Christians, it soon becomes evident that both the Jews and Christians were considered little more than enemies of the unbelievers. They were only acceptable to Muhammad once they had acknowledged him as a prophet (Sura 5:86). In fact there are specific Suras which warn the believers not to acquaint themselves with the Christians and Jews, warning that the Christians are only interested in converting the believers to their own beliefs. Consider these:

**Sura 2:120**= "Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: `The Guidance of Allah, that is the (only) Guidance.' Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor Helper against Allah."

**Sura 3:28**= "Let not the Believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah; except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah."

**Sura 5:54**= "O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors; they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust."

With quotes like the above, is it possible for us to contend that Muhammad was the prophet of the Christians? It is highly doubtful. It seems that Muhammad, and those who follow him can only accept Jews and Christians if they first renounce their beliefs and follow Muhammad as the final prophet. This is not an accommodation at all but rather a threat, and

finally a denunciation of all that the Jews and Christians cherish dearly.

### **[D] WAS MUHAMMAD THE SEAL OF THE PROPHETS?:**

We now come to the question of whether Muhammad had the right to claim to be the greatest of all the prophets, the final revelation of God, by whom all other prophets were to be measured.

For most Christians the very question is sparked with controversy, as it assumes that Muhammad can be deemed a legitimate prophet. There are few Christians who would make this claim. For argument's sake, however, let's assume that Muhammad did have the right to claim prophethood. Could he be the seal of the prophets; that is the greatest of all the prophets? Does he have the character to make such a claim?

The Qur'an is very clear that he does. In **Sura 33:40** we read, "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets, and Allah has full knowledge of all things."

#### **[1] What about Jesus?**

How, as Christians are we to answer that claim? What the Qur'an is saying, in essence, is that Muhammad has a standing with God which is superior to that of even Jesus. We know that the Qur'an does not attribute divinity to Jesus, but considers him merely as a prophet. Yet, in the pages of both the Qur'an and the Bible Jesus enjoys a uniqueness that elevates Him above all other prophets. The Qur'an is replete with attributes of Jesus which are absent in all other prophets:

1) He was born of a virgin (Suras 19:16-34; 21:91)

2) He was uniquely holy, pure or faultless, according to Sura 19:19.

(note: in Yusuf Ali's translation Jesus is referred to as "holy;" in Arberry's translation He is referred to as "pure," and in Pickthall's He is referred to as "faultless").

#### **[2] What about the other Prophets?**

Contrast this claim with the examples of the other prophets. We know that in the Bible all of the prophets were weak and sinful. Not one could stand up to the same standard which Jesus fulfilled. The Qur'an also recounts many sins of the prophets. Note the following:

**Adam:** in Sura 20:119 disobeyed his Lord and so sinned. In Sura 2:33 we find that Adam violated the prohibition to refrain from eating of the tree. The blame according to the following verse (34) is placed on Satan, but nonetheless Adam is charged with the sin. Then finally, in Sura 7:23 Adam and Eve ask for forgiveness for their wrongdoing.

**Noah:** in Sura 71:24-28 we find Noah cursing the infidels, asking God to annihilate them all, and then asks for forgiveness for his request. Noah in Sura 11:47-49 requests that God forgive his illegitimate son Canaan, and is rebuked by God for requesting it, implying a reprimand and threat to Noah. Noah's subsequent request for pardon is proof of his guilt.

**Abraham:** is ascribed a number of sins in the Qur'an, such as idolatry (Sura 6:77), doubting (2:263), deceit (Sura 37:39), and divination (Sura 37:86). These Suras show that Abraham worshiped the planets, questioned the might of God, lied several times, and consulted the stars.

**Lot:** is charged with failing to rely upon the Lord in Sura 22:82, when the people of Sodom refused the gift of his two daughters instead of the angels.

**Aaron:** is charged with going-along with the Israelites in building the golden calf, and therefore having done evil in Moses's absence (Suras 7:146-151 and 20:86-96).

**Moses:** was charged with ordering two golden cherubim to be fashioned in Sura

2:248. He is charged with murder, and the need for forgiveness in Sura 28:14-15. He allows sorcerers to practice their magic in Sura 26:42, and He asks forgiveness from God for his anger in Sura 7:147-150.

**David:** asks forgiveness from the Lord for his sin (which alludes to his taking of Uriah's wife, Bathsheba) in Sura 38:20-24.

**Solomon:** asks for forgiveness for letting horses cloud out his devotion to his Lord in Sura 38:30-34.

We can therefore say that even the Qur'an shows categorically that the prophets have all sinned, proving that, unlike Jesus, they were fallible. It is true that we have to look hard to find these sins (i.e, the Qur'an only alludes to David's sin, rather than emphatically pronouncing what the sin was in Sura 38), but the Qur'anic accounts do admit that God's holy emissaries were less than perfect. Jesus alone stands apart as "faultless."

(Note: it is important to remember that their sins are all in the realm of personal weaknesses, while their infallibility comes about when conveying divine revelations. In such instances they make no mistakes. It is this factor which seems to confuse so many Muslims, possibly because of their view of Nazil revelation attributed to the Qur'an.)

Jesus is the only one who is both infallible during his life, and when conveying divine revelations. There is no recorded evidence in the Bible or the Qur'an of Jesus sinning, both privately or publicly.

### **[3] What about Muhammad?**

But what about Muhammad? If he is the Seal of the prophets, he should have a better record than those which are mentioned above. As the greatest of all prophets his life should be exemplary. But is it? Let's find out:

#### **(a) Muhammad's Concessions to People:**

God sent His prophets to nations which committed many sins. Although these prophets were also sinners, they never compromised with those to whom they were sent. Prophets like Elijah and Micah, though they were faced with formidable odds (i.e. 400 false prophets, their king and people) they never shifted from their position, nor did any seek to present a message to satisfy the expectations of their audience.

Muhammad was altogether different. Ibn Abbas broke with the restriction of having sex with his wife when he first awoke, which was a law instigated by Muhammad, and therefore, asked forgiveness from Muhammad, who, receiving Sura 2:183 suddenly allows men to now do that which before was prohibited.

Muhammad legalized Muta marriages (marriages of pleasure) for his followers during the battle of Khaybar and Fath (Al-Bukhari's "al-Jami' al-Sahih, pg.423). He then prohibits it during the battle of Wadaa, because he believed it now resembled fornication (Imam Muslim's "al-Jami' al-Sahih" pg.130-131).

The Satanic Verses found in Sura 53:19-20 which speak about the goddesses Allat, Manat and Al Uzza were recognized by Muhammad during a dispiriting time in Mecca. When he mentioned them, the Meccans rejoiced and joined him in prayer. Then, supposedly Gabriel told him later to change this revelation.

#### **(b) Muhammad's Sexuality:**

The sexuality of Muhammad is a rather contentious area for most Muslims who believe that the sexual rules practiced by Muhammad and his followers were simply a fact of those days in which he lived, and we must see him within that context.

The argument by Muslims is that during the "Holy Wars" when many men were killed, polygamy, for instance, was a justifiable provision for the widows. Yet, according to notes in "Sahih Muslim" III, pg.941, in all the 82 hostilities during the lifetime of Muhammad, only 259 Muslims lost their lives. Muhammad moved to Mecca with 10,000

men. How many of them would have had a chance of marrying even one widow? 2%! (current figures show an over-abundance of males due to amnio-centesis tests, because of the girls who are aborted as a result of the findings: 20 million extra boys in China)

So what must we say about Polygamy?:

We are reminded of the words of Jesus who said, "He who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18).

Because polygamy excludes devoted love, for love between the sexes is exclusive, it is degraded in essence to mere sexual fulfillment. No woman who loves her husband and wishes to be fully loved in return, can tolerate a partner (why else was Hafsa so upset with Muhammad when he took the Copt Mary to her bed?).

Take for instance a report from Aisha, Muhammad's favorite wife (recorded in Mishkat 1, pg.210, and noted in the Hadiths collected by al-Bukhari and Muslim). This report quotes her as saying: "I used to backbite those (females) who offered themselves for the Messenger of Allah. So I asked: Does a woman offer herself? Then the Almighty Allah revealed: you (Muhammad) may put off whom you please of them, you may take to you whom you wish, and if you desire any whom you have separated, no blame attaches to you (from Sura 33:51). It seems to me that your Lord hastens to satisfy your desire."

There is a further aspect: monogamy gives recognition, status and integrity to a woman. It is simplistic to argue that a polygamous society makes prostitution unnecessary. What about sexual fulfillment for the woman who has to share her husband with other wives? And what about the men who surely have to go without wives, because someone else (usually an older and thus richer man) has more than one?

When we look at the life of Muhammad we find an even larger emphasis on sex, and the fulfillment of carnal desires. Consider the following examples:

(1) **13 Wives:** A Muslim man is permitted to marry up to four wives (excluding concubines) according to Sura 4:3. Muhammad had lived 25 years married to his first wife Khadija. After her death, which roughly coincided with the Hijra to Medina, he married about thirteen wives (the exact number is still debated). All except Aisha were widows or divorcees.

It is recorded in Sura 33:50, "O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers, and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee; and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated (from Mecca) with thee; and any believing woman, who dedicates her soul to the Prophet, and if the Prophet wishes to wed her-this only for thee, and not for the believers (at large)..."

This Sura gives Muhammad an unlimited number of women who lived in and around him, yet set strict restrictions on the other believers.

(2) **Zainab:** was the wife of his adopted son Zaid. When Zaid realized that Muhammad wanted her he divorced her so that Muhammad could have her. Sura 33:36-38 speaks of this affair (read).

(3) **Preference:** In Sura 33:51 we read, "Thou mayest put off whom thou wilt of them, and whom thou wilt thou mayest take to thee; and if thou seekest any thou hast set aside there is no fault in thee. So it is likelier they will be comforted, and not sorrow, and every one of them will be well-pleased with what thou givest her."

According to Al-Hasan, this phrase means "that the Lord (may He be praised and exalted) allowed Muhammad to abandon or to sleep with any of his women, according to his wish." Muhammad bestowed his love on Aisha, Hafsa, Um Salama and Zainab constantly and equally, and deferred the turn of five of his women (Ummu Habiba, Maymuna, Sawda, Juwayrid, and Safiyya). These he would visit according to whim (al-Zamakhshari's commentary on the verse).

(4) **Mary:** According to tradition, Muhammad would take a rota with his wives, sleeping with each in their turn. One night, during Hafsa's turn, she asked to visit her father, and Muhammad granted her request. While she was gone, however, Muhammad took Mary the Coptic slave-girl and slept with her in Hafsa's bed. Hafsa returned, was enraged, and confronted Muhammad. He promised (on oath) not to touch Mary again if she would keep this a secret, and then promised that her father Umar would be his successor after Abu Bakr (according to al-Sira al-Halabiyya, vol.2).

Hafsah, however, told Aisha of the incident, and for a full month Muhammad had no dealings with any of his wives, living with Mary alone. Aisha berated Muhammad for his deceit, whereupon Muhammad was finally given the vision recorded in Sura 66:1, in order to defend himself (Mizanu'l Haqq, pg.330 and Mishkat II, pgs.680-681) (read Ali's version of 66:1, plus footnotes).

This Sura says, "O prophet, why forbiddest thou what God has made lawful to thee, seeking the good pleasure of thy wives...?" Based on this ayya it seems that God is in the business of not only getting Muhammad out of his `jams', but that God justifies unfaithfulness and deceit as well.

(5) **Aisha:** According to Sahih Muslim (pg.716) Aisha reported that Muhammad married her when she was seven years old, and she was taken to his house as a bride when she was nine, along with her dolls. When Muhammad died she was only eighteen.

(6) **Zealousness:** There are many accounts of Muhammad's prowess with women. The traditions maintain that his marriages were primarily an act of compassion towards the widows whom he married. The evidence seems to say differently.

According to Al-Bukhari (1 pg.165) "the prophet used to visit all his wives in a round, during the day and night and they were eleven in number. I asked Anas, `Had the prophet the strength for it?' Anas replied, `We used to say that the prophet was given the strength of thirty (men). And Sa'id said on the authority of Qatada that Anas had told him about nine wives only (not eleven)."

Ibn Sa'd backs this up as well where he states (1 pg.438) "The apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him, said: Gabriel brought a kettle from which I ate and I was given the power of sexual intercourse [equal] to forty men."

It is odd that God would allow one of His prophets, the recipient of revelations, to indulge in lust and revel with women at his pleasure. Muhammad embraced those who captivated his mind and heart with their beauty, such as Aisha and Zainab, and treated the rest poorly.

Outside of Solomon (who many do not consider to be a prophet), do we find any of the other prophets so obviously controlled by sex, or even engaged in this sort of lifestyle? Of course not! We would be appalled if a prophet would allow his carnal desires to so completely control him that he would even use the Word of God to escape from difficult circumstances (such as we noted with Zainab or the incident with Hafsa and Aisha).

**(c) Muhammad's elevation:**

Looking at the "revelations" of the Qur'an and the Hadith Traditions, we cannot fail to see that a number of statements deal with personal advantages and give Muhammad a particular status which is far beyond any other prophet's.

We are told that all believers were to follow his example. Malek-b-Anas reported a defective tradition where Muhammad is purported to say, "I leave with you two things; as long as you hold fast by them both, you will never be misguided; the book of Allah and the Sunnah of his messenger (the copying of the lifestyle of Muhammad)" (from Mishkat 1, pg.159)

Abu Hu'airah reported that the messenger of Allah said, "Every one of my followers

will enter Paradise except he who refused." He was questioned, "And who has refused (truth)?" He said, "Whoever obeys me shall enter paradise, and whoever disobeys me has refused" (from Mishkat 1, Pg.173). Now not only must we obey God, but it is requisite that we obey Muhammad in order to enter paradise!

The Qur'an also assumes a high regard for Muhammad as the supreme example in Sura 33:21, saying, "Ye have indeed in the Apostle of Allah a beautiful pattern of (conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah." Later, in ayya 36 a reprimand is given for any who question the prophet's authority, equating his authority with that of Allah, "It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path."

**(d) Muhammad's Sin:**

Our final category asks whether Muhammad, unlike Jesus (Sura 19:19), ever sinned. Can the same be said of Muhammad that was said of Jesus? I believe not!

The Qur'an admits that the sins of Muhammad were many and that they weighed heavily on him. Sura 94:1-3 speaks of this when it says: "Have We not expanded thee thy breast? And removed from thee they burden, the which did gall thy back?" These verses indicate that Allah had to remove Muhammad's burdens (sins?) from his back. Muslims contend that these burdens were committed before he became a prophet (before 610). We need only refer to Sura 48:2 which says in reference to Muhammad, "Allah may forgive thee thy faults of the past and those to follow..." indicating that even after the Sura was delivered Allah expected him to sin.

In Suras 40:55 and Sura 47:19 we find written, "...and ask forgiveness for thy fault..." This seems straightforward, until you read Yusuf Ali's note at the bottom (4428), which explains that due to the prophet's responsibilities he asks forgiveness in a representative capacity. Leaving Yusuf Ali's "eisegesis" aside it seems evident that Muhammad, a weak and sinful man, pales in comparison to Jesus, the sinless and perfect incarnate God Himself.

As an outside observer, we find it incredulous that Muhammad is permitted to live outside of the very rules which he has ordained for the believers (i.e. permitted to marry more than four wives, or permitted to marry the wife of his adopted son, or permitted to consummate a marriage to a girl of only nine).

Yet, according to Islam, he is, at the same time, the absolute example of which all believers are to model. One is left with a set of contradictions: How are we to follow the model of a prophet who himself abrogates the very parameters which he has set for us to live by? To follow his example would contravene his laws. If a person is asked to follow a certain leader, they would weigh up the 'pros and cons' before reaching a decision. But when truth and eternal life are involved, expediency on temporal issues no longer applies. So when we are told to follow in the footsteps of a spiritual leader, our confidence must not be emotional alone; our confidence must be rational.

That presupposes as deep a study of the quality of the life of the example as possible. One should not give a deaf ear to negative reports, provided they are substantiated. Also one should not explain away possible flaws. But most of all one must have a fixed standard by which to measure right and wrong, good and evil. As Christians we use the standard that is found in the Bible. Ultimately, our concept of what is moral and what is immoral will find its root there.

We are deeply interested in the question of true prophethood. It is and always has been in our best interest to delineate who exactly is a true prophet, for we have been warned to be watchful for false prophets who will come our way (Matthew 24:24).

In light of that we ask whether Muhammad follows the standards by which he has set for himself; and we find him to be wanting. The historical record shows us that he abrogated

his call to the Jews when he exiled them from Medina and executed the males of the Kurayza tribe. His claim to be the Seal of the prophets rings hollow in light of his carnal inadequacies, especially in comparison with the other prophets who preceded him.

Finally we ask whether Muhammad fits the pattern of a prophet which we find in our own scriptures. That is the true test for us as Christians. From our study it is easy to ascertain that Muhammad failed in this category as well. What remains is to deal with one last area, the claim by Muslims that Muhammad was promised by the prophets who preceded him, and that these prophecies can be found in their writings. It is that area which we will take up next in order to conclude this study.

### **III WERE THERE PROPHECIES CONCERNING MUHAMMAD?**

We now come to this third and final category in our paper where we ask the question of whether the former prophets ever spoke about Muhammad? To begin with, let's ask that question of Moses, and see whether Muhammad is spoken of in the Taurat?

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Let's begin with a hypothetical situation. For instance, what would you say if I were to stand up and claim that I was the final prophet, in a long line of prophets; that whatever I said came straight from God, and therefore was to be believed as authoritative? You would obviously question my credentials as a spokesman from God; as a prophet. With a name like Joseph Smith, the same name as the founder of Mormonism, I wouldn't be the first to make this claim. And like him, all I would have to do is write a book which prescribed a new way of life, a new revelation for humanity, and then look around for some disciples who would believe me willingly.

There is another prophet who made such a claim, one who came a few hundred years before my namesake; you all know him as Muhammad, born in 570 C.E.

At the onset he received visions via the angel Gabriel in the Hira cave, outside Mecca, when he was 40 years old. Interestingly, it was his Nestorian Christian uncle who first told him that his visions were authoritative. Yet initially there were few people who took him seriously, or believed in him as a prophet. In fact, when he finally fled to Medina 8 years later, in 622 C.E. (known as the *Hijra*), he had less than 100 followers with him (not even a good-sized church by today's standards).

It was only when he attained political power, which afforded him economical might and control, that he was taken seriously, from a religious standpoint. This was especially so following the battle of Badr, when he turned against the Jews in Medina, with whom he had earlier made security alliances.

One might say, then, that his religious credibility was in direct proportion to his political ascendancy, culminating in his triumphal entry into Mecca 8 years later, after which a true theocracy was instilled, which by its very nature neutralized any criticism or suspicion of his religious credibility.

Because of his power-base in Medina and Mecca, Muhammad's authority was in no doubt 1,400 years ago, but it is in doubt today. There are many who are now asking where exactly Muhammad received his authority as a prophet? Previous prophets were authoritative first of all because they belonged to the line of prophets (the Israelite tribe), and secondly, because what they revealed coincided with that which had been revealed before; and indeed, continued the same theme, which was: the promise of a Messiah who would come to save the world from sin, and thereby bring God's children back in relationship with Him.

Yet, when we look at the revelations which Muhammad gave the world, we find many contradictions with the scriptures which preceded him. Some of the more common ones you know quite well: 1) the claim that Ishmael instead of Isaac was the son who was to be

sacrificed by Abraham, and the two of them then building the Ka'ba in Mecca; 2) the erroneous burial account of Abel by Cain; 3) the rather humorous account of king Solomon meeting the queen of Sheba by talking to a Hoopoo bird; 4) the miraculous birth of Jesus, which according to the Qur'an took place under a palm tree, 5) and even the story of Jesus speaking as a baby, 6) and later breathing life into birds of clay. But probably the most damaging contradictions in the Qur'an is 7) its refusal to accept not only the doctrine of the Trinity, but to reject the divinity of Jesus as well as his crucifixion and resurrection. These are absolutely central to the Biblical testimony.

Because so much of that which is important is at a variance with that which came before one has to ask for proof of his authority in making such claims. And this is being done today. It is for this reason that Muslims are attempting to come up with a ready defense.

Initially, Muslims held the view that the differences between the Bible and the Qur'an could be blamed on the Jews and Christians, who, they believed, conspired to corrupt their scriptures in order to reject the claims of the prophet of Islam. One must ask how the Jews and Christians would have known what to change considering they would have had to do their work hundreds of years before the arrival of the Qur'an, as we have thousands of manuscripts which predate the Qur'an in our possession today, all of which remain true to the scripture which we "hold in our hands."

The Qur'an itself, in Suras 5:47-51, 6:34, and 10:64 say that God cannot change his word, and that the Qur'an was sent to guard the former revelations. Thus many Muslim scholars have been forced to deny the possibility of corruption in the Word of God contained in the Bible. Consequently, they have turned their endeavors in other directions, looking for predictions of Muhammad within those preceding scriptures. And it is this assertion which concerns us here.

### **The Muslim agenda**

Muslims will point out that in the Qur'an there are two ayas (verses) which speak of a prediction of Muhammad in the Taurat and the Injil (the Torah and the Gospels). They are:

1)Sura 7:157= *"Those who follow the messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Taurat and the Injil..."*

2)Sura 61:6= *"Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Taurat, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is Ahmad (the Praised One)."*

These two ayas say specifically that Muhammad was referred to in both the Taurat and the Injil (the Torah and the Gospel). Our concern here is to ascertain whether this is true, whether there are any predictions concerning Muhammad outside the Qur'an?

In other words, we are interested in finding out whether there is any evidence that the previous Jewish and Christian scriptures spoke about his coming?

Most Muslims believe that in the Taurat (specifically in Deuteronomy 18:18) there is reference to the prophecy which the Qur'an speaks of in Sura 7:157 and Sura 61:6 concerning Muhammad. So it is to that passage that we will first focus our enquiry.

### **[A] IS THERE A PREDICTION OF MUHAMMAD IN DEUTERONOMY 18?**

In Deuteronomy 18:18 we read:

*"I (the LORD) will raise up for them a Prophet like you (Moses) and he will tell them everything I command him."*

### **[1] Comparison: Who is the prophet like Moses?**

Our inquiry here is to ascertain what evidence supports the Muslim claim that it is Muhammad who is "a Prophet like you [Moses]." Is it he who is referred to in these verses? If it is then this would contradict the claim by Christians that the verse refers to the prophet Jesus, the promised Messiah.

In order to support their claim, Muslim apologists have tried to write a list of criteria pertaining to Moses and Muhammad, saying that: both were married and had children, both led battles, and both were leaders, etc... What they fail to take into consideration is that any prophet could claim many of these parallels for himself.

A handier tool would be to identify those comparisons which Moses fulfilled which are unique to his ministry, and which would, therefore, be unique to him who is: "a prophet like you (Moses)." In other words, compare apples with apples.

### **[2] Contrast: This prophet cannot be Muhammad**

Can we, therefore, say that Muhammad is the promised one, this "prophet like Moses?" From what we have just read, we find that Muhammad was not born in the prophetic line of Moses, had no personal relationship with God, nor was he established in authority by God, as were both Moses and Jesus.

More importantly, the mission of Muhammad was nothing like that of Moses and Jesus, for it was Moses and Jesus who offered themselves as a sacrifice for the sins of their people (Exodus 32:30-32; Deuteronomy 34:10-12; and Matthew 26:28).

Most significantly, however, is the fact that, beginning with Moses and concluding with Jesus, the means of forgiveness and reconciliation with God were brought about (Leviticus 4:2; 6:24,25; 14:13 and Hebrew 19:22). This is the real criteria for "a prophet who is like you (Moses)." Many prophets can claim to be like Moses from the standpoint of human reasoning. Only one can claim to be like Moses from the standpoint of God's reasoning. His desire to save mankind, which Moses first began by bringing the Children of Israel out of captivity from Egypt, and which Jesus finally accomplished by bringing all believers out of captivity from sin 2,000 years ago.

### **[3] Consideration: This prophet must be Jesus:**

Muhammad can never claim to parallel the essential and unique aspects of Moses' ministry on earth, as Jesus can. Those who worked alongside Jesus, and who predated Muhammad by nearly 700 years came to this same conclusion. Consider the following witnesses from John and Luke:

**John 1:45** "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law."

**John 5:46** "If you believed Moses you would believe me [Jesus], for he wrote about me."

**John 6:14** "Surely this [Jesus] is the prophet who is to come into the World."

**Acts 3:22** "For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people...!'" (i.e. own brothers=sons of Israel.)

### **[4] Conclusion: Without a prediction where is Muhammad's authority?**

In order to prove that Muhammad was a true prophet, the Qur'an stipulated that in the Taurat and the Injil predictions concerning him could be found (Refer to Suras 7:157 and 61:6 above). Yet we find none of these prophecies in either the Taurat, or the Injil (i.e. John 16:7 which we will deal with later). What does this say for the authority of Muhammad?

At the heart of the argument, for a Muslim, is the desire to find any external predictions for the coming of Muhammad in the Taurat and the Injil (as referred to in

Sura 7:157). Without it, the only criteria for Muhammad's authority is the Qur'an; while the only authority for the Qur'an is Muhammad. This is circular reasoning, which is not a valid scholarly argument. Since the evidence for any prediction by Moses concerning Muhammad does not exist in the Taurat, this creates a problem for Muslims who must produce external criteria for the authenticity of their prophet.

Without it, Muhammad has no outside evidence to prove his prophethood. Furthermore, the Qur'an itself claims, in Sura 29:27, that prophethood belongs solely to the line of Isaac and Jacob, to which Muhammad has no part.

Consequently, the authority for the beliefs of over one billion Muslims then hangs on the single testimony of one finite man. (note: a man who himself admits his lack of power in Sura [Ta Ha] 20:49, and his sinfulness in Sura [Ghafir] 40:55, in contrast with the claim by Jesus to have all power in Matthew 28:18, and to be without sin in I Peter 2:22, which we also find in Sura 19:19).

As we read these verses and consider what has been written, it is easy to conclude that this prophecy by Moses in Deuteronomy 18 can only belong to Jesus the Christ. It is He who was born in the line of Moses, and it is He who had a relationship with God, as He was God. It was He who was established in authority with God, and it was He who, like Moses, offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of others (in His case for all of humanity). It is this last criteria which sets these two off from the rest. Only Moses and Jesus had the unique mission: to bring about a renewal of relationship with God; the one, Moses, out of the captivity of slavery in Egypt, and the other, Jesus, out of the captivity of sin in our hearts, for eternity.

## **[B] ARE THERE OTHER PREDICTIONS OF MUHAMMAD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?**

We now come to the question of whether there are any other predictions of Muhammad in the Old Testament? According to Muslims there are a number of other instances where their prophet can be found. We need to know how to answer them on these issues as well.

### **[1] Do we find Muhammad in the Old Testament?**

We know that Suras 7 and 61 maintain that Muhammad is supposedly predicted somewhere in the former scriptures, and that consequently Muslims have tried desperately to find these predictions for their prophet in those scriptures which preceded the Qur'an (the Taurat, Zabuur and the Injil), but to no avail. Yet we find it ironic that Muslims are now compelled by their own scripture to establish the credibility of their prophet in the Old Testament, the very book which they claim elsewhere to be corrupted and of no real worth (though this claim is never made in the Qur'an).

Muslims and Christians alike agree that Christ's coming was predicted often in the Old Testament. Yet, if God had intended to send another prophet far greater than He, we should naturally find predictions concerning him there as well. Yet, none are to be found. Therefore, without a prediction the sole criteria for Muhammad's authority rests entirely on the Qur'an, whose sole authority rests on Muhammad, and for obvious reasons this is unworkable.

### **[2] Muslims find Muhammad in the Old Testament:**

Due to the predicament which Muslims find themselves in, they have, after a hurried perusal of our Bible, come forward with a series of twelve passages from the Old Testament which they believe point to Muhammad. Outside of the Deuteronomy 18 passage (dealt with above), all of these passages, which supposedly refer to a messenger, falls into four general

categories.

1) This person is someone who used the **sword** (Psalm 45:2-5; 149; Isaiah 63). However, when we read further, the context in these passages clearly points out that the sword-wielder is not only God, but the Creator, the Lord of Israel and the Lord of Hosts. I know of few Muslims who would be willing to equate these titles with Muhammad.

2) This person is someone whose **life-style** parallels that of Muhammad's day (i.e. rides a camel, lives in a desert) (Isaiah 21:7 and 53). Yet the context again refers to both a messenger from Babylon, and a servant who was crushed, pierced, and wounded for others, hardly analogous to Muhammad's life.

3) This person is someone whose **geographical** location coincides with that of Muhammad (Deuteronomy 33:2; Isaiah 63; Habakkuk 3:3). Yet the Mount Paran which they claim to be in Mecca is rather on the Sinai Peninsula, while Bozrah is not Basrah, but modern-day Al-Busairah, situated in Edom, south of the Dead Sea.

In Habbakuk 3:3 we read, "God comes from Teman."

Muslims maintain that Teman refers to Islam. To be consistent they must also adhere to the other prophecies concerning Teman. In Jeremiah 49:7 God questions whether there is any wisdom in Teman. Verse 20 says the people of Teman will be aghast at their fate. Ezekiel 25:13 promises that God will lay waste the people of Teman, and God will send fire and consume them (Amos 1:12), and there will be no survivors (Obadiah 8-10). This would suggest that there is no wisdom in Islam, and that there awaits all Muslims a destruction by fire which will consume them!

Fortunately for the Muslims, we know that this fate has no place in reality. For when we refer to the Biblical account we find that Teman is not Islam at all, but a town close to Jericho, in the territory of Edom.

4) This person is someone whose **name** has a common root to that of Muhammad. In Genesis 49:8-10 it is Judah; in the Song of Solomon 5:16 it is Ahmad; and in Haggai 2:7 it is Hemdah. This fourth category needs further discussion as it is adhered to more resolutely by the Muslims as real proof for a prediction than the others.

### **[3] Names which supposedly point to Muhammad:**

Muslims believe that all of these three passages use names which can be translated as "praise" (Judah, Ahmad, and Hemdah), and are semantically similar to "Muhammad," which means "the praised one." However, in Arabic the verb "Hamada" (to praise) is the root for many words, yet one does not find Muslims substituting "Muhammad" and "Hamada" interchangeably.

Take for instance the very first Sura of the Qur'an. In the second ayya (verse) we find, "Praise (al-hamadi) be to Allah." Do we dare change this to Muhammad? Of course not! That is sacrilege!

In Haggai 2:7 Muslims believe "Hemdah" (the desire of nations) comes from the same root as the word "Muhammad." Yet they must certainly cringe when this word is again used in Daniel 11:37 to refer to a person "desired by women" who is a false god of the heathen.

### **[4] Song of Solomon 5:16**

But perhaps the best example to illustrate the difficulty in exchanging one word for another is found in the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verse 16. In this passage Muslims claim that the Hebrew word "Machmad" (altogether lovely) can be translated "praise" or "Ahmad." Following is the text of the passage as translated in the New International Version Bible:

*"His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."*

The book of Song of Solomon is a poetic love story between the Beloved and her Lover. It is a piece that explores the beauty of a marriage relationship between a king and his wife.

Muslims believe that the adjectival clause "altogether lovely" can be changed to a proper noun, "Muhammad." The text should then read, when translated into English:

*"His mouth is sweetness itself; he is Muhammad. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."*

This rendering, however, begs a number of difficult questions according to the context of the entire book.

1. Who are the daughters of Jerusalem? Did Muhammad ever court one of his many wives in Jerusalem?

2. If this is Muhammad, which of his wives is speaking? Was Muhammad ever married to a dark woman he wooed from Lebanon?

3. Did Muhammad ever claim kingship?

What, then, is this prophecy saying? The underlined words in the text above are the English renderings of the Hebrew word, *machmad*. Strong's concordance defines *machmad* as: desire, desirable thing, a pleasant thing.

So, can *Machmad* signify Muhammad? Wise men allow that when one verse is in doubt it is justified to explain one passage of the Bible by another. The word *machmad* appears twelve more times in the Old Testament. Since Muslims are so intent on finding the name of Muhammad in the Hebrew word "*machmad*," it is important that they remain consistent. Therefore, we have printed these twelve prophetic verses below and leave it to you to ascertain whether they fit. Note that we have been consistent in now translating this word as the long-neglected "proper noun" which they claim it to be.

1) 1 Kings 20:6= "Yet I will send my servants to thee tomorrow about this time, and they shall search thy house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, [that] whatever is Muhammad in thy eyes, they shall take [it] in their hand, and carry [it] away."

2) 2 Chronicles 36:19= "And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its Muhammad vessels."

3) Isaiah 64:11= "Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire: and all our Muhammad things are laid waste."

4) Lamentations 1:10= "The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her Muhammad things: for she hath seen [that] the nations entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command [that] they should not enter into thy congregation."

5) Lamentations 1:11= "All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their Muhammad things for food to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile."

6) Lamentations 2:4= "He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all [that were] Muhammad to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire."

7) Ezekiel 24:16= "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the Muhammad of thy eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down."

8) Ezekiel 24:21= "Speak to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellence of your strength, the Muhammad of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword."

9) Ezekiel 24:25= "Also, thou son of man, [shall it] not [be] in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the Muhammad of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters."

10) Hosea 9:6= "For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather

them up, Memphis shall bury them: the Muhammad [places] for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns [shall be] in their tabernacles."

11) Hosea 9:16= "Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay [even] the Muhammad [fruit] of their womb."

12) Joel 3:5= "Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my Muhammad things."

If this mutilation of Scripture seems to you ridiculous, it is meant to be as it shows the quality of the theory behind such an idea.

When taken to its logical conclusion it makes a mockery of Hebrew grammar. Why should an adjectival clause be translated a proper noun? Machmad already has a proper noun counterpart, but more closely related to the clause -- *Chemdan* (or Hemdan), the eldest son of Dishon of Anah the Horite. If machmad should have been written as a proper noun the author would have written Chemdan.

### **[5] The Problem with this exercise:**

This claim is quite similar to the issue of the paraclete in the book of John (which we will refer to later). Many Muslims contend that it is another prophecy of Muhammad. Yet this prophecy in John 14 and 16 has been shown for what it is -- a prophecy of the Spirit of God. We find it peculiar that Muslims will, in one text, base their claim on the meaning of one word at the expense of its pronunciation (paracletos versus periclytos) and yet with another text base their claim on the pronunciation of a single word at the expense of its meaning (desire versus praise)!

If these techniques of hermeneutics are just, then wouldn't it be quite in line to expect to find as a substitute for the word paracletos a prophet named "Perry Clinton," whose name really means "the desired one?" Absurd? Yes! That is the point. Using this technique one can conjure up a prophecy for nearly any prophet one happens to fancy, or even make up one on the whim.

Conversely, a Hindu could claim that in Sura 30:1, the word "al-rum" (for Romans), which can be written "Ram," must be referring to the Hindu God "Rama."

A further irony in this whole exercise is that Muhammad is not even the name which the prophet grew up with. According to Muslim tradition, in his youth Muhammad was called Amin, a common Arab name meaning "faithful, or trustworthy." Amin was his given name, a masculine form from the same root as his mother's name "Amina."

We understand the desire by Muslims to find any prophecy which will give credence to Muhammad, for without it Muhammad has no outside evidence to prove his prophethood. That then leaves the authority for the beliefs of over one billion Muslims hanging on the single testimony of just one finite man. We ask, however, that Muslims not twist or attack the scriptures in order to gain their own agenda. We are constantly amazed that Muslims should be at once both critics and stewards of the Holy Scriptures of Christians and Jews. It would be better to be of one mind.

If Muslims firmly believe the scriptures are inadequate then they should behave as such and abstain from picking and choosing what they like from what they deem a hopelessly inadequate book. We will not insult them for bravely allying with other enemies of the Bible. But it is hypocrisy to use data from a book they claim is crude and inferior to support an already illogical argument.

If we truly believe the scriptures and desire to find prophecies within them, then we need to read them all and learn with an open mind. We need to truly submit ourselves to the authoritative and COMPLETE teachings of Scripture as has been diligently preserved throughout the ages.

## **[C] IS THERE A PROPHECY OF MUHAMMAD IN THE INJIL?**

We now come to the final claim by Muslims, that a prediction of Muhammad can be found in the Injil, in other words in the New Testament.

### **[1] Parakletos or Periklytos?**

The two ayas quoted at the beginning of this lecture speak of a prophet or messenger who will be described in the Taurat and Injil, who can neither read nor write, who will come after Jesus, and will be called Ahmed. Attempts have been made by Muslims since the middle of the 10th century to quote definite verses from the Bible which speak of Muhammad; verses such as Genesis 16:9-12; 17:20-21; 21:21 and Deuteronomy 33:2,12. These are easily defensible, and need little of our time.

Another scripture which is often quoted by Muslims as the definitive proof of a prediction concerning Muhammad is that found in the New Testament in John 14:16 and John 16:7. These are the passages which we will deal with here.

Let's open to those passages. (Read John 14:16 and 16:7)

The problem comes with the word "Counsellor". All the misunderstanding which separates Jews, Christians and Muslims come from the manner in which one pronounces or writes parakletos, which the translators of the gospel have rendered as "counsellor." There are two popular spellings of this word, the one parakletos and the other periklytos?"

Muslims, aware that the original New Testament was written in Greek, choose the latter spelling, periklytos, which in Greek is translated as 'glorious', over parakletos which means 'counsellor', or 'lawyer'.

On the strength of the Qur'anic text Muslims claim that John 14:16 and 16:7 are predictions of the coming of Muhammad, as the word periklytos (glorious), refers to the Ahmad spoken of in Sura 61:6, a form of the name Muhammad, since both mean "the Praised one".

### **[2] Greek language confirms parakletos:**

What the Muslims have tried to do with this word is to replace the vowels as they see fit (replacing the a-a-e-o in parakletos with e-i-y-o in periklytos). In Hebrew and Arabic, where the vowels are not included in the words, there is room for debate as to which vowels the author intended (such as YHWH), however, this is not so in Greek, as the vowels are clearly written in all Greek texts.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali in his footnotes in the Qur'an referring to this passage says: "Our doctors contend that Paracletos is a corrupt reading for Periklytos, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our Holy Prophet Ahmad by name" (pg. 1461, note no.5438).

### **[3] Greek manuscripts confirm parakletos:**

It would have been helpful if Ali and his learned "doctors", before making such an erroneous claim, had referred to existing manuscripts (MSS) which are easily accessible for examination (including two of the oldest, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus, both in the British Museum in London).

There are more than 70 Greek manuscripts which include the book of John in existence today, dating from before the time of Muhammad, and not one of them use the word periklytos! All use the word parakletos. In fact the word periklytos does not even appear at all in the Bible! How then could the Muslims apply it to these two cases?

### **[4] Therefore Muhammad could not be the parakletos:**

So why do Muslims continue to cling to the erroneous rendering of this word? Obviously, as we have mentioned before, Yusuf Ali and his friends have a deep desire to find any prediction for the coming of Muhammad in the Taurat and Injil. Not only does the Qur'an mention that the predictions exist, but more damaging for today, without it the sole criteria for Muhammad's authority takes on an invalid circular reasoning, which goes something like this: Muhammad receives his authority from the Qur'an, which receives its authority from Muhammad, who receives his authority from the Qur'an...so on and so forth. There is no outside authority which can provide him with the credibility he needs.

The evidence for any prediction by Jesus concerning Muhammad just does not exist in the Injil, creating a problem for Muslims who must, therefore, produce some further external criteria for the authenticity of their prophet. It's an unenviable task, one which I wouldn't want to have to do myself.

#### **[5] So who is the parakletos?:**

A further problem for the Muslim exists once they open to the verses in question. John 14:16 says: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor (parakletos) to be with you for ever." Most Muslims quote only the first half of this verse, as well as John 16:7, and then shut the Bible.

What they fail to realize is that, as is the case in most pieces of literature, it is dangerous to read any verse or phrase without looking at the context first.

When we continue reading beyond chapter 14:16 and chapter 16:7, we find that Jesus predicts the specific details of the arrival and identity of the parakletos. Therefore, according to the context of John 14 & 16 we find that:

##### **1) Jesus said the parakletos is not a human being:**

- 14:16="he will be with you for ever" (a human doesn't live forever)
- 14:17="he will be the spirit of truth" (a human is distinct from spirit)
- 14:17="the world neither sees him..." (a human is visible)
- 14:17="...nor knows him" (a human would be known by others)
- 14:17="and he will be in you" (a human cannot be within others)

##### **2) Jesus said that the parakletos has a specific mission; to point to Jesus:**

- 14:26="whom the Father will send in my (Jesus') name"
- 14:26="will remind you everything I (Jesus) have said to you"
- 16:8="he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin..."
- 16:14="He will bring glory to me (Jesus)..."

##### **3) and finally, Jesus said that the parakletos is a spirit:**

- 14:17="the Spirit of Truth"
- 14:26="the Counsellor (parakletos), the Holy Spirit"

#### **[6] The Answer is the Holy Spirit, who arrived 50 days later:**

It is clear from the context that no human prophet or angelic being can qualify as the parakletos. Consider what these verses say: He will be with them forever, not seen, nor known, yet within others, and will set about reminding the people of what Jesus did, while bringing glory to Jesus. There is only one being who qualifies in all these areas, the Holy Spirit of the Injil, whom Jesus pointedly identifies as the parakletos. He fulfills all the above requirements.

In **Acts 1**, Jesus, just before He was to be taken up into heaven, and 40 days after He had first promised the Holy Spirit, again spoke about this "gift":

- vs.4="wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about"
- vs.5="in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

It is obvious that this counsellor, of whom Jesus speaks is indeed the Holy Spirit, who

came in power, 50 days after these promises were given to the disciples; on the day of Pentecost (which is translated as the 50th day), and 537 years before the birth of Muhammad.

## CONCLUSION

So what have we learned? We began this paper by asking whether Muhammad could qualify as a true prophet of God. We presented the Muslim positions, positing that they claimed his prophethood due to the supernatural witness to his prophethood during his early childhood, as well as the fact that he delivered the Qur'an, though he was illiterate, and because both his prophecies and miracles pointed to his prophethood.

We then gave rebuttals to all four of these positions and followed up with four criteria of our own, concluding that Muhammad could not qualify in any four of these categories.

Following that we took the question further by asking whether Muhammad's message was for Arabs alone, or whether it was universal. Though verses can be found in the Qur'an which maintain both positions, we determined that this particular revelation had possibly evolved and followed the polytheistic reality evidenced in Arabia at that time.

We asked whether Muhammad could be a prophet to the Jews and Christians, and came away bruised and battered from the violence he enjoined upon those two groups.

From there it was only natural to ask whether Muhammad could be understood as the seal of the prophets? In comparing him with Jesus and the former prophets we soon found that he didn't even come close. Not only did he concede his revelations to the people around him, but he had an enormous sexual appetite, while elevating himself almost on par with Allah. And finally, he, himself, realized that he had sinned and needed forgiveness.

In all these categories Muhammad failed to persuade us that he could legitimately claim to be a prophet of God. But our enquiry was still not finished. We needed to ascertain if others had spoken previously about this prophet who was yet to come.

In Suras 7:157 and 61:6 we read of a prophet, Ahmad (or Muhammad), who was revealed beforehand in the Taurat (Torah) and the Injil (Gospel). Because these Suras are included in the "eternal and perfect" revelation for Muslims, it is imperative, therefore, that these passages be found, since without them, Muhammad has no outside evidence to prove his prophethood, other than himself.

Muhammad's word and authority worked fine in the "heady days" of the seventh century, where no-one dared counter his claim to prophethood, and where convenient revelations "descended" regularly to give him credibility before his people. But today, outside the realm of Islamic jurisdiction, and on the heels of an invigorated and ongoing literary criticism, the critics demand more proof. Without it the authority for the beliefs of over 1 billion Muslims then hangs on the single testimony of this **one finite man**, Muhammad. And many of those beliefs are diametrically opposed to the intrinsic revelations espoused in the scriptures which preceded him, the very scriptures which Muslims must now use to find a prediction for their prophet in order to give him credibility.

There are, however, no passages in the Taurat or the Injil (essentially the Old and New Testaments) which speak of him, *not one*.

Muslims will certainly come forward and point to the passages in Deuteronomy 18, or the Song of Solomon 5:16, or John 14 and 16 as the one's which refer to Ahmad, or Muhammad. Yet, are they? Can this prophet like Moses, the promised one, this counsellor, be a mere human or a mere prophet; or is He more than that? Is He not God Himself, in the form of a man, or, as we found in John, in the form of the Holy Spirit?

As we read these verses and consider what has been said here, it will be good to feel encouraged that we do indeed serve the true God, who chooses to reveal Himself clearly and simply, from Genesis through to Revelation, and chooses to be in relationship with us as His

creatures, by coming to us as a man in the line of Moses, while still relating to us by means of His Holy Spirit, mediating Christ in us.

Because Muslims do not understand God within these parameters, it is no wonder that they are confused to find that it is Jesus and not Muhammad who is prophesied to carry on the mission of reconciliation, and that it is the Holy Spirit who has been promised to continue that same mission today, right here and right now, until we will all be with Him together for eternity; providing we believe.