

THE PATH OF FAITH

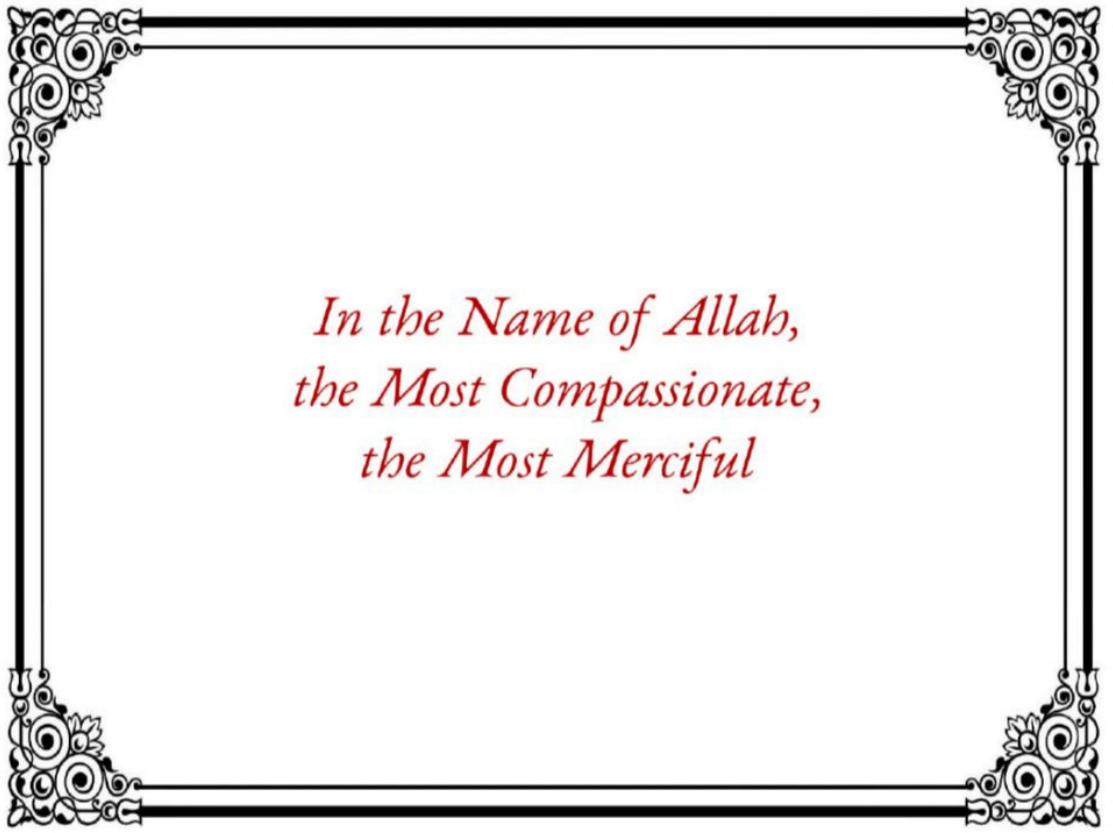
*A journey of inquiry from doubt and atheism,
through religions and schools of thought,
to the truth*



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*In the Name of Allah,
the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful*




First Introduction

Praise belongs to Allah. May peace and blessings be upon our master, the Messenger of Allah, and upon his family and companions. To continue:

Allah Most High says: “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and debate with them in the best manner.” [al-Nahl 16:125]

It is part of wise religious guidance to use wisdom when calling people to the truth and to choose the best way to convey Allah's religion to His creation.

The Prophet said, “Convey from me, even if it is only one verse...”

Allah Most High also says: “Prepare against them whatever strength you can.” [al-Anfal 8:60]

I had been thinking of a project that would take the reader from the darkness of confusion to the light of truth, and from atheism to the way of the righteous early Muslims. Many ideas came to me: a book, a video series, and so on.

Then my brother, Shaykh Muhammad, contacted me before the blessed month of Ramadan last year. He suggested a program that would lead people from atheism to the way of the early Muslims. I liked the idea, asked Allah for guidance, and relied on Him. The result is now in your hands, and is also available on YouTube in video and audio form.

By Allah's grace, we collected the harmful ideas and satanic doubts that often pass through young people's minds, and discussed them using both reason and revealed evidence in a clear way that suits all readers.

We also discuss religions and sects in a clear, easy way that makes the heart feel at peace with the great religion of Islam.

We ask Allah, Blessed and Exalted, to grant sincerity and acceptance. He has power over all things.

May Allah send peace and blessings upon our master Muhammad, and upon his family and companions.

Ahmad ibn Abd al-Hamid




Second Introduction

In the name of Allah. Praise belongs to Allah, and may peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah. To continue:

Allah Most High says: “The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then do not doubt, and strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is they who are truthful.” [al-Hujurat 49:15]

One aim of Islamic law is to strengthen certainty in Allah Most High. He says: “Say: The Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth, to make firm those who believe, and as guidance and good news for the Muslims.” [al-Nahl 16:102]

The Noble Qur'an presents strong proofs. Allah Most High says: “Say: With Allah is the decisive proof.” [al-An'am 6:149]

It is good for us to present these proofs, explain them to Muslims, and show how they build certainty in Allah. Then we move to proving prophethood, laying down the principles that support it, and confirming the truth of Muhammad's message through both revealed and rational evidence. After that, we explain how to recognise and follow the path set by Islamic law, away from religious innovations, newly invented practices, personal desires, and satanic ways.

This book lays out the basics in clear, simple language to make this goal easier to reach. It avoids excessive detail and, by Allah's permission, is easy for ordinary readers to understand. It uses a question-and-answer style to keep the mind active.

We ask Allah to place goodness in it, record its reward for us, and make it a treasure for us with Him.

Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din



Section One:

Establishing the Divinity of God

Muslim: Peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you.

Seeker of Truth: And upon you be peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah.

Muslim: How are you, my friend?

Seeker of Truth: I am well.

Muslim: What religion do you follow?

Seeker of Truth: I am not interested in religion. What do you think about starting a discussion?

Muslim: Before anything else, you need to describe your position correctly so that we can focus the discussion on you.

Seeker of Truth: What are these categories?

Muslim: Religious indifference, agnosticism, atheism, deism, theism, and doubt.

Seeker of Truth: Please explain them.

Muslim: They are as follows:

The indifferent: people who do not care and do not want to think about religion.

Agnostics: people who have thought and searched but have not reached a conclusion.

Atheists: people who conclude that there is no God.

Deists: people who conclude that a Creator exists, but reject revealed religions.

Theists: people who worship a god, whatever their religion may be.

Doubters: Muslims who experience doubts about Allah or religion in general.



Seeker of Truth: I do not place myself in any category, and I do not care.

Muslim: Then you are indifferent.



Discussion of Indifference

Muslim: Let us begin with religious indifference, because we need to deal with it first. As long as it remains, a person will not seriously discuss this issue.

Seeker of Truth: Why call it a problem? I am simply not interested. Why are you trying to pull me into it?

Muslim: Because it concerns your fate in the Hereafter.

Seeker of Truth: But I do not believe in the Hereafter.

Muslim: Whether you believe it or not, you will still leave this world one day.

Seeker of Truth: Yes, I will die.

Muslim: Then what comes after death?

Seeker of Truth: I am not interested now. When I die, I will find out.

Muslim: That way of thinking is mistaken. Sensible people plan for the future, and death is certain. Everyone will die, so a sensible person cannot avoid thinking about it. Suppose some people kidnapped you and put you in a car. What is the first question you would ask them?

Seeker of Truth: Why did you kidnap me?

Muslim: Good question. In the same way, since you have been brought into this world, you should ask: Why am I here?

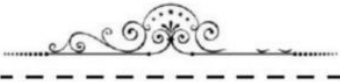
Seeker of Truth: Whom should I ask?

Muslim: If you were kidnapped, whom would you ask?

Seeker of Truth: The kidnappers.

Muslim: Then you should ask the One who brought you into this world why He brought you here.

Seeker of Truth: I do not know Him.



Muslim: Search for Him so you can know Him.

Seeker of Truth: Fine. Instead of that question, I would ask them: Who are you?

Muslim: That is also a good question. So you should ask: Who brought me into this life?

Seeker of Truth: I know you want me to say, “Where are you taking me?” Then you will tell me I should ask where we go after death. Right?

Muslim: Yes. In fact, all these are questions that an aware mind should ask about life. A person who never asks them thinks more like an animal. Lead a sheep and it follows you. Take it to a field of grass and it eats without asking where it is going... or why. That is animal-like. A sensible human being acts differently. At work, if a manager told you to leave your place and move to another department, you would ask: Why? Is the move permanent or temporary? And so on. How, then, can you be indifferent to your much greater place in this life?

Seeker of Truth: Fine. Even if I think about it, I will exhaust myself and still find no answer.

Muslim: Why begin with that false assumption? That is like saying, “I will not study because I will not pass,” even though studying may lead to success.

Seeker of Truth: I mean the problem is whether an answer exists, not whether I search. People give different answers to these questions, and they have not reached certainty.

Muslim: A question may have an answer even if someone else reaches the wrong one. Your own failure to find an answer does not mean no answer exists. If you wanted to buy a phone, you would research the best one for you even though people disagree about brands and models. You would do your own research and reach a conclusion. You would not say, “I will not search because I will never reach an answer.”

Seeker of Truth: In the end, even if God exists, what matters is that I do not harm anyone or lie. Then He will not put me in Hell.

Muslim: Did God tell you that, or is it your own idea?

Seeker of Truth: It is logical.

Muslim: How do you know God accepts your idea of logic? You have placed yourself in God's position and made your own rules for reward and punishment. That is wrong. The right approach is to learn those standards from Him.



Seeker of Truth: But surely God would not contradict logic.

Muslim: A short while ago, you thought it was logical not to care about God or religion. Do you still think that now?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then what seems logical to you today may seem illogical tomorrow. God's command does not follow your changing opinions. What you or someone else sees as logical may still be far from the truth. Logic by itself is not enough as the final standard.

Seeker of Truth: But I want to make sure God exists.

Muslim: Then you have left indifference and become agnostic. That is the next idea we will discuss. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/CTGj1GVfHvQ>

Establishing the Existence of the Creator

Seeker of Truth: What does agnosticism mean?

Muslim: It refers to people who are seriously asking whether God exists but have not reached a conclusion.

Seeker of Truth: Why should I assume that the God of the Muslims alone is the true God?

Muslim: I am not asking you to assume that now. We will examine the evidence and follow it wherever it leads.

Seeker of Truth: What could convince me that God exists?

Muslim: I will answer after asking you something: How did this life, with everything in it, come to exist?

Seeker of Truth: It has always existed like this, without a beginning.

Muslim: Do you know that this idea is no longer accepted in modern scientific discussions?

Allah Most High says: “Were they created by nothing, or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain. Or do they possess the treasures of your Lord, or are they the controllers?” [al-Tur 52:35-37]

Seeker of Truth: Yes. They speak of the Big Bang theory, but I do not see why that rules out what I said.

Muslim: The life we live follows a precise order. The sun provides the warmth needed for life. Heat causes water to rise as clouds, and winds carry those clouds to other places where rain falls. Crops grow from that water and people eat from them. Tree leaves release the oxygen we need for breathing and for the work of our cells. This oxygen mixes with the air, which is transparent; without that, sight would be blocked and life would be very difficult.

Seeker of Truth: That is useful scientific information, but what does it have to do with our discussion?

Muslim: It has a great deal to do with it.

Allah Most High says: “On the earth are signs for those with certainty, and within yourselves. Will you not then see?” [al-Dhariyat 51:20-21] He also says: “We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.” [Fussilat 41:53]

The precise order you see in the universe shows that it did not come from nothing. It must have a knowing and wise Maker who established these exact laws.

Seeker of Truth: What is the evidentiary point in this?

Muslim: A car factory, for example, requires intelligence: rules for turning raw materials into finished parts, plans for arranging those parts, a fixed order for manufacturing, and a production line.

All of this makes us certain that there is an intelligent planner behind the factory and skilled hands carrying out the work.

Once that is clear, look at a tree. Who placed a factory inside every seed? It turns water into wood, leaves, and produce of different colours and tastes - some salty, some sweet, and some bitter.

Allah Most High says: “Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky, and with it We bring forth fruits of different colours?” [Fatir 35:27] He also made the sun, rain, soil, and air serve the seed so that it can live.

Even with all of today's progress, human beings cannot build such a factory. Yet you find it in a tiny seed. Place it in the ground and give it water, and it begins working and producing. Does this not point to a Creator who is knowing, wise, strong, and able, who made it in this way?

Seeker of Truth: Could nature have existed forever in this form, or could it have created itself?

Muslim: No, because the created things that make up nature depend on one another.

The earth needs the sun even though the sun is far away and separate from it. People need plants and animals for food, and each is separate from the other. Animals need plants to live. If you lived without plants or anything taken from them, your body would be harmed by a lack of vitamins. Every living thing also needs water, and bringing water to them requires heat, wind, and the earth's atmospheric conditions.

When you look at life, you find that its parts are very different, yet they must be linked for life to be possible. Each part needs the others.



Without this connection there would be no life: no rain without seas, sunlight, and wind; no trees without rain; and if the sun were closer, rivers and seas would dry up and animals could not live. Without this balance, life would not exist at all.

These parts are weak and dependent. None can live without the others, and they have no mind with which to manage themselves. They therefore need a power greater than themselves to direct them.

Seeker of Truth: Your explanation is convincing, but could that power be something other than God?

Muslim: Once we have established an outside power that plans and governs, we have taken an important step toward establishing God's existence.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: What you now call a power, you will later call God.

Seeker of Truth: But I have another important point that removes the need for God.

Muslim: What is it?

Seeker of Truth: The Big Bang theory.

Muslim: What in that theory conflicts with God's existence?

Seeker of Truth: There was an extremely large explosion from which the matter of the universe arose.

From that explosion came galaxies, planets, gases, and radiation. Billions of galaxies formed, each containing billions of planets. Over billions of years there were countless possibilities, and one of them produced the conditions that allowed life on earth.

Muslim: Where did that matter come from?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: How can matter come from nothing? Nothing means the complete absence of anything. How could something arise from it?

Seeker of Truth: We could say that the matter already existed in a compressed state and then exploded.

Muslim: Who brought it into existence?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: There must be a cause that brought it into existence.

And this only addresses matter. Where did light and darkness come from? Allah Most High says: "Praise belongs to Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light." [al-An'am 6:1] Darkness and light are qualities beyond matter itself.

Where did the laws of physics come from? Allah says that He "created everything and determined it with precise measure." [al-Furqan 25:2] The laws of the universe must have a source. Do you have a sound explanation for all of this other than a Creator?

Seeker of Truth: No, but perhaps this conflicts with the theory of evolution?

Muslim: We can discuss evolution on its own. For now, tell me clearly: how do you think living things developed?

Seeker of Truth: They developed through mutations in their DNA. As these mutations built up over millions of years, new animals appeared.

Muslim: What was the first living thing from which we developed?

Seeker of Truth: A single-celled organism. It developed into sea animals, then amphibians, and then land animals.

Muslim: Very well. You are saying that this single cell developed into specialised systems over millions of years, even though those systems did not yet exist. How could it move toward something that was not there?

Take just one organ from an animal and consider the chance of it appearing. For example, did creatures in the early stages of evolution have eyes?

Seeker of Truth: They did not have eyes at first. Eyes later formed in more developed animals through mutations.

Muslim: Does that really make sense?

An eye needs an opening in the head - and remarkably, all creatures have their eyes in their heads; no creatures developed with their eyes in their legs. It also needs a transparent outer covering that allows light to enter, and a brain able to receive and explain the visual signals. How could all of this form through random mutations?

Seeker of Truth: It would develop one stage at a time, not all at once.

Muslim: So one mutation makes an opening in the head, then perhaps a million years later another mutation creates the body of the eye, and another million years later a mutation creates visual sensors - and so on. Do you honestly find that convincing?

Seeker of Truth: Honestly, no.



Muslim: Then look at living creatures. In all of them, the right side matches the left side. This supposed accident is repeated throughout creation. You do not find one animal with an eye where its nose should be, or its right hand where its mouth should be. If everything were the result of random mutations, we would expect examples like that.

Seeker of Truth: That is true, but how do you explain the great similarity among living things?

Muslim: Allah Most High says: “You do not see any inconsistency in the creation of the Most Merciful.” [al-Mulk 67:3] Allah created His creatures within this precise and balanced order.

Seeker of Truth: Then who created God?

Muslim: The question itself is mistaken.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: If you ask, “Who cooked the table?” the question is wrong because a table is not something that is cooked. A question is only valid when its description applies to the thing being asked about.

In the same way, asking “Who created God?” is wrong because God is not created.

Seeker of Truth: What is the proof that He is not created?

Muslim: Because being created would contradict His being God.

Let us agree on this: there are two categories, Creator and created. We are speaking about the Creator. If you ask who created Him, you have changed the subject from the Creator to a created being.

Seeker of Truth: The label is not important. I mean: how did He come to be, and where did He come from?

Muslim: However you phrase the question, it leads to the same point: God has no beginning. He exists without a starting point. Allah says: “He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden.” [al-Hadid 57:3]

Seeker of Truth: I can answer you in the same way and say that nothing can exist without something bringing it into existence.

Muslim: You cannot apply that to the Creator. Otherwise every creator would need another creator, and the chain would continue endlessly into the past. That is impossible.

Seeker of Truth: Why is it impossible?



Muslim: Because if the chain had no starting point, then anything depending on it could never begin.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: Imagine that you go to have a document signed. The employee says, “I cannot sign until my manager signs.” The manager says he cannot sign until his own manager signs, and this continues without end. Would your document ever be signed?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: But if the document reaches you already signed, what must be true?

Seeker of Truth: Someone must have signed it without needing a signature from anyone above him.

Muslim: Existence is similar. If there were an endless chain of creators with no beginning, existence would never have begun. Since existence is here, there must be a Creator who has no creator.

Seeker of Truth: But how can He have no creator?

Muslim: He exists by Himself and is independent of everything else. He brought existence into being and does not need anyone to bring Him into being. He is self-sufficient, mighty, and powerful in Himself.

Seeker of Truth: I understand, but that still does not prove that this Creator is the God you worship.

Muslim: We can discuss that later and examine the evidence for it. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/yOmOU9dugq1>

Discussion of Deism (Allah's Attributes)

Seeker of Truth: I am now convinced that this universe has a Creator, but I reject the idea of religions.

Muslim: Why?

Seeker of Truth: For many reasons. One is that God is too great to communicate with human beings. The idea of sending prophets and establishing religions does not seem acceptable to me.

Muslim: I want to understand the idea you have formed about this Creator.

Seeker of Truth: What do you mean? I do not know Him well.

Muslim: Allah says: “It is He who spread out the earth, placed in it firm mountains and rivers, and made two kinds of every fruit. He covers the day with the night. Surely in that are signs for people who reflect.” [al-Ra'd 13:3]

Seeker of Truth: What does that mean here?

Muslim: When you look at this creation, the precise connections in the universe, and the skill shown in it, what can you learn about its Creator?

Seeker of Truth: That He is creative?

Muslim: Good. Allah describes Himself as “the Originator of the heavens and the earth.” [al-Baqarah 2:117]

Seeker of Truth: But I have not said that I accept the Qur'an as true.

Muslim: So far I have not required you to accept anything from it. We relied on the signs in the universe, and you yourself drew out qualities that its Creator must have. I am only quoting the Qur'an to show that it supports the conclusion you reached.

Muslim: Now tell me: what does the great precision in creation, and placing everything where it belongs, show?

Seeker of Truth: Intelligence.

Muslim: Correct, although we do not usually use the word “intelligence” for Allah. We say wisdom. Allah says: “Know that Allah is Mighty and Wise.” [al-Baqarah 2:209]

Seeker of Truth: What does “Mighty” mean?

Muslim: I will explain after asking you something. We cannot move these mountains. What, then, can be said of the One who created and moves the earth, the sun, and the galaxies? What quality does this show?

Seeker of Truth: That He is powerful.

Muslim: Yes. This is one meaning of being Mighty. Allah says about Himself: “Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Mighty.” [al-Hajj 22:40]

Seeker of Truth: The verse says both powerful and mighty, so there must be a difference between power and might.

Muslim: Might is broader than power. The Mighty is one who cannot be humiliated. Might includes strength, complete authority, and freedom from any need of others.

Seeker of Truth: That is true. If He needed someone else, He would not be God.

Muslim: Correct. Allah Most High says: “Indeed, Allah is free of need from all the worlds.” [Al Imran 3:97]

Seeker of Truth: If He has no need of us, why did He create us?

Muslim: That is an unusual question. Do you need a cat?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then why did you feed the hungry cat you saw in the street a few days ago?

Seeker of Truth: Because I love animals and show them kindness.

Muslim: So an action does not have to come from a need. Correct?

Seeker of Truth: Yes, but I still do not understand the purpose for which we were created.

Muslim: Allah says: “Tell My servants that I am truly the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful, and that My punishment is the painful punishment.” [al-Hijr 15:49-50]

Among Allah's attributes are qualities that belong specifically to Him, and qualities whose effects reach others.

The qualities of His own Being include His Face, His Eye, His Hand, His greatness, and His majesty. These are to be known and honoured. Allah says: "Allah is the One who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them. His command descends among them so that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge." [al-Talaq 65:12]

This great God, who has all these qualities, also deserves to be worshipped. Allah Most High says: "I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me. I do not seek any provision from them, nor do I ask them to feed Me. Indeed, Allah alone is the Provider, the Lord of Power, the Mighty." [al-Dhariyat 51:56-58]

This completes the first type of divine attributes.

The second type includes attributes whose effects reach creation, such as mercy, anger, forgiveness, and punishment. Their effects become clear in the way Allah deals with His creatures.

When Allah created the creation, the effects of these attributes appeared. This does not mean that He needs His creation.

Seeker of Truth: Does that mean He needed us in order to show His attributes?

Muslim: No. I will explain with an example. What quality in yourself do you value most?

Seeker of Truth: I am very generous. I give poor people as much as I can.

Muslim: If there were no poor people, would your generosity disappear?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: But when poor people are present, your generosity becomes visible and they benefit from it. That does not mean you need poor people.

Seeker of Truth: Correct.

Muslim: Then Allah is even more free of need from us.

Seeker of Truth: You are right.

Muslim: Summarise the qualities you have concluded that God must have.

Seeker of Truth: He is the Originator, Wise, Powerful, and Mighty.

Muslim: What is His name?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: Does He have a Face?



Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: How can we find out?

Seeker of Truth: Only by seeing Him.

Muslim: Then tell me where He is so that we can go and see Him.

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: So how will we see Him?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know. What point are you trying to make?

Muslim: Our knowledge of Him is still very limited. We need a reliable source of knowledge in order to learn about Him. Do you agree?

Seeker of Truth: Of course, but that does not prove that such a source exists.

Muslim: I will return to that point.

Muslim: Can an ignorant person be described as wise?

Seeker of Truth: No. A wise person must have knowledge.

Muslim: Then Allah is All-Knowing. Allah Most High says about Himself: "Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing." [al-An'am 6:83]

Muslim: Now the question is this: do wisdom and justice not require the Creator to tell us why He created us?

Seeker of Truth: Not necessarily.

Muslim: How could that be? Could you build a company, hire employees, and never tell them their duties or the work expected from them?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Why not?

Seeker of Truth: Because they would not know what to do.

Muslim: Exactly. Allah must therefore inform us so that we can follow His command.

Seeker of Truth: But not everyone follows His command.

Muslim: That is why reward and punishment exist.

Seeker of Truth: He placed a natural sense within people that guides them to good and evil. That could replace the need for heavenly messages.



Muslim: That is not enough, because people often disagree about good and evil. For example, do you believe stealing is wrong in every case?

Seeker of Truth: Of course it is wrong.

Muslim: Some people say there is nothing wrong with stealing from the rich because it will not seriously harm them.

Muslim: What do you think about adultery?

Seeker of Truth: It is immoral.

Muslim: Yet some societies regard it as acceptable.

Seeker of Truth: But would a Creator who is so great really care about what we do on this earth, which is like a speck of dust in the universe?

Muslim: Suppose you owned a vast farm and had a young child whose size was nothing compared with that land. Would you neglect the child just because the farm was much larger?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then what about the Powerful, Mighty, and Wise Creator? If you imagine that He created us and then simply abandoned us, that would be an attack on His wisdom.

Seeker of Truth: Then why does He allow us to disobey?

Muslim: Because His wisdom includes allowing people to choose. Those who disobey may receive His pardon and forgiveness, or His punishment, and His justice is shown in how He deals with them.

Seeker of Truth: The argument is good, but why does the Creator not appear to us Himself so that we can be certain which religion is true?

Muslim: A moment ago you said He was too great to care for us. Now you want Him to appear personally so that He can tell each person what He wants.

If the ruler of a country issued a law and you heard it through the official state media, you would not say, "Come out yourself and tell us what you want."

Seeker of Truth: But how can we be sure that what is said about Him is true?

Muslim: Through truthful revelations and messengers.

Seeker of Truth: How can we confirm that they are truthful?

Muslim: That is what we will discuss in the next session. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/hJIdCB5D-Go>

Discussion of Theism

Seeker of Truth: How can I study thousands of religions and work out which one is true? That sounds extremely difficult.

Muslim: You do not need to study every religion one by one.

Seeker of Truth: So you expect me to study only your religion and become convinced by it?

Muslim: Even that would be enough if Islam were proven true, because anything that contradicts it would then be false. But that is not what I mean. Religions can be placed into broad groups. You can examine a central idea shared by many religions; if that idea is shown to be false, you do not need to study every religion in that group separately.

Seeker of Truth: That is a useful approach. What are the main groups?

Muslim: Religions can be divided into three broad groups: First: polytheistic religions, which believe in more than one god.

Second: idolatrous religions, which worship created objects or beings.

Third: monotheistic religions, which worship one God.

Seeker of Truth: Then let us discuss them one idea at a time.

Muslim: First, we must agree that there cannot be more than one true God. Allah Most High says: “Had there been in the heavens and the earth gods besides Allah, both would have fallen into ruin.” [al-Anbiya 21:22]

Seeker of Truth: How would the heavens and the earth be ruined?

Muslim: Imagine a car with two steering wheels and two drivers. Would it travel safely?

Seeker of Truth: No. It would probably crash.

Muslim: Why?

Seeker of Truth: One driver might try to turn right while the other turns left, so the car would be damaged or hit a wall.



Muslim: The universe is similar. Since it has not collapsed into conflict, it has one God.

Seeker of Truth: Is that comparison really the same?

Muslim: Yes. Allah gives another example of a servant owned by quarrelling masters and another servant owned by one master. Are the two equal? [al-Zumar 39:29]

Muslim: Suppose there were two gods. The first wanted you to die, while the second wanted you to remain alive. What would happen?

Seeker of Truth: They could agree on a solution.

Muslim: Until they reached that agreement, would the first be unable to cause your death?

Seeker of Truth: He could not be powerless, because we assumed that he was powerful and mighty.

Muslim: But he wanted you to die and still could not carry it out until he consulted the other.

Seeker of Truth: Then perhaps there is another system that controls how they decide.

Muslim: What kind of system? In every case, each of them would be restricted by it.

Seeker of Truth: Why would that be a problem?

Muslim: Because each god would have limited freedom and would need the approval of the other. That is a weakness. How could either one be God if he cannot act independently?

Seeker of Truth: Could their wills always be identical so that they never disagree?

Muslim: That leads to the same problem. Neither would have a unique and independent will, so neither would have complete freedom or independence.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps each one has his own creation and has nothing to do with the creation of the other.

Muslim: How is that better? Each would have no control over part of creation, so his power and freedom would be limited. In some ways that is even worse.

Seeker of Truth: Why?

Muslim: A large part of creation would have no need for the second god. They could reject him, and he would have no power to punish them because they belong to the first.

Seeker of Truth: They would not have to reject him. Their own god could tell them to worship the second god as well.

Muslim: Suppose they worshipped the second god but rejected the first. What would happen?

Seeker of Truth: Their own god would punish them.

Muslim: Then they raised their hands and begged the second god, whom they worshipped, to rescue them from that punishment. What could he do?

Seeker of Truth: He might leave them, because they are not his creation.

Muslim: He would abandon them after they worshipped him? That would be a betrayal.

Allah describes how false partners will fail their worshippers on the Day of Resurrection: "Where are the partners you used to claim?" [al-An'am 6:22-23] He also says that disgrace and misery will fall upon the disbelievers. [al-Nahl 16:27]

Muslim: The point is that this supposed partner would be expected to defend those who worshipped him.

Seeker of Truth: Then he could ask the first god not to punish them.

Muslim: He would have no right to force that request, and if he had to humble himself before the first god, he would no longer be mighty. Allah says that He has no partner in His rule and needs no protector because of weakness. [al-Isra 17:111]

If another god were equal to Him or stronger than Him, that would also mean weakness and humiliation. Allah is far above all humiliation.

So the second god would face three unavoidable choices:

First choice: he abandons the worshippers who belong to the first god. That would make him dishonourable and unfit to be God.

Second choice: he lowers himself before the first god and begs for his worshippers to be pardoned. A being who must do that does not deserve worship.

Third choice: he uses force against the first god.

Allah says: “Allah has never taken a son, nor is there any god with Him. Otherwise each god would have taken away what he created, and some would have tried to overcome others.” [al-Mu'minun 23:91] He also says: “Had there been other gods with Him, as they claim, they would have sought a way to challenge the Lord of the Throne.” [al-Isra 17:42]

Muslim: If there were another god, each would try to rule alone, and they would struggle and fight. Which of these choices seems sound to you?

Seeker of Truth: None of them.

Muslim: Then only one conclusion remains: God is One and has no partner. Any religion that calls people to several gods cannot be true.
Rejecting the Worship of Idols

Seeker of Truth: We agreed to discuss idolatrous religions. What exactly does idolatry mean?

Muslim: Idolatry is the worship of any created being or object. A person who worships a human being, a stone, or an animal is worshipping an idol.

Seeker of Truth: First, what do you mean by worship?

Muslim: Performing religious acts to honour something, or hoping that it will bring benefit or remove harm.

Seeker of Truth: Why do you consider that kind of worship wrong?

Muslim: For many reasons. One is that these objects and beings are created and powerless.

Allah says: “They have taken gods besides Him which create nothing and are themselves created. They have no power to harm or benefit themselves, nor do they control death, life, or resurrection.” [al-Furqan 25:3]

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps they believe that the idols have supernatural power.

Muslim: Prophet Abraham exposed that claim. He broke all the idols in the temple except the largest one and placed the axe beside it. When the people asked who had done it, he told them to ask the large idol. They already knew it could not move, speak, or protect itself. That showed how weak and helpless their idols were.

Seeker of Truth: Could the idols be a means of reaching the greater God, worshipped with His approval as representatives?

Muslim: It makes no sense that God would approve the worship of another being. We said that one reason for creation is to worship Allah. Why would He create us so that we worship a stone or a human being instead of Him?

Seeker of Truth: Do Muslims not do the same thing by worshipping the Kaaba?

Muslim: We do not worship the Kaaba. It is a sacred mosque where we worship Allah.

Seeker of Truth: But you walk around it and face it during prayer.

Muslim: Yes, but not because we worship it. Our religion is orderly, so Muslims unite around one direction in prayer. That direction is the Kaaba because it was the first house placed on earth for the worship of Allah. Allah says: "Let them worship the Lord of this House." [Quraysh 106:3] He does not say, "Let them worship this house."

In prayer we say that we have turned our faces to the One who created the heavens and the earth. We also perform the circling ritual at the Kaaba, not for the Kaaba.

Seeker of Truth: Could idol worship work on the same principle, with people turning toward idols on behalf of God?

Muslim: I did not say that we turn to the Kaaba on behalf of God. Even if the building were destroyed, we would still face its direction because we pray directly to Allah, not to the building.

Allah rejects the excuse of those who take protectors besides Him and say: "We worship them only so that they may bring us nearer to Allah." [al-Zumar 39:3] Allah calls this associating partners with Him (shirk), because no one besides Him may be worshipped.

Seeker of Truth: Worshipping a created object such as a stone does not seem reasonable.

Muslim: That is why Allah challenges those who worship created beings: "Those you call upon besides Allah are servants like you. Call upon them and let them answer you, if you are truthful. Do they have feet with which they walk, hands with which they grasp, eyes with which they see, or ears with which they hear?" [al-A'raf 7:194-195]

If stones and trees cannot move or hear, how could they bring benefit or harm? Worshipping them shows a lack of sound judgement.

Seeker of Truth: They also do not have the qualities we agreed God must have, such as wisdom and knowledge.

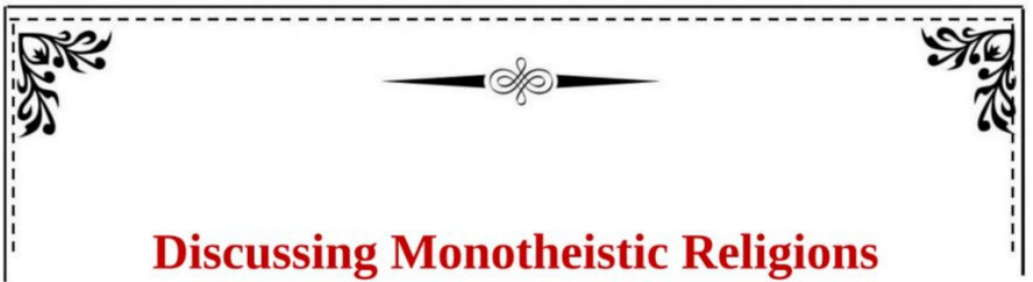


Muslim: And remember that idolatrous religions usually involve several gods. We have already shown why that cannot be true.

Seeker of Truth: I do not see any good reason for idolatry. I only wanted to examine the idea. Now I am eager to discuss the monotheistic religions.

Muslim: Then we will discuss them in the next session. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/v2Lmqj6IZwY>

Discussing Monotheistic Religions

Seeker of Truth: I looked into monotheistic religions and found that there are many of them too. It is difficult to study them all.

Muslim: Which ones did you find?

Seeker of Truth: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam, the Druze religion, the Baha'i Faith, and Ahmadiyya.

Muslim: Let us divide them into two groups: religions that appeared before Islam and religions that appeared after it. Those that appeared after Islam are much easier to test.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: Through two basic rules.

Seeker of Truth: Give me the first one.

Muslim: Would God's knowledge be vast and perfect, or narrow and limited?

Seeker of Truth: Vast and perfect.

Muslim: Suppose a person wrote a very successful poem, then wrote another poem but kept copying the same words and phrases from the first. What would you say about him?

Seeker of Truth: I would say that his command of language was weak.

Muslim: What if the second poem was also poor?

Seeker of Truth: That would show that he was not a skilled writer.

Muslim: Allah revealed the Qur'an in Arabic and gave it a unique style. It is not ordinary poetry, normal prose, or the rhymed form known as maqamat. It came in a style the Arabs had not known before.

Later people who claimed to be prophets tried to copy the Qur'an's style. Most of them failed badly. They repeated its phrases and produced awkward sentences shaped around its wording.

Seeker of Truth: Give me an example.

Muslim: Allah says: “Everyone upon the earth will perish, and there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honour.” [al-Rahman 55:26-27]

Baha'u'llah imitated the wording with a much weaker sentence: “Everyone upon it is perishing, and this is the face of your Lord, the Mighty, the Beloved.” [Kitab-i-Aqdas]

Seeker of Truth: The imitation is obvious, and it is very weak.

Muslim: Allah also says: “Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve months in the Book of Allah.” [al-Tawbah 9:36]

The Baha'i book says instead: “The number of months is nineteen months in the Book of God.” [Kitab-i-Aqdas]

Seeker of Truth: That is strange. They accept the Qur'an, yet the number cannot be both twelve and nineteen in the Book of God. It would have made more sense for him to say that the number had been changed.

Muslim: Exactly. This is not the only problem in their book. Would the All-Knowing and Wise God make basic mistakes?

Muslim: What is the proper Arabic plural of the word hadd? ⁽¹⁾

Seeker of Truth: Hudud.

Muslim: In their book al-Aqdas, they use the incorrect plural hududat instead of hudud. [al-Aqdas 2]

Muslim: And what is the plural of tall, meaning a hill?

Seeker of Truth: Tilal.

Muslim: Their book uses al-atlal instead of al-tilal. [al-Aqdas 4]

Seeker of Truth: How could the author of a supposedly divine book make such simple errors?

Muslim: Because the author was Persian, not an Arabic speaker.

Muslim: They also do not hold to clear monotheism.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: Baha'u'llah speaks about himself as though he is God and, at the same time, not God. In the Book of Certitude he says: “I am He and He is I, except that He is He and I am I.”

Muslim: Since you mentioned that the Baha'is and Ahmadis accept Islam, I can show the main problem in both claims very quickly.

(1) **Translator's note:** Hadd means a limit or a legal boundary.



Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, said: “There is no prophet after me.” They claim that prophets came after him. By accepting him as a true prophet, they undermine their own religions.

Seeker of Truth: Surely they have interpretations of that statement.

Muslim: The wording is extremely clear. Any attempt to force a different meaning onto it takes the statement away from what it plainly says.

Seeker of Truth: But is interpretation not part of Islam? Some Muslims say that “He rose over the Throne” means “He took control,” and that “hand” means “power.” Could “no prophet after me” also be given another meaning?

Muslim: Did you hear me make those interpretations?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then do not hold me responsible for them.

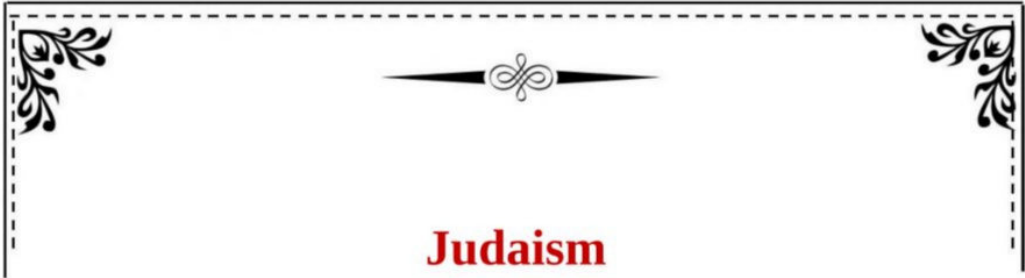
Seeker of Truth: But I have heard Muslim teachers say such things.

Muslim: Some do, and perhaps we will discuss that when we examine Islam.

Muslim: For now, do you not see that this method can make the meaning of any statement unclear?

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: Then this is a worthless heresy.

Judaism

Seeker of Truth: Let us leave those groups and discuss Judaism.

Muslim: There is little need to consider it as a universal religion.

Seeker of Truth: Why?

Muslim: Because it is not a missionary religion.

Seeker of Truth: What does that mean?

Muslim: It means that Jews generally do not call all people to enter their religion. In fact, conversion can be made difficult.

Seeker of Truth: But if it were the true religion, I would enter it even if the conditions were difficult.

Muslim: We agreed that Allah is Wise, and that His wisdom requires Him to send guidance so people can know why they were created and what He wants from them.

Seeker of Truth: Correct.

Muslim: Would it fit that wisdom for the true message intended for mankind not to invite people to know and follow it?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Therefore, if a religion does not call people to it, that shows it is not the universal religion Allah chose for all humanity.

Seeker of Truth: That makes sense. Does this apply only to Judaism?

Muslim: No. Any non-missionary religion, even if some part of it originally came from God, would not be the final religion Allah commands all people to follow.

Seeker of Truth: So the religion of the Sabians, the Druze, and several other closed religions cannot be the message Allah chose for all mankind.



Muslim: Yes. The Druze religion is also secretive and does not allow outsiders to learn its full teachings.

Seeker of Truth: Even so, I want to know whether the Torah is authentic.

Muslim: We believe that Allah revealed a book called the Torah, containing guidance and light. But who wrote the text that exists today?

Seeker of Truth: God.

Muslim: What is the evidence?

Seeker of Truth: That is what Jews say.

Muslim: A claim needs proof, and the evidence points in the opposite direction.

Seeker of Truth: For example?

Muslim: Read the final chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 5 to 8.

“So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab... and the Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days.”

[Deuteronomy 34:5-8]

Muslim: Does that sound like words revealed by God to Moses?

Seeker of Truth: It appears to have been written after his death.

Muslim: That is evidence that the Torah now in circulation is not exactly the book revealed to Moses. Much of it is historical narration about events during Moses' life. A later narrator is describing what happened.

Seeker of Truth: Give me another example.

Muslim: Read Leviticus 24:23.

“Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they brought the one who had cursed outside the camp and stoned him with stones. The Israelites did as the Lord commanded Moses.” [Leviticus 24:23]

Muslim: Would a revelation sent to Moses describe to him, as a past event, what he had just seen and done himself?

Seeker of Truth: A later person would normally tell that story. This suggests that the present Torah was written by someone after Moses.

Muslim: There is another important point. In our well-documented books, early Muslim scholars sometimes quoted passages from the Torah that are not found in today's Torah. There is no record that the Jews of their time accused them of inventing those passages.



The Qur'an says: "Successful indeed is the one who purifies himself, remembers the name of his Lord, and prays. Yet you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting. This is certainly found in the earlier Scriptures - the Scriptures of Abraham and Moses." [al-A'la 87:14-19]

The passage that the Qur'an says was in the earlier scripture is not found in the present Torah.

Seeker of Truth: Why should I believe the Qur'an's statement?

Muslim: Because the Jews who heard it at the time did not reply that it was false. That strongly suggests the passage was still known in their scripture.

Seeker of Truth: Are there other missing quotations?

Muslim: The New Testament also presents a sentence as scriptural: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man - what God has prepared for those who love Him." [1 Corinthians 2:9]

Muslim: This is supposed to be drawn from the earlier scripture. Where is the exact passage in the Old Testament?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: It is not there in that form.

Seeker of Truth: Where did these passages go?

Muslim: They once had other religious books, and later communities decided not to recognise some of them. These are often called the Apocrypha, meaning hidden or non-canonical writings. Even books that remained accepted could contain passages that were changed, replaced, or lost.

Seeker of Truth: How can you be sure that the Qur'an was not changed in the same way?

Muslim: I will explain that when we discuss the Qur'an itself.

Muslim: Now open Genesis, chapter 2.

It says that on the seventh day God finished His work and rested. [Genesis 2:2-3]

Muslim: We agreed that Allah is Powerful and Mighty. Is tiredness followed by rest consistent with the perfection we have established for God?

Seeker of Truth: No. That would make Him weak.

Muslim: Exactly. How could you follow a religion whose scripture has been altered and has lost passages?



Seeker of Truth: I could not, because it would not be a reliable religion.

Seeker of Truth: What about Zoroastrianism? ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/FgsgYbCPtEY>



Zoroastrianism

Muslim: Zoroastrianism cannot be the universal religion of God for reasons similar to those we have already discussed.

Seeker of Truth: Such as what?

Muslim: It is not missionary, and the religion Allah chose for all people could not be restricted in that way.

Seeker of Truth: It is strange that a person could believe he has the truth and the path to salvation, yet not invite others to it.

Muslim: That is the nature of their religion.

Muslim: A second reason is that it is polytheistic, not monotheistic as you said. They have a god who creates good, Ahura Mazda, and a god who creates evil, Ahriman.

Seeker of Truth: Then it is false.

Muslim: Wait. I have not finished. Do you know when this religion began?

Seeker of Truth: Roughly two thousand years before Islam.

Muslim: And when was the oldest surviving manuscript of its sacred text written?

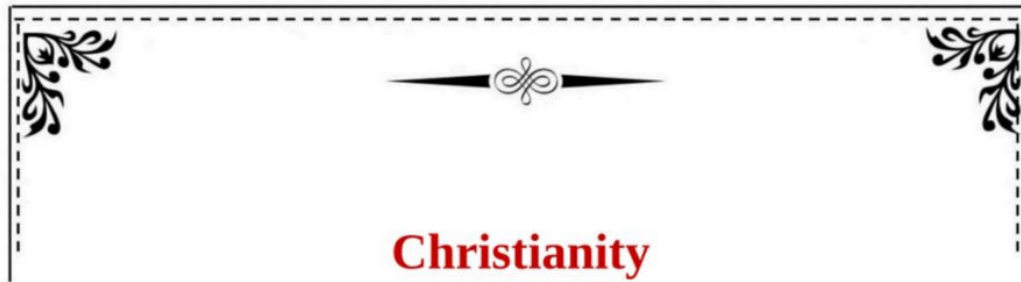
Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: About five hundred years after the rise of Islam.

Seeker of Truth: So the oldest surviving manuscript appeared around two thousand five hundred years after the religion began. How could its accuracy be proven?

Muslim: Let us leave it there and move on to Christianity. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/FgsgYbCPtEY>



Muslim: Why are you bringing up Christianity? Did we not agree that religions with several gods are false?

Seeker of Truth: Christians say they have one God. Even in prayer they say: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God."

Muslim: You have just named three. How can the Father plus the Son plus the Holy Spirit equal one rather than three?

Seeker of Truth: It is like the God of Islam. You say Allah plus His knowledge plus His power is one God.

Muslim: What are knowledge and power in relation to Allah?

Seeker of Truth: They are attributes.

Muslim: Are the Son and the Holy Spirit attributes of the Father?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then the two ideas are not the same.

Seeker of Truth: Let me explain it another way. How many sides does a triangle have?

Muslim: Three, and the three sides form one triangle.

Muslim: What are the sides in relation to the triangle?

Seeker of Truth: They are its parts.

Muslim: Then this is different from the Christian idea of God. The sides are parts of one thing, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not said to be parts of one being.

Seeker of Truth: What is the difference?

Muslim: In Christian terms, what are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit called?

Seeker of Truth: Persons, or hypostases.



Muslim: A person is a distinct self, not merely a body part. I can say the head, hands, and feet belong to one person, but I cannot call each hand or the head a separate person. Christianity calls each of the three a person, so each is treated as distinct.

Seeker of Truth: Could we not say this is a hidden matter beyond human understanding?

Muslim: No. Christians say Christ entered the world, was seen, and lived among people, so the claim is not entirely beyond observation.

Muslim: It is also a direct logical contradiction. Saying “three distinct persons are one person” is like saying a square has only three sides. That is not a mystery whose details we cannot grasp; it is simply impossible.

Seeker of Truth: But what if the Gospel clearly teaches it?

Muslim: The wording is not found there in that form. In fact, the Gospel contains statements that oppose it. Read Mark 13:32.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” [Mark 13:32]

Muslim: This denies the Son knowledge of the Hour, while we agreed that God must be All-Knowing.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps he knew it but hid the answer from them. One church commentator says that if Christ had told them he knew but would not reveal it, they would have remained distressed for a long time.

Muslim: Then he would have spoken falsely to them, and a liar cannot be God.

Seeker of Truth: Could we say that he knew through his divine nature but did not know through his human nature?

Muslim: Then the human person you call God lacked knowledge. The verse also excludes the Holy Spirit, because it says only the Father knows. That undermines the divinity of both the Son and the Spirit.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps Christians have an answer to that.

Muslim: In any case, the Gospels in their present form are not the original revelation.

Seeker of Truth: What is the evidence?

Muslim: Open the Gospel of Luke and read its beginning.



“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down by those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning. I too decided, after careful investigation, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of what you were taught.” [Luke 1:1-4]

Muslim: The writer says that he decided to compose an account, following others who had written accounts, and sent it to a man named Theophilus. Does that sound like a book directly revealed by God?

Seeker of Truth: No. I thought the Gospel was a book sent by God to Jesus, not a later biography.

Muslim: The true Gospel was revelation given to Jesus, but it was lost, and these later accounts came to be called Gospels.

Seeker of Truth: Then where do Christians take their rules about what is lawful and forbidden?

Muslim: From sayings attributed to Jesus in these books, and from the Old Testament, which Jesus says he did not come to abolish. [Matthew 5:17]

Seeker of Truth: But did we not already show that the Old Testament text is unreliable?

Muslim: Yes. There is also a basic contradiction in the idea of salvation. Paul says in Galatians:

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole. He redeemed us so that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the nations through Christ Jesus.” [Galatians 3:13-14]

Seeker of Truth: Christ was crucified to save us from sin.

Muslim: Which sin?

Seeker of Truth: God created Adam in a garden and told him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent told Eve that they would gain knowledge if they ate, so they both ate from it.

Muslim: That story is found in Genesis. But Adam and Eve did it, so why should we carry their guilt?

Seeker of Truth: Let me explain.

Muslim: Before you do: what was the tree called?

Seeker of Truth: The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.



Muslim: Then before eating from it, Adam did not know good from evil. How could God punish him for an act he could not yet recognise as evil?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know, but God warned him that he would die if he ate from it.

“You may eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” [Genesis 2:16-17]

Muslim: What did the serpent tell him?

Seeker of Truth: That he would not die.

Muslim: Did Adam die on the day he ate from it?

Seeker of Truth: No. Genesis says he lived for 930 years.

Muslim: Then the story appears to make the serpent truthful while giving God an unfulfilled warning.

Seeker of Truth: They say the earth became cursed and Adam's children inherited his sin. A punishment was needed, so God came down and was killed on the cross as a sacrifice.

Muslim: I will not ask you again what fault of ours makes us bear our father's sin, because you did not answer and will not answer. Instead, I ask: why could God not forgive them without humiliating Himself?

Seeker of Truth: Sin must be punished. It cannot simply be forgiven.

Muslim: In Matthew 9:6, Jesus says: “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” Since he had authority to forgive sins, why did he not use it without dying?

Seeker of Truth: There must be wisdom behind it.

Muslim: So there is no answer. Did he not become incarnate in order to die on the cross?

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: Read Matthew 26 from verse 3.

Seeker of Truth: “Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to arrest Jesus by trickery and kill him. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.’” [Matthew 26:3-5]

Muslim: Read from verse 14.



Seeker of Truth: “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you?’ They counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. From that time he sought an opportunity to betray him.” [Matthew 26:14-16]

Muslim: This shows that the Jewish priests decided to kill him while he was hiding from them, and Judas Iscariot took money from them to tell them where he was.

Muslim: Read from verse 20.

Seeker of Truth: “When evening came, he sat down with the twelve. As they were eating, he said, ‘Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me.’ They were exceedingly sorrowful, and each began to say to him, ‘Lord, is it I?’” [Matthew 26:20-22]

Muslim: This shows that they were sorrowful. Had he come for atonement and the salvation of humanity, this would have been joyful news for them. Continue reading.

Seeker of Truth: “The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” [Matthew 26:24]

Muslim: How can he condemn the one who contributed to his killing when he supposedly came to be killed?

Seeker of Truth: But he says: “For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.” [Matthew 26:28]

Muslim: This contradicts the events of the story. Read from verse 38.

Seeker of Truth: “Then he said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with me.’” [Matthew 26:38]

Muslim: Is this the condition of the God who came to redeem humanity when the time came to accomplish his purpose?

Muslim: Continue reading.

Seeker of Truth: “He went a little farther and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, ‘O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” [Matthew 26:39]

Seeker of Truth: “Again, a second time, he went away and prayed, saying, ‘O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away from me unless I drink it, Your will be done.’” [Matthew 26:42]

Muslim: So he did not know whether he would be killed, and he was afraid of it. That is why he said: if You have decreed this for me, then let Your will be done.

Muslim: Read what he said to his disciples.

Seeker of Truth: “Then he came to his disciples and said to them, ‘Sleep now and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.’” [Matthew 26:45-46]

Muslim: He called those who would kill him “sinners.” They should instead have been righteous people if they were carrying out the purpose for which he came.

Muslim: Read from verse 50.

Seeker of Truth: “Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took him. And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.’” [Matthew 26:50-52]

Muslim: His companions wanted to defend him and stop the Jews from killing him. If he had come for their salvation and to redeem humanity, they should have helped the Jews do it.

Muslim: Read verse 59.

Seeker of Truth: “The chief priests, the elders, and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death.” [Matthew 26:59]

Seeker of Truth: The account says they spat in his face, struck him, and mocked him. [Matthew 26:67-68]

Muslim: They spat in the face of the one they call God?

Seeker of Truth: Sadly, that is what the text says. If God wanted to save humanity, why would He humiliate Himself in this way?

Muslim: Read the start of Matthew 27.

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and elders made plans to have Jesus executed. They bound him, led him away, and handed him to Pilate the governor. [Matthew 27:1-2]

Muslim: The Jewish leaders decided to kill him; the account does not present him as ordering them to do it.



Muslim: Continue with Judas.

When Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned, he was filled with remorse, returned the thirty pieces of silver, and said: "I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood." [Matthew 27:3-4]

Muslim: Judas himself, one of the followers, regretted it and called Jesus innocent. He did not say that Jesus was carrying the sins of humanity and had come to be sacrificed.

Seeker of Truth: I do not need to read more. The point is clear. If he came to die as a sacrifice, he would have instructed his followers to help, not resist the arrest.

Muslim: If the doctrine of atonement falls, the doctrine of incarnation also falls.

Seeker of Truth: What does incarnation mean?

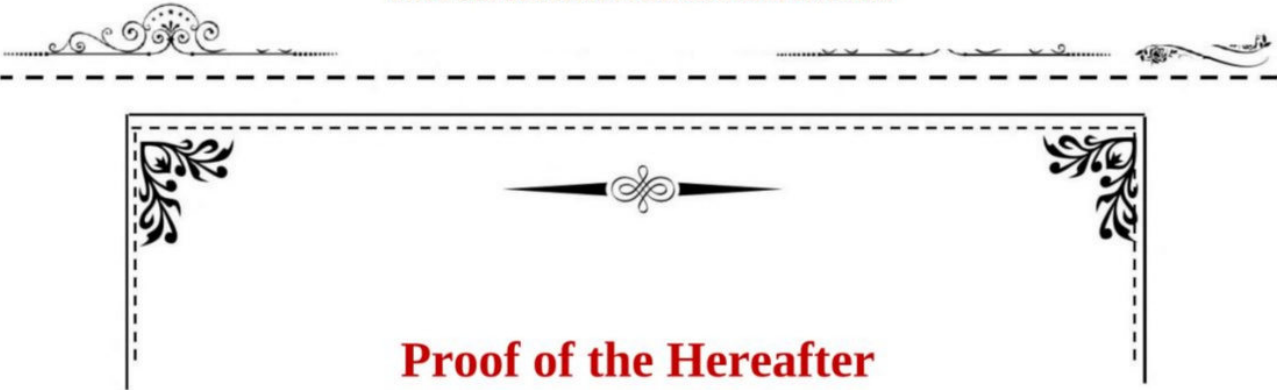
Muslim: That God came to earth in a human body. Christians say He did this in order to be sacrificed. If the sacrifice is disproved, the stated reason for the incarnation disappears.

Seeker of Truth: So the two main foundations are original sin with atonement, and the Trinity?

Muslim: Yes, and we have already challenged both.

Seeker of Truth: Then Christianity, in its present form, cannot be the true monotheistic religion. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/A4BEAFxkuCU>



Proof of the Hereafter

Seeker of Truth: I want to return to the point we began with: the claim that there is life after death.

Muslim: We can establish it through a few principles. First, why does an oppressor act unjustly?

Seeker of Truth: To gain something, protect an interest, or release hatred.

Muslim: So injustice comes from a need that cannot be met fairly, or from a defect such as greed, hatred, or envy.

Muslim: Because God is perfect, He is free from those needs and defects. Therefore God must be just. Do you agree?

Seeker of Truth: Yes. A god who is unjust would deserve contempt, not worship.

Muslim: That is why Allah says in a sacred hadith: "I have forbidden injustice for Myself and made it forbidden among you."

Muslim: People created laws, courts, police, and prisons in order to establish justice. But have they ever fully achieved it for everyone?

Seeker of Truth: No. Some people wrong others and are never punished. Courts may fail to discover the truth, and police do not catch every criminal.

Muslim: Their failure comes from limited knowledge or limited power. But if they knew the truth, had the power to restore a right, and still refused, what would they be?

Seeker of Truth: They would be unjust.

Muslim: We have agreed on three things: Allah knows everything, Allah has power, and Allah is just. He knows every wrong, can punish the oppressor, and can restore the victim's right.

Muslim: Yet many wrongs are not settled in this life. Therefore there must be a court of perfect justice after this life, where no right is lost.

Seeker of Truth: I agree, but I still have a problem: why does God allow evil in the first place?

Muslim: What exactly is the problem?

Seeker of Truth: The existence of evil seems to leave two choices: either God loves evil, or He dislikes it but cannot stop it.

Muslim: You have left out a third choice.

Seeker of Truth: What is it?

Muslim: That He can prevent evil, but wisdom requires that He allow people to choose in this world.

Seeker of Truth: Why would preventing evil be unwise?

Muslim: One purpose of creation is that people act freely: they may believe or reject, obey or disobey. Without that freedom, there would be no real test. The Prophet said that if people never sinned, Allah would bring a people who sinned, sought forgiveness, and were forgiven.

Seeker of Truth: So God loves evil?

Muslim: No. He loves the repentance of those who return to Him.

Seeker of Truth: What about those who reject Him and never repent?

Muslim: Fuel. Suppose I offered free food to anyone who simply asked, but some people called me a liar and refused until they died hungry. Whose fault would that be? ⁽¹⁾

Seeker of Truth: Theirs. But why not feed them anyway out of compassion?

Muslim: The condition was simple: ask. They rejected the offer and insulted the giver. The loss came from their own choice.

Allah says: "Indeed, Allah does not wrong people in the least, but people wrong themselves." [Yunus 10:44]

Muslim: Speak openly; the Qur'an says that people are tested with both hardship and ease. [al-Anbiya 21:35]

Seeker of Truth: Then what about children born with severe disabilities? Are they also being tested?

Muslim: Why not? Every one of us was once a child.

Muslim: And why did you decide that their condition is pure evil?

Seeker of Truth: Because they suffer through no fault of their own.

(1) Translator's note: The Arabic literally says "fuel" or "firewood"; here it means fuel for the Fire.



Muslim: But if you were a doctor, this would be good for you.

Seeker of Truth: Good from the material side, but I still feel compassion for them.

Muslim: The existence of this feeling of compassion, and your knowledge that good and evil exist, is itself one of the proofs of God, because feelings cannot be created by matter and chance.

Seeker of Truth: How does compassion point to God?

Muslim: Imagine an electronic knife programmed to cut an apple. If you then told it to cut a person's leg, would it understand that one act is harmless and the other is cruel?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Because it is only material. If human beings were nothing but matter, there would be no real moral feelings.

Seeker of Truth: Modern artificial intelligence may refuse when you ask it how to commit a crime.

Muslim: Only because a programmer made it respond that way. A different program could make it approve the opposite. The machine itself has no moral judgement.

Seeker of Truth: That is true. But you changed the subject. What did the disabled child do to deserve the disability?

Muslim: Working limbs are a gift. Why do you believe the Creator is required to give that exact gift to every person?

Seeker of Truth: Because the child may be sad.

Muslim: Freedom from sadness is also a gift. Why must the Creator grant every possible gift?

Seeker of Truth: I had not thought of it that way. We receive many good things without earning them. Because we are used to them, we treat their absence as if a right was taken away.

Muslim: Consider another side. If Bashar al-Assad had been born unable to walk, would that have been good or bad?

Seeker of Truth: Good for other people, perhaps, but not for him.



Muslim: It might even have been better for him. We have agreed that there is reckoning in the Hereafter. This man is a criminal, a shedder of blood, hateful, and suffers from a hundred psychological illnesses because of his crimes; in the Hereafter he will face severe punishment.

Muslim: If he had been born paralysed, he would suffer because of his paralysis and be rewarded for his pain, and his Hereafter would be far better than it is now while he is a criminal.

Seeker of Truth: But how do we know that a particular child would have become a criminal?

Muslim: We do not know, but Allah knows.

Seeker of Truth: Does that mean every disabled child would otherwise have become a criminal?

Muslim: No. This is only one possible example of divine wisdom. There may be many other reasons, greater and deeper than what we can see.

Seeker of Truth: You speak about the problem of evil as though it is not difficult at all.

Muslim: In Islam it is not a contradiction, much less an unsolvable problem.

Seeker of Truth: Why does the Creator not establish justice through judges in this life by inspiring them with the facts and the correct ruling?

Muslim: Because corrupt rulers and judges would then claim that God inspired their injustice. Even the Messenger of Allah judged by evidence presented to him, not by hidden knowledge, so that he would be an example for us.

Seeker of Truth: Then what is the solution?

Muslim: Allah's wisdom and justice require a true court where no one is wronged and no right is lost. It will come after this world of testing ends.

Seeker of Truth: One final point: some people say death itself is the punishment.

Muslim: Everyone dies, so how could the same death be a fair punishment for everyone?

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps the death of a criminal is much more painful.

Muslim: Would a painful death be enough for a drug dealer who destroyed thousands of lives, or a tyrant who robbed nations and killed people?



Seeker of Truth: Perhaps he could continue suffering for a very long time, even if we could not see it.

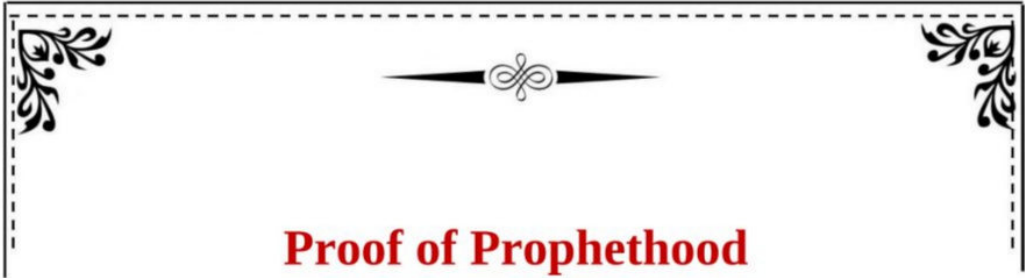
Muslim: Good. You have just accepted the principle of punishment after death.

Seeker of Truth: You have left me no reasonable way to deny it.

Muslim: Reward after death must also exist. Otherwise the Creator would fail to reward those who worshipped and obeyed Him, which would be unjust.

Seeker of Truth: Correct. What remains is to discover the true law that He sent to us and to obey Him. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/b8ml-eZ9NsE>

Proof of Prophethood

Seeker of Truth: Do you believe in extraterrestrial beings?

Muslim: No.

Seeker of Truth: Why not?

Muslim: Because I have not seen convincing evidence that they exist.

Seeker of Truth: What if I told you that they do exist?

Muslim: I would ask for your evidence. If it were sound, I would accept it.

Seeker of Truth: You have ruined the argument I planned to use.

Muslim: What was the plan?

Seeker of Truth: I expected you to say that you reject them because you have never seen them. Then I would say that God must show Himself to us before we can be held responsible for believing.

Muslim: That argument has no force. How do you know that you have vocal cords?

Seeker of Truth: They can be seen with medical equipment.

Muslim: Have you personally had yours photographed?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then how do you know they exist?

Seeker of Truth: Because I have a voice.

Muslim: So you know a thing through its effects. The same applies to Allah: you do not need to see Him in order to recognise the effects of His power and wisdom.

Seeker of Truth: I understand. We already discussed the evidence for God. My question is: why does Allah not show Himself to us?

Muslim: Imagine going to a university and saying: “Give me a degree before I attend classes or sit the exams.”

Seeker of Truth: That would be absurd.

Muslim: We pray, fast, give charity, and avoid what is forbidden, hoping to receive in the Hereafter the honour of seeing Allah. It is the greatest blessing of Paradise. You are asking for that reward before the test.

Allah says that no human being is spoken to by Him except through revelation, from behind a veil, or through a messenger sent by His permission. [al-Shura 42:51]

Seeker of Truth: What wisdom is there in keeping Him unseen?

Muslim: If Allah showed Himself openly, could you still deny that He exists?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then where would the test be?

The Qur'an praises those who believe in the unseen. [al-Baqarah 2:3] If Allah showed Himself openly, the basic choice between belief and rejection would disappear.

Seeker of Truth: How would it disappear? Surely some people would still reject Him.

Muslim: His existence would become as obvious as the sun and moon. A person might disobey Him, but could not honestly deny that He exists.

Seeker of Truth: Do Muslims not say that Iblis rejected Allah even though he was in heaven and Allah spoke to him?

Muslim: Iblis did not deny Allah's existence. His disbelief was pride and refusal: Allah ordered him to bow, but he said, “I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay.” [al-A'raf 7:12] That is different from denying and calling the truth false.

Seeker of Truth: Then why does Allah not send an angel to every one of us, as He sent angels to the prophets?

Muslim: Let us return to the main principle: why did Allah not simply create us unable to disbelieve?

Seeker of Truth: Because He wants to test us.

Muslim: Once you understand that, why keep asking for Allah to appear or for an angel to visit every person?



Seeker of Truth: A test does not mean that God should leave the truth unclear.

Muslim: Correct. He has given enough clear evidence. A person who always demands something stronger after every proof is often refusing the truth rather than searching honestly.

The Qur'an describes people who demanded: "We will never believe you until we see Allah openly." [al-Baqarah 2:55]

Seeker of Truth: But I have not yet seen enough evidence that the prophets you believe in were truly prophets.

Muslim: That is because you have not examined the matter seriously. I will present the evidence.

Seeker of Truth: I know you will try to prove Muhammad was a messenger. But even if that were proven, how did he know that the being who came to him was the angel Gabriel and not a devil?

Muslim: Do you see what I meant?

Seeker of Truth: What do you mean?

Muslim: I said that even if an angel came, you would ask for another proof. Gabriel came to the Messenger, and you now ask how he knew it was Gabriel.

Muslim: If Gabriel came to you, you could still say: "How do I know you are not a devil?" So merely sending an angel would not end every objection.

Seeker of Truth: You are right, but I still want an answer to the question.

Muslim: You will get one, but first we need to establish that the Messenger of Allah was truthful. Then we can trust his report about the being he saw.

Seeker of Truth: That is fair. What is the evidence for his truthfulness?

Muslim: Which is worse: lying about people or lying about Allah?

Seeker of Truth: Lying about Allah.

Muslim: Could a person be consistently truthful in ordinary life, then suddenly invent the greatest possible lie about God?

Seeker of Truth: Only someone already comfortable with lying would dare to do that.



Muslim: Muhammad was not known to lie to people. When he first called his clan, he asked: “If I told you that horsemen in the valley were about to attack you, would you believe me?” They replied: “Yes. We have never known you to lie.”

Muslim: He was known among his people for honesty. It is unreasonable to think that, when he finally chose to lie, he invented the greatest lie a human being could tell.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps they were merely being polite.

Muslim: Why would he be so confident that he gathered all of them and asked whether they would believe his warning? A habitual liar would not place himself in that position before everyone who knew him.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps they had not yet discovered his true character.

Muslim: Makkah was a small town where people knew one another closely. A person's habits could not remain hidden from the whole community.

Seeker of Truth: I am not fully convinced.

Muslim: Do you believe a liar could be so skilled that no one ever discovered a single lie?

Seeker of Truth: Not to that degree. But realistically, people may fail to discover a liar if they have not dealt closely with him, especially in business.

Muslim: That is a good point. Trade is one of the places where people are most tempted to lie.

Seeker of Truth: Even otherwise honest people may lie when money is involved.

Muslim: Do you know why Khadijah married Muhammad?

Seeker of Truth: She was his first wife, a wealthy woman of Makkah, known for her good character and beauty. Why did Khadijah marry him?

Muslim: He worked for her in trade. She gave him money to conduct business, and when she found him honest and trustworthy, she asked him to marry her. She had never known him to lie or cheat.

Seeker of Truth: If he was that truthful, why did his people not believe him?

Muslim: Did they ever present evidence that he had lied?

Seeker of Truth: What kind of evidence?

Muslim: For example, someone could have said: “Muhammad betrayed me,” or “He lied to me about such-and-such before claiming prophethood.”

Seeker of Truth: I have not found anything like that.

Muslim: If he had been a liar - far above that - you would have found examples. But imagine that an honest man told you, “You and your father do not understand.” Would you calmly consider his words?

Seeker of Truth: No. I might hit him.

Muslim: Now suppose you worshipped a god and an honest man spoke against that god. Would you still think calmly?

Seeker of Truth: Sometimes people do not use reason in situations like that.

Muslim: And suppose he threatened your position or status. Would you judge his words calmly?

Seeker of Truth: I would throw him out at once.

Muslim: That was Quraysh's position. He told them that their gods were false, so they rejected what he said. He told them that they and their fathers were in error and disbelief.

“Have you considered al-Lat and al-Uzza, and Manat, the third one?” [al-Najm 53:19-20]

He said about these gods: “They are only names you and your fathers have given them. Allah has sent down no proof for them. They follow only guesses and what their souls desire, even though guidance has come to them from their Lord.” [al-Najm 53:23]

Muslim: He also told them, “I am a warner to you before a severe punishment.” In other words, if they did not follow him, Allah would punish them. At that point, they were not calmly weighing whether he was truthful. Some believed that if Allah sent a messenger, the messenger had to be one of the great tribal chiefs.

Seeker of Truth: Tribal life has serious weaknesses.

Muslim: The weakness is blind loyalty. It still exists: people may dislike being led by someone from another town, family, or tribe. Abu Jahl said that his clan had competed with Banu Abd Manaf in honour, feeding, giving, and leadership. When Banu Abd Manaf then said, “A prophet has arisen among us,” he declared that his clan would never believe him.

Seeker of Truth: I thought Abu Jahl was the Prophet's uncle.



Muslim: No. Abu Lahab was his uncle. Abu Jahl belonged to Banu Makhzum, another branch of Quraysh.

Muslim: The Prophet belonged to Banu Abd Manaf.

Seeker of Truth: Why did Abu Lahab reject him?

Muslim: He rejected him out of pride and thought himself better. Yet Abu Lahab's son Utbah later believed, as did the Prophet's uncles al-Abbas and Hamzah, because they came to know his truthfulness.

Seeker of Truth: Why not simply say that those who rejected his prophethood no longer counted him truthful?

Muslim: Because many of the people who first rejected him later became believers.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps they believed only because he fought them.

Muslim: When someone fights you, do you normally love him and accept his word, or oppose him?

Seeker of Truth: I would oppose him. Look at how Palestinians regard an occupier.

Muslim: Exactly. They did not believe merely because he fought them. When he appeared weak, pride made it hard for them to accept him as a leader. When he gained strength, many reconsidered and recognised that he was right.

Seeker of Truth: Give me an example.

Muslim: Abu Sufyan led Quraysh against the Prophet for many years. After becoming Muslim, he asked to fight unbelievers as firmly as he had once fought Muslims. Khalid ibn al-Walid also fought the Prophet, then became one of his greatest commanders. Would they risk their lives for someone they knew was lying?

Seeker of Truth: That is a good point, but I am still not completely convinced.

Muslim: Who usually knows a liar best?

Seeker of Truth: His family.

Muslim: The first woman to believe was his wife Khadijah, and the first adult man was his close friend Abu Bakr. If he had been a liar, those closest to him would have been the first to expose him.

Seeker of Truth: Is there more evidence for his honesty?



Muslim: Yes. Al-Bukhari reported that Aisha said, “I was sleeping beside the Messenger of Allah. During the night, I noticed that he was gone, so I reached out with my hand. My hand touched his feet while he was prostrating and saying: ‘I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, in Your pardon from Your punishment, and in You from You. I cannot praise You enough. You are as You have praised Yourself.’”

Muslim: Could someone who invented a false call to God rise secretly at night, worship that God, plead with Him, and glorify Him?

Seeker of Truth: No. A liar may deceive people, but he does not keep up the deception when he is alone.

Muslim: Another example: on the day his son Ibrahim died, a solar eclipse occurred.

Seeker of Truth: An eclipse is a natural astronomical event.

Muslim: So, in your view, the eclipse would not prove prophethood?

Seeker of Truth: Certainly not. People in the past may have thought it did, but today we know how eclipses occur. If he had used it as proof, I would see that as evidence against him.

Muslim: Why?

Seeker of Truth: Because it was only a coincidence that it happened when his son died. An honest prophet would not exploit it.

Muslim: That is exactly what happened. When people said the sun had eclipsed because Ibrahim died, the Prophet gave a sermon and said: “The sun and moon do not eclipse because of anyone's death or life.” A false claimant would have used the moment for himself.

Seeker of Truth: That really is evidence of honesty. But is it enough by itself?

Muslim: It is strong evidence. It also teaches an important rule for careful research.

Seeker of Truth: What rule?

Muslim: One of the biggest mistakes is to break the evidence into isolated pieces.

Seeker of Truth: What does that mean?

Muslim: A case is often established by the combined weight of its evidence, not by demanding that every single item prove everything on its own.

Seeker of Truth: Give me an example.

Muslim: Suppose a murder occurs. One witness identifies the suspect, but you say one witness is not enough. A recording shows the suspect threatening the victim, but you say a threat is not enough. Evidence shows he left home at the time of the crime, but you say leaving home proves nothing. If you reject each item separately, you may wrongly clear him.

Muslim: What mistake have you made?

Seeker of Truth: When all three pieces are joined, they strongly point to him as the killer.

Muslim: Exactly. Judging each proof as if the others did not exist gives a different result from considering them together. This applies in many fields.

Seeker of Truth: I understand. Even the individual signs you mentioned are meaningful, and together they are much stronger.

Muslim: That is the point.

Seeker of Truth: Suppose a being came to Muhammad and said, "I am an angel named Gabriel." How could he know it was not a devil?

Muslim: First, you must understand that Gabriel's way differs from Satan's way. Allah says: "Satan threatens you with poverty and commands you to immorality" [al-Baqarah 2:268], and He says: "Indeed, Allah does not command immorality." [al-A'raf 7:28] Thus, the two calls are clearly different.

Muslim: Second, if Gabriel - far above such an accusation - had been as you claim, he would have told the Messenger of Allah, "I am God, so worship me." Why would he call him to worship someone else if he were lying?

Muslim: Third, the beginning of revelation was not an isolated accident. Rather, there were signs that preceded and indicated his prophethood, including the incident of the opening of the chest: two angels came to him when he was young, opened his chest, took out his heart, washed it, and returned it to his chest. Had this not been from Allah, it would have caused his death.

Muslim: When Gabriel first came down to him, he and Khadijah went to Waraqah ibn Nawfal, a learned Christian. When Muhammad told him what had happened with Gabriel, Waraqah said: "This is the same angel of revelation whom Allah sent to Moses."

Muslim: Likewise, Gabriel ascended with him to heaven, where he met the prophets, then took him to the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary. He saw Allah - it is said with his eyes and it is said with his heart - Allah Most High spoke to him, and commanded him to pray. How could he not believe?

Seeker of Truth: But is Allah not closer to the Prophet than Gabriel? Why send Gabriel at all?

Muslim: What kind of closeness do you mean?

Seeker of Truth: The Qur'an says that Allah is closer to a person than his jugular vein.

Muslim: Is the jugular vein merely near you, or is it inside your body?

Seeker of Truth: It is inside my body.

Muslim: Then this passage is not describing physical distance.

Seeker of Truth: What is it describing?

Muslim: Read the verse in full: "We created the human being and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than his jugular vein." [Qaf 50:16]

Muslim: The verse is about knowledge. Allah is above the heavens, yet nothing in creation is hidden from His knowledge.

Seeker of Truth: I heard some Muslims say that Allah is physically everywhere. I wondered why, if He was so close, He would send Gabriel from above. I was planning to use that as an argument against you.

Muslim: Use it to confound those poor people; they are farther from Islam than the Jews and Christians.

Seeker of Truth: I still need to discuss the many Islamic sects with you, but for now let us stay with the evidence for prophethood. I expected you to mention predictions made by your Prophet.

Muslim: There are many. But the most important matter is first to establish his truthfulness. Once his truthfulness is proven, deliberate rejection becomes unreasonable. Predictions and other signs then add further certainty.

Seeker of Truth: His honesty has been established, but I would still like to hear those further signs.

Muslim: God willing, we will discuss them. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/r1anM8rIIQk>



The Prophethood of Muhammad

Seeker of Truth: We have discussed the evidence that the Messenger of Allah was truthful. What about his miracles?

Muslim: I prefer the Qur'anic word “signs”.

Seeker of Truth: What is the difference?

Muslim: A sign is an indicator of prophethood. The word “miracle” mainly stresses that other people cannot reproduce it. For our discussion, “sign” is clearer.

Seeker of Truth: Did he have many signs?

Muslim: Yes.

Seeker of Truth: Give me an example.

Muslim: One sign was Allah's protection of him from indecency before prophethood. He lived among people who openly practised many immoral customs, yet he was known for noble character.

When Quraysh rebuilt the Kaaba, he carried stones with the others. Someone advised him to place his lower garment over his shoulder to protect it from the stones. When doing so exposed part of his body, he fell, covered himself, and was never seen exposed after that.

Seeker of Truth: Even though exposing the body was ordinary among them?

Muslim: Yes. Another report says that, while he was a young shepherd, he twice planned to attend the night entertainment of the people of Makkah. On both occasions he fell asleep before reaching it. He later said that he never again intended the practices of the Age of Ignorance until Allah honoured him with prophethood.

Muslim: He also kept away from idolatry and did not take part in pagan rituals.

Seeker of Truth: So this first group of signs concerns Allah protecting him from shameful acts before prophethood, preparing him for his mission. What is the second group?

Muslim: His great worship of Allah. He did not stop at the obligatory prayers. He prayed voluntary prayers before and after them and stood in prayer at night.

Seeker of Truth: What does standing at night mean?

Muslim: He would pray eleven or thirteen units during the night. When illness made standing difficult, he continued while seated.

Aisha described how he kept worshipping until his feet were affected, even though Allah had forgiven him. His answer was: "Should I not be a grateful servant?"

Muslim: False religious claimants usually avoid too much worship because they know their claims are empty. The Messenger of Allah did the opposite: his worship increased.

He also fasted more than other Muslims and at times continued fasting through the night, though he did not require his followers to do the same.

Seeker of Truth: You gave other examples of his worship in our last meeting. Let us move to another kind of evidence.

Muslim: Another sign is that Allah openly corrected him in the Qur'an. Once the Prophet was speaking to leading unbelievers and calling them to Islam. A blind man came asking for guidance. The Prophet disliked the interruption because he hoped to influence the chiefs. Allah then revealed Surah Abasa, correcting him for turning away from the sincere questioner. "He frowned and turned away because the blind man came to him..." [Abasa 80:1-10]

Muslim: A fabricator normally justifies himself. The Prophet instead recited and taught verses that corrected his own action.

On another occasion, some hypocrites asked permission not to join a campaign. Allah revealed: "May Allah pardon you. Why did you give them permission before those who spoke the truth became clear to you?" [al-Tawbah 9:43]

Seeker of Truth: I used to quote verses like these as proof that the Prophet could make mistakes.

Muslim: They also prove that, if he made a judgement that needed correction, Allah would reveal the explanation and correction.



Seeker of Truth: Give me another kind of evidence.

Muslim: Why might someone falsely claim to be a prophet? Usually for status, praise, wealth, or power.

Muslim: The Messenger of Allah was far from glorifying himself. When Mu'adh once prostrated to him, he forbade it. When a delegation said, "You are our master," he replied, "The Master is Allah."

He said: "Do not praise me as the Christians praised the son of Mary. I am only Allah's servant, so say: the servant of Allah and His Messenger."

He also said: "I do not like you to raise me above the station in which Allah has placed me."

Seeker of Truth: But did he not take large amounts from charity and war gains?

Muslim: That is mistaken. He did not take zakat, and he did not allow his descendants to take it.

Muslim: As for war gains, he had a share of them, but he said: "I have nothing from this fay' except the fifth, and the fifth is returned to you."

Seeker of Truth: What does "returned to you" mean?

Muslim: The Messenger of Allah was occupied with governing the state, teaching people, and solving their problems, which kept him from having ordinary work from which he could earn. Allah therefore allotted him one-fifth of the fay' and one-fifth of the war gains.

Muslim: As for the meaning of "returned to you," he spent it in charity on the Muslims. He said, "If someone dies owing a debt, the Messenger of Allah will pay his debt." He gave to their poor and needy and equipped their armies, leaving very little for himself.

Aisha said that three new moons could pass in two months without a fire being lit in the houses of the Messenger of Allah. Their food was mainly dates and water.

Seeker of Truth: That is remarkable. Most people hope for money so they can spend it on themselves. Perhaps he stored it instead?

Muslim: Amr ibn al-Harith reported that the Prophet left no gold or silver, no male or female servant, and no property except his white mule, his weapons, and land that he had made charity.

Seeker of Truth: How could he live so simply?

Muslim: Because he was detached from worldly luxury.

Ibn Mas'ud saw the marks of a rough mat on the Prophet's side. The Prophet compared himself in this world to a traveller who rests for a while under a tree and then continues his journey.

Seeker of Truth: Then it is impossible that he claimed prophethood for worldly interests. He lost support from relatives, endured hardship, and lived through years of boycott in Makkah.

Seeker of Truth: Many of us thought the evidence for prophethood was only a few spectacular miracles. Now I see that the case is much broader.

Muslim: Would you like evidence from the behaviour of his wives and companions?

Seeker of Truth: How would that help?

Muslim: Do you think his companions were simple-minded people?

Seeker of Truth: No. History shows that within a few years they built a powerful state. Some were skilled merchants, and some could memorise long poems after hearing them once.

Muslim: Could one man deceive all of them for many years while living closely among them, without any of them exposing the lie? They risked their lives for his message.

His wives and companions were also among the most devoted worshippers. For example, Uthman would recite the entire Qur'an in a single rak'ah. If their motives were worldly, why did they worship Allah with such effort? Why did Abu Bakr spend all his wealth in Allah's cause?

Abu Bakr spent all his wealth in the cause of Allah, and Umar spent half of his. Khalid ibn al-Walid read in the Qur'an a severe condemnation of his own father, al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah, yet Khalid devoted his life to defending that Qur'an and the Prophet who brought it.

Seeker of Truth: His faith must have been sincere, especially since history shows that he was an intelligent and capable man.

Seeker of Truth: Still, why was the Prophet unable to bring a visible sign to prove his prophethood?

Muslim: Who said he was unable?

The Qur'an says: "Nothing kept Us from sending the requested signs except that earlier peoples denied them." [al-Isra 17:59]

Muslim: This verse does not deny signs in general. It refers to a particular kind: when people demand a specific sign, receive exactly what they demand, and then still reject it, destruction may follow.

Muslim: Allah did not will to destroy the people of Muhammad while the Prophet was among them. The Qur'an says that Allah would not punish them while he was among them, nor while they sought forgiveness. [al-Anfal 8:33] I have already given you many independent signs of his prophethood. Why would they not be enough?

Seeker of Truth: They are enough, but you answered every question except the one about physical miracles.

Muslim: By Allah's command, the Prophet split the moon, and the people of Makkah saw it.

Seeker of Truth: I heard Muslims say the moon did not split and that its splitting will only be a sign of the Last Hour.

Muslim: That interpretation contradicts the clear wording and the early reports.

“The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has split. Yet whenever they see a sign, they turn away and say: continuing magic.” [al-Qamar 54:1-2]

Muslim: The Qur'an describes it as an event they saw and called magic. The companions reported through numerous sound chains that the moon appeared in two parts and then returned. The unbelievers of that period did not deny that they saw the event.

Seeker of Truth: So there were visible signs. I thought there were none.

Muslim: There were many. In one report, a man asked for a sign. The Prophet called a tree; it came and stood before him, then returned when he told it to go back.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim report that Jabir's camel became exhausted. The Prophet touched it, and it regained its strength.

Ibn Hibban reports that a wolf spoke to a shepherd and told him about the Prophet. The shepherd then came to the Messenger of Allah and accepted Islam.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim report that a cooked sheep's liver fed about one hundred and thirty people.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim report that Umm Sulaym prepared a small amount of food. The Prophet prayed for blessing, and seventy or eighty men ate from it.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim report that, during one campaign, water flowed from between his fingers into a vessel, and the army drank and performed ablution from it.

Al-Bukhari reports that Abdullah ibn Atik broke his leg. The Prophet wiped it, and it healed.

Al-Bukhari reports that Salamah ibn al-Akwa was struck in the leg by a sword. The Prophet blew over it, and it was healed.

Seeker of Truth: That is enough; we may never finish today. But did he also foretell hidden events that later happened? I am afraid you will call me greedy for asking for more.

Muslim: There is no problem. Take one example.

The Qur'an foretold that the Romans, after a major defeat, would defeat the Persians within "a few years." [al-Rum 30:2-4]

The Arabic expression meant a period of three to nine years, and the prediction was fulfilled.

Al-Bukhari reports that the Prophet announced the death of the Negus on the very day he died. The Negus was in Abyssinia while the Prophet was in Madinah. ⁽¹⁾

Ahmad reports that, when the Prophet sent the army of Zayd ibn Harithah, he told the Muslims what had happened to the army before the survivors returned. Their report later matched what he had said.

Al-Bukhari reports that Hatib ibn Abi Baltaah secretly sent a letter to Makkah. The Prophet told Ali, al-Zubayr, and al-Miqdad that a woman at Rawdat Khakh was carrying it. They found her there with the letter.

Al-Bukhari reports that the Prophet said about al-Hasan ibn Ali: "This son of mine is a leader, and perhaps Allah will reconcile through him two great groups." What he said came to pass, and al-Hasan reconciled the supporters of Muawiyah and Ali.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim also report that he said one sign of the Hour would be barefoot, poorly clothed, destitute shepherds competing in tall buildings. In the Emirates a hundred years ago they were barefoot, poorly clothed shepherds; today they have some of the tallest towers in the world.

Seeker of Truth: We have spoken for a long time, and you clearly have much more. Can you recommend a book on this subject?

Muslim: There are many. One is al-Sahih al-Musnad min Dala'il al-Nubuwwah by Shaykh Muqbil al-Wadi'i.

Seeker of Truth: One final objection.

Muslim: What is it?

Seeker of Truth: Why could Muslims not have invented all these stories for their Prophet?

Muslim: When we speak about Muslim reports, we also speak about documentation, chains of transmission, and the science of hadith.

⁽¹⁾ **Translator's note:** This was before modern means of communication.



Muslim scholars developed detailed rules for testing narrators and reports. A report was not accepted merely because it supported the religion. Many stories that seemed useful were rejected because their chains or narrators were weak.

In addition, a number of the reports I mentioned are transmitted through so many independent routes that deliberate invention is not a reasonable explanation.

Seeker of Truth: After all this, I cannot reasonably call the Prophet a liar. I still have objections about the Qur'an itself. Perhaps we can discuss them in a separate meeting.

Muslim: God willing.



Doubts About the Qur'an



The Prophet Did Not Author It

Seeker of Truth: You always say, “Allah said this” and “Allah said that.” But I discovered that some of you believe Allah did not actually speak the Qur'an and that it is Gabriel's own wording.

Muslim: We seek refuge in Allah from such a claim. Where did you get it?

Seeker of Truth: From books by major scholars.

Muslim: Whom do you mean?

Seeker of Truth: al-Baqillani says in al-Insaf that what literally descended and moved from one place to another was the speech of Gabriel.

Muslim: That claim is a serious deviation. The followers of the prophets are innocent of it. The Qur'an is the speech of Allah.

Seeker of Truth: Should I leave the words of the respected Imam al-Baqillani and accept yours?

Muslim: You are looking for Islam, not the personal opinions of individuals. Do you want the religion itself, or people's views?

Seeker of Truth: The religion itself.

Muslim: Then the Qur'an itself says that a protected unbeliever should be allowed to hear “the speech of Allah.” [al-Tawbah 9:6] The Qur'an is Allah's speech, not Gabriel's own composition.

Seeker of Truth: How can I know that the Prophet did not compose the Qur'an?

Muslim: The Prophet said it came from Allah, and you have already become certain of his truthfulness. That is enough to accept his report.

Seeker of Truth: Yes, but I want further evidence to strengthen certainty.

Muslim: Compare a poet's earliest work with what he writes ten years later. Would the skill be exactly the same?

Seeker of Truth: Of course not. In ten years the poet gains practice, vocabulary, and control.

Muslim: Correct. Yet the Prophet had never been known as a poet or writer before the Qur'an began to be revealed, and the Qur'an appeared from the beginning with its distinctive power.

Seeker of Truth: Perhaps he gained this ability through years of reading poetry and literature before he began.

Muslim: The Messenger of Allah was unlettered.

Seeker of Truth: What do you mean?

Muslim: He did not read or write.

Seeker of Truth: Then where did all the historical information in the Qur'an come from?

Muslim: Allah Most High says: "You did not recite any scripture before it, nor did you write it with your right hand; otherwise the followers of falsehood would have had reason to doubt." [al-Ankabut 29:48]

Muslim: If he had studied earlier books and could read and write, his opponents could have claimed that he copied from what he read.

Seeker of Truth: I am very interested in poetry and know most of the poems of Ahmad Shawqi, but even so I find it difficult to compose good poetry myself.

Muslim: If I showed you one unknown poem by Shawqi and one by somebody else, could you tell which was his?

Seeker of Truth: Easily. I know his style well, and it does not become confused with another poet's style.

Muslim: Would you still recognise it if he tried to change his style in that poem?

Seeker of Truth: Yes. However much a writer changes subject or tone, something of his personal style remains. A poet may write about religion, love, or politics, yet careful readers can still recognise the same author.

Muslim: The same is known in books. A work was once printed and attributed to al-Khallal. When I read it, the style did not resemble his. Further investigation showed that it was actually by al-Tamimi.

Seeker of Truth: Why change the subject? Stay with the Qur'an. How do I know the Prophet did not write it?

Muslim: I have not changed the subject; these examples are the point. Read a passage of the Qur'an, then read a book of hadith and compare the two styles. It is impossible for the author of both to be the same person.

Seeker of Truth: That may need time to examine. For now, give me something quick and clear.

Muslim: Every Muslim should read both carefully. Anyone who does not do so leaves an empty space that can be filled by doubts and confused teachings. But I will give you the quick examples you asked for.

Compare Qur'anic wording with the Prophet's wording

1. Qur'an: "Let there be among you a community calling to good, commanding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong." [Al Imran 3:104]

Prophetic wording: "You must command what is right and forbid what is wrong, or Allah may place the worst of you over you; then the best of you will pray, but their prayer will not be answered."

2. Qur'an: "The believers are brothers, so make peace between your brothers." [al-Hujurat 49:10]

Prophetic wording: "A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; he does not wrong him or abandon him."

3. Qur'an: "O humanity, We created you from a male and a female and made you peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. The most honoured of you before Allah is the most mindful of Him." [al-Hujurat 49:13]

Prophetic wording begins: "O people, your Lord is one, and your father is one..."

"All of you are from Adam, and Adam was created from dust. No Arab is better than a non-Arab, and no non-Arab is better than an Arab; no red person is better than a black person, and no black person is better than a red person - except through mindfulness of Allah."

Seeker of Truth: A person's usual vocabulary often gives him away. Even when he tries to change his style, he repeats familiar words and phrases.

Muslim: Dr Halim Sayoud carried out a study comparing the Prophet's wording in Sahih al-Bukhari with the wording of the Qur'an. He reported that 62 percent of the hadith vocabulary does not occur in the Qur'an, and 83 percent of the Qur'anic vocabulary does not occur in the hadith. The study was published in an Oxford University journal. This supports the conclusion that the Prophet was not the author of the Qur'an.

Seeker of Truth: Could Waraqah ibn Nawfal have written the Qur'an for him?

Muslim: Waraqah died before the Prophet's public mission began.

Seeker of Truth: He might have written all of it beforehand and handed it to him before he died.

Muslim: That is impossible. Qur'anic passages were revealed in response to events that happened throughout the Prophet's life. "He frowned and turned away" was revealed after a particular incident. Verses about angels helping the Muslims came during the Battle of Badr after the migration. A ruling came when a woman complained about her husband, and verses declaring Aisha innocent came when the hypocrites accused her. Revelation came at different times across the Prophet's life.

Seeker of Truth: I want to understand the claim that the Arabs could not produce anything like the Qur'an. What exactly made it difficult?

Muslim: If it is not difficult, then produce a chapter like it.

Seeker of Truth: Someone hostile to Islam organised an international competition and spent a great deal of money on an imitation chapter. I have it.

Muslim: Read it to me.

Seeker of Truth: I will recite it with Qur'anic-style chanting. He recites the imitation.

Muslim: I will examine it piece by piece. Remove the rhymed phrases and expressions copied from the Qur'an. What remains is empty wording like ordinary speech.

Seeker of Truth: If we remove the Qur'anic wording, almost nothing remains. But how should someone answer the challenge properly?

Muslim: Consider how skilled Arab poets answered one another. Al-Farazdaq said: "I am death, which will certainly reach you; look at how you will face it."

Jarir answered him without copying his wording or merely imitating him.

Jarir replied in meaning: "I am time itself; I outlast death while time remains. Bring me anything like time that can rival it."

He did not steal a phrase from the first poet. He answered the same idea with wording that was more powerful.

Muslim: Likewise, anyone who wants to produce something like the Qur'an should take one of its chapters and either answer it or discuss its subject with greater eloquence.

Seeker of Truth: But the Qur'an is Arabic. What about people who do not know Arabic and cannot enter the challenge?

Muslim: If a surgeon challenges others to perform an operation like his, we look to qualified surgeons. If they cannot match him, the rest of us accept their judgement. The same applies to an engineer and his buildings. When the masters of Arabic literature could not match the Qur'an, everyone else had reason to accept their judgement.

Seeker of Truth: People sometimes challenge us with silly things and we ignore them. Why could the Arabs not simply have ignored this challenge?

Muslim: You ignore a challenge when it is trivial or beneath attention. Quraysh did not treat the Prophet that way. His message was their greatest concern. They held meetings about him and argued over what to tell visiting Arabs: "Confused dreams," "he invented it," or "he is a poet." [al-Anbiya 21:5] They negotiated with him. After he migrated they fought him, made a treaty with him, and fought again. He criticised their gods and drew their children to his religion. If they could have answered the Qur'an with anything like it, they would have done so, ended his call, and rested. ⁽¹⁾

Seeker of Truth: But you yourselves say that the Qur'an is incomplete.

Muslim: Who says that?

Seeker of Truth: You say that a verse was eaten by a goat.

Muslim: Verses are words. Goats eat food, not words.

Seeker of Truth: There was wording about ten known breastfeedings establishing the legal prohibition, and the goat ate it.

Muslim: If the wording is still known and you can quote it, how did the goat eat it?

Seeker of Truth: The goat ate the sheet on which it had been written.

Muslim: What does the sheet matter? Whether it was eaten or not, the wording is known to this day. If it had remained part of the Qur'an, it would still be recited in the Qur'an.

Seeker of Truth: But the report from Aisha says that among what was revealed were ten known breastfeedings, later replaced by five known breastfeedings.

Muslim: It was revealed and then abrogated.

Seeker of Truth: Then is the Qur'an incomplete?

Muslim: Allah says: "Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or similar to it." [al-Baqarah 2:106]

(1) - <https://youtu.be/XYisBLIMuLI>



Seeker of Truth: That verse is in the Qur'an.

Muslim: Then the same Allah who revealed a passage removed it from the final Qur'an. When revelation was completed, that passage was no longer part of it. This is not loss. Loss means part of a book disappears. Abrogation means the owner of the message deliberately removes a ruling or wording.

Seeker of Truth: If Allah knew He would remove it, why reveal it in the first place?

Muslim: Do you sleep?

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: Do you know that you will wake after sleeping?

Seeker of Truth: Of course.

Muslim: Then why sleep if you know you will wake?

Seeker of Truth: There is a time for sleep and a time for waking.

Muslim: Exactly. Knowing that a later stage will come does not make the earlier stage pointless. Allah may first command something demanding and later make it easier, so people recognise His favour. Had the easier ruling come first, they would not value the relief in the same way.

Muslim: The opposite may also occur. People were first commanded to fast Ashura, then were given the greater duty of fasting Ramadan. This trained them gradually in worship.

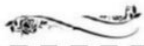
Seeker of Truth: I am talking about abrogating verses, not merely changing rulings.

Muslim: It is the same principle. Verses containing rulings were revealed and then abrogated. Allah first commanded people to leave a bequest for parents and close relatives, then revealed the fixed shares of inheritance, replacing that earlier ruling.

Seeker of Truth: What was the wisdom in that?

Muslim: When people were left to divide estates themselves, they did not always act fairly. Allah then set the inheritance shares so that people would know the just division.

Seeker of Truth: Does that not show that errors occurred in the Qur'an?



Muslim: No. Abrogation concerns rulings, not statements of fact. If factual reports were later corrected, that could indicate an error. But changing a ruling for wisdom, training, or a different stage does not mean the earlier ruling was mistaken. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/rhcFTTdMOLw>

The Burning of the Mushafs

Seeker of Truth: What about the historical report that Caliph Uthman burned copies of the Qur'an?

Muslim: Imagine I read you a recipe from my own book: "Take a spoon of coffee, add water, and place it over the heat." You ask whether the coffee should be finely or coarsely ground, and I answer, "Fine." When you copy the recipe, you add the word "fine" so you will not forget. Years later someone finds your copy. What will he think?

Seeker of Truth: He may think the word "fine" was in your original book.

Muslim: Something similar could happen in personal copies made by companions. A person might write a short explanation beside the text and be relaxed about it because he knows what is Qur'an and what is his note. Later someone could find the copy and think the Qur'an itself differed from what Muslims recite. Uthman ordered such personal copies removed to prevent confusion.

Seeker of Truth: So if I mention the Sana'a manuscripts and say they contain wording different from today's copies, you will give the same answer?

Muslim: Who wrote the Sana'a manuscripts?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know who wrote them, but they are old.

Muslim: About three years ago, while reviewing my memorisation, I used to write a page from memory and then listen to a reciter to check myself. Sometimes I had written one word incorrectly or left out a verse. Suppose you found those pages today. Would it be reasonable to tell Muslims, "Your Qur'an is corrupted because it differs from these papers"?

Seeker of Truth: Of course not.

Muslim: Yet the writer of my pages is known and has more than one formal authorisation in Qur'anic recitation. That is far stronger than anonymous manuscript fragments from Sana'a.



Seeker of Truth: Still, your own pages cannot be used as evidence because you wrote them yourself. The Sana'a manuscripts were written in the early period.

Muslim: Suppose, for argument's sake, that I and my mistaken pages had lived in the first century. Would age make those pages authoritative?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then a copyist's mistake is not evidence against a Qur'an transmitted by the whole community.⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/rhcFTTdMOLw>

Ibn Mas'ud and the Two Protective Surahs

Seeker of Truth: Al-Bukhari reports that Ibn Mas'ud used to remove the two protective surahs from his copy and said they were not part of the Qur'an. Would that not mean the Qur'an contains an addition?

Muslim: What did the rest of the companions and their students say?

Seeker of Truth: They said the two surahs are part of the Qur'an.

Muslim: Is it reasonable that every companion was mistaken and only one man was right?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Imagine you arrive late to class. Ten students say the teacher covered five pages, while one says he covered only four. Whose account do you accept?

Seeker of Truth: The one student probably forgot or missed something.

Muslim: Then the isolated view attributed to Ibn Mas'ud does not harm the Qur'an. ⁽¹⁾

Seeker of Truth: It is surprising that a companion as important as Ibn Mas'ud could make such a mistake.

Muslim: It is not surprising. At that time, he spoke according to what he had personally learned from the Messenger of Allah. He thought the two surahs were supplications and had not heard the Messenger of Allah recite them in prayer, so he said they were not part of the Qur'an.

Muslim: When the other companions explained that the two surahs were Qur'an, he accepted the truth. Today we recite the Qur'an through the reading of Shu'bah from Asim with a chain going back to Ibn Mas'ud, and both surahs are included in it. ⁽²⁾

(1) Translator's note: The broad agreement and living recitation of the companions outweigh an isolated misunderstanding.

(2) - <https://youtu.be/rhcFTTdMOLw>

Adding Dots to the Qur'an

Seeker of Truth: Could there be a flaw in the Qur'an because it was written without dots? An undotted Arabic word can sometimes be read in several ways. For example, the word **حبر** (ḥibr, “ink”), if written without dots, could be read as **حجر** (ḥajar, “stone”), **خبز** (khubz, “bread”), or **جبر** (jabr, “compulsion” or “algebra”). Could Qur'anic words be confused in the same way?

Muslim: Your example is mistaken for two reasons. First, you mentioned the word **حبر** in isolation, so several dot patterns are possible. But inside a sentence, the context prevents that. If the sentence were **أكلت الخبز والزيت** (akaltu al-khubza wa-l-zayt, “I ate bread and oil”), could it be read as **أكلت الحجر** (“I ate the stone”) or **أكلت الجبر** (“I ate compulsion/algebra”)? Of course not. Second, Muslims did not transmit the Qur'an through writing alone. They transmitted it by memorisation together with writing.

Take a familiar passage written without dots and read it: “Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High, who created and proportioned, and who determined and guided.” [al-A'la 87:1-3]

Muslim: Why did you read **سبح اسم ربك الأعلى** (subbiḥ isma rabbika al-A'lā, “Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High”) rather than **سبح اسم ربك الأغلى** (al-aghlā, “the most expensive”)? Why did you read **الذي خلق فسوى** (alladhī khalaqa fa-sawwā, “who created and proportioned”) rather than **خلق فشوى** (khalaqa fa-shawā, “created and roasted”)? And why did you read **قدر فهدى** (qaddara fa-hadā, “determined and guided”) rather than **قدر فغدى** (qaddara fa-ghadā, “determined and went out in the morning”)?

Seeker of Truth: Because I already know the passage.

Muslim: Exactly. The reciters knew the entire Qur'an. Whether it was dotted or undotted did not harm them. They taught their students, and every student recited the Qur'an to teachers until mastering it. It therefore made no difference whether a written copy was dotted or undotted. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/rhcFTTdMOLw>



How the Qur'an Reached Us

Seeker of Truth: So the Qur'an is a unique book and comes from Allah. But do you remember what you said about the books of earlier nations?

Muslim: What did I say?

Seeker of Truth: You said that the books they possess today are different from what was revealed to their prophets.

Muslim: Correct.

Seeker of Truth: Then what guarantees that the Qur'an we have today is the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet?

Muslim: After the Prophet, the companions spread to many lands and taught people the Qur'an. The Qur'an recited in Iraq was the same Qur'an recited in Syria, Madinah, and Egypt. It was one Qur'an across distant regions.

By contrast, while other nations do not know which of their inherited books is sacred, our Qur'an teachers precisely regulated qalqalah and the durations of the letters. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/rAeVPdhpHIE>



Mass Transmission of the Qur'an

Seeker of Truth: Do you have a chain of transmission for the Qur'an?

Muslim: Yes. Here is one.

Seeker of Truth: Without even looking, I can tell you that the chain contains Ash'aris.

Muslim: Finding Ash'aris in Qur'anic chains is actually strong evidence that the Qur'an was preserved.

Seeker of Truth: But I have read that whether the Ash'aris are Muslims is disputed: scholars either declare them innovators or declare them unbelievers. How then can a Qur'an transmitted by them be authentic?

Muslim: Suppose you are a judge and there is a dispute between me and another man. I cannot attend, so my lawyer comes and gives you my statements, including evidence against my opponent. Would you accept that the lawyer is reporting my words?

Seeker of Truth: Usually, yes.

Muslim: Now suppose I had no lawyer, but I gave my opponent the evidence against him. He himself reports it to you, then tries to escape it with weak arguments. Would you trust that he reported the damaging evidence accurately?

Seeker of Truth: Certainly. If he were going to alter your words, he would not preserve what harms his own case.

Muslim: The Qur'an contains verses that Muslims use against Ash'ari doctrines. Yet Ash'ari transmitters passed those verses on exactly as they received them. They did not alter one verse, one letter, or even a vowel mark.

Seeker of Truth: What difference could one vowel make?

Muslim: They deny that Allah comes, although the Qur'an says: "And your Lord comes." [al-Fajr 89:22] If they could change رَبُّكَ (rabbuka, "your Lord" as the subject) to رَبَّكَ (rabbaka, "your Lord" as the object), they would claim that Allah is not the subject of "comes" and that something else comes to Him. And if they could add one letter to استولى (istawā), they would make it استولى (istawlā), meaning "seized control." But they cannot.

Seeker of Truth: Yes. If they could not change the verses used against their own doctrine, then they were even less able to change unrelated verses.

Seeker of Truth: You say the Qur'an is mutawatir - mass transmitted - correct?

Muslim: Yes.

Seeker of Truth: Meaning that a large group transmitted it to another large group, generation after generation, rather than one person alone passing it to one person?

Muslim: Correct.

Seeker of Truth: But I will surprise you: the Qur'an is not really mass transmitted.

Muslim: Where did you get that claim?

Seeker of Truth: I heard it from an Azhar-trained shaykh.

Muslim: What did he say?

Seeker of Truth: He challenged the Salafis to produce one Qur'anic chain that does not pass through Ibn al-Jazari, whom he described as an Ash'ari and a Sufi. He claimed all Qur'anic chains return to him.

Muslim: That is wrong.

Seeker of Truth: I also heard a Salafi shaykh - perhaps named Latif - challenge you personally with the same point.

Muslim: I told you before that listening uncritically to sectarian polemic creates these problems. Such arguments are used to defend a school, but to non-specialists they can make the whole religion look doubtful. There are two answers: one based on ordinary reasoning and one based on the technical details. Which do you want first?

Seeker of Truth: Both, but begin with the simple argument.

Muslim: What is the most famous landmark in your country?

Seeker of Truth: The pyramids.



Muslim: Where are they?

Seeker of Truth: In Giza.

Muslim: Is that information mass known?

Seeker of Truth: Certainly.

Muslim: Imagine you travel to Mexico and tell people this. They ask, “How do you know?”

Seeker of Truth: I would say that no reasonable person doubts it. Ask any Arab and he will tell you.

Muslim: They insist: “Tell us exactly who told you the pyramids are in Giza.”

Seeker of Truth: My father told me.

Muslim: Who told your father?

Seeker of Truth: My uncle.

Muslim: Who told your uncle?

Seeker of Truth: He visited Giza and saw them himself.

Muslim: The people investigate and find the claim completely true. For documentation, they write: “We heard it from Ahmad, who heard it from his father, who heard it from his brother.” Does recording that one chain prove the information was not publicly and widely known?

Seeker of Truth: Of course not.

Muslim: Ibn al-Jazari lived from 751 to 833 AH. During his lifetime, the Qur'an was recited in mosques across the Muslim world - the Hijaz, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, the Maghrib, al-Andalus, India, Sind, and Anatolia. Adults and children memorised and taught it. How could anyone imagine that he was the only person who possessed the Qur'an?

Seeker of Truth: They certainly had Qur'ans and lessons, but why do formal chains so often mention Ibn al-Jazari?

Muslim: I personally narrate hadith from more than one hundred teachers. Each of them has many teachers; some have twenty, and some have hundreds or more. If you asked me to narrate a report and list every one of my teachers, every one of their teachers, and so on until the Prophet, would we ever finish?

Seeker of Truth: No. That would never end.



Muslim: So what would you do?

Seeker of Truth: I would choose your most learned or most famous teacher, then the best-known of his teachers, until reaching the Prophet.

Muslim: Exactly. People often select the most famous teacher, or the oldest, because that shortens the written chain.

Seeker of Truth: Why does age shorten it?

Muslim: If every teacher between you and the Prophet lived only around fifty years, the chain would need many more names.

Seeker of Truth: If each person met his teacher at age ten and represents about forty years, then 1,440 years would require about thirty-six teachers or more.

Muslim: What if each teacher lived about one hundred years?

Seeker of Truth: The number could be roughly half - about eighteen teachers.

Muslim: That is why compilers may prefer an older or more famous teacher in a displayed chain.

Seeker of Truth: Should they not always choose the most trustworthy?

Muslim: In the early generations, the reliability of a report depended directly on the trustworthiness of the narrator. In later times, a report already fixed in books and circulated among scholars does not become false merely because a later person who repeats it is personally unreliable.

Seeker of Truth: The idea is clear, but give me an example so it settles in my mind.

Muslim: Look at Qur'anic chains and name one famous student of Ibn al-Jazari.

Seeker of Truth: Ridwan ibn Muhammad al-Ugbi.

Muslim: He read with Nur al-Din Ali ibn Abd Allah al-Damiri and Shams al-Din al-Ghumari. From Ibn al-Jazari himself he read only al-Fatihah and five verses of al-Baqarah.

A biographical source states that he read al-Fatihah and the opening verses of al-Baqarah to Ibn al-Jazari inside the Kaaba.

Seeker of Truth: There is another well-known student: Tahir ibn Muhammad al-Nuwayri.



Muslim: Tahir read the Qur'an with Shams Abu Abd Allah al-Hariri al-Shirazi and Nur al-Din al-Habibi, as mentioned in the biographical works.

He read only four sections of the Qur'an to Ibn al-Jazari. His name is still placed in formal chains because Ibn al-Jazari was so famous in the field of recitation.

Seeker of Truth: That is astonishing. Do the people who gave me this doubt know these details?

Muslim: People who spread sectarian doubts are often poorly informed. If they do not know, that is a serious problem; if they do know, the problem is even worse.

Seeker of Truth: It is strange that someone would cast doubt on the Qur'an to defend his own school.

The Different Qur'anic Readings

Seeker of Truth: If the Qur'an is from Allah, why do Muslims have ten different written versions?

Muslim: We have only one Qur'an. You probably mean the ten recognised qira'at, or readings.

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: Those readings are the Qur'an recited in more than one authorised form. They are not ten different books.

Seeker of Truth: Is that not alteration of the Qur'an?

Muslim: No. The authentic hadith says: "The Qur'an was revealed in seven ahruf."

Seeker of Truth: What does ahurf mean?

Muslim: Harf literally means an edge or aspect. Here it refers to forms connected with Arab dialects. Some tribes used imalah, leaning certain vowels. Some pronounced the hamzah strongly, while others softened or omitted it. Some said certain words with an i-vowel while others used a u-vowel. Revelation allowed recognised forms suited to the speech of different Arab tribes.

Allah revealed the Qur'an in forms familiar to the tribes so they would not all have to master the Qurayshi dialect before they could recite it.

Seeker of Truth: But there are ten readings. Where did the other three come from if there were seven ahurf?

Muslim: I said the Qur'an was revealed in seven ahurf. The ten qira'at are a different classification, formed from the authorised details found within those ahurf.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: Suppose one tribe used both imalah and a pronounced hamzah, so it recited a phrase in its own way. Another tribe used neither imalah nor hamzah, so it recited the same phrase in its own way. Those are two revealed forms.

Muslim: Now suppose you combine the imalah from one form with the hamzah from the other. The result is a valid recited combination, but it is not itself one complete original dialect-form. We therefore call that combination a qira'ah, a reading.

Seeker of Truth: So more than one reading can be formed from the details of two ahruf?

Muslim: Yes. In this way the recognised readings were formed from the revealed ahruf. All are valid because their elements come from what Allah revealed.

Seeker of Truth: This is very specialised information. How can an ordinary Muslim learn all of it?

Muslim: Every Muslim does not need to master every technical subject. That would be impossible. A Muslim should return to qualified students and specialists, and should not take doubts from people who exploit his limited knowledge to confuse him about his religion.

Seeker of Truth: There is still another issue. Some readings contain different words, not merely different pronunciation. Sometimes the meaning changes.

Muslim: Allah revealed those different wordings within the authorised forms as an added explanation.

For example, al-Baqarah 2:10 is recited in one form as: "For them is a painful punishment because they used to lie."

Muslim: Their lying was one cause of punishment. Another cause was that they used to deny the messengers. If both verbs were forced into one sentence, the wording would become heavy and less eloquent. Another authorised reading conveys: "For them is a painful punishment because they used to deny." [al-Baqarah 2:10]

Muslim: The two readings together give both parts of the explanation while each keeps the Qur'anic expression concise.

Seeker of Truth: You answered that, but I have an objection you will not be able to answer.

Muslim: What is it?

Seeker of Truth: What is the most widely used reading in the world?



Muslim: The transmission of Hafs from Asim.

Seeker of Truth: Scholars called Hafs weak and rejected. I have documented quotations. How can you take the Qur'an from him?

Seeker of Truth: Ahmad ibn Hanbal said: "Hafs ibn Sulayman, Abu Umar the reciter, is abandoned in hadith."

Muslim: Abandoned in what?

Seeker of Truth: Hadith.

Seeker of Truth: Al-Nasai also said: "He is not reliable, and his hadith is not written."

Muslim: What is not written?

Seeker of Truth: His hadith.

Muslim: Then what does that have to do with his Qur'anic recitation? He was not strong at memorising hadith, but our discussion is about the Qur'an.

Seeker of Truth: What is the difference? The important thing is that he was called weak.

Muslim: Suppose a professor of English were described as weak in French. Would that mean you should not learn English from him?

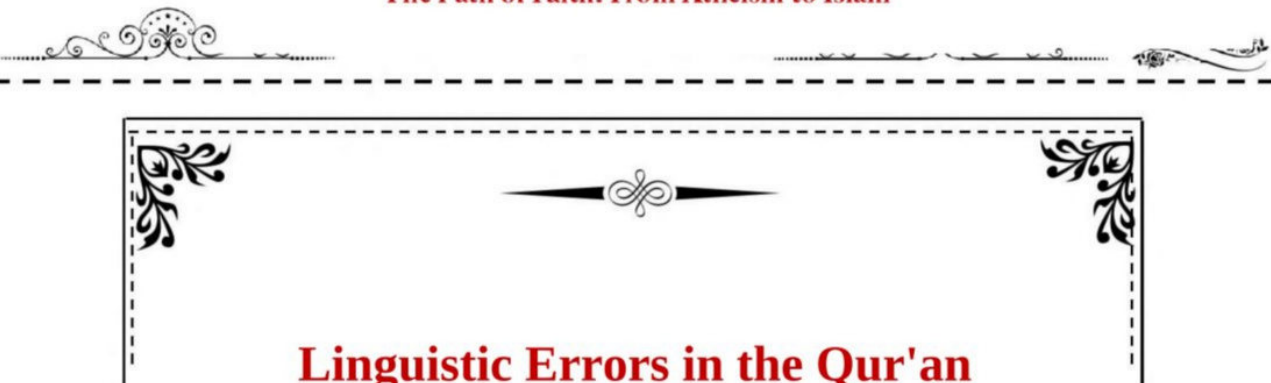
Seeker of Truth: No. English and French are different fields.

Muslim: The same applies here. Hafs devoted his life to the Qur'an and mastered it. He did not give hadith the same attention, so he did not master that field.

This is normal. Today there are reciters such as al-Masrawi and Karim Rajih who have exceptional mastery of the Qur'an and its readings, while their work in hadith is more limited. If we compared them with leading hadith specialists, each group would be strongest in its own field.

Likewise, some scholars are highly skilled in law and hadith even though we warn against errors in their theology. A doctrinal error does not automatically erase a person's technical mastery in another subject.

Seeker of Truth: Then the Qur'an is sound beyond reasonable doubt. I still have some other questions.



Linguistic Errors in the Qur'an

Seeker of Truth: When you criticised the Baha'i book, you said it contained language mistakes. I have found language mistakes in the Qur'an.

Muslim: Do you know that this objection is very weak?

Seeker of Truth: Why?

Muslim: Suppose I draw your face but make your mouth smaller than it really is. Is the mistake in your face or in my drawing?

Seeker of Truth: In your drawing, because my face is the original.

Muslim: In the same way, Arabic scholars use the Qur'an as a main source in dictionaries, grammar books, and other works. If a later grammar book seems to conflict with the Qur'an, which one should be questioned?

Seeker of Truth: The grammar book.

Muslim: Second, was Muhammad an Arab or a non-Arab?

Seeker of Truth: An Arab.

Muslim: Could a native Arab of that time normally make basic mistakes in his own language?

Seeker of Truth: No. They did not learn Arabic from textbooks; it was their everyday speech.

Muslim: So even if, for the sake of argument, he had written the Qur'an himself, he would not have made basic Arabic mistakes.

Muslim: Third, did any of the early unbelievers - who were native masters of Arabic - claim that the Qur'an contained grammatical errors?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then the claim that the Qur'an contains language errors has no real basis.



Seeker of Truth: You are right, but let me give you one example. Explain why it is not an error.

Muslim: Go ahead.

Seeker of Truth: In Surah al-Ma'idah the verse says, in meaning: "Indeed, those who believed, those who were Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians - whoever believed in Allah and the Last Day and did good - they will have no fear, nor will they grieve." [al-Ma'idah 5:69] Should the Arabic word for "the Sabians" not be in the accusative form, like the nouns governed by inna at the beginning of the verse?

Muslim: Why is inna used in Arabic?

Seeker of Truth: For emphasis.

Muslim: Here the sentence gives stronger emphasis to the promise concerning the believers, Jews, and Christians who truly believed and acted well, while the Sabians are mentioned through a separate grammatical construction.

Seeker of Truth: Then why does Surah al-Baqarah use the accusative form for the Sabians?

Muslim: Because that verse also mentions their reward: "Indeed, those who believed, those who were Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians - whoever believed in Allah and the Last Day and did good - will have their reward with their Lord. They will have no fear, nor will they grieve." [al-Baqarah 2:62]

Muslim: There the wording strongly confirms that their reward will not be lost. In the verse that only mentions freedom from fear and grief, the structure gives a different level of emphasis.

Seeker of Truth: Arabic can carry very fine shades of meaning. Not everyone notices them.



Rejecting the Sunnah



Seeker of Truth: Have you just finished performing the “ghasaq prayer”?

Muslim: What prayer is that?

Seeker of Truth: You do not know the correct prayers mentioned in the Qur'an. You pray as al-Bukhari told you.

Muslim: And you have now discovered the correct prayer that all Muslims missed?

Seeker of Truth: Yes. I studied the Qur'an deeply for a whole week and found the truth.

Muslim: How do you perform this ghasaq prayer?

Seeker of Truth: I face the Sacred Mosque, bow, prostrate, and that is all.

Muslim: You call it the ghasaq prayer because Allah says: “Establish prayer from the decline of the sun until the darkness of night” [al-Isra 17:78]?

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: The plain wording describes a span from the sun's decline until the darkness of night.

Seeker of Truth: No. It means one prayer at the sun's decline and one at nightfall. I heard this from a modernist scholar whose name I forgot.

Muslim: You leave fourteen centuries of Muslim understanding to take your religion from one modernist whose name you cannot remember?

Seeker of Truth: Yes, because he speaks from the Qur'an.

Muslim: And did Muslim scholars take their religion from a Buddhist gospel?

Seeker of Truth: They took it from myths found in the hadith books.

Muslim: The person who taught you this new prayer invented it himself. Why do you call the Sunnah books myths?

Seeker of Truth: Al-Bukhari wrote his book more than two hundred years after the Prophet. Where did he get the reports he attributed to the Prophet? Is it reasonable that Muslims did not know their religion for two hundred years until al-Bukhari arrived? That would mean Muslims had only the Qur'an before him.

Muslim: Have you read Sahih al-Bukhari?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Had you read it, you would know the answer. Read any hadith from it.

Seeker of Truth: It says: Sa'id ibn Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qurashi told us; my father told us; Abu Burdah ibn Abd Allah ibn Abi Burdah told us, from Abu Burdah, from Abu Musa, who said:

They asked, "Messenger of Allah, which form of Islam is best?" He replied: "The one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe."

Muslim: Al-Bukhari has just told you where he received the report. Muslims knew this hadith through its transmitters in every generation after the Prophet, not only in al-Bukhari's time.

Seeker of Truth: But why do we need the Sunnah? Is the Qur'an incomplete, so that it needs the Sunnah beside it?

Muslim: The Qur'an is complete. Allah chose not to place every detailed ruling inside it, and He taught other rulings through the Prophet.

Seeker of Truth: Then it is incomplete.

Muslim: No. A matter not being stated in the Qur'an does not mean the Qur'an is defective. It means Allah did not choose to state that matter there.

Seeker of Truth: Does Allah not describe the Qur'an as "an explanation of all things" [al-Nahl 16:89]?

Muslim: Does the Qur'an give you my phone number?

Seeker of Truth: No, but "all things" means all matters of religion.

Muslim: You have already limited the word "all" by saying it concerns religion. So the word can be understood according to context; your earlier insistence on its broadest possible meaning was mistaken.

Muslim: Allah commands us to face the Sacred Mosque. Does the Qur'an itself tell us its exact location?

Muslim: The point is that the Qur'an does not state that location, even though it is a religious matter. So the verse cannot mean that every single detail is written inside the Qur'an.

Seeker of Truth: That is true, but why use the word “all”?

Muslim: Arabic often uses “all” without meaning every possible thing without exception. If I say, “I searched for you everywhere,” you would not think I searched in China or inside a tea box. You would understand: everywhere you would normally be found.

Seeker of Truth: Yes, that is how ordinary speech works.

Muslim: Likewise, when Arabs hear that the Book explains all things, they understand that it gives decisive guidance on the foundations of religion. They do not understand that it must list every movement of prayer, every circuit of tawaf, and every small detail.

Seeker of Truth: But Allah says: “Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them?” [al-Ankabut 29:51] Does that not mean the Qur'an alone is enough and the Sunnah is unnecessary?

Muslim: You have taken the verse away from its context. The idolaters demanded special miracles from the Prophet. The previous verse says: “They say, Why have signs not been sent down to him from his Lord?” [al-Ankabut 29:50] Allah then answered that the revealed Book was itself a sufficient sign and proof.

Muslim: So that passage is about signs and proofs, not about whether every legal detail is written in the Qur'an.

Seeker of Truth: By giving so much attention to the Sunnah, you oppose the Messenger. On the Day of Judgement he will say: “My Lord, my people have taken this Qur'an as something abandoned.” [al-Furqan 25:30]

Muslim: We take rulings from both the Book and the Sunnah. Because the Sunnah contains many details, it is often quoted. The verse you mentioned is not about Muslims following the Prophet. It is about the Quraysh who rejected him.

The passage begins by describing the wrongdoer who regrets not taking a path with the Messenger and who followed a misleading companion [al-Furqan 25:27-29]. It then records the Messenger's complaint that his people abandoned the Qur'an, and says that every prophet had enemies among the guilty [al-Furqan 25:30-31].

Muslim: The people criticised there are those who turned away from revelation and did not take the Messenger's path - a description that fits those who reject the Sunnah rather than those who follow it.

Seeker of Truth: But when you say the Sunnah is revelation, you make it equal to the Qur'an.

Muslim: Allah says that He inspired Moses: "Throw your staff." [al-A'raf 7:117] This inspiration came before the Torah was given to him. Is every form of revelation therefore equal in rank to the Qur'an?

Seeker of Truth: Yes. If it is revelation, then it is equal to the Qur'an.

Muslim: The Torah is also revelation. Is it equal to the Qur'an?

Seeker of Truth: Certainly.

Muslim: That conflicts with the Qur'an. Allah says: "We have revealed to you the Book in truth, confirming what came before it and as a guardian over it." [al-Ma'idah 5:48] The Qur'an has a higher and final authority.

Seeker of Truth: Then different revelations can have different ranks. But what proves that hadith is revelation?

Muslim: Allah says: "Indeed, We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him." [al-Nisa 4:163] Revelation to Moses included more than the written Torah, and revelation to Abraham included the command in his dream to sacrifice his son. In the same way, Allah revealed to Muhammad the Book and guidance outside the Book. The Sunnah is part of that revelation.

Seeker of Truth: The word Sunnah should not be used for hadith, because the Qur'an says "the way of Allah," not "the way of the Prophet."

Muslim: The Qur'an also says "Allah's she-camel." It does not mean that no ordinary camel can be called the camel of its human owner.

Seeker of Truth: No, because those are two different camels.

Muslim: And these are two different uses of the word Sunnah. Allah's sunnah means His established way of dealing with earlier peoples. The Prophet's Sunnah means his sayings and actions.

Seeker of Truth: Do you have proof from the Qur'an that we must follow the Prophet?

Muslim: Before giving the proof, notice a problem in the question. Who delivered the Qur'an to you?

Seeker of Truth: The Messenger of Allah.

Muslim: When he said, "This is Allah's Book," we believed him. Likewise, when he told us that something was lawful or forbidden, we believed him.

Seeker of Truth: I disagree. Did the Prophet not tell people not to pollinate their date palms, and when they obeyed him the crop was poor? That shows they did not always have to follow him.

Muslim: Read the report as it is.

Seeker of Truth: Musa ibn Talhah reported from his father: I passed with the Messenger of Allah by people working at the tops of date palms. He asked, "What are they doing?" They said, "They are pollinating them, placing the male with the female." He said, "I do not think that will help."

Muslim: Stop there. He said, "I do not think." He was giving a personal opinion about farming, not teaching a religious command.

Seeker of Truth: You promised me Qur'anic proof that the Prophet must be followed.

Muslim: There are many verses. For example: "Believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided." [al-A'raf 7:158]

Seeker of Truth: How can I follow hadith when you yourselves call them speculative?

Muslim: Is your own understanding of the Qur'an completely certain?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Then what deserves more trust: your personal reading, or reports accepted and practised by the Muslim community?

Muslim: Now for the technical answer. When hadith scholars call a report zanni, they do not mean "probably false." They use a technical division. Qat'i means evidence whose basic authenticity is not open to ordinary dispute. Zanni means evidence whose chain or interpretation may be examined by qualified hadith specialists. The fact that specialists may discuss a report does not make it wrong.

Seeker of Truth: But some of your scholars do not accept solitary reports in matters of belief. Does that not make them unreliable?

Muslim: That view came from theological schools such as the Mu'tazilah and Ash'aris.



Seeker of Truth: Are you calling scholars who held that view innovators?

Muslim: They are scholars among the people of religious innovation. The scholars of the Muslim community are the Companions, the Followers, and those who followed them well - not those who introduced religious innovations. Kalam came later.

Seeker of Truth: I will research that. For now, do you accept a trustworthy solitary report in creed?

Muslim: The Prophet's followers did. They did not divide a trustworthy report into "law" and "creed." The Messenger sent Mu'adh ibn Jabal alone to Yemen, where he taught both worship and the oneness of Allah. Nobody said, "One person is not enough to teach belief."

Seeker of Truth: Did Umar not refuse Abu Musa al-Ash'ari's report until he brought another witness?

Muslim: That was a special case. Umar himself explained that he was not accusing Abu Musa. He wanted people to be careful when reporting from the Messenger of Allah. Umar accepted solitary reports: he accepted the report of Haml ibn Malik concerning compensation for a fetus, the report of Ammar concerning tayammum, the report of al-Dahhak ibn Sufyan al-Kilabi, and other reports transmitted from Umar.

Seeker of Truth: Why did the Messenger forbid writing hadith if it is binding evidence?

Muslim: Which report do you mean?

Seeker of Truth: "Do not write from me, and whoever has written anything from me other than the Qur'an should erase it."

Muslim: Why did you stop there? Complete it.

Seeker of Truth: "Do not write from me anything other than the Qur'an, and whoever wrote anything other than the Qur'an should erase it. But narrate from me, and there is no harm."

Muslim: Then the same report tells people to spread his hadith by narration. It is evidence against your claim.

Muslim: And how can you use a hadith as proof while denying hadith?

Muslim: There is also the report in which Abdullah ibn Amr was told by the Prophet: "Write. By the One in whose hand is my soul, nothing comes out of this mouth except truth."

Seeker of Truth: We accept a hadith only when it agrees with the Qur'an.



Muslim: Which verse does that report agree with?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: Then you accepted one part only because it suited your view.

Seeker of Truth: We do not accept it for ourselves. We use it against you because you consider it authentic.

Muslim: Evidence against us cannot be built from one isolated phrase while ignoring the rest of the texts on the same subject.

Seeker of Truth: What do you mean?

Muslim: A single subject may be addressed by several verses and hadiths. We must gather them and understand them together. Taking one text while leaving the others is selective reasoning driven by preference, not by the religion.

Seeker of Truth: But he said, "Do not write." That settles it.

Muslim: Suppose you asked me for dietary advice. I said, "Do not drink milk." Then I said, "Drink low-fat milk." Then I added, "If you drink milk, do not drink more than one glass a day." Would it be correct to take only the first statement and ignore the others?

Seeker of Truth: No. I must consider all the statements together. I would understand "Do not drink milk" to mean full-fat milk, since you permitted low-fat milk. I would also understand that I should not drink more than one glass.

Muslim: Good. If you took one statement and ignored the others, you would reach the wrong conclusion. The same applies here. Other reports clearly allowed writing. The early restriction existed when writing materials were limited and the Qur'an needed to be kept clearly separate from personal notes. Once Qur'an memorisation was widespread and confusion was no longer feared, writing hadith was permitted.

Seeker of Truth: If hadith is true, why do we not find very many reports transmitted by Abu Bakr and Umar?

Muslim: The Qur'anic chains commonly known today do not pass through them either. Does that make the Qur'an untrue?

Seeker of Truth: I did not know that.

Muslim: They were occupied with leadership and running the state, while other Companions had more time to teach. During their period, many Companions were still alive, so there was less need to quote formal chains. After many Companions died, those who lived longer became major sources for later students.

Seeker of Truth: How can I believe that al-Bukhari memorised six hundred thousand hadiths and examined them while compiling his book over sixteen years?

Muslim: Why not?

Seeker of Truth: By calculation, that would mean examining about 37,500 hadiths each year. That is a huge number.

Muslim: Sixteen years was the time spent compiling the book, not the whole time he spent learning hadith. He devoted himself to hadith from childhood, travelled widely, studied constantly, and had an exceptional memory.

Muslim: Also, six hundred thousand hadiths in the scholars' counting did not mean six hundred thousand different statements of the Prophet.

Seeker of Truth: Then what did it mean?

Muslim: Listen to this saying: "None of you should propose marriage to a woman after his brother has already proposed." How long did that take you to memorise?

Seeker of Truth: I have memorised it.

Muslim: Good. One chain is: Malik, from Nafi, from Ibn Umar, from the Messenger of Allah. Repeat it.

Seeker of Truth: Malik, from Nafi, from Ibn Umar, from the Messenger of Allah: "None of you should propose after his brother has proposed."

Muslim: Now replace Malik with Ubayd Allah.

Seeker of Truth: Ubayd Allah, from Nafi, from Ibn Umar, from the Messenger of Allah: the same wording.

Muslim: Now you have two hadiths in their method of counting.

Seeker of Truth: Only the name of Nafi's student changed!

Muslim: Yes. Different chains were counted separately. Al-Bukhari lived with these names in his memory - their reports, teachers, and students - almost as closely as a person lives with his own family. With his strong memory, why could he not retain them?



Seeker of Truth: Fine, but he called his own book authentic and you simply believed him. How is that reliable?

Muslim: We do not accept every author merely because he calls his book authentic. Ibn Khuzaymah and Ibn Hibban each wrote works titled al-Sahih, yet scholars examined them and did not accept every report without review.

Seeker of Truth: Al-Bukhari was not infallible. How can you believe everything in his book?

Muslim: The book is not accepted as one man's private opinion. It passed through generations of hadith scholars, who studied it and confirmed its overall authenticity. It became a book of the Muslim scholarly community.

Seeker of Truth: But some scholars criticised parts of it.

Muslim: Their ability to examine and discuss roughly one percent of the book proves that scholars did not accept it blindly because its title was "The Authentic." They researched every report. Sometimes a critic merely preferred another chain, saying, "Had you used the other chain, it would have been stronger." Sometimes later scholars answered the critic and showed that al-Bukhari was correct.

Muslim: Even if, for argument's sake, one accepted that half of one percent or one percent contained weakness, that would not undermine the book as a whole. ⁽¹⁾

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Denying the Divine Attributes



Seeker of Truth: I now invite you to Islam. Accept Islam and you will be safe.

Muslim: I was the one inviting you to Islam. What happened? Is there a new Islam I have not heard of?

Seeker of Truth: No, but you are an unbelieving apostate who worships a beardless young man!

Muslim: Who told you that? I worship Allah, besides whom there is no god. Allah is not described as young, because youth is a stage of age. Where did you get this claim?

Seeker of Truth: Your books contain a report saying, "I saw my Lord in the form of a beardless young man."

Muslim: The report is found in works such as 31-8333015 al-Asma wa-l-Sifat and Ibn Asakir's history.

Seeker of Truth: I heard that only Wahhabis such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab transmitted it. How could Ibn Asakir report it if he was Ash'ari?

Muslim: It is a transmitted report, and narrators transmit reports regardless of their creed. But it does not speak about an attribute of Allah; rather, it describes a dream vision, and in the first place it is a weak report.

Muslim: No one among Ahl al-Sunnah, the Kharijites, the Ash'aris, or the Rafidah believes that "a beardless young man" is an attribute of Allah. How can you call me an unbeliever for something I do not believe?

Seeker of Truth: Even if you reject that report, you are still an unbeliever because you affirm place and direction for Allah and say that He is above the heavens.

Muslim: If that makes me an unbeliever, then your argument would also condemn the Messenger, because he spoke of seeking permission to enter upon his Lord, asked the slave woman, “Where is Allah?” and accepted her answer, “Above the heavens.” Allah says, “The Most Merciful rose over the Throne” [Taha 20:5] and “They fear their Lord above them.” [al-Nahl 16:50] During the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet pointed upward when calling Allah as witness.

Seeker of Truth: There is no need for so many texts. All of them must be interpreted away from their apparent meaning.

Muslim: What do you mean by interpretation?

Seeker of Truth: We reject the apparent meaning and search for a meaning that fits our creed about Allah.

Muslim: Why not accept the wording as it stands, without likening Allah to creation?

Seeker of Truth: Because taking it as it appears is disbelief. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi even declared Ibn Khuzaymah an unbeliever over this issue.

Muslim: And what proof makes that a certainty?

Seeker of Truth: The rational certainties established by kalam theology.

Muslim: Kalam is misguidance. Why leave the guidance Allah revealed and follow kalam instead?

Seeker of Truth: How can you criticize kalam when Imam al-Nawawi said: “One required religious innovation is to learn the proofs of kalam so a person can answer an innovator or atheist who raises an objection. This is a communal duty.” [al-Nawawi, al-Majmu' 4/519, al-Muniriyyah edition]

Muslim: Kalam has helped lead many people into atheism and religious innovation. I discussed atheism with you using Qur'anic evidence and did not need anything from kalam.

Muslim: Look at what it has done to you. I say, “Allah says” and “His Messenger says,” and you reply, “We must reinterpret it because its apparent meaning is disbelief.” You then force revelation to agree with kalam. That makes kalam a higher guide than the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger.

Seeker of Truth: That is correct. Imam Ibn Asakir al-Ash'ari quoted Imam Abu Abdullah ibn Mujahid al-Ash'ari as saying, “Every field of knowledge is a servant of kalam.” [Ibn Asakir, Tabyin Kadhhib al-Muftari fima Nusiba ila al-Ash'ari, p. 357] So the Book and Sunnah cannot be understood without kalam.

Muslim: We seek Allah's protection from such error. Allah says: "Is the One who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or one who cannot find guidance unless he is guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?" [Yunus 10:35]

Seeker of Truth: Our imam al-Razi answers you: "Without rational proof we could not distinguish the clear from the ambiguous; in reality, true guidance is rational proof, not the Qur'an."

Muslim: That statement argues against Allah, not against me. Allah says that He guides, while your al-Razi says that his reason is the true guide. We seek Allah's protection from this error.

Seeker of Truth: Where is the error?

Muslim: What then separates your method from any false religion? Could idol worshippers not reinterpret the verses against idols and claim that the language is only figurative?

Seeker of Truth: How could they reinterpret a verse such as Abraham saying to his father: "Do you take idols as gods? I see you and your people in clear error" [al-An'am 6:74]?

Muslim: How did you reinterpret the Prophet's saying, "Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven"?

Seeker of Truth: It means that an angel of our Lord descends.

Muslim: Then idol worshippers could use the same method and claim that Abraham meant, "Do you take the angels of the idols as gods?"

Once unlimited reinterpretation is accepted, anyone with a belief contrary to Islam can still call himself Muslim and dismiss every verse or hadith that conflicts with his own ideas.

If every clear text may be rejected by calling it figurative, very little remains of submission. Islam means surrendering to Allah: the Book goes in front and the believer follows it, not the other way around.

Seeker of Truth: You believe in indwelling because you say Allah is in the heaven.

Muslim: Allah describes Himself as above the heavens: "Do you feel secure from the One above the heaven that He will not cause the earth to swallow you?" [al-Mulk 67:16]

Seeker of Truth: That refers to Gabriel.



Muslim: The early commentators agreed that the reference is to Allah. Al-Wahidi later altered this meaning, and some Ash'aris followed that interpretation.

Seeker of Truth: You contradict yourselves. Sometimes you say “above the heavens” and sometimes “over the Throne.”

Muslim: Allah says that He is above the heavens and that “The Most Merciful rose over the Throne.” [Taha 20:5] There is no contradiction. A person may say, “I am in Egypt” and also, “I am on the roof of my house.”

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: Why, when the words are in the Qur'an, do you immediately claim contradiction?

Seeker of Truth: If Allah is over His Throne, where was He before the Throne was created?

Muslim: I know the reported answer, but suppose I did not. What would your question prove? Must I know every detail about Allah? Do you not believe: “They do not encompass anything of His knowledge except what He wills” [al-Baqarah 2:255]?

Seeker of Truth: Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi reported from Ali: “Allah was when there was no place, and He is now as He was.”

Muslim: What is his chain to Ali?

Seeker of Truth: He did not give one.

Muslim: Then how can you say he transmitted it? A report from Ali requires a chain.

Seeker of Truth: What should I say instead?

Muslim: Say that the statement was attributed to Ali without proof. Abd al-Qahir lived in the fifth Islamic century. Without a chain, how did Ali's words reach him?

Seeker of Truth: It is a rational rule and does not need a chain. Reason requires that Allah does not change.

Muslim: Allah says that He rose over the Throne. He did not say that He underwent a change.

Seeker of Truth: Rising over the Throne is a change.

Muslim: It is an action. An action is not the same as a change of nature. Becoming a young man after being a child, or becoming a human after being dust, is change. Standing, eating, or doing an action is not normally called a change in ordinary Arabic.

Seeker of Truth: In kalam theology we call every new action a change.

Muslim: I know, but I would not buy your terminology for an onion. Speak in the Arabic people actually know, not in terms imported from pagan Greek philosophers.

Seeker of Truth: If I used plain Arabic, I would have to say, "It is impossible for Allah to act." That sounds ugly and people would reject it. So we call action "change" and then say, "Allah does not change."

Muslim: Good. You have admitted the trick. Changing names is an old method of deception. When you want to reject something, you give it an unpleasant label. You call Allah's highness "being confined," and you call affirming His attributes "anthropomorphism," and so on.

Seeker of Truth: Let us return to the main question: where was Allah before He created the Throne?

Muslim: The Messenger was asked a similar question and answered: "He was in ama; there was no air above it and no air below it, and He created His Throne over the water."

Seeker of Truth: Your shaykh al-Albani graded that report weak.

Muslim: That was his opinion. He did not know the status of one of the hadith's narrators, so he graded it weak. But our shaykh Ibn Majah authenticated it and included it among the hadiths about which he said, "The Jahmiyyah rejected them." Our shaykh al-Qasim ibn Sallam also transmitted the agreement of our noble early shaykhs on authenticating it.

Seeker of Truth: I still consider it weak and do not accept it.

Muslim: What conclusion are you trying to reach?

Seeker of Truth: Allah existed before the Throne without a place. He created the Throne and remained without a place exactly as before.

Muslim: That wording is confused. It is like saying, "Allah existed when there were no servants; then He created servants and remained as He was." Did Allah create the servants inside Himself?

Seeker of Truth: No. Allah does not create things inside Himself, but outside Himself.



Muslim: Then did He create the Throne above Him, in front of Him, behind Him, to His right, to His left, or below Him?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: If the Throne is not in any relation outside Him, the alternative would place it inside Him, and neither of us says that. If it is outside Him, then there is some relation between it and Him. Where was it created?

Seeker of Truth: Certainly below Him, because Allah is the Most High.

Muslim: Once you say the Throne is below, you have affirmed that Allah is above. That is what the people of Islam affirm.

Seeker of Truth: But if we affirm that, does it not mean that Allah is in a place, and therefore...

Muslim: That is because you compared Him to created beings - may Allah protect us from that. A created being occupies a place because it needs it, while Allah is independent of all creation. If people followed your reasoning, religion would be ruined.

Seeker of Truth: How?

Muslim: They would say: Allah did not create us because He had no need to create us, and He did not command us to worship because He has no need of our worship.

Seeker of Truth: Yes, that is true. This was one of the objections used by atheists. Praise be to Allah, my heart is free of it now, so I do not know how they deceived me with something like it.

Muslim: Do you now believe Allah, who told us that He is over the Throne, or the deceivers who claim that their minds take priority over the Qur'an and Sunnah?

Seeker of Truth: Is that not a call to switch off reason?

Muslim: No. It is a call to respect reason. A reasonable person knows that Allah is true, that the Qur'an guides to what is most upright, and that the Messenger is truthful. Did Allah send His Messenger to guide us or to mislead us?

Seeker of Truth: To guide us.

Muslim: Allah tells us in many verses, and His Messenger tells us in hadiths, that Allah is above the heavens over His Throne. Yet they never told us, "He is not in a place," as the Ash'aris claim. Did the Book and Sunnah come to guide us or to mislead us?



Seeker of Truth: Allah forbid. That would mean they came to mislead us, and that is impossible.

Muslim: I advise you to read this book. It records the consensus of the Muslims on the matter.

Seeker of Truth: All right. I believe that Allah is above His Throne, as He said.

Seeker of Truth: But do you believe that Allah has a face, an eye, and a hand like human beings?

Muslim: Notice the distortion. Where did you get the words “like human beings”? I believe that Allah has a face, an eye, and a hand, because He told us so. You added “like human beings” to make the statement sound ugly.

Seeker of Truth: But Allah says: “There is nothing like Him.” [al-Shura 42:11]

Muslim: We believe that verse. But have you not reinterpreted many verses that conflict with your creed? Why do you refuse to reinterpret this one? Suppose I said it means that Allah is God and nothing is like Him in being God. Then the matter would be finished and you could no longer use the verse against me.

Seeker of Truth: Because it is a clear verse and must not be reinterpreted.

Muslim: How did you decide that it is clear?

Seeker of Truth: Because it agrees with reason.

Muslim: So it must not be reinterpreted?

Seeker of Truth: It must never be reinterpreted.

Muslim: Good. I will not reinterpret it. I believe it according to its clear meaning, but I ask you not to reinterpret it either.

Seeker of Truth: If you truly believed it, you would deny that Allah has a face or a hand, because we have faces and hands.

Muslim: By your understanding, you would have to deny every attribute that is also found in created beings. You would even have to deny Allah's knowledge, because human beings have knowledge.

Seeker of Truth: No, because Allah's knowledge is not like our knowledge.

Muslim: And Allah's hand is not like our hands, and His face is not like our faces.

Seeker of Truth: The moment you affirm a face or a hand, you have compared Him to creation.

Muslim: Why did you not say that the moment we affirm knowledge, we have compared Him to creation?

Seeker of Truth: Because knowledge is not an attribute of bodies.

Muslim: But the verse says, “There is nothing like Him.” [al-Shura 42:11] It does not say, “There is no body like Him.” Why did you restrict it to bodies? That is an interpretation of the verse, even though you claimed it must not be interpreted.

Seeker of Truth: The shaykhs said so.

Muslim: I seek refuge in Allah from their misguidance.

Seeker of Truth: But why is affirming a hand not the same as affirming likeness? We have hands.

Muslim: Did the shaykh who misled you look like a monkey?

Seeker of Truth: No.

Muslim: Yet a monkey has a hand, a leg, an eye, and so on.

Seeker of Truth: But it is not like us.

Muslim: Then why do you assume that affirming a hand for Allah means that it must be like our hands?

Seeker of Truth: Does not “hand” sometimes have a figurative meaning? Allah says, “Rather, both His hands are extended” [al-Ma'idah 5:64], meaning that He is not miserly. He also says, “You are under Our eyes” [al-Tur 52:48], meaning under Our care.

Muslim: Yes, such expressions carry those meanings. But when generosity is expressed by saying that His hands are extended, this also shows that He has two hands. When care is expressed by mentioning His eye, this shows that He has an eye. You may tell someone, “You are upon my head,” meaning, “I respect you.” You used your head in the expression because you have a head. You may say, “So-and-so has a strong eye,” meaning that he is bold or shameless. The expression uses his eye because he has an eye.

Seeker of Truth: That is convincing. But if we affirm a face, hands, and a leg for Allah, Allah says: “Everyone upon it will perish, and the Face of your Lord, full of majesty and honour, will remain.” [al-Rahman 55:26-27] Does that mean Allah's hand will perish?



Muslim: “Everyone upon it” - upon what?

Seeker of Truth: Upon the earth.

Muslim: Is Allah's hand upon the earth?

Seeker of Truth: No, but another verse says: “Everything will perish except His Face.” [al-Qasas 28:88] If we affirm a hand for Allah, then according to this verse His hand and His leg would perish.

Muslim: Glory be to Allah. You were more sensible during your atheist days. How do you understand the verse?

Seeker of Truth: I understand “Face” to mean His very Self. Allah does not perish, while everything besides Him perishes.

Muslim: How can He refer to Himself by His Face if He has no face?

Seeker of Truth: I do not understand your question.

Muslim: May I say about one of the Ash'aris, “His tail will remain”?

Seeker of Truth: No, because he has no tail - unless you wanted to insult him and compare him to animals.

Muslim: Then did Allah refer to Himself by mentioning His Face because He has a face, or because He compared Himself to created beings, which would be an insult and a defect?

Seeker of Truth: Allah forbid. Allah does not compare Himself to created beings.

Muslim: Then He has a Face, and He mentioned His Face when referring to Himself. Do you affirm knowledge for Allah?

Seeker of Truth: Yes.

Muslim: Will Allah's knowledge perish?

Seeker of Truth: No, because Allah does not perish.

Muslim: You said that “Face” means the Self, while knowledge is not the Self. According to your shallow reading of the verse, knowledge would also perish.

Seeker of Truth: That is false, but the verse does not mean that.

Muslim: Exactly. The verse never means that. Had you read it in full, you would understand it: “Do not call upon another god besides Allah. There is no god but Him. Everything will perish except His Face.” [al-Qasas 28:88]

Seeker of Truth: Now I understand. It means that the other gods will pass away, while Allah remains.

Muslim: Correct. Some created things, such as the Throne and the Preserved Tablet, will also not be destroyed.

Seeker of Truth: Correct.

Muslim: Do you now believe in Allah's Face?

Seeker of Truth: Praise be to Allah, yes - but without meaning. The early Muslims affirmed the words without meaning.

Muslim: Would you accept someone saying about you, "You drink wine," but claiming the words have no meaning?

Seeker of Truth: No. That statement has a clear meaning. How could it have no meaning?

Muslim: The words face, hand, eye, rising over the Throne, and coming also have meanings. How can you believe them while denying their meaning?

Seeker of Truth: As Imam al-Shafi'i is reported to have said: "I believe in Allah and in what came from Allah according to the meaning Allah intended."

Muslim: That report is not sound. It was not reliably transmitted from al-Shafi'i.

Seeker of Truth: But is the statement itself not correct?

Muslim: No. Suppose someone says, "I believe in Paradise, but without meaning." Paradise might then mean a well, a watermelon, the eternal home in the next life, or a hole. Would you call him a believer in Paradise?

Seeker of Truth: No. He believed in the word "Paradise," not in Paradise itself.

Muslim: That is what you did when you denied the meanings of Allah's attributes.

Seeker of Truth: Did Imam Ahmad not say, "We believe in them without asking how and without meaning"?

Muslim: Read his words in full.

Seeker of Truth: "We believe in the hadiths on this subject, accept them, and let them pass as they came, without asking how, and with no meaning except the meaning by which He described Himself, Exalted is He." [Ibn Battah, al-Ibanah al-Kubra 7/158]

Muslim: The words “with no meaning except the meaning by which He described Himself” do not deny meaning. They affirm the revealed meaning and reject invented meanings.

Seeker of Truth: But I heard that the early Muslims left the meaning entirely to Allah.

Muslim: That is a false claim about them. If they denied all meaning, why did they oppose the Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah? How could those groups accuse the early Muslims of anthropomorphism if the early Muslims affirmed no meaning at all?

Seeker of Truth: But if I asked you for the meaning of “hand,” what would you say?

Muslim: I would not replace it with another word, because the Arabic word “hand” has no exact synonym.

Seeker of Truth: It does. It means a limb or an organ.

Muslim: “Limb” and “organ” are not synonyms. They describe the form of a created being's hand. We do not know the form of Allah's hand.

Seeker of Truth: Do you have statements from the early Muslims showing that they affirmed the meanings of the attributes?

Muslim: Many. For example, Imam al-Bukhari wrote in his Sahih: “Chapter: His Throne was over the water” [Hud 11:7], and “He is Lord of the Mighty Throne.” [al-Tawbah 9:129] Abu al-Aliyah explained “He rose to the heaven” as “He went up,” and Mujahid explained “He rose over the Throne” as “He rose high over the Throne.”

Seeker of Truth: That is al-Bukhari. He was a Wahhabi anthropomorphist.

Muslim: He was quoting Abu al-Aliyah al-Riyahi and Mujahid ibn Jabr, both students of the Companions.

Seeker of Truth: They were all anthropomorphists. I follow Imam al-Tirmidhi. He said: “Reports on this subject are established, believed, and not imagined, and it is not asked how. It is reported from Malik, Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, and Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak that they said concerning these hadiths: Let them pass without asking how. This is the view of the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jama'ah.”

Muslim: Continue reading.

Seeker of Truth: “The Jahmiyyah denied these reports and said this was comparison. Allah mentioned in more than one place in His Book the hand, hearing, and sight. The Jahmiyyah reinterpreted these verses and explained them differently from the scholars.”

Muslim: So al-Tirmidhi tells you that the early scholars explained them one way, while the Jahmiyyah explained them in a different way.

Seeker of Truth: Is that not a contradiction? How can he say, “Let them pass without asking how,” and then claim that they explained them?

Muslim: Their explanation was to affirm them as they came, while the Jahmiyyah altered their meanings. Continue reading.

Seeker of Truth: “They said that Allah did not create Adam with His hand, and they said that the meaning of hand here is power.”

Seeker of Truth: That is the explanation given by our imams al-Juwayni, al-Razi, al-Nawawi, and others. How can al-Tirmidhi call it the explanation of the Jahmiyyah?

Muslim: Continue.

Seeker of Truth: “Ishaq ibn Ibrahim said: Comparison occurs only when someone says, ‘A hand like a hand,’ or ‘hearing like hearing.’ If he says, ‘Hearing like hearing,’ or ‘similar to hearing,’ that is comparison. But when he says what Allah said - hand, hearing, and sight - and does not ask how or say, ‘Like this hearing,’ then it is not comparison.” Who is this Ishaq? He sounds like a Jew or an anthropomorphist.

Muslim: That is Imam Ishaq ibn Rahawayh. Will you attack his religion too?

Seeker of Truth: Then this book must not truly be al-Tirmidhi's. One narrator in its chain is unknown to me, so the book cannot be established.

Muslim: Allah is our help. Where did you get this new practice of denying books? You are tearing Islam down to defend your innovation.

Seeker of Truth: In any case, all chains pass through Ash'aris and Maturidis, while you have no chain.

Muslim: Chains to what - to the books of those you call anthropomorphists? Chains to books do not prove their contents. Al-Nawawi said that later people no longer required all the old conditions of transmission, because the aim had become preserving the chain unique to this nation [al-Taqrīb wa-l-Taysir, p. 52]. Al-Iraqi likewise said that once preserving the chain became the main concern, young children should be brought early to hearing sessions [al-Taḥyīd wa-l-Idāh, p. 164]. People began listing chains to books merely to say, "We have a chain." Such a chain has little academic value.

Muslim: For example, Ibn Hajar found an elderly woman named Fatimah bint al-Manja who had permission from a shaykh who had died long before. He read fifty books to her and then transmitted them through her. She may never have heard some of those books and may not have known their contents. But because Shaykh Sulayman ibn Hamzah had told her when she was young, "I grant you permission," people read to her and transmitted through her. What academic value does that have?

Muslim: Now I ask you: what are the chains of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari?

Seeker of Truth: I do not know.

Muslim: And the chains of al-Ghazali?

Seeker of Truth: Which chains?

Muslim: And the chains of al-Razi?

Seeker of Truth: Allah knows best.

Muslim: These are the founders of your theological school, yet they have no chains for it. What is your chain for reinterpreting the attribute of the Face, the descent, and Allah's highness?

Seeker of Truth: There is none.

Muslim: Then stop using this argument.

Seeker of Truth: But the hadith of descent means that Allah's command descends.

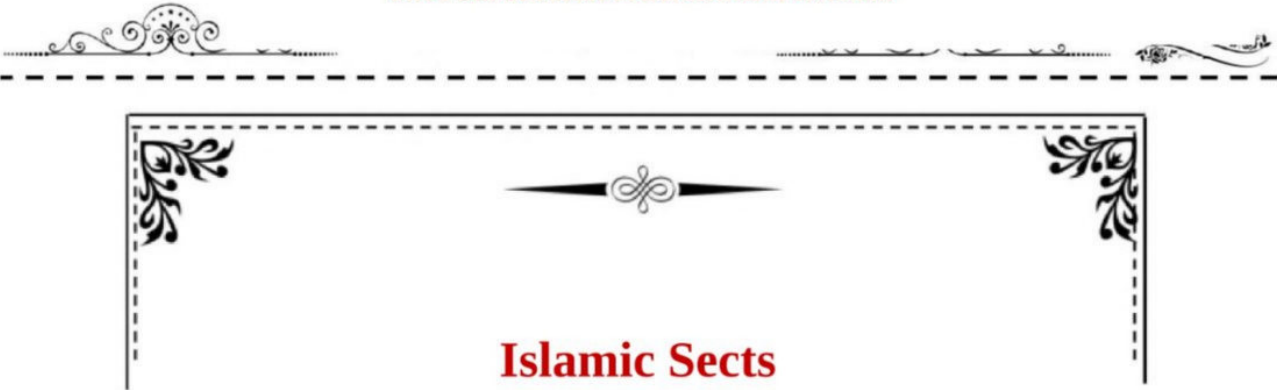
Muslim: From where does it descend?

Seeker of Truth: From Allah.

Muslim: Then Allah is above.

Seeker of Truth: I believe in Allah. ⁽¹⁾

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Islamic Sects

Seeker of Truth: I am a Muslim now, but I feel lost and confused. There are many Islamic groups, with disputes and disagreement between them. Which group should I join?

Muslim: Join the Islam that came from Allah.

Seeker of Truth: Every group says that it follows true Islam.

Muslim: Follow the one that brings evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Seeker of Truth: Every group has evidence that it uses to support its views.

Muslim: That is true, but you need a method by which you can recognise the truth.

Seeker of Truth: You will give me your method, and if I ask someone else, he will give me another method. Which one should I follow?

Muslim: Let us search together for the method that agrees with the Qur'an, Sunnah, sound reason, and natural disposition. What do you think?

Seeker of Truth: I agree, but first I want to ask about a few things I came across while researching the Islamic groups.

Muslim: I am ready, by Allah's permission.

Seeker of Truth: Some people ask: why are you hostile to the fighters who call themselves mujahidin?

Muslim: Because some of them are Rafidah who insult the Companions and distort the religion.

Seeker of Truth: Whom do you mean?

Muslim: The group called Hizb Allah? Do they not call themselves mujahidin?

Seeker of Truth: Yes, but I mean someone else.

Muslim: Haftar's group?

Seeker of Truth: No.



Muslim: Tell me whom you mean. There are many groups, and each calls itself mujahidin: Hamas, al-Qaeda, ISIS, the Taliban, Haftar, Boko Haram, Hizb Allah, and others.

Seeker of Truth: I mean the people of truth.

Muslim: That description is relative. Every group claims that truth is with it and declares the other sides unbelievers.

Seeker of Truth: I mean those who say they established Islamic law.

Muslim: They all say that, but each has a different version of law.

Seeker of Truth: They say they ruled by Islamic law: they cut off a thief's hand, carried out stoning and flogging, and banned smoking and alcohol.

Muslim: Is that all it means to establish Islamic law?

Seeker of Truth: What do you say?

Muslim: Which is more serious in the religion: for a person to be misled and not know his Lord, or for him to steal?

Seeker of Truth: To be misled about his Lord.

Muslim: Then which deserves to be stopped first: the doubts spread by those who deny Allah's attributes, or the thief's hand?

Seeker of Truth: Both.

Muslim: But if one remained unchecked, which would place Muslims in greater danger?

Seeker of Truth: The doubts.

Muslim: Yet those who claimed to establish Islamic law called the people who founded these doubts "imams," while declaring Muslim shaykhs unbelievers for disagreeing with them on political issues and over opinions about certain rulers.

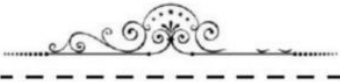
This shows that groups of this kind are often more political than religious.

Seeker of Truth: There are also unarmed groups involved in politics that try to unite the Muslims. What do you think of them?

Muslim: Do they unite Muslims upon what came from Allah?

Seeker of Truth: They say the Muslim nation must unite, so we should remove the differences between us.

Muslim: Remove them by rejecting the falsehood within them?



Seeker of Truth: No. They say that Sunnis, Mu'tazilis, Ash'aris, Maturidis, and Ibadis are all brothers and all part of Ahl al-Sunnah, and that we should cooperate to raise the Muslim nation.

Muslim: That really means saying that the people of truth and the people of falsehood are all people of truth, and that the people of truth must cooperate with falsehood. This opposes the prophetic way. Allah sent down the Book and sent the Messenger, bringing us together upon that guidance. He did not tell us, "Join truth together with falsehood."

Seeker of Truth: But when the Messenger sent the Muslims to Banu Qurayzah, he told them not to pray Asr until they reached Banu Qurayzah. The time for Asr came while they were travelling. Some prayed on the road and others delayed it until they arrived. The Messenger told both groups, "You were correct."

Muslim: True. That is why we do not allow division over questions of this kind. This is where the flexibility of legal interpretation comes from and why the schools of law developed. But are questions of this kind similar to our disagreement with those theological groups?

Seeker of Truth: What is the difference?

Muslim: One group worships a lord who does not speak, has no face, and is not above his Throne, and it believes in a Qur'an that Allah did not truly speak. Another believes in a Lord who speaks and is above His Throne, and in a Qur'an that Allah truly spoke. Is this disagreement like the disagreement over what the Prophet meant in the hadith of Banu Qurayzah?

Seeker of Truth: No. That is a major difference. Each group gives completely different descriptions of Allah, almost as if they followed two different religions.

Muslim: Then how can we ignore that disagreement, give innovators room to mislead Muslim children, and call everyone Ahl al-Sunnah?

Seeker of Truth: But this group says it wants to reach power so that it can rule by Allah's law.

Muslim: You see one of them with ten centimetres of beard on his face, yet he shaves it and does not apply Allah's ruling even to himself. How will he apply it to an entire country? They also do not follow Allah's law in matters of belief. Many of them have reached power, yet we did not see them establish a law different from the constitutions used by today's rulers.

Seeker of Truth: So you do not advise me to join them?



Muslim: I advise you only to follow the true religion and not attach yourself to any sect, party, or organisation.

Seeker of Truth: What is the true religion?

Muslim: The Qur'an and Sunnah.

Seeker of Truth: We agree on that, but according to whose understanding?

Muslim: Who do you think knew the Prophet best?

Seeker of Truth: His Companions, because they accompanied him, saw him, learned from him, and witnessed the revelation being sent down.

Muslim: Then this gives us a standard. If a matter in the Qur'an or Sunnah is unclear, we return to the Companions. If we understand it in a way different from them, we know that we are the ones who made the mistake.

Seeker of Truth: That is logical, but is there evidence for it from the Qur'an and Sunnah?

Muslim: The Qur'an says: "The first and foremost among the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them with excellence - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him." [al-Tawbah 9:100]

Seeker of Truth: We agree on that principle. What if I cannot find a statement from the Companions?

Muslim: Then ask: who was trained by the Companions?

Seeker of Truth: Their students.

Muslim: We call them the Followers.

Seeker of Truth: But the Kharijites, Qadariyyah, and Murji'ah appeared during the time of the Followers. How can we simply take from everyone of that generation?

Muslim: When the Kharijites appeared, Ali and other Companions fought them, so their corruption became clear. The Companion Ibn Umar warned against the Qadariyyah, and leading Followers warned against the Murji'ah.

Muslim: Some of those sectarians were senior Followers, but they opposed the words of the Companions. Truth must be taken from its people. Merely living in the era of the Followers does not prove that a person's religion was sound. We take from the scholars among the Followers and from those known for learning from the Companions.

Seeker of Truth: Is there evidence for this?



Muslim: The evidence mentioned earlier praises those who follow the Companions with excellence. Allah also says: “Follow the way of those who turn to Me” [Luqman 31:15], not the way of people of desire. He says: “O believers, fear Allah and be with the truthful.” [al-Tawbah 9:119]

Seeker of Truth: Good. Then we follow them, and by the same method we follow the trustworthy scholars who came after them.

Muslim: Correct.

Seeker of Truth: But what should we do when they disagree?

Muslim: Look for the opinion closest to the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Seeker of Truth: I am not qualified to do that.

Muslim: Then follow the position of your school of law.

Seeker of Truth: I do not have a school.

Muslim: Then follow the judgement of your shaykh.

Seeker of Truth: I do not have a shaykh.

Muslim: Then find a trustworthy shaykh and a recognised school to which you can refer.

Seeker of Truth: But is that not abandoning the Qur'an and Sunnah? I know people who say they follow only the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Muslim: When they have a question, do they personally search the Qur'an and the books of Sunnah?

Seeker of Truth: No. They search YouTube for what shaykhs have said.

Muslim: Then they deceive themselves. They imitate shaykhs while claiming to take directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is good not to follow anyone until you know his evidence, but do not claim something that is not true.

Seeker of Truth: Which school should I choose? Perhaps the Hanbali school, since Imam Ahmad is said to have memorised a million hadiths?

Muslim: That is a good choice.

Seeker of Truth: Returning to creed, we take it only from the early Muslims. Yet Salafis themselves differ on many issues.

Muslim: I told you to return to the Companions, the Followers, and those who followed them. They are the Salaf, so take from them.

Seeker of Truth: But according to whose understanding? The Ash'aris claim that they agree with the Salaf, while Salafis also claim that they agree with the Salaf.

Muslim: How can the Ash'aris agree with the Salaf when they identify themselves with someone outside the Salaf? They take their name from Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, who did not meet any of the Salaf.

Seeker of Truth: He may still have learned their teachings, and he lived close to their period.

Muslim: But did he transmit, with a chain, the disputed teachings from any person among the Salaf?

Seeker of Truth: No. But al-Juwayni, al-Razi, al-Nawawi, al-Ghazali, al-Izz ibn Abd al-Salam, and al-Suyuti were all major imams. Why should I not take their understanding of the Salaf? You take your understanding from Ibn Taymiyyah. Did all those imams misunderstand the Salaf while Ibn Taymiyyah alone was correct?

Muslim: I did not mention Ibn Taymiyyah.

Seeker of Truth: Even if you did not mention him, all Salafis take from him. Why should I take from him and leave those imams? Do you not say that they were imams of the religion?

Muslim: I do not say that in the way you mean.

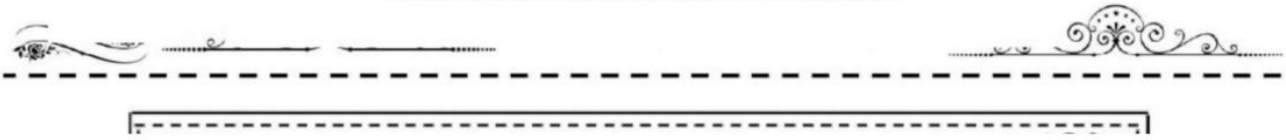
Seeker of Truth: But I have heard Salafi shaykhs say it.

Muslim: Those who called them imams did not mean that every part of their creed was correct. They meant that they were imams in jurisprudence.

Seeker of Truth: How can their creed be wrong if they were imams? Is it reasonable that they were imams in jurisprudence yet did not know their Lord? Is it reasonable that they worked hard on the details that break ablution but did not work hard on creed? How can I take from them the law in which they disagreed, yet leave the creed on which they agreed?

Muslim: They reasoned from the principles of speculative theology, and that was a corrupt effort that must be rejected. The scholars of hadith took creed from its true people and reached the truth. ⁽¹⁾

(1) - <https://youtu.be/XYIiNjKQdHY>



The Way to Establish the Truth

Seeker of Truth: How can I know who actually reached the truth?

Muslim: We agreed that the Salaf are the people of truth. These are their books. Read what they wrote and examine the Ash'ari beliefs: did they take them from the Salaf or from Aristotle?

Seeker of Truth: Tell me about some books of the Salaf.

Muslim: For example, the short works of the imams from the early generations and those after them: Usul al-Sunnah by Imam Ahmad and Usul al-Sunnah by Imam al-Humaydi. There are also medium-length works such as al-Sunnah by al-Kirmani, al-Sunnah by Abdullah ibn Imam Ahmad, al-Ibanah al-Sughra by Ibn Battah, al-Shari'ah by al-Ajurri, and Sharh I'tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah by al-Lalaka'i, among others.



Rulings I Dislike

Seeker of Truth: As a doubting Muslim, there are matters in Islam that feel wrong to me.

Muslim: Before we discuss them, let me ask: are they wrong according to you, or according to Allah?

Seeker of Truth: Logically, according to me. From our first day we agreed that what looks logical to you today may look illogical tomorrow, so I cannot place that opinion above what came from Allah. Still, reason must be used.

Muslim: Of course. But once your reason has established that this religion is true, do not object to what it contains. To make the principle clear, imagine that you and I took a taxi and the driver carried us a long distance. When we arrived, I tried to pay him, but he refused and said, "By Allah, I will not take anything from you, shaykh." I thanked him, got out, then took a knife from my pocket and punctured one of his tyres. What would you think of my action?

Seeker of Truth: It would be very bad.

Muslim: What if I did it because I knew that a gang was coming to steal his car? When they arrived and found the tyre punctured, they would be unable to steal it.

Seeker of Truth: That changes the matter. You would have saved him.

Muslim: That is how you should approach Allah's decree and rulings. Allah does not have to explain to us everything He does.

Muslim: When we understand the wisdom behind something, that is good. When we do not understand it, we say that Allah must have a wisdom greater than our minds can grasp.

Muslim: Did you know that the Qur'an gives a similar example?

Seeker of Truth: Where?



Muslim: In Surah al-Kahf, Moses and al-Khidr boarded a ship whose owners carried them. When they arrived, al-Khidr damaged the ship. He later explained to Moses that a king was seizing every sound ship by force. When the king saw this one damaged, he would leave it.

Muslim: Al-Khidr also killed a child, then explained that the child would grow up to disbelieve and become a tyrant, so Allah took his life as a mercy to his parents.

Seeker of Truth: But how did he know?

Muslim: Allah informed him, for he was a prophet. This teaches us that what we see of Allah's decree and rulings must contain good, even when we do not know it.

Seeker of Truth: But are we not allowed to ask questions?

Muslim: Yes. You may say, "There are matters I find difficult and want to understand." Then, by Allah's permission, you may find an answer. But do not begin by objecting. As for what you still do not understand, leave its matter to Allah.

Then ask whatever you wish.

Seeker of Truth: If a person is born with same-sex attraction, what has he done wrong to deserve punishment?

Muslim: He is not punished for the attraction itself.

Seeker of Truth: Really? I have heard that he is punished.

Muslim: No one is punished for an inclination. Punishment is for actions.

Seeker of Truth: But actions come from inclinations.

Muslim: Not necessarily. Many people feel a desire to steal, but they control themselves and stop themselves from stealing. They are rewarded for their patience and are not punished for the desire. Some people also have urges to kill or other violent impulses. A person is not punished for an urge within himself, but he is punished if he acts on it. His duty is to control himself, train himself, and keep himself away from that evil.

Seeker of Truth: That makes sense. So a person's desires are not limited to sexual matters.

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