

**The prophetical claims of the founders of Islam
(Muhammad) and Mormonism (Joseph Smith, Jr.):
A comparison from a Christian apologetic
perspective**

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THE PROPHETICAL CLAIMS OF THE FOUNDERS OF ISLAM (MUHAMMAD) AND MORMONISM (JOSEPH SMITH, JR.): A COMPARISON FROM A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC PERSPECTIVE

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- I. TITLE: The Prophetical Claims of the Founders of Islam (Muhammad) and Mormonism (Joseph Smith, Jr.): A Comparison From a Christian Apologetic Perspective
- II. KEYWORDS: Muhammad, Joseph Smith, Islam, Muslim, Mormon
- III. INTRODUCTION

The history of comparing Muhammad, the founder of Islam, and Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of Mormonism, is relatively novel in contrast to human history, as well as sporadic. Starting as early as 1834, various antagonists and protagonists have tried to show where the two leaders lives have overlapped for either polemical, sociological, or apologetic reasons, with none of them getting much beyond the “superficial” level that later Mormon scholars such as Hugh Nibley and Arnold Green allude to in the critiques of previous works on the subject. Therefore, a thorough and in-depth research of this matter that gets beyond the superficiality, anecdotal, and trivial, and determines if there are any real parallels between them, is long overdue. With this intent, it is also deemed necessary to offer a possible reason or reasons why any parallels exist, if they exist.

At the outset the assumption of the research is that Muhammad and Joseph Smith had many things in common due to their personal experiences, beliefs they shared, and the works they produced. Preliminary evidence will be discussed in detail later points in that direction. Both were visited by angels that assisted them in the creation of extra-biblical sources of authority, the Koran and the Book of Mormon. Both were influence internally through the families and externally through their surroundings to pursue the prophet statuses. Both exhibited eccentric behavior toward women, their neighbors, and the world. Both shared an extraordinary zeal for power and conquest, regardless of the means necessary to fulfill

the latter. Both of these men subscribe their beliefs and works to encounters with a “spirit,” which is taken for granted as being from God, yet has been rarely discussed with any amount of critical analysis or exegesis.

Even though it is assumed that Muhammad and Joseph Smith had many things in common, it is also acknowledged that many differences existed as well. There is no such thing as the perfect analogy between any two persons or entities without confusing the distinct identities that make those persons or entities unique. It is unfortunate, though, that some have decided to focus on the differences to the degree where it is concluded that the main reason anyone should compare both Muhammad and Smith is to that “pious writers... felt the needs to expose Joseph Smith and Mormonism...contending that both Joseph Smith and Muhammad different [sic] little from preceding ‘imposters’ and ‘frauds.’” The premise of this research is that despite the differences, the similarities are more than coincidental, and in many cases striking. While Green may be correct in part, that previous works were done with an ulterior motive in mind, no one has conducted a study that fully did as Green suggests. This is stated while taking into account that it would seem that such evaluations as his have an ulterior motive behind them as well; one that desires to thwart open investigation and inquiry by poisoning the well before any evidence is examined or conclusions drawn.

IV. PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is hypothesized that there are several prophetic parallels between the two founders of the two major religions of Islam and Mormonism that have been left unexplored, and that despite the amount of material that has been produced by proponents of both religious entities explaining their history and theological beliefs. What is more, both Muhammad and Joseph Smith have boasted to be either God’s final conduit of revelation or the one who has restored communication with God through whatever revelation God has imposed upon him to share with the rest of the world. Both claim biblical authority stemming from covenantal precedents that God shared with his people, Israel, while at the same time perverting that same authority and those covenants as they revise biblical statements oftentimes without compunction. In short, those prophetic parallels need to be explored and explained.

The problem statement of this research can therefore be described as whether the apparent prophetic parallels between Muhammad, as the founder of Islam, and Joseph Smith, Jr., as the founder of Mormonism, are of apologetic significance or superficiality.

V. QUESTIONS

- A. Are the prophetic parallels between Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr., significant or superficial?
- B. Is the Koran and the Book of Mormon inspirationally comparable to the Bible?
- C. Both Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr. claimed to be prophets of God, after the order of Jesus Christ, but were their words and works comparable to those of Jesus?

VI. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION FROM THIS STUDY

The contribution of this study is to focus on the parallels that apparently exist between the Islam, Muhammad, and the Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith. As noted previously, previous attempts to do the same are few in number, are typically either extremely polemical or unbalanced in their treatment of the subject, or fall short by failing to address the more prominent issues that seemingly tie the two together, even though they have been separated by twelve centuries of time and thousands of miles of geography. Furthermore, the spiritual aspect has never been addressed, at least to the knowledge of this author, which makes it all the more important, given the spiritual influence that both prophets experienced and reported, as well as exerted on others, especially during the nascent stages of the development of their respective religions.

VII. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

A. GENERAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general research objective of this dissertation is to determine whether or not the apparent prophetic parallels between Muhammad, the founder of Islam, and Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of Mormonism, are significant or “superficial,” and what it means for an apologetic understanding of these two faiths.

B. SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To do an in-depth analysis of the lives and beliefs of Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr.
2. To determine whether the prophetic claims by and about Muhammad and Joseph Smith are consistent with those made by and about the biblical prophets.
3. To determine if any significant parallels exist; avoid “parallelomania.”
4. To present a good-faith and scholarly response to the research data while shunning polemics.
5. If any significant prophetic parallels do exist, to explain why, using sound hermeneutical principles.
6. To remain open to possible suggestions, but be unafraid to stand by the naked truth

VIII. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Based on a preponderance of the early evidence and considering the preliminary arguments offered by those on both sides of the discussion, it is hypothesized that there will be multiple significant parallels discovered. While those parallels will not be exact in every instance, there will be substantial to counter any prejudicially biased retorts that attempt to thwart the truth that both Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr. were influenced in both human and spiritual ways, which resulted in the religious movements they were elected to create and lead.

IX. RESEARCH METHOD

It will be a literature study. The research method to be employed throughout the course of this research will be to consult as much of the primary literature as possible that is relevant to the subject, which will not only prove or disprove the hypothesis stated earlier and to resolve the problem of making allusions without satisfactorily making the case that has been occasionally raised for two centuries. The primary Islamic sources are, of course, the Koran and the Hadith, with several authoritative biographies, both Muslim and non-Muslim, which are good to discuss the historical background of Muhammad's life. David Margoliouth's *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* is excellent, as well as is Ibn Ishaq's *The Life of Muhammad*, Ali Dashti's *23 Years* and a more recent work by Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* are equally superb for biographical understanding. To assist in an explanation of Muslim culture, Ignaz Goldziher's *Muslim Studies*, Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples*, and Ira Lapidus's *A History of Islamic Societies* will all serve important roles as well.

From the Mormon side of the discussion the primary sources are the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the pronouncements of the General Authorities during the biannual General Conference. The Bible also serves as a primary source, since the Mormon claim it as one of their "Standard Works" alongside the aforementioned sources. There is a veritable mountain of historical and biographical material that has been published on the life of Joseph Smith from both Mormon and non-Mormon authors. Besides the seven-volume *History of the Church* written by Joseph Smith, there is the six-volume *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, written by Mormon historian and apologist B. H. Roberts. Volumes dealing with Smith's life and Mormon Church growth have been written by Eduard Meyer, *The Origin and History of the Mormons*; Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*; Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*; D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic Worldview* and *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*. Doctrinally speaking, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, along with his three-volume *Doctrines of Salvation*, as well as *Discourses of Brigham Young* compiled by John A. Widtsoe, the four-volume *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* edited by Daniel Ludlow, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* and *The Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, as well as the frequently recognized and cited *Mormon Doctrine* by Bruce R. McConkie, all serves as credible examples on a short list.

X. TIME FRAME

The dissertation will be completed in the 2018 academic year.

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A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE VERSION OF THE BIBLE AVAILABLE TO MUHAMMAD

ABSTRACT

It is a mandate that all Muslims believe in all previous revelations given by God along with the Koran. Relative to discussions with Christians, Muslims are required to believe the Bible. “And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the hereafter,” said Muhammad (Surah 2:4). That mandate, however, has been excused by some Muslim apologists today, as they contend that the Bible has been “corrupted” or tainted through the infusion of faulty doctrines and the exclusion of valuable texts that support Islamic ideas by dubious scribes and malicious copyists. Although the Muslim mandate endures, there is really no way of knowing what was in the “original text” of the Bible, at least according to the apologists, which calls into question the mandate in the first place.

“Discussing with Muslims the Version of the Bible Available to Muhammad” offers both a response to the Muslim apologist arguments regarding biblical integrity and trustworthiness, as well as explains that what Muhammad knew as the Bible through the Syriac Peshitta is essentially the same in biblical content as what most reputable Bible versions contain today. That through the efforts of labor intensive manuscript discovery and exhaustive textual criticism, both Christians and Muslims can know with precision what the early writers of both the Old and New Testaments wrote as “inspired” Scripture. That in order for the Muslim to be consistent in following the mandate to believe all the books previously given by God, as well as the Koran, he must believe the Syriac Peshitta, or a Bible version that is a comparable translation, in order for the Muslim mandate to make sense.

Such a concession, however, places the Muslim in an extremely difficult position. For if he continues his allegiance toward Muhammad and the Koran, then he cannot believe what the Bible teaches. If he concedes to believe the Bible, as Muhammad and the Koran teach, then he must cease believing in Muhammad and the Koran. It is a conundrum that Muhammad created fourteen centuries ago by adoring something he was unable to read, much less was he able to comprehend. It is a conundrum that needs to be discussed between Christians and Muslims, if they both wish and desire to be thought of as worshiping the one true God.

1. INTRODUCTION

To convince his audience that Jesus is Lord and Messiah, Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) refers several times to Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was the source of authority in which the Jews believed and Peter declared the arrival,

redemption, and resurrection of our Lord on the basis thereof. From the beginning of his speech on the Areopagus, Paul connects with the beliefs and practices of the Hellenistic times. Instead of citing the Old Testament as authority, Paul uses the creation which the Greek philosophers are engaged in their study, to bring the people to the Creator, and thus to salvation in Christ (Acts 17:22-ff.). It is important to know what carries weight for those who listen to you. Because the Koran is authoritative to Muslims, it is important in conversations with Muslims for Christians to know what the Koran has say about the Bible and to what extent a connection can be found through it.

Muslims place great emphasis upon written revelation, particularly the Bible, as a guide to lead them in not only their quest for the truth, but in their relationship with Allah. Knowing what the Bible says is imperative, if not an integral part, for anyone claiming to be a follower of Islam. Muhammad ibn Abdallah ibn Abd al-Muttalib, the founder of Islam, and subsequent Muslim writers and leaders have made it a requirement to read, study, and augment their understanding of the Bible.¹ In fact, according to Surah 2:4 a Muslim's walk in this life, as well as his eternal welfare, absolutely depends upon the Christian Bible.²

That said, Muslims seem to have a love-hate relationship when it comes to the Bible. While a Muslim must extol the value of the Bible as a recorded prerequisite to the establishment of the Koran, he demeans its trustworthiness as something that has been tampered with by unscrupulous translators and dishonest scribes. He loves it, in other words, when it supports his Islamic world view, but he hates the Bible when its history and doctrine run contrary to everything that he presupposes to be true.

It is the object of this article to discern, therefore, what the Muslim means by the Bible, particularly as a document he defines as "scripture." What version of the Bible was Muhammad referring to when he spoke of "the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time"? Was it basically the same text that early church authorities discovered and now comprise the current sixty-six books or was it something wholly other? If it was based on the same Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that make up all reputable translations currently used by Christians today, then why do most Muslims demonstrate such animosity toward them? If the translation Muhammad referred to was something wholly other, then what is the manuscript evidence to support that translation and what version of the Bible does the modern-day Muslim believe to be absolutely credible, beyond a flaw, and unequivocally supportive of his beliefs that contradict Christian doctrine?

The reason for the inquiry is simple. If the Bible is such an integral part of the Islamic faith,

¹ See Surah 4:136; M. M. Ali (2012:147); Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri (1994:811).

² Surah 2:4 reads, "And who believe in the Revelation Sent to thee, *And sent before thy time*, And (in their hearts) Have the assurance of the Hereafter" [emphasis added] (Ali 1997:17). According to *Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an, Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (2007:4, 6), and *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (2000:1.116) the revelation "sent before thy time" refers to the Torah, the Gospel, and "previous Messengers." While those "previous Messengers" may include "Arab, non-Arab, or a person of a previous Scripture," the main emphasis is upon "People of the Book" or Jews and Christians; they "have a special significance...since they believe in their Books and in all the details related to that, so when such people embrace Islam and sincerely believe in the details of the religion, then they will get two rewards." Everyone else only gets one and that in only a "general way" (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir* 2000:1.118).

which is even more so the case with Christians, and yet the Christians are being led astray by trusting in an aberrant text, regardless of the version that that text or translation appears, then it is incumbent upon the Muslim to divulge that superior text and bring both groups of people into harmony whereby a consistent worship of the one God is possible. Conversely, if the Muslim is unable to specify that wholly other Bible that differs greatly from the original sixty-six books that constitute it, handed down from generation to generation, and “that without essential loss,” then is his criticism of the various Bible versions necessarily warranted, much less is his claim that the Bible is an integral part of his faith necessarily true? And if that is not necessarily true, then what might be the implications for other adamant statements made by Muslims that are relative to the persons and doctrines both Muslims and Christians hold to be integral?

2. THE BIBLE'S COMPOSITION IN ISLAM

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is reported to have said, “Say ye: ‘We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the descendents [sic] (children of Jacob) and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: and we bow to Allah (in Islam)’” (Surah 2:136). Similar declarations are found elsewhere in the Muslim holy book.³ Muhammad, in other words, recognized the importance of the biblical witnesses in both the Old and New Testaments, although in the latter case, that would pertain only to the Gospels or Injil. Such confidence led the highly respected Muslim scholar Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1989:56) to opine:

We are thus in the true line of those who follow the one and indivisible Message of the One Allah, wherever delivered. If others narrow it or corrupt it, it is they who have left the faith and created a division or schism. But Allah sees and knows all. And he will protect His own, and His support will be infinitely more precious than the support which men can give.

While it is wonderful, at least from the Christian perspective, that anyone would make such a reassuring confession, it begs the question of just what Muhammad, A. Y. Ali, and others of the Muslim faith meant or mean by believing in all those writings relative to Judeo-Christian history. Because there is no indication in the Koran or the Hadith – “Traditions relating to the deeds and utterances of the Prophet as recounted by his companions” (Glassé 2002:159) – that Muhammad understood the Bible as anything other than what the early Christians accepted it to be, while he was alive, meaning the original sixty-six books and letters that we find today as part of its constitution. What could possibly be askew about such an understanding of Muhammad's recognition?

2.1. *A Brief History of the Biblical Canon*

Biblical history, and specifically the Book of Acts, informs us that the gospel message was spread everywhere by Jesus' apostles shortly after his ascension. This came on the heels of his assurance that they would be his witnesses “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the world” (Acts 1:8). Wherever the apostles went, they shared their message in

³ Surah 2:285; 3:84, 119; 4:136.

the vernacular of the people who they encountered. Hence, the original gospel message was an oral gospel that would later be written as the apostles eventually died and subsequent Christians carried on the evangelistic tradition.⁴ Such writing helped to preserve the authenticity and authority of the apostolic preaching and teaching.

What is often overlooked in the transmission process of the biblical message is the fact that the early messengers committed to memory the eventual written texts, which early on is what we commonly call the Old Testament. Meticulous precision would be the best way to describe such an effort, since the Jew was taught from a young age that the Scriptures—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—were of divine origin and to be valued, as one would value his or her own life. Such a commitment meant that very few alterations ever crept into scribal efforts to produce copies of the biblical text. So rare were the variants that Gerhardsson (1998:41) observed,

It is just because it is the Sacred Word, the source of endless riches, which is found in the Scriptures, that each and every syllable must be both preserved and used. These two tendencies are also psychologically associated: the perception of the text as sacred leads partly to a desire to preserve the text without corruption, and partly to a desire to appropriate all its incomparable riches. Furthermore, certainty that the sacred words of the text have in fact been preserved without distortion adds to the frankness with which the very letter of the text is drawn upon for teaching purposes.

Attention to precision and exactitude would carry over to the transmission of the gospel message, even though initially done orally as well. It would not be until a few years after the crucifixion of Jesus that the Christian world would begin to see the gospel message put upon parchment. That is not to say that the gospel would not continue to be transmitted orally. What is meant is that as the message spread and the church grew exponentially, and as mentioned above, the apostles began to die away, the written page was used to preserve the history, integrity, and teachings of both Jesus and his Apostles. Although such manual transmission included thousands of variants among the equally thousands of manuscripts, the message remained coherent and unchanged. A careful perusal through those manuscripts, using textual critical effort, reveals that amid all the grammatical changes, errors of sight on the part of the scribe doing the transmitting, homoioteleuton (“similar ending”), harmonization, conflation, attempts to correct previous manuscripts, and a host of other faux pas one will encounter, the message has remained intact. The overall consensus is that we know what the New Testament gospel and text comprised with extreme confidence.⁵ This led the

⁴ Barrera (1998:104-107); McDonald (1995:139); Carson, Moo, & Morris (1992:20-21); Comfort (1990:3); Graham (1987:120-21); Johnson (1986:131); Barr (1983:12-13); Perkins (1980:196-201); Von Campenhausen (1972:103-104); Ackroyd & Evans (1970:286-87); Guthrie (1970:222-ff.); Barclay (1961:41-43); Eusebius (1953:3.39.4).

⁵ Robertson (1925:21-22) argued that whatever variants there were in the NT text only effected “a thousandth part of the entire text.” Metzger (1992:86) wrote, “Indeed, so extensive are these citations [from the Church Fathers] that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.” Black (1994:24) concurred with Metzger’s assessment. F. F. Bruce (2000:19-20) concluded, “The variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affect no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice.” Dan Wallace (2011:55), after putting Bart Ehrman’s hyperbolic criticism into perspective and demonstrating where he agreed with his mentor, Bruce Metzger, who asserted that none of the textual variants found in the Scriptures had an effect upon Christian faith and practice, pointed out, “Suffice it to say that viable textual variants that disturb cardinal doctrines found in the NT

late biblical scholar and textual critic Sir Frederic Kenyon (1958:55) to write,

It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain. Especially is this the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world. Scholars are satisfied that they possess substantially the true text of the principal Greek and Roman writers whose works have come down to us, of Sophocles, of Thucydides, of Cicero, of Virgil; yet our knowledge of their writings depends on a mere handful of manuscripts, whereas the manuscripts of the New Testament are counted by hundreds, and even thousands. In the case of the Old Testament we are not quite in such a good position...In some passages it seems certain that the true reading has not been preserved by any ancient authority, and we are driven to conjecture in order to supply it. But such passages are an infinitesimal portion of the whole. The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.

One other fact needs to be pointed out, which is simply that the biblical canon was established and essentially closed long before Muhammad and Islam ever graced the earth with their presences. Whether one accepts the Council of Jamnia theory, which dates the closing of the Old Testament Canon at 90 A.D.⁶ or another theory that dates its closing later in the third or fourth centuries A.D. and repudiates the Jamnia theory⁷, by the time Muhammad arrived on the human scene, the

have not yet been produced.” Therefore, if it is true that we know with better than 99% comprehension what the NT consisted, that even without those manuscripts in hand we could reconstruct the NT by consulting the Early Church Fathers, and that even though of 100,000+ variants found in extant manuscripts, none of them have any bearing upon NT belief, then despite all the presupposed criticisms to the contrary, we know what the early Christians wrote that became today's New Testament Bible.

⁶ Frants Buhl (1892:24) was one of the first exponents, if not the first, who advocated this view and wrote, “It was not until about A.D. 90 that the whole question [about the Book of Ecclesiastes] was brought up for discussion before a Synod at Jabne (Jamnia, a city not far from the coast, south of Jaffa)...At that Synod the canonicity of the whole of sacred writings was acknowledge. The later professor and Harvard scholar Robert Pfeiffer (1941:64) was quite straightforward on the matter when he wrote in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, “At the close of the first century of our era, following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 and the resulting disorganization of Judaism, the Council at Jamnia (ca. A.D. 90), under the leadership of Johanan ben Zakkai, fixed for all times the canon of scriptures.” Others, such as H. E. Ryle (1899:182-84), W. O. E. Oesterley (1914:173-174), Max Margolis (1948:89), Oesterley and Robinson (1955:7-8), Bernhard Anderson (1957: 535-36), Otto Eissfeldt (1965:568), Morton Smith (1971:1), James Sanders (1972:94-5), William Barclay (1979:28-9), LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush (1982:22), Norman Gottwald (1985:113-14) R. T. Beckwith (1992:57, 61), all would agree, either in part or in full with Buhl and Pfeiffer's assessments. Ackroyd and Evans (1970:133-35) qualify their commitment to Jamnia by presupposing an already established canon and then wrote, “[I]t is difficult to doubt that both the tripartite structure of the Canon and its precise contents had been settled soon after A.D. 100, if not earlier.” Samuel Sandmel (1978:14, n.6) called the Jamnia Council “a convenience, not an irrefutable conclusion.” Aage Bentzen (1952:1.31) argued that “The synod of Jamnia did not define the Canon, but it undertook a *revision*,” which was his way of saying there already was a canon in existence. The councilors merely revised it.

⁷ H. H. Rowley (1950:170), Edward J. Young (1958:160), George W. Anderson (1959:13), Harrison (1969: 277-

Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (the Writings) were set.⁸ The same applies to the New Testament. All of the books and letters that comprise its makeup were determined no later than 300 A.D., with few exceptions. By 367 A.D., the Early Church Father Athanasius records two catalog lists of books that became widely accepted by the church as authoritative in respect to both Old and New Testament canons. "These are the fountains of salvation," wrote Athanasius, "that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these" (Schaff 1996:4.552). Such lists have remained complete and they constitute our current biblical composition. The only exception being that the Roman Catholic Church subsequently added the Apocrypha to the lists, which were recognized by the Early Church Fathers as "interesting," but not of the same weight and caliber as those adopted as inspired scripture. What bearing would this have upon the biblical version available to Muhammad?

2.2. *The Presence of Christianity in Arabia*

As noted previously, Christian missionaries spread the Gospel message everywhere they went. It is a mandate given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 and fulfilled starting in Acts 1:8. Although the Bible makes it clear that the Gospel spread throughout Judea, Asia Minor, ancient Macedonia unto Rome, and possibly even as far as Spain, there is paltry written evidence of its infiltration into Arabia shortly after Pentecost. It is not that the Arabs are not mentioned in the Bible (see Acts 2:11). It is that the missionary effort is not readily noticeable in the biblical text, and that even though as Trimmingham (1979: 41) observed,

Jesus must have been in close touch with Arabs. In his homeland of Galilee he would meet them every day. His active ministry was carried on primarily among the pagan populations of Phoenicia, Ituraea, Batanaea, and the Decapolis...His itinerant ministry, though embracing Phoenicia and Lebanon, was concentrated on Arab regions, Ituraea, and in the Decapolis, among Arab peasantry rather than in Hellenistic cities. The region of Caesarea Philippi, around the present-day Banyas and near the sources of the Jordan, which was his place of retreat, less from Jews than from Galilean revolutionaries who wished to make him their leader, was inhabited by half-settled Arab Ituraeans.

What started with Jesus would carry over to the establishment of Christian colonies in the Arabian Peninsula. Their influence would have a great impact upon desert dwellers. "The steady spread of the Gospel during the second century is evident from the fact that congregations (*ekklesiai*), each with its *episkopos* or pastoral overseer, were found in most towns and villages of the Province of Arabia when visited by Origen on various occasions during the first half of the third century" (Trimingham 1979:51). The late Iranian scholar, Ali Dashti, distinguished the Bedouin from the city-dweller by observing that those outside the more populated areas were more idolatrous than those within. The reason for this was the Jewish-Christian presence in the cities. According to Dashti (1994:35), and particularly in reference to Mecca and Medina, Muhammad's places of

79), Philip R. Davies (1998:43-4), Sid Z. Leiman (1991: 125-ff.), Lee McDonald (1995:35, 49-50).

⁸ Routledge (2008:18) wished to straddle the fence on Jamnia, so to speak, and have it both ways.

rearing and ruling,

The inhabitants of those two towns, particularly Yathreb, had been influenced by the beliefs of Jews and Christians. The word Allah, meaning The God, was in use among them. They considered themselves to be descendants of Abraham, and were more or less acquainted with the legends of the Children of Israel and stories of the Old Testament. The story of Adam and Satan was generally known to them. They believed in the existence of angels and imagined them to be daughters—a fallacy to which the Qor'an several times alludes.

Dashti (1994:35-36) added, "Furthermore these town-dwellers had adopted several Jewish practices such as circumcision, ritual ablution, avoidance of menstruating women, and observance of a rest-day, for which they chose Friday instead of Saturday."

Further evidence of the Christian missionary influence is seen in the number of heretical sects that successfully imposed their particular "Christian" views upon the Arabs, which later influenced the thinking of Islam's founder. Islamic apologist Karen Armstrong (1991:57) wrote, "At the beginning of the seventh century, the Arabs of central Arabia were surrounded by deviant forms of Christianity...." The divisiveness of the Christian sects led Justo Gonzalez ([1971]:2.105) to conclude, "Thus, monophysism and Nestorianism in Syria, monophysism in Egypt, and the remnants of Donatism in Africa opened the way to Islam, which was seen by many as the arm that God had caused to rise in order to chastise the Byzantine Empire." Islamic scholar Husein Haykal (1976:61) projected that, "When he [Muhammad] arrived at Busrah [while in the employ of his wife, Khadijah, on a commercial trip], he came into contact with Syrian Christianity and talked to the monks and priests, some of whom were Nestorians." Christian Sociology Professor, emeritus, Alvin Schmidt (2013:80) observed, "By the fifth century, Arabia and Syria were known as the meeting place of Christian heresies. And by Muhammad's time (early seventh century) numerous Christian sects were present: Arians, Ebionites, Valentinians, Basilidians, Gnostics, Carpocratians, Nestorians, Jacobites, Nazarites, Marcionites, Monophysites, Eutychians, Sabellians, Collyridians, Mariamites, Anti-Dicomariamites, and Monothelites." According to UC-Berkeley History Professor, emeritus, Ira Lapidus (2002:3), "Islamic societies were built upon the framework of an already established and ancient Middle Eastern civilization. From the pre-Islamic Middle East, Islamic societies inherited a pattern of institutions which would shape their destiny until the modern age. These institutions included small communities based upon family, lineage, clientage, and ethnic ties, agricultural and urban societies, market economies, monotheistic religions, and bureaucratic empires. The civilization of Islam, though born in Mecca, also had its progenitors in Palestine, Babylon, and Percepolis." Georgetown University professor, and defender of Islamism, John Esposito (2002:6-7) wrote, "Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam originated in the Middle East. It was not a totally new monotheistic religion that sprang up in isolation. Belief in one God, monotheism, had been flourishing for many centuries. Knowledge of Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism had been brought to Mecca in Arabia by foreign caravan trade as well as through the travels and contacts of Meccan traders throughout the Middle East. Moreover, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Jewish tribes lived in Arabia."

Perhaps those very priests or some others discussed with Muhammad the religion of Jesus, which

had by then divided itself into several sects and parties. Ironically, such influences, over the course of time, would have a deleterious effect upon the Arabian culture that would cause it to regress back into anti-Christian thought. Such regression would turn into aggressive hostility toward both the Jews and Christians to the extent that Christian historian Philip Schaff (1996: 4.159) described it as “wild, warlike” and “eclectic,” much like the religion that Muhammad would eventually establish, contrary to later claims otherwise.

While Greek was the *lingua franca* of most of the biblical world, not every nation or territory a Christian missionary visited necessarily spoke or wrote in *Koiné* Greek. Judea's neighbor to her south, Arabia, was one such territory. Arabic, which is a Semitic language, along with its different dialects, is indigenous to the Arabian Peninsula. In order for a Christian missionary to make inroads into the Arabian culture, therefore, it required the scaling of the language barrier. One advantage the Christian may have had is the fact that Aramaic was akin to Arabic and Hebrew and was also spoken widely throughout the Middle East. Since many, if not most, of the original Christians were Jewish and hence spoke Aramaic, as well as Greek, it is not improper to deduce that when they met the Peninsula Arabs, they were already familiar with their dialect.

Prior to the Christian missionary effort to evangelize the Arabs, there was a large contingent of Jews already living in the Hijaz prior to Muhammad's arrival, and especially in southern Arabia. Although removed from the immediate environs of Israel, according to Sidney Griffith (2013: 11) the Arabian Jews were in “continuous contact with Jews elsewhere proper, and particularly in Palestine, and that they were fully aware of current Jewish traditions, both scriptural and rabbinic.” The Arabian Jews were a multilingual culture, speaking both Aramaic and its sister languages, Arabic and Syriac. Such an arrangement would allow for not only commercial trade between the Palestinian Jews to the north and Arabic-speaking Jews to the south, it would afford the propagation and proliferation of Judaism among the pagan Arabs as well. As Islamic scholar Alfred Guillaume (1956:11-12) points out, “At the dawn of Islam the Jews dominated the economic life of the Hijaz. They held all the best land in the oases of Taima, Fadak, and Wadi-l-Qura; at Medina they must have formed half of the population...the Jews of the Hijaz made many proselytes among the Arab tribesmen.”

3. THE PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIC VERSION OF THE BIBLE

Given the influx of both Jews and Christians in Arabia long before Muhammad Islamized the Hijaz, and due to the success of both groups to garner converts, even though in the latter case the “Christians” were of several heretical sects, as noted above, it must be asked if either group translated any part of the biblical canon into the native Arabic in order to spread their messages. It is a question that has provoked scholars to both affirm and deny the reality. Without rehashing the long history centered on the question of textual transmission from Greek, Aramaic, or Syriac into Arabic, let us take a look at two of the most recent arguments from Hikmat Kashouh and Sidney Griffith, the former scholar a proponent of a pre-Islamic Arabic version of the Bible (or at least the Gospel), with the latter scholar rejecting such a proposal.

According to Kashouh (2010:318), the first defense of the Christian faith in Arabic, in written form, was issued circa 750 A.D. Because of our knowledge of such events, the first Christian

texts to appear in Arabic had to have been sometime before that date. Evidence of this, argued Kashouh, is seen in two palimpsests, “Sinai, Ar. 514 and Codex Sinai, Ar. N.F. Par 8 and 28,” one of which (Codex Sinai) likely contained Luke’s Gospel. Although he is not absolutely certain of the discovery, “the text is most likely to be a Christian text and pushes back the hypothesis of the existence of the Arabic Bible to the seventh century if not earlier.” Because of “contaminations” in that text, it is not only plausible, but also “possible” that “a number of the eighth/ninth century manuscripts originated in the seventh century.” In fact, due the exclusive nature of the Arabic text that was produced, which “*is incompatible with biblical texts of southern Palestine the roots of which go back to the seventh century,*” [emphasis his] it is indeed plausible to propose that the Arabic Gospel text first appeared in the pre-seventh century era” (2010:319).

The problem with such a conclusion is that no one has ever produced an Arabic text of the Bible that Christians used “prior to the rise of Islam” (Griffith 2013:49, 98). What we have, according to Griffith, are “tenuous extrapolations” that amount to “Wishful thinking.” This is not to say that the Gospel was not being preached and taught throughout the Arabian Peninsula, in the Arabic dialect. As mentioned earlier, the early propagation of the biblical Gospel was by word of mouth, *not through the reading of a text*. And as Griffith further argues, it would not be until after Islam’s rise and Muhammad’s death that the importance of collecting the Koran’s many surahs, along with the Hadith, became an issue. Suddenly there was a need to preserve the sayings and teachings of the prophet, but that would only be done in Arabic. Development of Arabic grammars and dictionaries would not occur until the second half of the eighth century (Griffith 2013:103). Translation of the Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic text of the Bible into Arabic would follow, meaning that those texts would not come into being until at least the eighth century as well, and that to compete with the Koran. Given the number of biblical allusions to stories and characters found in the Koran, many of which were distorted recollections by the heretical sects already mentioned, it should come as no surprise that later on the followers of Muhammad would read and rehash those distortions, as they made their way into the Koran. It is another reason why there was no effort on the part of the “Christians” to produce, except possibly in note form, a Bible in Arabic, which would have possibly kept in check the distortions being spread abroad among the tribal pagans prior to Islam’s rise.

While Kashouh’s argument shares much with other scholars on the subject (e.g. Anton Baumstark and Ifran Shahid) as “plausible” or “possible,” Griffith’s counter-argument pointing out the lack of tangible evidence is enough to defeat the “wishful thinking.” There was no Bible written in Arabic prior to Islam’s rise and sudden expansion throughout Arabia, the Middle East, and North Africa in the mid-seventh century. Since Muhammad was dead at the time of the rise of the Arabic Bible, as well as the Koran, what “books,” particularly the Bible, was he referring to then, when he testified that he believed in it and that by necessity all subsequent Muslims must believe in them as well (Surah 2:285; 4:136; 6:92)? Moreover, how did he believe in them? Was it something written or merely audible? He was obviously aware of something that he found worthy of adoration. But, what was it?

4. THE VERSION OF THE BIBLE AVAILABLE TO MUHAMMAD

As has been already established, both the Jews and the Christians occupied land and cities in the Hijaz prior to Muhammad's existence. The texts that those Jews and Christians used as aids to memory, while they propagated their message verbally, were already confirmed and essentially closed by the mid-fourth century A.D. Although the *lingua franca* of the day was Greek, not all Jews or Christians necessarily spoke or wrote in Greek, but in other languages, such as Latin in the west, Syriac in the east, and Coptic in North Africa, as they spread abroad throughout the Middle East, Asia, and eventually into the Arabian Peninsula. Literally thousands of copies of biblical manuscripts, many of which are extant today, were produced as a result of the rich diversity of the languages and cultures that were encountered by both the Jews and Christians as they shared their messages.

The Old Testament had been translated from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek by the time both the Jews and Christians reached the Hijaz, which was more commonly known as the Septuagint. Rival stories conflict over the designated terminology, Septuagint, whether the naming of the translation was due to the number of Jewish scribes employed to create it or whether it had to do with the number of elders who accompanied Moses to Mount Sinai to receive the Law from God. Regardless, the Old Testament was accessible in a language the Jews were speaking and/or writing while they were dispersed abroad. The finalization of the Old Testament text that encompassed more than just the Torah occurred early in the second century A.D. Such wide acceptance, though, would extend into the Christian community, only to be eventually rejected by the Jews because "some Christians had based some of their criticisms against Judaism upon faulty LXX [Septuagint] texts" (McDonald 1995:89).

Aside from the verbal transmission of the New Testament, the text that most likely had the greatest impact upon Arabian culture at the time Muhammad spoke of the wonders of previous "revelations," "books," and "scriptures" was handed down by the Syrians. They gave aid to not only the Jews and Christians in Arabia, but the influence of the Old Testament, along with five versions of the New Testament they translated into Syriac, was witnessed as far as Lebanon to the north, China to the east, and of course, Arabia to the south. Although the Old Syriac version was not well attested, one particular version, the Peshitta, was copied and distributed with great vigor and faithfulness. As Bruce Metzger (1977:49) observed, "Syrian scribes devoted great care to the transcription of the Peshitta version. A remarkable accord exists among the manuscripts of every age, there being on the average scarcely more than one important variant per chapter." Aland and Aland (1995:194) add, "The Peshitta version of the New Testament is the most widely attested and most consistently transmitted of the Syriac New Testament versions. The Syriac church still preserves it and holds it in reverence in this form today." But, why is the Peshitta version relevant to our thematic question?

The Syriac Peshitta is important for at least three reasons. First, aside from Jewish and Christian usage, it was the version being utilized by both the Nestorians and the Jacobites (Monophysites), as they grappled over the identity of Jesus. The conclusions they drew would be reacted to by Muhammad when he taught "(Far is He) from having the partners they [Jews and Christians] associate (with Him)" (Surah 9:31). Subsequent Muslims would later take up the gauntlet and "fight" those foes as projections against Orthodox belief.

Second, the Peshitta version not only consisted of all the books common to the Hebrew Old Testament canon (along with several apocryphal works), it contained 22 books from the New Testament canon, as well. It included all four gospels, the Apostle Paul's letters and the Book of Hebrews, with only 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and the Book of Revelation left out. Due to the faithfulness of those who translated it from Greek into Syriac, anyone familiar with the former would have a good idea of what went into the latter. Such fidelity leads to important reason #3, namely the natural rebuttal of some modern-day Muslim apologists who argue that what can be known about the Torah and the Gospel is something wholly other than what Muhammad knew about them in his day. If it is true that the Peshitta is as well attested and preserved as is contended, then what the Syrian Christian Church knew about the Gospel in the sixth and seventh centuries of Muhammad's earthly existence is exactly what biblical Christians know about it today. It is not something wholly other that the Muslim apologist wishes everyone to believe.

5. RAMIFICATIONS FOR ACKNOWLEDGING MUHAMMAD'S AVAILABLE "REVELATION"

Since the Syriac Peshitta was most likely the Bible version that Muhammad alluded to in Surahs 2:4, 136, 285; 4:136, 162; 6:92, *et al*, then there are several ramifications for acknowledging it as such. We know its content and that content has not been "corrupted." Any prophecies projected about the "prophet" Muhammad would be dubious at best. The requirement that Muslims must read the Bible would be faulty. Finally, knowledge about the persons of Jesus and God would be absent. Let us take a look at each of these effects, one-by-one, to judge their validity and gravity.

5.1. The Claim for Corrupt Versions of the Bible

The Bible has not changed, nor has it been "corrupted," in other words, if the Peshitta is the highlighted "revelation" behind Muhammad's assertion. Many later Muslim apologists repeatedly assert just how corrupted or tainted any current revelation is by comparison with the "original text." Nevertheless, the Syriac Peshitta is nothing more than a copy, written in another language, and handed down with "remarkable fidelity" (Metzger 1992:70) to Syriac-speaking Christians in the proclamation of their messages. What can be known from the contents of both the Old and New Testaments is the same information as that which was known by both the Jews and Christians for hundreds of years leading up to the development of the Peshitta. Arguments raised by Muslim spokesmen, such as A. D. Ajijola (1984:78), which speak of believing in the Torah, Psalms of David, and the Gospel, yet denigrate them because they supposedly do not share the "original form" is misleading, if not untrue. Even though Muhammad could not read the Peshitta himself, its contents is essentially the same as that found in the Septuagint and the Greek text from which the Peshitta was translated. Whatever charges, therefore, of "tampering" and/or adulteration is without merit. Again, please note Sir Frederick Kenyon's comments above in respect to biblical and textual integrity and credibility.⁹

So long as the Muslims choose to exalt any other non-biblical revelation or to align themselves

⁹See 2.1. A Brief History of the Biblical Canon

with the “People of the Book,” then there must be a consistency in those revelations and Muslim behavior that honors, not demeans, both the Jews and Christians. The Peshitta was “the Book” those people were using at the time they made progress in Arabia both prior to and during Muhammad’s reign. No longer can the Muslims accuse the Jews of changing (Surah 2:59), perverting (Surah 2:75), or speciously writing God’s revelation with their own hands (Surah 2:79), as if to further accuse God of impotence over what he has revealed.¹⁰ Moreover, no longer can the Muslims look down upon the Jews as being or becoming “apes” (Surahs 2:65; 7:166), “swine” (Surah 5:60), or cursed (Surahs 5:60; 9:30; 98:6), simply because the Muslims happen to disagree with any one of a number of beliefs or doctrines they find personally distasteful. Muslims cannot call the Jews or Christians “losers” (Surah 3:85) or encourage others not to befriend them (Surahs 5:51; 60:1), and they certainly must end their campaign of jihad against them, so as to oppress them until they are either killed or “feel subdued” (Surahs 9:29, 73, 123; 47:4). The Muslims, in other words, must “believe the Revelation,” as Muhammad claimed he did, which would involve any reputable version after the order of the Peshitta or the texts upon which it was based, if they are to be consistent in their claim of following the one true religion.

5.2. Prophesying the Coming of Muhammad

A second ramification of accepting the Syriac Peshitta as the Bible version available to Muhammad alluded to as a previous “Revelation” leading up to the Koran is the disavowal that Muhammad was forecasted as the successor to Jesus as a “prophet of God.” It is not uncommon that non-Christian religious followers, and even many who claim to be Christian, wish to exalt their religious leaders to a special status in God’s economy. Typically, this status takes the form of some kind of prophet, seer, or revelator. The basis for such exaltation is usually the product of biblical manipulation through poor exegesis of the biblical text coupled with a misapplication based on faulty hermeneutical principles. When the exegesis (more properly eisegesis) and interpretation are found to be wanting, the critic is either attacked personally, the biblical text is demeaned as somehow missing a plain and precious truth, or the Bible is assumed to have been tampered with somehow. All of that must be denounced when it becomes clear that what Muhammad accepted as the Bible version of his day is the same one used by the Jews and Christians prior to their entrance into the Hijaz.

Khurshid Ahmad (1999:86-87) serves as a classic example of a Muslim who believes that the Bible has something to say about Muhammad’s revelation that is exegetically untenable. In his explanation on how the Koran influenced human history, he wrote,

In Islam religion has been perfected. That is another way of saying that with Islam the age of new revelation has come to a close, and that the age of realization of the principles revealed religion has been inaugurated. That is why in all the earlier

¹⁰ Although the cited Koranic references specifically allude to the Jews, Islamic belief includes Christians as also engaging in alleged impropriety by accusing them of falsifying (Glassé 2002:86), corrupting (Aijijola 1984:79), or introducing defects into the New Testament, thereby making it “obscene” (Ali 2012:149). Anyone, however, that has spent an appreciable amount of time reading and studying the topic of textual criticism of the Bible knows immediately that such charges and accusations are without merit, if not “obscene,” themselves.

scriptures references are to be found to the advent of the Prophet of Islam. Students of the Bible, for instance, know that Jesus had said: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now...He will guide you unto all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but of whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak' (John 16:12-13).

A careful examination of the reference Ahmad provides as his proof text to validate Muhammad's prophethood, reveals that not only is Muhammad not being spoken about by Jesus, but the *modus operandi* Ahmad used to mislead the reader. Nobody should unjustly cite the Bible to his or her own advantage—especially, if his or her own prophet has such a high esteem for the Bible. Ahmad simply excised the passage to exclude any mention of “the Spirit of truth” in verse 16, which Jesus mentioned previously in John's Gospel, as the one whom both he and the Father would send as another *Paraclete* (Jn. 14:16-17).¹¹ With the advent of the Peshitta in Arabia, there is no room for Muhammad to be included among the biblical prophets. Anyone practicing careful exegesis and proper hermeneutical skill would not only see Muhammad's absence, but upon examining the world of Islamic history and doctrine would note that whatever prophetic status he might have was something other than that engaged in by those recognized as biblical prophets.

5.3. *Inconsistency in the Muslim's Acceptance of Divine Revelation*

Since the Syriac Peshitta was the biblical version that Muhammad sanctioned while he was alive, it follows that this version or any one of a number of other similar versions, should be “required” reading for yesterday and today's Muslims. Accordingly, the Bible should form the basis for Muslim belief and doctrine, which would include that found in the book Muslims believe came straight from heaven, the Koran. There should be no variance, since God would be the author of both. Any progressive revelation would dovetail with previous revelations, with the ultimate object of all revelation being the person of Jesus Christ (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:7; Rev. 19:10). That is not the case for the Muslims, however, as they reject, except piecemeal, anything the Bible has to say, especially when it contradicts their own presuppositions. Therefore, the conclusion that can be made is that today's Muslims are at variance with what Muhammad thought about the Bible in Surahs 2:4, 136, 285, *et cetera*.

If the Muslims reject the Peshitta, as well as any other textual revelation that serves as the basis upon which various Bible translations and versions are created, then the mandate that stipulates belief in the Bible is without any authority to enforce it. To state as much, as M. M. Ali did, that the Muslims are “required to believe” in all the books of God, would be basically meaningless. If it is assumed the Koran serves as a corrector or surrogate for the Bible, once again, it implies that God is impotent in preserving his previously transmitted revelation(s). Fallen humanity is capable of doing in the reverse what God is incapable of doing initially. Man's sinful will is more decisive than is God's holy will. Furthermore, it assumes that God is mutable. In the Koran's case, it would project that God somehow garnered more power, will, and control over that revelation, than he

¹¹ A. Y. Ali (1997: 1461, n. 5438), et al, contends that Paraclete is a corruption for Pericytyos or “praised one,” referring to “Ahmad” or “Muhammad.” However, he offers no manuscript support for his contention and there is no variant at John 14:16, 26; 15:26, or 16:7 to justify his contention.

did over previous revelations. That, however, would contradict Koranic revelation that God was immutable (51:58), which would in turn negate that he was self-sufficient (3:2; 20:111) and unified (see K. A. Hakim 1992:58) as the one being representative of deity. The only possible way for the requirement to believe in previous revelations to mean anything is for those revelations currently to exist and that there is access to those revelations to be read. Since, according to the Muslims those revelations do not exist, except in alleged corrupted or tainted forms, then the mandate to believe means nothing in modern-day parlance, which also nullifies the words found in the Koran—Allah's most perfect book.

5.4. No Jesus, Nor God

The best and only historical document that speaks of the life of Jesus is found in the Bible and that in an extremely abbreviated account. Aside from a short birth narrative coupled with the last three and one-half years of his life, which is focused mainly on the Passion Week, what we know about the person of Jesus is found in the New Testament and nowhere else. The Koran's recollection is highly polemical and proffers nothing of biographical value regarding the historical Jesus. In fact, in the instance of the Koran, Muhammad's "revelation" seems more interested in arguing with those with whom Muhammad is contending, and that from a "distinctive prophetology" in mind, than providing any kind of real historical recollection.¹² What little can be derived from the Koran in respect to Jesus has more to do with denigrating his person (Surahs 4:157, 171; 5:75, 116; 19:92), than it does in crediting those who wrote about him, according to their personal experiences, in their letters (1 Jn. 1:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:16). Jesus, in other words, in the Koran, ends up being nothing more than an ordinary man (Surahs 3:59; 43:59),¹³ who came only to seek and save one faction of the human race (Surah 3:49; M. M. Ali 2012: 158), and never dies for anyone (Surahs 4:157; 5:110): while Muhammad is viewed as Jesus' superior, who came to comfort all humans (Surahs 21:107; 61:6 cf. A. Y. Ali 1997: 1461, n.5438).

Without God's revelation, there can be no knowledge of him either. It is why the followers of Muhammad would record him saying, "It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is most high, most wise" (Surah 42:51). Unfortunately, the Muslims deny the continuing existence of previous revelation in the form of the Bible. To him, it has been perverted beyond recognition, all the while confessing that Muhammad approved of previous revelation. Since that is the case, then there is no possible way to confirm later revelation. Therefore, the Koran can be no more a revelation from God than any other religious document, because it lacks God's sanction. Yet, Muhammad acknowledged the existence of previous

¹² A "distinctive prophetology" is a hermeneutical principle observed by Sidney Griffith (2013:58, 62, 70-71, 76, 83, 85), whereby the Islamist recognizes certain beliefs, stories, and phrases common to both Jewish and Christian understanding, but have been criticized and revised with Muhammad as the focal point of absolute truth. As he put it, "...it is the Qur'an's distinctive prophetology that ultimately controls the process of scriptural recollection, determining which biblical narratives are recalled and which are ignored, a feature of the Bible in the Qur'an that is best studied in reference to well-known instances of the phenomenon rather than merely in the abstract."

¹³ "After a description of the high position which Jesus occupies as a prophet, we have a repudiation of the dogma that he was Allah, or the son of Allah, anything more than a man...In Allah's sight Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is" (A. Y. Ali 1997: 142, n.398).

revelations from God, specifically as it related to the Bible. The Syriac Peshitta was that relative version to which every Muslim today must also acknowledge, or at least another version consistent with it, lest he be at odds with his prophet and without any true knowledge of God in the world.

6. CONCLUSION

Muslims claim that they are “required” to believe in previous revelations concomitant with their own revelation, the Koran. The founder of Islam made it clear that he believed in all previous revelations, books, and scriptures, which would have meant he accepted the contents of the Syriac Peshitta or the version of the Bible used by the Jews, Christians, and the sects prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula both before and after Muhammad came to notoriety. Even though Muhammad accused the Jews and the Christians of corrupting the biblical text, manuscript evidence shows that whatever corruptions there might have been were minimal at best, meaning the astute observer knows what God revealed and what he wanted humanity to retain.

Muslims completely reject any version of the Bible, Peshitta or otherwise. To them, the Koran is the “corrector” and replacement of all previous revelations, even though it and they supposedly share much in common. The problem, however, still remains where the trustworthiness of the Bible that Muslims must follow and study, to understand God's message through the ages via his prophets, is denied. Because they accept the Koran, which alludes to the importance of the Bible, the Bible can still be used as a source of authority in discussions with Muslims who want to know more about the prophets, and especially of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. It is the challenge for the Christian, therefore, to show the Muslims that what Muhammad adored in the Bible is the same Bible Christians today confidently holds in his or her hands, as the Word of God.

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A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC RESPONSE TO THE CLAIM OF “PROPHET” BY MUHAMMAD AND JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

ARTICLE I – A TRULY BIBLICAL PROPHET

ABSTRACT

Muslims and Mormons around the world claim that their founders were prophets of God after the order of the biblical prophets. In the first of three articles, those claims are examined from a presuppositional apologetic approach to the Bible. Article I defines what it means to be a biblical prophet, with special attention paid to those whom the Muslims and Mormons believe that Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr. were patterned, Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Also, attention is given to the subject of false prophets. Articles II and III then deal with Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr. individually, their claims and accomplishments, to determine whether or not they fit the criteria of a biblical prophet established in this article.

Islam and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), as religions, revolve around the spiritual journeys of their founders, Muhammad ibn Abdallah ibn Abd al-Muttalib (hereafter Muhammad) and Joseph Smith, Jr. (hereafter Joseph Smith). Those spiritual journeys are considered by their adherents as extraordinary to the degree of completely changing the course of human history.

Muhammad, because of his spirit visitation, is considered by his followers to be the last prophet that God (Allah) sent to warn humankind of its idolatrous ways. By submitting exclusively to Allah and Muhammad as his messenger, humans may then work their way into good favour with Allah, with the aim of potentially earning a place in Paradise (Koran 19:72; 25:15; 61:11-12).¹⁴

Joseph Smith is believed by the Latter-day Saints (LDS), who are also known as Mormons, to be God’s special prophet, seer, and revelator. After the inception of the Christian Church and 1800

¹⁴ In a statement similar to that found in Zoroastrianism (see Boyce 2001:14, 27; Zaehner 1961:302-ff.). Muhammad Abul Quasem (2011:25) wrote, “All people then will proceed to the Bridge suspended over Hell to be crossed by everyone. It will have hooks and thorns which will catch people at right and left. Those who are declared ‘damned’ will fall down the gulf of Hell. Others will pass over the Bridge in varying speeds: some like lightning, some like wind, some like a running horse, some will run, some will walk, and some will crawl with much difficulty; *these variations will depend on variations in strength of faith and in the number and types of good works performed* [emphasis added]. Having crossed the Bridge all these people will enter into Paradise.” Later, Quasem (2011:26) would add, “Opposite to Hell in all respects is Paradise which has eight gates commensurate with the principal acts of obedience to God. There are innumerable grades of happiness in Paradise, depending upon innumerable differences in people’s devotions and character-traits.”

years of ecclesiastical apostasy, Smith is believed by his faithful followers to be the chosen vessel to restore what had been lost, namely the full gospel of Jesus Christ, along with many of the laws and ordinances that supposedly comprised his message.¹⁵ That by subscribing fully to Smith's restorative ideas and doctrines, members of the LDS Church may now progress unto godhood in the Celestial abode of heaven, which is the highest aspiration attainable in Mormon thought.¹⁶

1. MUHAMMAD AND SMITH'S CLAIMS TO BIBLICAL PROPHETHOOD

To deal apologetically with Muhammad and Joseph Smith's claims to prophethood – a doctrine they proclaimed to be in accordance with the Bible – it is first necessary to deal with the biblical definition of a prophet, as well as characteristics of a true prophet, in distinction from a false prophet. The articles that follow will focus on the prophetic parallels that seemingly exist between Muhammad and Joseph Smith and will evaluate the claims from Muhammad and Joseph Smith in light of what the Bible has to say about prophethood. The purpose of these articles is to determine whether these two very influential men were prophets in the biblical sense of the word, as they and their followers contest. Questions that had to be asked are whether their messages were consistent with the messages of the biblical prophets, as well as whether their lifestyles were exemplary of the persons of Moses and Jesus in whose steps both Muslims and Mormons make special claim that their founders followed. These articles wish to address these questions in a Christian apologetic way, with the ultimate intent of either affirming or disaffirming the Muslim and Mormon claims.¹⁷

Before addressing whether or not Muhammad and Joseph Smith were prophets of the biblical variety, it is important to understand what a biblical prophet was. What did he do and what did he believe that substantiated the fact that he was indeed called of God to speak for God?

While in both Islam and Mormonism there is only passing respect for the Bible, as both religions advocate that the Bible has been corrupted or is defective due to alleged nefarious transmission of the text by unscrupulous scribes and sages,¹⁸ it is still necessary to appeal to the Bible to garner an understanding of what it means to be a prophet. Muhammad and Joseph Smith, as well as their followers, thought of them as being in the line of the biblical prophets, meaning that they at least accepted those passages of scripture dealing with the office of prophet and gift of prophecy, in general, as authoritative.¹⁹

¹⁵ Book of Mormon, 4 Nephi 24-ff.; Hinckley 1979:31-32; *Gospel Principles* 2009:91-92, 96-99.

¹⁶ *DBY* 1978:87-95; Ludlow 1992:2.465-66.

¹⁷ This article is based on the presuppositional approach to apologetics, meaning that the defense of the Christian faith rests on accepting the reality of God's existence and that he has revealed himself in inspired Christian Scripture. Ultimately, God's revelation has been manifest in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who is, as the writer of Hebrews argues, "the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3). Claims about God and reality that do not comport with his divine revelation and in His Son either are distortions of reality or are falsehoods altogether. Accordingly, Christian apologetics should test the prophetic claims of those making them to be sure they are from God and not simply one of many false prophets that have gone out into the world with the express intent to deceive (Matt. 7:15-ff.; 1 Jn. 4:1-ff.; 2 Pet. 2:1-ff.).

¹⁸ Koran 2:59, 75, 79; 4:46; Ali 2012:149-151; Ajijola 1984:78-79; Haneef 1996:21. From the Mormons see 1 Nephi 13:26-29, 32, 34, 40; Smith 1976:10, 310, 327; Matthews 1990:26.

¹⁹ See Ajijola 1984:119; Rahman 1989:82-82); Koran 2:136; 3:84. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992:3.1164), "A belief in prophets and their messages lies at the heart of LDS doctrine (A of F 4, 5, 6, 7, 9).

2. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Three different Hebrew words are used in the Old Testament to designate a man called of God to speak for God: *nābî*, *rō'eh*, and *hōzeh*.²⁰ Added to those are the expressions the “man of God,” “messenger of the Lord,” and “watchman.”²¹ For the sake of space, only *nābî* will be discussed here, since it, by far, is the most common term translated “prophet” in the Old Testament.²²

Although there is some discrepancy and disagreement over the exact interpretation of *nābî* from an etymological point of view, an Old Testament prophet (*nābî*) was usually a man called of God who spoke for God in respect to either God’s will or Israel’s future.²³ According to Albright (1994:209), “He was, then, a charismatic religious figure without hereditary right or political appointment, but authorized by his vocation to speak or act for Yahweh.” There were some women who were called as prophetesses (*nebi'ah*), but comparatively speaking, they were fewer in number, although not in significance, as to their words and deeds, than their male counterparts.²⁴ God working and speaking through specially chosen individuals became the inspired mode of interaction between the divine and the mundane. As Vos (2012:193) put it, “It marks the religion of the Old Testament as a religion of conscious intercourse between Jehovah and Israel, a religion of revelation, of authority, a religion in which God dominates, and in which man is put into the listening, submissive attitude.” Two individuals, of several, in the Old Testament, serve as prime examples, here, of what it meant to be called as a prophet of God. Those individuals were Moses and Jeremiah.

Moses, in a recorded conversation that took place between him and God, was told by God, “See I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of this land” (Ex. 7:1-2). Moses was to act as God’s representative, speaking to his brother the words that God wanted to convey to Pharaoh. This declaration came on the heels of Moses’ tenuous pleading that he was not capable of serving in the capacity that the Lord God had called him (Ex. 4:10-ff.). Rather than allow Moses to wither away in self-pity, though, God appoints

Latter-day Saints recognize the biblical and Book of Mormon prophets, as well as latter-day prophets, as servants of Jesus Christ and accept as scripture the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. They believe that Joseph SMITH and all subsequent PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH were and are prophets and representatives of Jesus Christ.” See also McConkie 1985:425.

²⁰ See Isa. 6:8-9; Jer. 1:4-10; Amos 7:14-15, Jon. 1:1-2 for examples of God’s call upon those individuals as prophets of God and how they reacted to the call.

²¹ See Berkhof 1941:358. “Man of God,” which emphasized the prophet’s close relationship with God (Routledge 2008:211), was applied to Moses (Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6; 1 Chr. 23:14; 2 Chr. 30:16; Ezra 3:2; Psa. 90), the angel of the Lord (Judg. 13:6, 8), a visitor to Eli (1 Sam. 2:27-ff.), Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6-10), Shemaiah (1 Kg. 12:22; 2 Chr. 11:2), a visitor to Jeroboam (1 Kg. 13:1, 4-8, 11-12, 14, 21, 26, 29, 31; 2 Kg. 23:16-17), Elijah (1 Kg. 17:18, 24; 2 Kg. 1:9-13), a visitor to Ahab (1 Kg. 20:28), Elisha (2 Kg. 4:7, 16, 21-22, 25, 27, 40, 42; 5:8, 14-15, 20; 6:6, 9-10, 15; 7:2, 17-19; 8:2, 4, 7-8, 11; 13:19; 2 Chr. 25:7, 9), David (2 Chr. 8:14; Neh. 12:24, 36), Igdaliah (Jer. 35:4).

²² *nābî* (“prophet(s)”=317x); *hōzeh* (“seer”=16x; “prophets”=1x); *rō'eh* (“seer(s)”=13x; “seer’s”=1x) as per *Accordance Bible Software* analysis.

²³ Harrison 1969:742.

²⁴ Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kg. 22:14; 2 Chr. 34:22), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Lk. 2:36). There is also one unnamed prophetess in Isa. 8:3 and a “man who had four virgins who were prophetesses (Acts 21:9), and the false prophetess Jezebel (Rev. 2:20).

Moses' brother, Aaron, to the role of speaking God's words that God would inspire Moses to share with Aaron, and that while Moses retained the sobriquet of "prophet" (Deut. 34:10). The God who creates human beings, and enables them to speak, is the same God who sustains their call.²⁵ Moses, in other words, retained his intimacy and calling *with* God *as* God, while speaking authoritatively *for* God through Aaron, despite Moses' fear that he would fail (see Num. 12:5-8).

In the Jeremiah example, another conversation took place between Yahweh and the prophet Jeremiah, whereby God informs his prophet of the predestined nature of his calling – he was set apart or "consecrated" (Heb. *hiqdashti*) and given or "appointed" (Heb. *netatti*).²⁶ A similar resistance was encountered by God from Jeremiah, as seen above with Moses.²⁷ "Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth," argued Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6). God's response, though, is similar through assurance that wherever Jeremiah was sent to represent God, God would be there to both deliver Jeremiah from his enemies and to "put My words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:8-9). God, in other words, preceded the prophet wherever his journey took him and then provided the necessary commentary appeal to those whom the message was designated. As John Frame (2002:83, n.6) succinctly observed, "The prophet's words are God's, and disbelieving or disobeying the prophet's words is the same as disbelieving or disobeying God's own words." There was no compromise or alternative to the prophet's authoritative declarations, since his message came directly from the mouth of God.

Another aspect of being God's prophet was that he had to have a correct theological world view. It was an imperative for maintenance after becoming an Old Testament prophet. It is what distinguished the true prophet of God from a false prophet, whose desire was not only self-serving, but one of which led those willing to listen to the false prophet to stray after false gods. In Deuteronomy 13:1-4 this is spelled out as follows:

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.

The false prophet was not only capable of mimicking the true prophet through the manifestation of dreams and visions (Num. 12:6-8; Isa. 1:1; Dan. 7:1-ff.), but was also able to contrive events involving the miraculous ("sign or wonder"), which made him all the more convincing, at least

²⁵ House 1998:94-95.

²⁶ See *TDOT* 2003:12.528, 538. Jackie A. Naudé (*NIDOTTE* 1997:3.885-86) wrote, "The hi. [hiphil] has the sense of dedication, not with the implication of cultic qualification, but rather of transfer to the possession of God, to whom the person or thing dedicated now exclusively belongs. The hi. focuses on the process of dedication."

²⁷ Moses and Jeremiah may be viewed as exceptions and not the rule when it came to prophets fulfilling their roles as called individuals. On the other hand, it would not be uncommon to consider the fear that most men or women might sense from being called by God to perform any seemingly daunting task.

to some.²⁸ His point of departure from the true prophet, however, was his lack of knowledge and commitment to the God of Israel. His wish or goal was to pursue and to serve the false pagan deities and not Yahweh at all, while taking as many as would listen with him. God, apparently, was instrumental in rearing the false prophet to serve as a “test” to the Israelites, to see whether or not they loved God. Such testing would not increase what God already knew, but would demonstrate the utter lost condition of those who would turn their back on God. Later, it would be found out that as Israel slowly devolved into sin and idolatry, over the course of 800 years, their love would grow cold and distracted, which would eventuate in them being carried away into captivity. Israel’s capture would serve as an example to anyone observant enough to take seriously what God had revealed in this passage concerning commitment to God and those who would come along and attempt to divert that attention away from Him to the service of false gods (see 1 Cor. 10:6, 11).

Another facet of the true prophet of God was his supernatural ability to predict future events relative to the nation of Israel.²⁹ Typically, this came in the form of a warning that forecasted impending judgment due to the impropriety and disobedience on the part of God’s people. It also often included a pronouncement of restoration based upon God’s cleansing, coupled with the people’s repentance and obedience. A glimpse of what later biblical prophets would reiterate in accord with more specific events and times was issued by Yahweh in the Deuteronomic covenant found in Deuteronomy, Chapter 28. Obedience to God would result in innumerable blessings (28:1-14). Conversely, disobedience to God would result in innumerable curses (28:15-68). It would be the curses, all of which was brought on by Israel’s illicit behaviour and obstinacy, that God’s prophets would ultimately be alluding to when they predicted Israel’s demise at the hands of her enemies.³⁰ Since God was the one who initiated both the covenant and the prophecy, both would be fulfilled to the letter. Neither would fail, which further meant that the prophet called by God to issue his specific prophecy dealing either with Israel or the nations would not fail either. Such would not be the case with the false prophets who presumed to speak in the name of the Lord.

In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, we have a specific reference to the prophet who attempted to forecast future events, but who would ultimately fail because of his presumption to be called by God, when he, in fact, was not. The indications that such a prophet was not one of God’s own is found earlier in the passage when Moses revealed that (1) the true prophet would be like Moses, (2) the prophet would proceed from among “your countrymen,” literally “brothers” (Heb. *’ach*), meaning the

²⁸ According to Helfmyer (*TDOT* 1974:1.177), The anti-Yahwistic prophets “...used signs to establish the credibility of their summons. The signs intended here can be perceived by the senses as confirmations of the prophetic teaching effected by the deity. Such signs are very similar to confirmation signs, which cannot be clearly distinguished from faith signs. However, the primary purpose of the signs mentioned...is more to motivate the people to follow other gods than to confirm the correctness of the prophetic word.” This is in sharp contrast to Yahweh’s warnings found in Deut. 10:12-11:31, where Israel was only to fear Him, walk in His ways, and avoid turning away to follow after other gods (11:16, 28).

²⁹ This is not to say that predictions were not made in relationship to the pagan nations that surrounded Israel (see Isa. 13-21, 47; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 25-32; 35; 38:17-39:16; Joel 3:2-17; Amos 1:3-2:3; Obad.; Jonah 1:1-2; Mic. 7:9-13; Nah. 2-3; Zeph. 2:4-15; 3:8-13; Hag. 2:20-23; Zech. 14:12-15). It is that even the predictions that were made about the pagan nations affected Israel as well.

³⁰ Isa. 8:1-8; 10:5-11; Jer. 4:11-13, 23-31; 5:18-19; 6:1-8, 22-26; 9:12-16; 16:10-13; 25:1-11; 27:1-ff.; 30:4-11; Ezek. 4:1-3; 5-7; 11:5-12; 13-ff.; 16:53-59; 17:1-ff.; 21:1-ff.; 22:17-22; 38:1-16; Dan. 7:1-ff.; Hos. 4-5, 8-10, 13; Joel 2:1-17; Amos 2:4-8; 3:11-4:3; 5:1-3; 6; 8:1-3, 7-14; Mic. 1:1-2:5; Zeph. 1:2-18; 3:1-7; Zech. 13:2-14:8; Mal. 4:1-3.

Israelites, and (3) the prophet would speak *to them* all that God had commanded. Since there is only one Prophet to come after Moses that was actually like and even exceeded him, and since Jesus claimed that Moses wrote about Jesus (Jn. 5:46), even though Moses himself, at the time, probably knew nothing about Jesus, this prediction is seen as pointing to the Messiah.³¹ Although the false prophet, in contrast, may have recognized or acknowledged the person of Moses, his motive was not focused on imitating or being like him. The false prophet's arrogance (Heb. *yazid*)³² misled him to believe he was speaking in God's name, when the reality was he speaking for a false deity. The proof for the deception was seen in the outcome. If what the prophet predicted did not happen, then that prophet was not of God. He had spoken "presumptuously" (Heb. *zud*) and no one should literally "sojourn" or "dwell with" him. In fact, "that prophet shall die" (v. 20; Stulman 1990:621).

3. NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS

The exclusive term for prophet in the New Testament is *prophētēs*. Its verbal form is *prophēteuō*. In their various forms, they occur 195 times in the New Testament.³³ Generally speaking, *prophētēs* and *prophēteuō* share the same meaning as that found for the Hebrew term *nābī'* or someone who has been specifically called of God to speak for God either as a foreteller of God's will or forth-teller of futuristic events.³⁴ According C. H. Peisker, the term prophet was used in the New Testament in five ways: (1) for the Old Testament prophet, (2) John the Baptist, (3) Jesus Christ, (4) Those Specially Commissioned, and (5) Christian Prophets.³⁵ The adverse of all five was the false prophet, who upon observation helps our understanding of the importance and role of the true prophet of God. Since the Old Testament prophet has already been discussed above, let us deal briefly with the remaining four prophet types, along with the false prophets, mentioned in the New Testament.

³¹ Acts 3:22-23; 7:37; O'Toole 1983:251; Wood 1966:126; Mare 1966:146, 148, n.25; Clowney 1968:49; Scipione 1974:196; Boyer 1960:14; Emmrich 2000:273; Balentine 1962:38; Baxter 1999:77, 80; Merrill 1998:108; Couch 1999:370.

³² Hiphil imperfect of *zud*, *zid* meaning "to boil [or] cook" (Gen. 25:29, 34; 2 Kg. 4:38-40; Hag. 2:12), "act presumptuously" (Ex. 21:14; Deut. 1:43; 17:13; **18:20**; Ps. 19:14;), "be arrogant" (Ex. 18:11; Neh. 9:10, 16, 29; Ps. 86:14; 119:21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122; Isa. 13:11; Jer. 43:2; 49:16; 50:29, 31-32; Ezek. 7:10; Dan. 5:20; Obad. 3; Mal. 3:15; 4:1), "insolence" (1 Sam. 17:28; Prov. 13:10; 21:24), "raging" (Ps. 124:5), "pride" (Prov. 11:2; 21:24). Both Scharbert (*TDOT* 4.49-50) and Günther (*NIDONTT* 1986:2.92) observe that *zud* is translated in the LXX with *asebein* or *asebēs*, which is a derivative of *sebomai* coupled with an alpha privative, meaning irreverence, unholiness, unworthiness, or indignity. "In the LXX," wrote Günther, the negative compound *asebēs* is used synonymously with *adikos*, unrighteous, unjust, and describes both an individual action and the general attitude of men, in departing from God... Thus *asebeia* and *adikia* stand very close to *hamartia*, → sin: social order and social justice are inseparable from worship."

³³ See *Accordance Bible Software*.

³⁴ Hoehner (2002:441-42) defines the New Testament prophet thusly: "A prophet is one who is endowed by the Holy Spirit with the gift of prophecy for the purpose of edification, comfort, encouragement (1 Cor. 14:3, 31), and the enablement to understand and communicate the mysteries and revelation of God to the church (1 Cor. 12:10; 13:2; 14:22-25, 30-31) and his prophecy may include a predictive element (1 Thess 3:4; 4:6; 14-18; Gal 5:21). Hill (1979:8-9) is a bit more particular when he stresses that, "A Christian prophet is a Christian who functions within the Church, occasionally or regularly, as a divinely called and divinely inspired speaker who receives intelligible and authoritative revelations or messages which he is impelled to deliver publicly, in oral or written form, to Christian individuals and/or the Christian community" [emphasis his].

³⁵ *NIDONTT* 1986:3.81-84.

3.1 John the Baptist

All of the references to John, as a prophet, are found in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Only four verses (Mt. 14:5; 21:26 cf. Mk. 11:32; Lk. 20:6) specifically address John as a prophet, all of which are mere recognition of what the people thought about John—not that those who wished to do him harm actually believed that he was a prophet. In one passage, Jesus announced that John was “more than a prophet” and identified him as the person of Elijah (Matt. 11:9, 14). Although Luke would forecast that John would be “the prophet” forerunner of the Lord (Lk. 1:76), John is seemingly unaware of his identity and denies his prophetic role when asked, “Are you the prophet?” (Jn. 1:21). Later, as Cullmann (1963:29-30) pointed out, “The Jewish Christians designated Jesus ‘the true Prophet’, and went so far as to picture John the Baptist as the representative of false prophecy. The subject of the first Christological discussions thus took the form not so much of Christology as of ‘Prophetology’, and the battle was fought out not between Jews and Christians, but between the disciples of the Baptist and Christians. This shows the importance of the concept Prophet.”

3.2 Jesus Christ

References to Jesus’ prophetic status are found mainly in the Gospels, with two exceptions already discussed above in respect to Peter’s declaration in Acts 3:22 and Stephen’s in Acts 7:37 that Jesus was the fulfillment of Moses’ prediction pertaining to the prophet whom God would raise up and be like Moses.³⁶ Phillip, one of Jesus’ earliest disciples, hailed to Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (Jn. 1:45 cf. Lk. 24:27). Jesus indirectly claimed to be “a prophet,” but not necessarily “the prophet;” *the Prophet* being the last prophet to come at the end of time (Cullmann 1963:24).³⁷ Jesus told the multitudes who followed him, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his *own* household” (Matt. 13:57 cf. Mk. 6:4; Lk. 4:24; Jn. 4:44) in response to them being offended at his teaching.³⁸ Elsewhere, Jesus in a scathing denunciation of Herod told some Pharisees, who warned of his intent to kill Jesus, “Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem” (Lk. 13:33). Mainly, however, it was people outside the circle of Jesus’ disciples who recognized him as a prophet (Mt. 21:11; Mk. 6:15; Lk. 7:16), which would include a Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:19) and a blind man whom Jesus helped to see (Jn. 9:17). Some of the people referred to Jesus as “the Prophet” (Jn. 6:14; 7:40), even though Jesus never referred to himself by that designation.

³⁶ Deut. 18:15-ff.; Hill 1979:53.

³⁷ See Hahn (1963:372-388), for an in-depth discussion about Jesus as the “eschatological prophet” who is the fulfillment of Moses’ prediction found in Deut. 18:15-ff. Thomas Oden (2006:2.280) wrote, “The overarching theme of Christ’s saving work is this: *Jesus first appeared as a teacher in the prophetic office; then as high priest and lamb sacrificed in his suffering and death; and finally by his resurrection received his kingdom and remains active in his office of cosmic governance, as eschatological ruler in this kingdom*” [emphasis his].

³⁸ Friedrich (*TDNT* 1968:6.841) points out that while, “It is true that in this saying [Lk. 13:33], as in Mk. 6:4, Jesus is not describing Himself as a prophet but quoting a common view. Nevertheless, by not merely adopting the view but also preparing to exemplify it, Jesus numbers Himself among the prophets.”

3.3 The Specially Commissioned

Peisker (*NIDONTT* 1986: 3.84; see also Friedrich, *TDNT*, 6.835-36) mentions four individuals, all found in the Gospel of Luke, that fit the role of being specially commissioned as Prophets or Prophetesses. They were Elizabeth (Lk. 1:41), Zacharias (Lk. 1:67), Simeon (Lk. 2:25), and Anna (Lk. 2:36).

Elizabeth's implied prophetic occasion came when the Holy Spirit made her aware of Mary's special condition after Mary greeted her.³⁹ Although it was the desire of Jewish women to carry and bear the Messiah, and Elizabeth was likely informed by her husband that the child she was carrying was his forerunner, meaning that the Saviour could not be far behind, she could not have known that Mary was the one carrying him.⁴⁰ Then, Elizabeth's baby "leaped in her womb" and she was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak. At that time she knew that Mary was carrying "[her] Lord" and the fulfilment of what she faithfully knew was complete.

Zacharias is recorded to have "prophesied" (*eprophēteusen*), after being filled with the Holy Spirit, concerning Israel's redemption in the person of Jesus (Lk. 1:67). Space precludes a comprehensive exegetical effort in respect to Zacharias' benediction, but it is clear that he understood Jesus to be the Saviour and John to be his forerunner, and that only by divine intervention.⁴¹ Deeply devotional, Zacharias focuses "especially on the three great covenants: the Davidic, Abrahamic, and New covenants, and thus is a major bridge from the Old Testament to the New," culminating in the finished work of Christ at Calvary.⁴²

Simeon was "righteous and devout" and looked for the "consolation of Israel."⁴³ His prophetic stance is realized in the special revelation he received from the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he saw the Lord's anointed first (Lk. 2:25-32). That prophetic "light" was fulfilled in Christ when he died, not only for "Thy people Israel," but for the Gentiles as well (v. 32). "The regal, Davidic, messianic Savior-Servant has come to redeem more than the nation of Israel; he has come for the world," wrote Bock (1994:245). Or, as Luke would record Jesus saying, "Thus is it written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (24:46-47).

Finally, Anna (Gr. Hanna = "grace") is deemed a *prophētis*, which is simply the female version of the male *prophētēs*.⁴⁴ *Prophētis* is ascribed to only one other individual in the New Testament:

³⁹ Pentecost 1981:46.

⁴⁰ Edersheim n.d.:1.152.

⁴¹ Friedrich (*TDNT* 1968:6.835).

⁴² MacArthur 2009:95.

⁴³ *Consolation* (*paraklēsis*) is the same word later attributed by Jesus to the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

⁴⁴ Luke makes passing mention of a certain Philip who had four daughters that were "prophetesses," but nothing beyond that fact is elaborated (Acts 21:9). We do know from Eusebius (1953:1.295) that Philip and his daughters lived at Hierapolis and that the Church Father Papias "was with them and received a wonderful story from the daughters of Philip." Paul also alludes to women who prophecy with their heads uncovered, but does not name them specifically (2 Cor. 11:5) and Peter recalls an Old Testament prophecy made by Joel fulfilled at Pentecost, when "your daughters

Jezebel, the vile wife of King Ahab (1 Kg. 18-19, 21). Anna was an elderly woman of 84 years, widowed, and devoted to temple service, “serving night and day with fastings and prayers” (Lk. 2:37). Upon hearing Simeon’s declaration to Mary, Anna burst out in ecstatic praise, thanking God and making her own pronouncements to those standing by expectantly waiting for the Saviour (v. 30). As Bock (1994:252) argued, “Just as the prophet Simeon testified of Jesus, so this woman, the highest example of female piety, will point to him.”

3.4 Christian Prophets

The New Testament is replete with examples of those who were either prophets or prophetesses in the early church, after Jesus’ ascension.⁴⁵ Acts 11:27-28 identifies “some prophets” from Jerusalem, with Agabus being one of the more outspoken (cf. Acts 21:10). At Antioch, there were at least four prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1). Judas and Silas were identified as prophets after the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:32). Philip the evangelist had four daughters that were prophetesses (Acts 21:9). Some even conclude that the Apostle Paul was a prophet because of his close affinity to the Old Testament prophets.⁴⁶ Prophets were considered the “foundation” of the Christian faith (Eph. 2:20), receivers of insight into Christ’s mystery (Eph. 3:4-5), and outfitters of the Church for service (Eph. 4:11-12).⁴⁷ Elsewhere, especially in the writings of Paul, it is evident that prophecy was alive and well; that there were certain characteristics that accompanied the office that made the “gift” (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 13:2) distinguishable from the false prophet to be discussed below:

- *First*, the gift of prophesying applied to both men and women (1 Cor. 11:4-5).⁴⁸ Interestingly, the appointment (1 Cor. 12:28) to prophecy was honoured or disgraced when the prophet covered (men) or uncovered (women) the head.⁴⁹
- *Second*, although prophesying was encouraged for everyone (1 Cor. 14:1), not everyone possessed the gift itself (1 Cor. 12:29). In that respect, exposure of the abuse of another gift—speaking in tongues—is more in focus in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, than a universal reality of prophesying by all Christians.
- *Third*, the gift of prophecy was considered to be partial in the sense of incomplete.⁵⁰

will prophecy” (Acts 2:17).

⁴⁵ According to Ellis (1977:173), “Christian prophets are not very prominent in the New Testament. Yet there is evidence that they constituted a distinct order in the early Church, an order that remained significant into the second century.”

⁴⁶ Evans in Hawthorne and Martin (1993:762); Hill (1979:111); Grudem (1982:53).

⁴⁷ Hoehner (2002:397, 441, 550); O’Brien (1999:216, 232, 304).

⁴⁸ Barrett (1968: 250) wrote, “The verse [v. 5] is meaningless unless women from time to time moved, in the Christian assembly in Corinth, to pray and prophesy aloud and in public (not simply in family prayers and other small groups).” MacArthur (1984:256-57), though, confines women prophesying to “witnessing” in public and teaching children.

⁴⁹ Keener (1992:21,31-32) argues that heading covers had to do with the culture in which the men and women lived. Therefore, Paul is making a cultural argument, dealing with the men and women of Corinth and not a transcultural argument dealing with modern-day society.

⁵⁰ “It is ‘partial’ because it belongs only to this age, which is but the beginning, not the completion, of the End”

One day, when love is perfected, prophecy will cease or be done away (1 Cor. 13:9-11; Lenski 1963:565).

- *Fourth*, as noted above, prophetic utterances were to edify believers (1 Cor. 14:5, 12, 17, 26). It, once again, served as a benchmark between what prophesying could do for the Church, namely edify, as opposed to speaking in tongues, which only edified the individual.⁵¹
- *Fifth*, prophesying served as a “sign” to believers (1 Cor. 14:22). Signs were often associated with the miraculous in the New Testament, signifying their divine origin and demonstrating favour with God’s people.⁵²
- *Sixth*, prophesying served to convict the unbeliever or the ignorant (*idiōtēs*), which resulted in the recognition and worship of God (1 Cor. 14:24).⁵³ It is reminiscent of Paul’s words, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).
- *Seventh*, prophets were to judge the merits of other prophet’s prophecies (1 Cor. 14:29). Prophets being subject to other prophets (1 Cor. 14:32) is similar to Paul’s command to “examine everything” (1 Thess. 5:21) and John’s imperative to “test the spirits” (1 Jn. 4:1), to see whether or not the revelations were “good” or from God.⁵⁴
- *Finally*, the prophets were to take individual turns at declaring their messages (1 Cor. 14:31). Not only was Christian decorum kept, but also those who listened, which included the other prophets prophesying, would learn and be exhorted by the prophecy.⁵⁵

3.5 False Prophets

The converse of being a prophet of God was to be a false prophet (*pseudoprophētēs*), which the New Testament addresses as clearly as that found in the Old Testament. Cited 11 times in the New Testament, a false prophet was essentially a false teacher whom Jesus identified as having a genuine outward appearance, but inwardly a vicious or destructive demeanour (Mt. 7:15). False prophets were producers of “bad fruit,” which was a by-product of their bad (Gr. pl. *ponērous*) or “evil” messages.⁵⁶ They were messages that alluded to the Lord and could even perform great works of demonic exorcism and the miraculous, but ultimately were adjudged as unrecognized,

(Fee 1987:645-46; Hodge 1956:272).

⁵¹ Barrett (1968:316) wrote that the prophet is “greater, because he is a better servant.” Later he would add that exercising gifts for self-development purposes was “contrary to the law of love which regulates all Christian behavior” (Barrett 1968:327). Gordon Fee (1987:667) is even more pointed by stating, “The building up of the community is the basic reason for corporate settings of worship; they should probably not be turned into a corporate gathering for a thousand individual experiences of worship.”

⁵² Hodge 1956:295-96; Lenski 1963:601; Barrett 1968:326; Fee 1987:683.

⁵³ Hodge 1956:298-99; Lenski 1963:604-5; Fee 1987:685-87; MacArthur 1984:384.

⁵⁴ Robertson 1958:321-22; Hodge 1956:301-2; Lenski 1963:610-11; Barrett 1968:328; Fee; 1987:693-94.

⁵⁵ Robertson 1958:322-23; Hodge 1956:302-3; Barrett 1968:329; Fee 1987:695-96.

⁵⁶ G. Friedrich (*TDNT* 1968:6.830, 860) contended that they “are liars by nature” that later caused the “early Church a good deal of trouble.”

antinomian, and rejected (vv. 22-23). Later, Jesus would warn of a coming day when there would be a proliferation of false prophets working their wonders and if it was possible, would be even able to deceive Christians (i.e. “the elect”), had not the days been shortened (Mt. 24:24).

Elsewhere, Peter addresses the subject of false prophets and the unsavoury characteristics that gave them their distinction. Peter, first of all, equates them with false teachers who would covertly mingle among believers, introducing “destructive heresies” (*haireseis apōleias*) that amounted to a denial of the Master (i.e. Jesus) who bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). Here, the idea seems to centre on a salvific denial, which could further mean that these renegades would be strong advocates of human autonomy or those who believe in a works-based salvific program, rather than salvation by grace through faith alone. Peter further observed that the false prophet is a(n) habitual sexual pervert, greedy cunning liar, scorner of divine authority, “self-willed and presumptuous” individual,⁵⁷ undaunted blasphemer, irrational animal, extravagant reveller and glutton, habitual adulterer, seducer of the unstable, “child of the curse,”⁵⁸ deserter unto deception, and fanatic of Balaam. Moreover, they are dry springs, a fog whipped up in a tornado, empty, arrogant boasters of vanity, who promise freedom, while being slaves themselves, and ultimately lead those naïve enough to follow them back to the very vomit they previously consumed and pigsty they used to live in before listening to the false prophet in the first place.⁵⁹

Aside from a passing comment by Luke about a false prophet by the name of Bar-Jesus in Acts 13:6, the only other New Testament writer to use the expression “false prophet” is John. He uses it four times (1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). In the 1 John 4 reference, the false prophet is linked with an anti-Christ “spirit” that John argues should be tested, like all spirits should, to see whether or not what they are confessing is from God. The three-fold test consists of listening to a prophet/spirit “declare” (publicly), or “acknowledge” (*BDAG* 1979:568) that (1) Jesus has come in the flesh, (2) he is in agreement with Christians in matters pertaining to Jesus (vv. 5-6), and, (3) Jesus is the Son of God (v. 15).⁶⁰ Anyone who failed to make such a *confession* “is not from God” and is of the *spirit* “of the antichrist,” which was already pervasive in the biblical world in which John lived. As Bruce (1983:105) concluded, “No matter how charming, how plausible, how eloquent the prophets in question may be, the test of their witness to Christ and his truth is the test by which they must be judged.” In the Book of Revelation references, the false prophet is associated with Satan, the beastly political system of the last days, and the demonic realm. In fact, the “spirits of demons” (Rev. 16:14) have their derivation, in part, from the false prophet, who enables them to perform the miraculous, whereby they are able to gather the world leaders for war against God. The final two references (Rev. 19:20; 20:10) reveal the hellish reward the false prophet receives for all of his deceptive effort.

⁵⁷ See *TDNT* 1972:8.185 for *tolmētēs*.

⁵⁸ See *NIDONTT* 1986:1.416 for *katara*.

⁵⁹ Hiebert 1984:255-ff.

⁶⁰ Previously, John had argued that due to the number of antichrists in the world, it was an indication of “the last hour” (1 Jn. 2:18). They were former church members that now denied Jesus was the Christ (2:22). Hence, they were liars or persons with an opposing attitude toward God (see *EDNT* 3.499) and in this particular reference, in opposition over the identity of Jesus, as the Christ, and his intimate relationship with the Father. “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.” Conversely, “the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (v. 23).

4. CONCLUSION

In this article, an effort was made to describe and define what a prophet of God was from the biblical perspective. It was done to have a measure to determine whether or not Muhammad of Islamic fame and Joseph Smith of Mormon fame fit in with the claims made by them, and their followers, that they were after the order of Moses, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, or Jesus. It was discovered that both the Old and New Testament prophets were men and women called of God to fulfil certain functions that either had to do with propagating doctrinal teaching consistent with the will of God or with making a futuristic pronouncement that had something to do with either the nation of Israel or the Christian church. Anything that managed to lead God's people astray theologically or failed to happen exactly as uttered was deemed false and consistent with an anti-Christ spirit.

In article 2 of 3, attention will focus upon the specific prophetic claims of Muhammad and his followers. He was obviously the charismatic leader of his respective religious upstart who had garnered significant attention and drawn in billions of followers over the course of the past fourteen centuries. So, his influence has been extraordinary. Nevertheless, the question that will be asked is whether his theology is consistent with the biblical prophets of old. Other questions that will be addressed are what did he have to say about the nation of Israel? What did he have to say about the person of Jesus Christ? Was he God's Son and if he was, would the authors of the Bible, including Jesus himself, agree with his conclusions? By examining his statements and actions in comparison with what has been written above, only then can a definitive answer be rendered.

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A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC RESPONSE TO THE CLAIM OF “PROPHET” BY THE FOUNDERS OF ISLAM AND MORMONISM, MUHAMMAD AND JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

ARTICLE II: MUHAMMAD

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on whether the biblical particulars of prophethood apply to Muhammad, the founder of Islam, as he and his followers believed. This claim is weighed by focusing on a comparison of Muhammad’s theology with doctrine found in the Old and New Testaments, including what Muhammad believed Jesus to be, as well as understanding to whom Deuteronomy 18 referred. Based upon what Muhammad believed about himself, as well as what he believed about the biblical prophets and about Jesus, coupled with Islamic history and legend spoken about Muhammad in contrast to the warnings issued in both the Old and New Testaments, the article comes to the far reaching conclusion that Muhammad was not a prophet of God after the order of the biblical prophets.

The first article in this trilogy discussed what a biblical prophet was, what a prophet did, and to whom the office or gift of prophecy applied in the biblical contexts of Old and New Testament revelations. Article 2 focuses on the question: Do the biblical particulars of prophethood apply to Muhammad, the founder of Islam as believed by Muslims? By consulting with what the primary sources of Islam reveal,⁶¹ along with commentary from those who staunchly uphold their beloved leader as a biblical prophet,⁶² and contrasting those claims with what has already been written, the question of whether or not Muhammad was a prophet after the order of the Old and New Testaments prophets will be evaluated.

The assessment begins by researching three additional questions. First, does Muhammad’s theology comport with either Old or New Testament theology? Second, does Moses in Deuteronomy 18 refer to Muhammad? Third, who did Muhammad believe Jesus to be? Was he God’s Son, incarnate in the flesh, or a mere man? Answers to these questions will provide the basis to consider the claim that Muhammad was a prophet after the same order as the biblical prophets.

1. MUHAMMAD’S THEOLOGY

⁶¹ The primary sources in Islam considered authoritative are the Koran and Hadith.

⁶² A partial list would include *Tafsir Ibn-Kathir*, A. Y. Ali’s *The Meaning of the Holy Koran*, and M. M. Ali’s *The Religion of Islam*.

The pagan setting in which Muhammad was reared is reported in hundreds, if not thousands, of books and journal articles. Therefore, it is unnecessary to rehash that history here. The relevance of his upbringing in the research is whether the description of Allah by Muhammad is the same as the attributes of God in the Bible. As was discussed in the first article of this series of three, one test to determine whether a prophet was called of God lay within the theology he proclaimed, especially on his understanding of who God is. The Bible teaches in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 that even if a prophet performed the miraculous in the name of God, if he also urged the people to go after “other gods,” then God did not call him. Moreover, in the New Testament, Jesus not only warned of false prophets, but also stated that by their fruits a person could know them (Matt. 7:20). Since Muhammad and his converts believed that he followed in the footsteps of both the Old and New Testament prophets,⁶³ which included Jesus, his theology should be consistent with theirs.

Etymologically, the Arabic words that Muhammad used for God, Allah, means “the god.” It later became the proper name for “the God” that Muhammad and Muslims worship(ed).⁶⁴ Most Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians used Allah when speaking of God in Muhammad’s time.⁶⁵ Allah was initially used as a name for a pagan desert deity. In other words, Allah was already worshiped by the pagans and Bedouins long before Muhammad ever arrived on the scene. “Like his Greek counterpart, Zeus,” wrote Reza Azlan (2006:7), “Allah was originally an ancient rain/sky deity who had been elevated into the role of the supreme god of pre-Islamic Arabs.” According to Zwemer (1905:32-33), “In pre-Islamic literature, Christian or pagan, *ilāh* is used for any god and *Al-ilah* (contracted to *Allah*), i.e., *ὁ θεός*, the god, was the name of the Supreme.” Guillaume (1956:7) adds that, “Some scholars trace the name [*Allah*] to the South Arabian *Ilāh*, a title of the Moon god, but this is a matter of antiquarian interest.”⁶⁶ Even though the name Allah was viewed by Muhammad as exclusive to “the god,” it by no means meant that it was the same deity that the Jews and Christians worshiped as “the God.”

The Old Testament emphasizes that God is “one” (Deut. 6:4). “Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him” (Deut. 4:39).⁶⁷ The New Testament also refers to God as one (Jam. 2:19), but also reveals what God’s oneness partially

⁶³ Koran 2:136; 3:84; 4:163.

⁶⁴ Watt 1953:26; Gibb 1955:48; Hughes 1994:141; Azlan 2006:6; M. M. Ali 2012:110; Omar 2012:28-29.

⁶⁵ Corduan 2012:112; Dashti 1994:35; Guillaume 1956:7.

⁶⁶ Contemporary Christian author Dr. Robert Morey (1992:50-52) argued that Allah was the moon god, even citing Alfred Guillaume along the way, but never offered any corroborating evidence to support his argument. It is not that there was not a moon deity amid the pantheon of gods and goddesses, some extending back to the moon god of Babylon named Sîn. It is that there is no evidence that the Arabian Allah is associated with the moon deity. In fact, if there were any association with Allah with one of the pagan deities, it would most likely be the supreme deity in the Kaaba known as Hubal (Wellhausen 1987: 75-76). Winfried Corduan (2012: 112-114) has offered an effective rebuttal based on etymology, history, and symbolism that dismantles Morey’s *et al* argument that Allah is the moon god of ancient Arabia.

⁶⁷ Cf. 2 Sam.7:22; 1 Chr. 17:20; Jer. 10:6-7; Isa. 40:18, 25; 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5-6, 18, 21-22; 46:9.

entailed. Both Jesus⁶⁸ and the Holy Spirit⁶⁹ were revealed to be one with God the Father. A composite of the testaments revealed one God who subsisted in three persons. As Robert Letham (2004:32) puts it, “While the Old Testament does not make explicit what is revealed by the coming of Christ and the writing of the New Testament, it does provide the essential foundation without which the full Christian doctrine of God could not exist.”

Consistent, however, with other movements in history, which rejected either the deity of Jesus or the personality of the Holy Spirit, is Muhammad’s rejection of the triune nature of God or simply the Trinity. Although the Jews did not advocate the triune nature of Yahweh, hints of the Trinity are found in the Old Testament as far back as Genesis 1:26, when Elohim said, “Let Us create man in Our image according to Our likeness.”⁷⁰ Later, that reality is made more specific in the New Testament with explicit statements about either Jesus’ or the Holy Spirit’s deity made evident (like those seen above) or in formulas or allusions that could be interpreted and explained in triune language (see Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Thess. 1:3-5; 1 Jn. 4:2, *et al*).

Also consistent with a denial of the Trinity involved a denial of Jesus’ Sonship. Jesus could not be God’s son and share in God’s nature, according to Islamic thought, (Koran 19:88-92). To associate him in any way with God was considered blasphemous or an act of Shirk (Ali 2012: 106; Sodiq 2011: 109-10). God cannot have any partners and to acknowledge Jesus as God’s Son would contradict that mandate, as well as implicate God in a sexual union with a consort (Koran 6:101; Tafsir Ibn Kathir 3:427). Such notions about the Trinity, Jesus’ deity, and Jesus’ Sonship are, according to the Muslim explanation of events, all contrivances and perversions created by misguided Christians who failed to keep Jesus’ original monotheistic message and had suddenly decided to placate the Greeks and Romans (Campell 2013:5-6; Mufassir 1980:23; 1993: 4). Therefore, “Say not ‘Trinity’: desist: It will be better for you: For Allah is One God: Glory be to Him: (Far Exalted is He) above Having a son” (Koran 4:171 cf. 5:73). Muhammad’s rejection of the Trinity, along with his refusal to acknowledge Jesus’ deity and Sonship, is a major deviation from the teaching of the Bible and Jesus himself, which makes it impossible for Muhammad to be a continuation of the biblical prophets, and especially not one who further builds upon what Jesus taught. Muhammad’s theology on the nature of God was clearly at odds with both the Old and New Testament statements about Yahweh Elohim revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁷¹

2. MUHAMMAD AND DEUTERONOMY 18

Muhammad and his followers believed that he was the fulfilment of the prophecy given by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-ff. A primary Koranic reference often used to justify such a conclusion is

⁶⁸ Jesus is described as “the exact representation of [God’s] nature” (Heb. 1:3 cf. Col. 1:15) Jesus was God’s Word manifest in the flesh, as God, and dwelt among humankind; one essence with the Father, but two persons (Jn. 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28-31). See Montefiore (1964:35); Bruce (1964:5-6); Pink (2004 reprint:36); Owen (1980 reprint:95); *TDNT* ([1972]:585-ff).

⁶⁹ The Holy Spirit was revealed to be God, as well (Acts 5:4; 1 Thess. 4:8).

⁷⁰ See Anthony A. Hoekema 1986:12; House 1998:61-62; *NIDOTTE* 1997:1.405; *TDOT* 2003:12.394; Frame (2002:355).

⁷¹ See for instance Jn. 20:28-29; Heb. 1:8; Rev. 1:8.

found in Surah 7:157.⁷² According to A. Y. Ali (1997:389), “In this verse is a prefiguring, to Moses, of the Arabian Messenger, the last and greatest of the Messengers of Allah. Prophecies about him will be found in the Tawrah and the Injil.” The verse reads as follows.

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them. He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul; and he will relieve them of their burden and the fetters that they used to wear. Then those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him: they are the successful.⁷³

Ali (1997:389, n.1127) alludes to Deuteronomy 18:15 for his support that when Moses gave his prediction, he had Muhammad in mind as “the only Prophet who brought Sharī’ah like that of Moses.” That future prophet would be from the house of Ishmael, Isaac’s brother, the father of Israel.⁷⁴ Muslim apologist Ajijola (1984:167-68) gave similar testimony. After explaining that Moses was the most spoken about prophet in the Koran, he went on to argue that Moses served as Muhammad’s example, who was prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. “It was only the revelation [Koran 73:15] of the Holy Prophet, and that the earliest, which pointed out the fulfilment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy (18:15-18) in the advent of a Prophet like Musa.” Finally, the popular Muslim and South Africa based provocateur Ahmed Deedat reasoned, based on negation rather than on what was actually in the Deuteronomy passage, to discount Jesus and exalt Muhammad, even to the point attributing a bogus quote to atheist George Bernard Shaw to support his contention!⁷⁵

⁷² In the *Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur’an* are several biblical verses listed in defense of Muhammad’s alleged forthcoming (Deut. 18:18; 21:21; Psl. 118:22-23; Isa. 42:1-13; Hab. 3:3-4; Matt. 21:42-43; Jn. 14:12-17, 26-28; 16:7-14), none of which, when read in their immediate contexts, warrants their citation. They are merely assumed without any explanation.

⁷³ Muhammad M. Pickthall (2006), *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. Revised and edited by Arafat K. El-Ashi, Ph.D. Beltsville, MD: Amana.

⁷⁴ Elsewhere (Koran 3:81, n. 416), Ali alludes to the Deuteronomy 18 passage again to defend Muhammad’s rise to prophethood, along with the Arab nation uprising in Isaiah 42:11 through Ishmael’s son, Kedar. Rather than paint a glorious picture of the Arabian uprising through Kedar, the Bible does just the opposite, by depicting its tribes as uncivilized warmongers (Ps. 120:5-ff.). According to Coogan (*The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* 1996:563), “[The Kedarites] raided lands on their eastern and western borders and controlled the eastern trade route from Arabia to the Fertile Crescent.” Although Jeremiah describes Kedar as a “nation which is at ease, which lives securely” (Jer. 49:31), Isaiah tells of a people who wield the sword and bend the bow in preparation for battle, although unto eventual defeat (Isa. 21:15-17).

⁷⁵ See Deedat (n.d.:23), where he attributes the following statement allegedly written by Shaw in *The Genuine Islam*: “IF A MAN LIKE MOHAMED WERE TO ASSUME THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE MODERN WORLD, HE WOULD SUCCEED IN SOLVING ITS PROBLEMS THAT WOULD BRING IT THE MUCH NEEDED PEACE AND HAPPINESS.” In an email exchange, dated February 10, 2017, with Mr. Richard Dietrich of the International Shaw Society, it was asked if the book, *The Genuine Islam*, was actually authored by George Bernard Shaw. According to Mr. Dietrich, “That is a fake book and one that I have never seen, and although you can find extravagant claims by Shaw (hyperbole being his favorite way of getting attention) for all sorts of world leaders, including Mohammad, I doubt that you’ll find this one. If you do, it won’t be in that book.” In other words, not only is the book “fake,” so is the statement.

There are several major flaws in all of these propositions.

First, the Prophet to come was to discourage involvement in the occult (Deut. 18:14). Israel was about to enter “The Promised Land,” which was inundated with practitioners of witchcraft, sorcery, and demon worship as methods of communicating with or palliating the gods (Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:37).⁷⁶ Yahweh forbade such activity for his people. Muhammad’s biography, however, demonstrates involvement in typical occult practices. An example is Muhammad’s initial experience of being visited by what he thought was a jinn (demon), who physically “strangled” and emotionally abused him into submission (Haykal 1976:73-74). Another is Muhammad’s own testimony concerning two men who allegedly removed a “black drop” from his heart (Ibn Ishaq 72; Haq 2009:1:170) that was interpreted by Muslim historian Tabari as “hatred,” “impurity” and “the pollution of Satan” (Watt and McDonald 1988:63, 75). Even a more popular and belief-shaping event in Islamic history is Muhammad’s out of the body experience flight to Jerusalem, otherwise known as his Night Journey. It has similarities to astral projection in the occult.⁷⁷ While a biblical prophet’s task was to discourage involvement in the occult, it seems that Muhammad’s life encouraged it as a part of his life.⁷⁸

Second, the Prophet to come was to be like Moses in the sense that he was to be an Israelite (vv. 15, 18), literally “brother” (Heb. *’ach*) to the Israelites, not an Arab or any other non-Jewish race. This would exclude Ishmael, as well, since Ishmael was not a Jew, even though he shared a familial tie with Isaac. Ali’s argument that only Muhammad brought Shariah (law) similar to Moses, as evidence for associating him with Deuteronomy 18, is outside the context of what Moses recorded. It is imposition, not exposition, of the text. For Moses’ prediction does not entail bringing another or additional law, but the revealing of another person, like Moses, to whom God would place His words in that prophet’s mouth. In fact upon Jesus’ arrival, who is viewed by most reputable Christian scholars as the Prophet spoken by Moses, he would fulfil the law (Matt. 5:17), with the further effect that those found to be “in Christ” by grace through faith would be accounted as legally just before God (Rom. 3:21-26, 28; 4:5; Gal. 2:16). The law would serve as a magnifier and teacher of moral unrighteousness before God (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19) that leads the responsive unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). It did not serve as a justifier of the person attempting to keep the law (Gal. 2:21; 3:10-11; Jam. 2:10), much less as a means of salvation (Gal. 3:16, 21; Eph. 2:8-9), since no one except Jesus Christ is humanly capable of perfectly keeping the law, which is absolutely necessary if one wished to stand before the perfect God who gave it. Accordingly, it is also clear that the Islamic claim of a biblical prophet succession from Moses through Jesus to Muhammad is impossible.

Third, the Prophet to come was not to speak “presumptuously” in the sense of arrogantly forecasting the future (Deut. 18:20-22). What he predicted needed to come humbly to fruition exactly as stated, otherwise that “prophet” was deemed as false and unworthy of any respect by the people with whom he spoke. All it took was one false prophecy to exclude him as a prophet of God. That said,

⁷⁶ See Moscati 1957:112-116; Finegan 1989:132-134; Albright 1994:119-140.

⁷⁷ See Eliade 1992:5; Grimassi 2005:32, 118; Agrippa 2005:631-32, 801.

⁷⁸ Koran 17:1; Ibn Ishaq (Guillaume 1955:181-87), Bukhari (Khan 2007:5:142-49; 6:195-96), Kathir (5:550-575), and Muslim (2007:1:259-263).

we do not have to look far to find such a prediction when it comes to Muhammad. He believed that he was the fulfilment of Deuteronomy 18:15-ff., as well as did his followers. However, as already seen above, that would be impossible, since Muhammad was not a Jew and the prophetic lineage would have to stop with Jesus. Only if the context of the whole passage from Deuteronomy 18:15-22 is ignored, revised, or reinterpreted, using presupposed ideas about who the prophet is, can Muhammad be included in the discussion.

3. MUHAMMAD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AS THE HOLY SPIRIT

Koran 3:81 and 61:6 are interpreted in such a way by Muslims as the basis to further manipulate the New Testament, particularly in John's Gospel, and persuade others who listen to them to believe that Jesus was referring to Muhammad, rather than the Holy Spirit. The standard Muslim argument goes like this. The Holy Spirit could not be the one spoken of in those references found in John's Gospel, since he was already present and assisting Jesus. The Greek word for "Comforter" (*Paracletos*) has been corrupted from *Periclytos*, which literally means "Muhammad." Finally lost Gospels, like Barnabas, attest to Muhammad's coming. Each of these premises is specious, as the following rebuttal will demonstrate.⁷⁹

First, it must be understood that in Islam, the Holy Spirit is the archangel Gabriel and not the third person in the triune Godhead, as Christianity teaches.⁸⁰ That stated, the typical references cited to support the idea that Muhammad is spoken of by Jesus, and not the Holy Spirit, so as to avoid conflict with the misidentification with Gabriel, are John 14:16, 26, 15:26, and 16:7. All of the references, though, are quite clear and it takes a fair amount of textual gymnastics to arrive at conclusions that are completely at odds with a plain understanding of the verses. For instance, in the first reference, John 14:16, Jesus tells his disciples, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; (17) *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you." The Muslim focuses heavily upon one word, "Helper," sometimes translated "Comforter," while neglecting the details in the rest of the passage. According to A. Y. Ali (1997:148), "the *future* Comforter cannot be the 'Holy Spirit' as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit already was present, helping and guiding Jesus. "

Nowhere in Scripture is the Holy Spirit ever confused with the archangel Gabriel. Moreover, when the archangel is referred to, it is always by name, which amounts to four references throughout the whole of Scripture (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Lk. 1:19, 26). When angels are mentioned in John's Gospel, none of them are associated with Gabriel, with one occurrence associated with a thunderous sound from heaven (12:29), two occurrences of *angels* (1:51; 20:12), and the final reference (5:3-4) being absent "from the earliest and best witnesses" (Metzger 1994:179). In other words, the argument

⁷⁹ See Ali 1997:148, n. 416 and 1416, n. 5438; Zayed 2012:63-65; Deedat 1997:15-16, 21, 23-35, 39, 60-61.

⁸⁰ See Ajjola 1984:73; M. M. Ali 2012: 16, n. 5, 17, 568; Hughes 1994:133, 177. According to William Muir (1861: 138), "It is not clear what ideas Mahomet at the first attached to 'the Spirit' here spoken of. They were perhaps indefinite...He had learned, and he believed, that Jesus was 'born of the Virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost;' and either knowingly rejecting the divinity of that blessed Person, or imperfectly informed as to His nature, he seems to have confounded Gabriel announcing the conception, with the Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary. The two expressions became, in the phraseology of the Coran, synonymous."

that the Holy Spirit (i.e. “Gabriel”) was already present and helping Jesus, and therefore could not be the Holy Spirit of Christian understanding, is simply incorrect and makes no hermeneutical or exegetical sense.

Second, the Muslim argument that *Paraclete* has been corrupted from *Periclytos* has absolutely zero textual-critical support. In the latest 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*⁸¹ and the United Bible Societies 5th edition of the *Greek New Testament*⁸², neither apparatuses present any textual variations in any of the cited references listed above whereby the reader is faced with a choice between *Paracletos* or *Periclytos*.⁸³ John uses *Paracletos* in each reference without question. There is no “corruption.” Moreover, of the references in the New Testament where *Paracletos* is used, all of which are by John, there is no variation apart from switching between cases at John 14:16 and 1 John 2:1 to *Paracleton*. One additional note regarding *Periclytos* is that it is not found anywhere in either the Old or New Testaments. If there were the possibility that the two terms could be confused with each other, one would think that the latter term would at least show up one time, as a *hapax legoumena*, in the biblical corpus. It does not, however. Only *Paracletos* does and that only three times plus a change of case twice. Therefore, the whole Muslim argument based on linguistics is specious, having no textual support whatsoever.

Third, what Jesus says about the *Paraclete* is only applicable to the Holy Spirit and not to Muhammad at all. Jesus told his followers that the *Paraclete* would be with them “forever.” As Morris (1995:577) puts it, “The Spirit once given will not be withdrawn.” When Muhammad died in 632 A.D., he was “withdrawn” not only from his followers, but the rest of the world as well. Jesus then said that the *Paraclete* would be “in” the disciples of Jesus, as Jesus was “in” them (Jn. 14:20). Even though Jesus was about to go to the Father (Jn. 14:12, 28; 16:10, 17), he would not leave or forsake them by sending the Holy Spirit as “another Helper,” who would “abide” with them by being “in” them, denoting the intimate relationship Jesus and the Spirit have with believers.⁸⁴ “Another” (Gr. *allos*) signifies “of like kind” (Robertson 1960: 5.252), since the Holy Spirit would act and speak in the same manner as Jesus, while “bearing witness” of (15:26) and glorifying Jesus (Jn. 16:13-14). Although Muhammad may have influenced thousands, he never resided in anyone, because he could not, much less did he testify or glorify Jesus. Human limitation prevented his residence and if he testified of or glorified Jesus, Muhammad’s status, as a prophet, would be negated, since he would be culpable of committing *shirk* or associating individuals or things with Allah.

Jesus also told his disciples that when the Spirit came, he would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance everything that Jesus said (14:26). The Spirit’s mission, in other words, was about Jesus and no one else. Muhammad’s focus, however, was not about Jesus, and when he spoke

⁸¹ See the apparatus on pages 352-53 and 355-56.

⁸² See the apparatus on pages 369-70 and 373-74.

⁸³ The same can be said of *TDNT* 1967:5.773-814, *NIDONTT* 1971:1.88-91, *EDNT* 1993:3.23-27, *BDAG* 1979:168, and *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* 1996:330-331, 333-334, where there is no confusion or conflict over John’s usage of *Paracletos* versus *Periclytos*.

⁸⁴ See *TDNT* 2.543; Carson 1991:502; Köstenberger 2004:436-37.

about Jesus, it was always in a polemical way to discount the testimony of those who did glorify Jesus. Finally, commensurate with the Spirit's testimony about and glorification of Jesus, Jesus said that the Spirit would guide his disciples into all truth. Interestingly, Jesus had earlier claimed to be "the way, *the truth*, and the life," and that no one would come to the Father, except through Jesus (Jn. 14:6). Nowhere in any of Muhammad's teachings, either in the Koran or the Hadith, does he make a remotely similar statement. Instead, according to his teachings Jesus is nothing more than a mere man⁸⁵, who died for no one⁸⁶, much less for anyone's sin, and who ultimately one day will return, defeat the anti-Christ⁸⁷, die, and be buried alongside Muhammad in a special grave the Muslims have already preserved for him.⁸⁸ Clearly, Muhammad is not the *Paraclete*.

4. MUHAMMAD'S JESUS

It is a common fallacy among the religiously aberrant to equate their view of Jesus with the Jesus of the Bible without ever doing an honest inquiry into what the Bible has to say about Jesus. When this occurs, the result is the creation of "another Jesus" that differs substantially from the biblical Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4). Muhammad and the Muslims are no exception in that respect. Although Muhammad and his followers have frequently written and spoken about Jesus, it is clear that certain biblical statements made by him and by those who followed him, especially concerning his sonship, are an affront to the Muslims and the image of Jesus they have created. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized, if a person's view of Jesus is distorted, skewed, or simply erroneous, the rest of that person's belief system about God, sin, salvation, revelation, humanity, *et cetera*, will be equally distorted, skewed, or simply erroneous. Muhammad and the Muslim rejection of Jesus' sonship take many different forms. For the sake of space, we will examine three basic arguments. Jesus was a creature. Jesus never called himself the Son of God. Allah can have no partners.

4.1 Jesus was a Creature

Consistent with the ancient Arian heresy is the Muslim belief that Jesus was a created being. "The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be': and he was" (Koran 3:59). Ali (1997:142, n. 398) commented, "In Allah's sight Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is. The greatness of Jesus arose from the Divine command 'Be': for after that he was – more than dust – a great spiritual leader and teacher." *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (2000:2.175) rationalized,

Therefore, He Who created Adam without a father or a mother is able to create 'Isa, as well, without a father. If the claim is made that 'Isa is Allah's son because he was created without a father, then the same claim befits Adam even more. However, since such a claim regarding Adam is obviously false, then making the same claim

⁸⁵ Koran 4:171; 5:75; 43:59.

⁸⁶ Koran 4:157; 5:110; Ismail 2008:30, 42, 60; Ajjola 1979:43, 48.

⁸⁷ *English Translation of Jami at-Tirmidhi* 2007:4.288, no. 2240; 292, no. 2244; 6.560; *English Translation of Sunan Abu Dawud* 2008 4.526, 527, no. 4321; 4.529, no. 4324; 5.508; *English Translation of Sahih Muslim* 2007:7.21.7373; 7.23.7381; 455.

⁸⁸ Dimashqi 2006:151-52; al-'Areefi 2010:308-310, 337, 353-354, 357, 359.

about 'Isa is even more false.

The Bible, however, argues that Jesus was not a created being, but was God's Word in the beginning of creation, who was with God, and was God (Jn. 1:1). That because Jesus is God, "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16). The concept "Son of God" has to do with Jesus' divine nature, which cannot be created, and has nothing to do with the naturalistic understanding of sonship and fatherhood that Muhammad, et al, wish to impose upon the Biblical description of both God and Jesus due to an intentional or unintentional ignorance of what Scripture has to say about both.⁸⁹

4.2 *Jesus never called himself the Son of God*

A second argument utilized by those who deny Jesus' Sonship is either an admission of agnosticism or simply duplicity. Jesus never claimed to be God's Son, so goes the argument, therefore, he could not be God's Son. Muslim apologist Reza Aslan (2006:136) recently repeated this line of reasoning when he wrote, "Nor, by the way, did Jesus call himself 'Son of God,' another title that others seem to have ascribed to him." Mufassir (1993: 8-9) argued similarly by appealing to the Koran as the final authority on the subject, rather than by making an objective appeal to the Bible. Citing Koran 5:78, 119-120, and 9:30, Mufassir wrote, "The Koran repeatedly emphasizes the fact that Jesus was a human being," and goes on to condemn the Trinity by citing Koran 4:171.

While it is conceded that several diverse characters all alluded to Jesus' Sonship, which included Satan (Matt. 4:3, 6; Lk. 4:3, 9), some demons (Matt. 8:29; Mk. 3:11; Lk. 4:41), a crowd of passers-by hurling insults at Jesus on the cross (Matt. 27:40), a Roman centurion (Matt. 27:54; Mk. 15:39), Mark (Mk. 1:1), Gabriel (Lk. 1:25), John the Baptist (Jn. 1:31), Nathaniel (Jn. 1:49), Martha (Jn. 11:27), John the Beloved (Jn. 20:31), and God the Father (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; 9:7; Lk. 3:22), Jesus also claimed to be God's Son. The following citations are evidence of that fact.

And the high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do you make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it *yourself*" (Matt. 26:63-64a).

He trusts in God; let Him deliver *Him* now, if He takes pleasure in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God' (Matt. 27:43).

And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I

⁸⁹ Another typical argument presented by deniers of Jesus' sonship or deity is that the Scriptures have somehow been "corrupted" by wily and nefarious scribes of the past (see Yahiya Emerick's pamphlet "Who is Jesus?" for a classic example of misrepresentation of the fact concerning the Bible). That argument, though, is invalid, once a full understanding of the process of textual transmission and the subsequent criticism of the texts is considered. Not only do the informed realize what is in the biblical corpus with better than 99% accuracy (Robertson 1925:21-22), if there is any question about an expression, translation, or interpretation of a specific passage, all one needs to do is consult the manuscript evidence. There is not one doctrinal belief effected by any variant found in either the Old or New Testaments. Not one! See Wallace 2011:20, 54-55; Bruce 2000 reprint: 19-20; Greenlee 1995:61; Black 1994:56; Geisler and Nix 1986:474; Barclay 1972:139; Kenyon 1958:55.

am” (Lk. 22:70).

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:17-18).

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live (Jn. 5:25).

If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? (Jn. 10:35-36).

But when Jesus heard it, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (Jn. 11:4).

The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God” (Jn. 19:7).

Between what others said about Jesus, combined with what Jesus said about himself, the biblical evidence is overwhelming. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God.

4.3 Allah Can Have No Partners

The essential doctrine that all of Islam is centred is known as *Tawheed* (sometimes spelled *Tauhid*) or the strict belief in one God. So essential is the belief that a person’s very salvation depends upon it. “The most fundamental ingredient of Islamic faith is belief in the oneness of God,” wrote Quasem (2011:31). “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him” (Koran 112:1-4). Advocating that anything or anyone might be associated with Allah is considered an act of *Shirk* or the most egregious sin that anyone could commit.⁹⁰ Therefore, conceding that Jesus is God’s Son is tantamount to concluding that Jesus shared God’s nature, which is blasphemy.⁹¹

Aside from the fact that the Bible makes it clear that Jesus is the Son of God, as seen above, several fallacies have been utilized by Muhammad and his followers to prevent them from accepting what the Bible, as well as Jesus, has said about the subject. First, while Christians believe it is true that there is only one God, nowhere in Scripture is belief in one God a prerequisite to salvation. Otherwise, demons could be redeemed, since they believe in one God as well (James 2:19). Yet, that is not possible, since the destiny of the demonic is eternal fire (Matt. 25:41), not eternal salvation.

Second, just because Jesus is God’s Son does not mean he is a “partner.” Since God cannot be parted, fragmented, or dismembered, and since Jesus’ Sonship denotes his divine nature, they both

⁹⁰ “Because the sin of *Shirk* denies the very purpose of man’s creation, it is to God the gravest of sins; the unforgiveable sin” (Philips 1990:27).

⁹¹ Ali 1997:40, n. 119.

share the same essence of being which makes them what God is. To discuss God as a being is different from discussing God as a person, since there is only one essence ascribed to be God, but three persons that manifest that essence. To confuse the two is to confuse the discussion and miss what is really being talked about when God is the subject.

Third, although Jesus was begotten does not necessitate a natural explanation, given that Jesus' coming to be was a supernatural event. Luke's Gospel tells us, "And the angel [Gabriel] answered and said to her [Mary], 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God'" (Lk. 1:35). The fallacy of ascribing the natural to the supernatural seems to be directly linked to the Muslim acceptance of the apocryphal "forgery," the *Gospel of Barnabas*.⁹² Therein, not only is Jesus not the Son of God, he is not the Messiah, nor was he God incarnate.⁹³ In fact, Muhammad is revealed to be the Messiah and Saviour of all humanity, as predicted by none other than Jesus himself!⁹⁴

Finally, Jesus taught that the most "egregious" sin that anyone could commit was to speak against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:32), not some misunderstanding about God's relationship with His Son. "Blasphemy" (Luke 12:10) against the Holy Spirit had to do with attributing the works of the Spirit to the works – and in this particular case the exorcising of a demon – of Satan. Since Muhammad and the Muslims are "required" to believe the Bible as they claim, they would know this.⁹⁵

4.4 Spirit of Anti-Christ

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 Jn. 4:15). John's statement is closely tied to an earlier one made by him, in the same chapter, where usage of the term "confession" is part of an overall testing of the spirits associated with false prophets who have rejected the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (vv. 1-2). "This denial," wrote Glenn Barker (Expositor's 1981:12.340), "makes them not only precursors of Gnosticism but also of Docetism." Islam is tainted with both Gnostic and Docetic points of view.⁹⁶ According to John, the person who refuses to "confess" that Jesus has come in the flesh, and by implication that Jesus is the Son of God, exhibits a spirit of anti-Christ (v. 3). It is a spirit that seemed to permeate society, as there were already "many" anti-Christ's walking about during John's day (1 Jn. 2:18). It is also a spirit

⁹² See Sale 1880:xii.

⁹³ See Lonsdale and Ragg's *The Gospel of Barnabas* (2010). Denial of Jesus' sonship (Chapters Intro, 53, 70, 93, 97, 138, 206, 220, 222). Denial of Jesus as Messiah (Chapters 42, 82, 96, 97, 191, 198, 206, 208). Denial of Jesus' deity (Chapters 198, 206).

⁹⁴ "Jesus answered: 'The name of the Messiah is admirable, for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in a celestial splendor. God said: 'Wait Mohammed; for thy sake I will to create paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creatures, whereof I make thee a present, insomuch that whoso shall bless thee shall be blessed, and who shall curse thee shall be accursed. When I shall send thee into the world I shall send thee as my messenger of salvation, and thy word shall be true, insomuch that heaven and earth shall fail, but thy faith shall never fail.' Mohammed is his blessed name.

"Then the crowd lifted up their voices, saying: 'O God send us thy messenger: O Mohammed, come quickly for the salvation of the world!'" (*The Gospel of Barnabas*, Chapter 97).

⁹⁵ See M. M. Ali 2012:147.

⁹⁶ See Schmidt 2013:81; Armstrong 1991:159; Rodinson 1971:159; Gibb 1955:85, 97, 101-102, 107.

that John concluded would lead a person to deny God the Father through a denial of Jesus as the Christ (1 Jn. 2:23). To recognize the identity of one was to recognize the identity of the other. To reject Jesus as the Christ or the Son was to reject God as the Father and that regardless of how sweet sounding the person might be or regardless of his official capacity. As F. F. Bruce (1970:105) wrote, “No matter how charming, how plausible, how eloquent the prophets in question may be, the test of their witness to Christ and His truth is the test by which they must be judged.”

The “witness” of Muhammad and the Muslims by now should be evident. Although they lauded Jesus in some respects as a great prophet, that is where the best of the accolades end. Muhammad and his followers outright rejected Jesus as the Son of God (Koran 3:59; 9:30; 43:59). To “confess” otherwise was an act of Shirk or blasphemy of the worst monstrosity (Koran 19:88-89). Instead of confessing Jesus’ sonship, which would have been an admission of his divine nature,⁹⁷ Muhammad chose to reject that confession and follow the understanding of anti-Christ thought. The only thing lacking in such a condemnation is the fact that Muhammad was not a part of the Christian community that “went out” from it (1 Jn. 2:19). Instead, “Muhammad leads his followers to the portal [of “glorious perfection and Divine majesty,” found only in Jesus], but he fails to open the door” (Zwemer 2010:247). He, in fact, put a lock on it, whereby neither he, nor they, could enter it.

5. CONCLUSION

After perusing through the data, we may now answer our three questions in the introduction and draw a definitive conclusion. First, does Muhammad’s theology comport with either Old or New Testament theology? The answer is absolutely not. Yahweh is not Allah, Allah is not Yahweh, when biblical, and Islamic definitions are understood, and that despite the crossover in terminology whereby some Arabic Jews and Christians used the term Allah when speaking about God.

Second, is Muhammad the prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18? The answer is absolutely not. Muhammad’s occultic inclination excludes him from positive association with that prophet. Instead, given the testimony of Jesus and careful exegesis of the relevant biblical texts, “the Prophet” whom Moses spoke was Jesus himself.

Third, who did Muhammad believe Jesus to be? Was he God’s Son, incarnate in the flesh, or a mere man? According to Muhammad and his followers, Jesus was nothing more than a mere man and not the Son of God at all. Such a confession, however, was not only antithetical to Jesus’ confession, but the confession of others as well, whether they were Christian and/or non-Christian.

Therefore, based on the evidence, Muhammad was not a prophet of God after the order of the biblical prophets. Instead, based upon what he believed about himself, as well as what he believed about the biblical prophets, which included Jesus, coupled with Islamic history and legend spoken about Muhammad in contrast to the warnings issued in both the Old and New Testaments, Muhammad does not fit the description of a true biblical prophet.

⁹⁷ See Barth 2010 reprint:IV.2.42-ff., 69-ff.; Oden 2006: 2.58; Frame 2002:658, 660; Baker 1996:411; 660; Grudem 1994:547; Chafer 1993:1.382-ff.; Hodge 1977 reprint:1.471; Cullmann 1963:270; Calvin 1960:1.149; Berkhof 1941:91-92.

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Advancing Native Missions

A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC RESPONSE TO THE CLAIM OF “PROPHET” BY THE FOUNDERS OF ISLAM AND MORMONISM, MUHAMMAD AND JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

ARTICLE III: JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

ABSTRACT

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, better known as the Mormon Church, adamantly believes that its founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. was a prophet called of God. He not only allegedly helped to restore New Testament Christianity to its original form, but he received additional revelations and prophecies to assist in bringing the Christian Church to maturity. The entire Mormon structure stands or falls with the truthfulness or falseness of Joseph Smith’s claims to be a prophet. This article is in response to those stated claims. Smith believed in multiple gods, with Heavenly Father being an exalted human being from another planet. He also taught that his “spirit children,” whom he conceived with at least one goddess wife, could become gods and goddesses too, if they would only comply with certain laws and ordinances. An examination of his failed prophecy concerning the building of the Independence, Missouri, Mormon Temple in 1832, as well as his failed Civil War prophecy, demonstrated his inability to know what the future held, but also that God was not in the midst of his forecasts. If anyone was to be acknowledged as a biblical prophet of God, that prophet’s theology and ability to know the future had to be consistent with those who went before him. Neither Joseph Smith’s theology, nor his prophetic prowess, were consistent. Therefore, he cannot rightly be aligned with those who were recognized as biblical prophets, who were called by God to act as His spokespersons.

1. INTRODUCTION

Without Joseph Smith, Jr. (hereafter Joseph Smith) there would be no Mormonism.⁹⁸ Everything that Mormonism embodies is a reflection of the personality of its founding prophet. Despite the biblical evidence to the contrary, the Mormon faithful argues that the principles of Mormonism extend back to the days of Adam, Moses, and Jesus, all of whom were Mormons, as those former Mormon prophets put into practice Mormon beliefs.⁹⁹ To Mormons, Joseph Smith was simply the

⁹⁸ “He did organize the ‘Mormon’ Church. And he was undoubtedly the soul of the movement during the first fourteen years of its existence” (Evans 1930:308). “Joseph Smith is the key figure in the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days...Every doctrine, organization, movement, and achievement of the Latter-day Saints must be attributed directly or indirectly to the latter-day Prophet” (Widtsoe 1951:322).

⁹⁹ *TPJS* 1976:59-61; Alma 46:13, 15; 48:10 cf. Acts 11:26.

most significant of all of God’s prophets.¹⁰⁰ Although Joseph Smith was admittedly a mere man, still he was, according to his followers, the exemplar for humanity to follow who delivered a divine message of warning, glad tidings, and restoration. With the coming of Joseph Smith is the coming of God’s revelation in the form of a book: the Book of Mormon. It was God’s continuing revelation to humankind designed to clarify and correct what others had complicated and corrupted in texts such as the Bible.¹⁰¹ Joseph Smith, in other words, became to his followers God’s intimate spokesman, revelator, and visionary, “the foremost in the company of historical prophets,” doing what no other man in human history had ever done, namely reveal God’s final word and unify humanity in worship of the one God under one roof, the Mormon Church.¹⁰² Failure to recognize Joseph Smith as God’s most significant modern-day prophet, seer, and revelator could only result in personal damnation.¹⁰³ What follows concerning his theology, prophetic swagger, and views about Jesus are what made him attractive to those who called him “Prophet.”

2. JOSEPH SMITH’S THEOLOGY

As observed in the first two articles in the trilogy on the claim of prophet by the founders of Islam and Mormonism,¹⁰⁴ in order for a person to be a prophet of God entailed a correct theological view of God, as guided by God’s revelation, the Bible. “Latter-day” revelation, therefore, must be corroborated by previous revelation that is only recorded in the Bible to ensure doctrinal and prophetic consistency. Any aberration of or straying from said revelation, whereby the “prophet” led people to follow other gods or to engage in false prophetic pronouncements is, according to Biblical statements, a clear indication that that prophet was not of God (Deut. 13:1-5, 18:22 cf. Matt. 7:15-ff.).

To determine whether or not Joseph Smith was a biblical prophet, it must be asked whether his theology was consistent with what God already revealed about himself as an omnipotent, omniscient, infinite being of self-existence. The question must also be asked about the accuracy of Smith at forecasting the future. Did all of Smith’s predictions come true? Finally, were Smith’s views about Jesus Christ consistent with what the Bible has revealed about him? Smith confessed that Jesus was God’s son: but God’s son in what way? No better source can be found to begin to answer these questions, than Smith’s own words found in his most famous sermon delivered in memorial honour of Mormon member, King Follett.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3; Smith 1980:6.408-409).

¹⁰¹ *Gospel Principles* 2009:46.

¹⁰² Widtsoe 1951:288.

¹⁰³ Joseph Fielding Smith [1954]:1:189-90.

¹⁰⁴ This is the third article on the question whether the founders of Islam and Mormonism, Muhammad and Joseph Smith, could be regarded as the final Biblical prophet, as they and their followers claim.

¹⁰⁵ What makes The King Follett Discourse so famous is that Joseph Smith not only delivered it during General Conference, or during a time when Mormon Church leaders are thought to deliver inspired messages directly from the Holy Ghost (Utchtdorf 2011:4; TLP 2010:71; Benson 1988:335), but “because of its comprehensive doctrinal teachings” (EM 1992:2.791), especially as they relate to the person of God.

2.1. Inspirational Authority

In his sermon in honour of King Follett, a brief mention is made about the source of Smith's authority. When Joseph Smith orated to an estimated 20,000 friends, family, and acquaintances of the deceased King Follett, Smith asserted that his words were "inspired by the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁶ Although inspiration is analogous to revelation in Mormonism and is a gift to be exercised as a "right" by every Mormon,¹⁰⁷ it is understood differently by most orthodox Christians.¹⁰⁸ To a Mormon, Heavenly Father has spoken, whether to individual members of the Mormon Church or more importantly to the Mormon leadership! Therefore, His words are established and that without the possibility of alteration or appeal, unless the previous claims of anyone who inspirationally spoke or wrote are contradicted. And no one spoke or wrote with more established authority about Mormon history and belief than did Joseph Smith.

According to Mormon teaching, to receive inspiration (direct revelation) is to receive the Holy Spirit; to reject inspiration is to sin against the Holy Spirit, which is essentially impossible for a Mormon to do, for that would require a knowledge greater than the assurance the Holy Spirit provides when he gives a revelation.¹⁰⁹ So, unless the Holy Spirit changed his mind when he revealed to Joseph Smith information regarding the person and attributes of God, thereby making the Spirit fickle, what Smith proclaimed about God during King Follett's funeral (which was also during General Conference on April 7, 1844) is as true and special today as it was then.

2.2. God's Creation

When discussing God's creation in the context of whom or what God is from the Mormon perspective, the emphasis is not on his creative acts, but on how he became God. In fact, according to Mormon teachings, God created nothing, nor could he, since all the "elements" that comprise existence already existed eternally alongside God, including the "intelligences" that would become humanity (D&C 93:29, 33).¹¹⁰ According to Joseph Smith, God was not always God. God became

¹⁰⁶ Smith 1980:6.302, 312. The deceased member's first name was actually "King."

¹⁰⁷ *EM* 1992:2.684; McConkie 1966:383.

¹⁰⁸ Most Orthodox Christians understand Scripture to be inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), not the writers of Scripture (Frame 2010:82, 140-ff.; Gaussen 2007:28-33; White 2004:30-31; Geisler 2002:1.235-36, 239-41; Gruden 1994:74-75; Warfield 1948: 34-ff., 296; Strong 1907:197).

¹⁰⁹ Kimball 1969:123.

¹¹⁰ "And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all" (Abr. 3:19)...I dwell in the midst of them all...for I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou has seen" (Abr. 3:21).

There is some discrepancy, though, over what the Mormon leadership means by "intelligence," much less the "more intelligent" of the intelligences (Abr. 3:19). Joseph Smith equated intelligence with the mind of man (*TPJS* 1976:353), but also revealed that the intelligences were spirits that were "co-equal" with God (*TPJS* 1976:354). B. H. Roberts (2013:175) explained, "Spirits are uncreated intelligences inhabiting spiritual bodies; while 'intelligences,' pure and simple, are intelligent entities, but unembodied in either spirit bodies or bodies of flesh and bone." John A. Widtsoe (*HotR* 1944:192) was more confused and abstract in his explanation of intelligences by stating, "Intelligence is compounded of knowledge and love, the latter sometimes called Wisdom...Intelligence is the glory of man also."

God. At the funeral, Smith told his followers:

God himself, was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make himself visible, – I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form – like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.¹¹¹

God was and is a human being, in other words, who was reformed, just as Adam was; who through the secretive process of exaltation became a god.¹¹² Even though he achieved such a lofty status, those privileged to stand in his presence may commune with him, as could any human being. God is special, but not so special as to be different from all other reformed beings. Some Mormon leaders would later argue that God is of the very same species or race as humanity.¹¹³ He was merely more “intelligent” than all the rest and advanced more quickly than they did. Although humans were naturally reformed in God’s image through an act of procreation on his part, thereby becoming “Avatars of God,”¹¹⁴ God is also reformed in man’s imagination, as he shares in the very

Later, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie (1966:387) interpreted the intelligences to be “the spirit children of the Eternal Father,” who were not created, since “God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all” (*TPJS* 1976:354), but were combined with all the eternal elements to comprise humans bodies via natural sexual copulation between Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother (See Widtsoe 1915:64-65; *EM* 1992:2.961).

Intelligence(s), however, are nothing new, as even Plato discussed them, which is probably why Mormon philosopher Sterling McMurrin (2000:29) wrote, “As a constructor or artisan God, not entirely unlike Plato’s demiurge of the *Timaeus*, the Mormon deity informs the continuing processes of reality and determines the world’s configurations, but he is not the creator of the most ultimate constituents of the world, either the fundamental material entities or the space and time that locate them... In any case, it is entirely evident that it is a basic article of Mormon theology that God is related to a world environment for the being of which he is not the ultimate ground and by which he therefore is in some sense conditioned. This means that God is a being among beings rather than being as such or the ground of being, and that he is therefore finite rather than absolute.” See also Widtsoe 1951:148-49; *HotR* 1944:199-200; *GCR* Oct. 1907:51; Apr. 1904:17.

Interestingly, Mormon apologists frequently accuse Christians of adopting and implementing Greek and pagan sources to establish their doctrines, when it is clear from the preceding that that is exactly what Joseph Smith and subsequent Mormon apologists have done (Roberts 2013:459-61; 1998:116-18; Robinson 1991:40; Hopkins 1988:19-ff.).

¹¹¹ Smith 1980:6.305.

¹¹² “Exaltation” is a Mormon-specific term used to denote those who have attained “true” salvation, whereby the faithful and obedient Mormon has satisfied all the legal requirements necessary to become a god in the Celestial Kingdom. See D&C 76:52-58; 93:18-20, 27; 132:17, 22, 29, 37, 49; McConkie and Millet 1996:336-37; *EM* 1992:4.1674; Talmage 1984:424; *TSWK* 1982:51-53; *DBY* 1978:21, 392; Cannon 1974:1.102, 107, 111-12, 154, 232-33; Clark 1971:5.31; McConkie 1985:337; 1982:632, 644; 1981:19, 353; 1966:231, 237, 256-58, 321, 395, 404, 451, 480, 546, 577, 669-70; Smith [1955]: 2.47-48; Snow 1899:530.

¹¹³ See Roberts 2013:176, 505-506, 536-37; 1998:165, 222, 255; Millet 2005:144; *EM* 1992:1.272-73, 2.549; Matthews 1990:190; McConkie 1981:305; 1966:466, 744; Berrett 1964; Smith 1954:1.103, 139; Widtsoe 1915:27, 61; *GCR* Oct. 1910:37; Oct. 1965:58; Oct. 1968:132, Oct. 1969:18; *JD* 4.217; 19:323.

¹¹⁴ See B. H. Roberts, “Joseph Smith’s Doctrines Vindicated,” *Improvement Era*, March 1910, 432-440, specifically

same image and likeness as they do. Such genetic affinities would later manifest themselves in Joseph Smith's "First Vision," whereby Jesus and his Father appear as identical twins in Mormon artistic depictions. But, who exactly reformed the most intelligent intelligence into a man? Joseph Smith does not tell the reader, even though he promised during his discourse, "I will show it from the Bible" how "God came to be God."

Nowhere in the Bible does God claim to be an "exalted man," to have been a man, much less could he be a reformed being. Instead, the observant Bible reader is confronted with statements like those found in Numbers 23:19 and John 4:24, which explicitly tells him or her that "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent" and "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." In the former example, God's immutability is contrasted with man's corrupted nature, whereby lying is a distinct human possibility at any moment. If God were a man, he would be a predisposed to lie like a man (Rom. 3:4). Since God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18), which would be a denial of himself (2 Tim. 2:13), then he cannot be a man either. In the latter example, Jesus is speaking emphatically about God's ontological makeup: *πνεῦμα ὁ θεός*. While some translations have included the indefinite article before *πνεῦμα* (KJV, ASV, Douay-Rheims), rendering the translation "God is [a] spirit," that is not the best way to understand Jesus' focus. God is not being compared to other spirits or gods.¹¹⁵ Since God is spiritual by nature and in order to worship him truly (cf. Isa. 31:3), it requires the worshiper to approach God spiritually or "the need for complete sincerity and complete reality."¹¹⁶

Of course, some Mormon faithful frequently appeal to the person of Jesus being a man as evidence that God the Father is a man as well.¹¹⁷ Such an appeal, though, is fallacious at best, since it fails to take into account the fact that Jesus "became flesh" (Jn. 1:14) for the specific purpose of humbling himself to die on a Roman cross for the redemption of humanity (Phil. 2:7-8 cf. Rom. 3:24-25; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:15). The flesh, in other words, was not an original aspect of Jesus' nature. It was inherited (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:7). What is additionally fallacious and unfortunate is that Joseph Smith also advocated his own brand of Patripassianism in his effort to equate, physically, God the Father with Jesus.¹¹⁸ Joseph proclaimed at the funeral:

The scriptures inform us that Jesus said, as the Father hath power in himself, even so hath the Son power – to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious – in a manner to lay down his body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you

page 432, where the first point in his piece is entitled "Men the Avatars of God." This same article would later appear in his *Defense of the Faith and the Saints* (Vol. II, 623-639), where his main argument was that since secular scientists, university professors, and aberrant religious movements (Christian Science, New Thought, and Swedenborgianism) were all coming to the same conclusions, which is "a pluralistic panpsychic view of the universe," then Joseph Smith's teaching was vindicated.

¹¹⁵ See Wallace 1996: 270; Carson 1991: 225.

¹¹⁶ Morris 1995: 239; Köstenberger 2004: 157.

¹¹⁷ See D&C 130:22; Alma 18:26-28, 22:9-11 cf. Robinson 1991: 79-81; McConkie [1981]: 1.82, 730, 853, [1973]: 3.136, 138; 1979: 21; 1966: 288.

¹¹⁸ See Bavink 1997 reprint: 287-88; Brown 1988: 85; Kelly 1978: 120; Pelikan 1971: 179-80 for definitions and discussions about Patripassianism.

going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again.¹¹⁹

Worse yet, Smith believed that there were, are, and will be future gods on other earths who will repeat what both God and Jesus had done previously, which ultimately means that Jesus was not telling the truth when he said, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). The sin debt had not been paid in full, meaning that the dualistic struggle between good and evil would continue. Joseph Smith’s theology, if true, not only reduced God to the level of a creature, and a reformed one at that, it completely destroys any real hope that humanity might have for eternal life after death.

2.3. *God’s Conversion*

Being that Joseph Smith believed that God did exist, even though “God is an exalted man,” it must be asked how that man converted into a god. “We have imagined,” argued Smith, “and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil, so that you may see.” In Gnostic-like fashion, Smith rejected God’s immutability and unraveled the “secret” of theosis or the deification of humanity. Of course, Smith’s idea of theosis and orthodox Christianity’s understanding of the same are in different universes. Whereas Smith envisioned an ontological transformation of humans into gods, the Christian view sees humankind becoming like God through the restoration of the image of God lost at the fall.¹²⁰ Again, God was special, according to Smith, but not so special as to distinguish himself from all other entities in existence, except, as noted above, by a few degrees of intelligence. Deity was not reserved only for the God whom Joseph understood him to be. Deity was an inherent part of all of humanity. It was incumbent upon humanity to realize its divine potential.

According to Smith, godhood was something to be “learned,” as all of the gods and goddesses have done from eternity past. “By going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power” (Smith 1980:306). Becoming a god was a possibility for everyone! The key to exaltation unto godhood is to “learn” the “principles of the gospel” and then put them into practice. As a person learns to climb a ladder, to use Smith’s analogy, so it is when becoming a god. All one had to do was take one step, one rung, at a time. One caveat Smith issued is that such progress is not learned exclusively in this life, but includes education “beyond the grave” (Smith 1980:307). Even God himself, as a man, lived on another earth prior to his glorious self-transformation. How long the process took, or would take others, Smith does not divulge. What is assured is that Jesus, Heavenly Father, and all the fathers preceding them, ad infinitum, all patiently attained their divine statuses. Therefore, those listening to the voice of Joseph Smith can rest assured that they can do the same. It is all in the Bible. Smith simply never showed where it was to be found.

What the Bible does say about doctrines such as God’s evolution, or the evolution of man unto

¹¹⁹ Smith 1980:6.305.

¹²⁰ See James White’s (1997:207-227) precise rebuttal of LDS abuse of Christian sources used to defend theosis. See also Stavropoulos 2003:183-ff.; Rakestraw 1997:261.

godhood, is completely contrary to Smith's revelation, because God has not evolved or "progressed" at all. Instead, God is immutable or does not change (Ps. 102:26-28; Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17).¹²¹ God's essence necessarily remains the same; otherwise, the discussion is about something other than God.¹²² "The divine immutability," however, "should not be understood as implying immobility, as if there were no movement in God," wrote Berkhof (1991 reprint:59). God is active in his creation, as it changes, and men or women repent or harden their hearts toward God. Also, God's immutability works perfectly with all of the rest of his divine attributes – aseity, eternity, love, omniscience, infinity, etc., – which means that there is no increase or decrease in any of them as well.¹²³ To say that God's infinite essence, which would include his perfection,¹²⁴ for example, is changeable makes no sense. It would be the equivalent of arguing that there is something infinitely more perfect than God's infinite perfection, which he has not attained. If God is not absolutely and infinitely perfect, then he is not God. He is a creature, after the order of Joseph Smith's Mormonism, at best, or an idol at worst.¹²⁵

2.4. *God's Company*

Whenever there is a denial of basic biblical truth regarding the person of God, it is inevitable that, before long, God will have competition from all of the gods that fallen humanity has created to either rival or succeed him. Such is the case with Joseph Smith's "revelation" that God is an exalted man who evolved unto deity. Such is the case that Smith argued was a possibility for all human beings. Whereas at one time that Smith advocated at least a quasi-monotheistic view of God (Alma 11:28-29; 14:5; Moses 1:6), later "revelation" found in the King Follett Discourse shows Smith's departure from his previous theological stance unto henotheism (Smith 1980:6.474), which received its impetus from polytheism. Not only are there previous humans who have "learned how to become gods," there was a "grand council" of gods already in existence prior to the reformation of the elements that would become the constituents of the reformation (Smith 1980:6.307-8). Eleven days prior to Smith's death, he presented an all-out assault on monotheism by proclaiming, "I will preach on the plurality of Gods" and "the doctrine of a plurality of Gods is as prominent in the Bible as any other doctrine. It is all over the face of the Bible. It stands beyond the power of controversy. A wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein" (Smith 1980:6.474). What is unfortunate is that he completely misrepresented the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, as well as the Apostle Paul, in his effort to validate his argument.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Bavink [2004]:2.153-59; Frame 2002:559-61; Horton 2002:330; Grudem 1994:163-64; Ware 1986:432-34; 1985:179-ff.

¹²² Frame 2002:568.

¹²³ Hodge 1997 reprint:1.390; Berkhof 1991 reprint:58; Henry 1999:5.286-ff.

¹²⁴ Bavink [2004]:2.160.

¹²⁵ Bavink (1997 reprint:149) wrote, "Nevertheless the doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in him alone, for only he is pure being and no [sic] becoming."

¹²⁶ Although "Paul's letters do not present a developed doctrine of the Trinity or a lengthy explanation of the interrelationships in the Godhead, but in predicating divinity of Father, Son and Spirit, Paul provided the raw data for later Christian trinitarianism" (Hawthorne 1993:103-104).

The Bible makes it perfectly clear that God has no company, let alone a “council of gods,” of which he is a part, or that he consults with to make decisions about his creation. There is only one true God, there were none formed either before or after him (Isa. 43:10), and he knows of none besides him (Isa. 44:8).¹²⁷ Even though God exists in trinity that in no way implies a plurality of gods, whereby through legalistic effort and pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps a finite man can become an infinite god.¹²⁸ God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Ps. 102:25-27; Mal. 3:1; Rom. 1:23; Jam. 1:17). He has not evolved, nor has he progressed unto his station of existence. “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14 cf. Jn. 8:58) is an emphatic reminder of God’s constancy. Had God changed or “progressed,” as Joseph Smith argued, then there would have been a time when God did not exist. And if there were a time when God did not exist, then nothing would exist, including Joseph Smith or time.

3. JOSEPH’S SMITH’S PROPHECIES

To reiterate, the role of the biblical prophet called by God was to (1) proclaim sound doctrine consistent with God’s inspired revelation, and (2) predict future events relative to the nation of Israel or God’s called-out assembly, the church. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 and 18:14-22 serve as general guidelines for God’s people to discern whether or not anyone speaking in the name of the Lord was a prophet of God or whether that person was speaking “presumptuously.” Since Joseph Smith’s theological views deviate radically from the Bible as seen above (see point 2), it should not come as a surprise that his attempts at prophesying the future are equally deviant. Although Joseph Smith uttered or wrote numerous prophecies, only two will be examined here to demonstrate his deficiency: the Independence, Missouri Temple prophecy and his Civil War prophecy.

3.1. *Independence, Missouri Temple Prophecy*

Much ink has been spilled by both advocates and opponents of Mormonism in respect to Joseph Smith’s prophecy about a Temple being built in Independence, Missouri during the days in which he lived. The prophecy itself is found in Doctrine & Covenants 84:1-5 and reads,

(1) A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and six elders, as they united their hearts and lifted their voices on high. (2) Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem. (3) Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased.

¹²⁷ Henry (1999:5.169) wrote, “The Bible is monotheistic from core to circumference. From its beginnings Christianity is no less irreducibly monotheistic than Judaism. It unwaveringly joins the Old Testament in insisting that the living God reveals himself as the one and only God.”

¹²⁸ Spencer W. Kimball (1982:28), “Man can transform himself and he must. Man has in himself the seeds of godhood, which can germinate and grow and develop. As the acorn becomes the oak, the mortal man becomes a god. It is within his power to lift himself by his very bootstraps from the plane on which he finds himself to the plane he should be. It may be a long, hard lift with many obstacles, but it is a real possibility” [emphasis added].

(4) Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. (5) For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house.

The major problem with the whole Independence, Missouri temple prophecy is that it simply cannot be fulfilled. The key to understanding this failed prophecy centers in the phrase “this generation.” Joseph Smith and key contemporary Mormon General Authorities all believed that “this generation” pertained to those living at the time when Smith uttered the prophecy.¹²⁹ It was to be a time of heightened expectation and joy that the Mormons would soon build, or return to build, God’s kingdom on earth, starting with the Temple, and the return of Jesus to rule there. Mormon President George Q. Cannon (JD:10:344) stated in 1864, “The day is near when a Temple shall be reared in the Center Stake of Zion, and the Lord has said his glory shall rest on that House *in this generation*, that is *in the generation in which the revelation was given, which is upwards of thirty years ago*” [emphasis added]. Joseph Smith’s original prophecy concerning the building of the Independence Temple was given in 1832. Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt (JD:15:365) reasoned, “When the Temple is built the sons of the two Priesthoods...will enter into that Temple *in this generation, or in the generation that was living in 1832*...and he will purify the sons of Moses and of Aaron, until they shall be prepared to offer in that Temple an offering that shall be acceptable in the sight of the Lord” [emphasis added]. Lorenzo Snow repeatedly argued that the Temple would be built by those listening to his voice. During General Conference, which is a particularly important time of supposed divine revelation that Mormon authorities dispense to the faithful, Snow would share that,

Now the time is fast approaching when a large portion of the people that I am now addressing will go back to Jackson county. *A great many people that are now dwelling in the State of Utah will have this privilege...a large portion of the Latter-day Saints that now dwell in these valleys will go back to Jackson county to build a holy city to the Lord*, as was decreed by Jehovah and revealed through Joseph Smith [emphasis added].¹³⁰

Of course, when the day came and went without fulfillment of the prophecy, several Mormons, including Joseph Smith, offered what they thought were plausible explanations why. Smith (1980:2:129) cited persecution by Jackson county residents. Later, Joseph Fielding Smith (1974:197) wrote that only “after tribulation, and after the nations have been punished for their sins” would the Temple and Zion be built leading to Jesus’ return. Bruce R. McConkie would proffer two explanations, one already cited above, namely sinners thwarting God’s plans and then imperfect Saints.¹³¹

The problems with the explanations or excuses for this prophecy that did not come to pass is that

¹²⁹ See D&C 57:2-3; Smith 1980:1.189, 287-88; Roberts 1965:1.254, 261, 310n9, 5.532-33, 6.430.

¹³⁰ GCR October 1900:61. See also GCR April 1898:61 Lorenzo Snow’s, “Notable Reunion of Weber Stake,” *The Deseret Evening News*, June 15, 1901.

¹³¹ McConkie 1982:281; 1985:602.

they do not make sense if the Mormons believed that God and Jesus are omnipotent, superior beings that they claimed them to be. If sinners can halt God's plans so easily, then just what kind of God is God? Moreover, if God must punish the wicked first, before he may proceed with his plans to build the Temple, then how does that comport with the biblical witness that the Jerusalem Temple will already be rebuilt at the time the antichrist takes his seat in the Temple when Jesus returns (2 Thess. 2:1-4)? Finally, if Sainthood is a necessary prerequisite for Jesus' return, and it is believed to be a purely human endeavor to merit God's grace (2 Nephi 25:23), then the question must be asked: Is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ even possible?¹³² Clearly, if the Mormon reasons for the delay in building the Temple are true, then Jesus cannot be the sovereign King of kings and Lords of lords. Fallen human beings are.

3.2. The Civil War Prophecy

All eight verses of Doctrine and Covenants 87 cover Joseph Smith's lauded Civil War prophecy. Given on December 25, 1832, Smith informed his followers that the state of South Carolina would rebel against the Union, which would result "in the death and misery of many souls." While it is true that South Carolina led the way in attempting to secede from the Union, Smith failed to provide any actual reasons for the secession, but did include many details that turned out to be patently false. At issue was the subject of slavery, the inclusion of Kansas and Nebraska as new states, and whether either should be slave states in lieu of the Compromise of 1820 that set the limits on slavery in the old Louisiana territory based on the 36° 30' parallel. No new states, excluding the state of Missouri, could become a slave state above that line. When settlers in Kansas engaged in their own precursor to "Civil War" over slavery and Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, the more formal Civil War was on, which began with several southern states seceding from the Union, beginning with South Carolina. Joseph Smith predicted none of these events.

Instead, Smith proffered "the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations," "Great Britain" and "other nations" would become involved, after being called upon by the southern states. Smith continued by revealing, "after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war." Any leftovers would also be marshaled "and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation." During or after the time of bloodshed "the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations." Finally, Smith encouraged the listeners to "stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, said the Lord."

It does not take much reflection to notice the falsity of the whole prophecy, of which it would only

¹³² "In our journey toward eternal life, purity must be our constant aim. To walk and talk with God, to serve with God, to follow his example and become as a god, we must attain perfection. In his presence there can be no guile, no wickedness, no transgression. In numerous scriptures he has made it clear that all worldliness, evil and weakness must be dropped before we can ascend unto 'the hill of the Lord'" (Kimball 1969:26).

take one false detail to disqualify Joseph Smith as a prophet of God. First, war was not “poured out on all nations” (87:2-3, 6) when the Civil War broke out. The four-year conflict was confined only to the United States and none else. Second, while those in the South may have wished for outside intervention, and especially from Great Britain, to come to its aid (87:3), so did those in the North. That said, no foreign government came to the aid of either and Great Britain made it a point to remain “neutral” concerning the whole affair, even though it sympathized with the South’s cause.¹³³ Third, while there were sporadic backlashes by slaves against their southern slave owners, none of them materialized to the degree that Smith projected. If anything, the southern slave owners grew paranoid after rejecting all arguments to emancipate their slaves due to all the incendiary propaganda being published.¹³⁴ “Few slave rebellions were systematically planned, and most were merely spontaneous and quite short-lived disturbances by small groups of slaves.”¹³⁵ In fact, very few black men were a part of the Civil War effort, with only about 10% of the Union forces consisting of black men¹³⁶ – and that after Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act legalizing Negro enlistment and participation – and absolutely zero participation in the Confederate Army, since “Black men were not legally allowed to serve as combat soldiers... they were cooks, teamsters, and manual laborers.”¹³⁷ Fourth, while a few nations were effected by the final outcome of the Civil War, those effects were not dire (87:6). Ultimately, Smith called for an end of the world, which did not happen.¹³⁸ The Lord Jesus did not return, as is obvious by a casual perusal through contemporary news headlines and a comparison with biblical revelation that describes Jesus’ return (Matt. 24:27, 30; Rev. 19:11-ff.). Conversely, when the Civil War ended, slavery was abolished, the United States was born anew, and nations like Great Britain were democratically strengthened. In short, Joseph Smith’s Civil War prophecy was an abject failure; projecting much, but falling far short of realization.

4. JOSEPH SMITH’S JESUS

Joseph Smith believed in a Jesus. Joseph Smith’s Jesus was a good man, a saviour, and a son of a god. Eventually, Joseph Smith’s Jesus became a god himself, which is something he saw his father do, as was explained earlier. According to Mormon biographers (*TPC* 2007: 45), Joseph Smith “was blessed to enjoy a personal knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ and to understand His role as the Redeemer of the world.” But, Joseph Smith’s Jesus was “another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4).

¹³³ See Megan Gambino, “Britain and the American Civil War,” *Smithsonian*, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-unknown-contributions-of-brits-in-the-american-civil-war-2478471/> [accessed March 16, 2017].

¹³⁴ See Bailey and Kennedy 1987:361-62.

¹³⁵ See “Slave rebellions,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/slave-rebellions> [accessed March 16, 2017]

¹³⁶ See Freeman, Elsie, Wynell Burroughs Schamel, and Jean West, “The Fight for Equal Rights: A Recruiting Poster for Black Soldiers in the Civil War” *Social Education* 56, 2 (February 1992):118-120. [Revised and updated in 1999 by Budge Weidman] as “Black Soldier in the Civil War,” *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war> [accessed March 16, 2017]

¹³⁷ Sam Smith, “Black Confederates: Truth and Legend,” *Civil War Trust*, <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/untold-stories/black-confederates.html> [accessed March 16, 2017]

¹³⁸ See the footnote in both the online version of *Doctrine and Covenants* at 87:6, as well as the hardcopy 1981 edition, where “end of all nations” has been interpreted to mean “World, End of.”

Previously, it was pointed out Joseph Smith argued that God was a “once a man like us” and “dwelt on an earth” somewhere in the universe. He is now an “exalted man,” but still resides somewhere in that same universe, “nigh unto Kolob,” which is a star near his throne (Abr. 3:9). Joseph Smith’s Jesus is the “literal” son of that exalted man who would become a god and would sire Jesus’ into existence as a spirit child with the aid of a goddess whom Mormons refer to as Heavenly Mother.¹³⁹ Since all human beings share a fallen nature, whereby they perpetually sin and are in need of forgiveness and redemption (2 Chr. 6:36; Ps. 143:2; Rom. 3:23; 5:12), then in order for the “exalted man” to have been truly “like us,” Jesus perpetually sinned and was in need of forgiveness and redemption as well. According to Joseph Smith, Jesus did not receive a “fulness” at time of his earthly birth, meaning he was not always deity (D&C 93:12-14, 27).¹⁴⁰ He came into the world with the taint of sin, just as his father did on another earth. Jesus was a mere man and merited his deified status one-step at a time, as one ascends a ladder. Jesus, therefore, was in need of forgiveness and salvation too, and that despite claims that he kept every law.¹⁴¹ Who Jesus’ saviour was, no one has ever said. Perhaps it was Satan. After all, Satan is Jesus’ “spirit brother”¹⁴² and is thought to have been interested in, and apparently capable of implementing, the salvation of humanity (Moses 4:1), until his plan of salvation was rejected in favor of Jesus’ plan (Abr. 3:27-28).

Hebrews 13:8 tells us, though, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever.” What is essentially true about Jesus in eternity past will be true about Jesus now and in eternity future. Since he is the Son of God by nature and not through a biologically procreative act between his father and his sister, he shared in all the same attributes as God and did not progress from a nebulous existence unto godhood. As God, he created all things – including Satan – without which nothing would exist (Jn. 1:3 cf. Isa. 66:2; Rom. 4:17). All things and beings in the finite universe are contingent upon him and his infinite power to hold them together (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). In him are the words and works of life, without which there is no life (Jn. 6:63, 68). When he emptied himself of the prerogative to act as God and took on the human nature (Phil. 2:6-7), he did not change his essential being as God. As the Son of Man, he bridged the gap between God and man; a chasm that was created when man sinned against God and distorted the image in which man had been created at the beginning. Jesus, as the Son of Man, his favorite self-designation, is the image that God intended for man at creation, and manifests the divine authority necessary to recreate the “new man,” whereby God and man are reconciled in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-20; Rom. 5:10).

¹³⁹ Ballard 2016:26, 29; Marriott 2016:11-12; Holland 2015:50; *EoJST* 1997:436; *TLS* 1996:7, 191; McConkie and Millet 1996:63; *EM* 1992:1.234, 384; 2.486-87, 490, 503, 507, 549, 687, 785, 853, 856, 961-62; 3.1088, 1123, 1404; 4.1770; Hinckley 1991:LDS-CD; Burton 1987:LDS-CD; Holland 1987:LDS-CD; *TSWK* 1982:52; Kimball 1978:LDS-CD; GCR 1978:1948: 76; 1924:16, 24; 1911:76; 1909:24; 1908:70; 1907:50; 1904:23; Smith 1974:LDS-CD; Clark 1971:4.203, 206; McConkie 1966:516-17, 589; Smith [1960]:3.142-44; Whitney 1921:258; Roberts 1912:2.268, 314; *JD* 26:214; Nelson 1895:738.

¹⁴⁰ “We find in the same section [D&C 93] the information that the Savior did not receive a fulness at once, but grace was given Him for grace. As He overcame He developed and progressed” (George Albert Smith, *GCR* Oct. 1906:48). See also Wilford Woodruff *JD* 5:50. Joseph Fielding Smith ([1954]:1.32-33) argued that Jesus “was a God before he was born into this world,” but that “The Savior did not have a fulness at first.” Yet, what kind of god is a god that is not fully God?

¹⁴¹ McConkie and Millet 1996:35; Matthews 1994:204; 1990: 260; *EM* 1992:2.724; Wood 1958:*LF*: 5.2.

¹⁴² *Primary* 7 1997:6; Hales (May) 1990:LDS-CD; Christensen (June) 1986: *LDS-CD*; Kimball 1982:163; 1972:87; (December 1980):LDS-CD; Merrill *GCR* (April) 1949:27.

5. CONCLUSION

Joseph Smith is the authoritative spokesperson for all things Mormon. Everything that Mormonism represents stands or falls depending on what he said or wrote. What Smith had to say about God either equated him with creation or equated nature with God. It was a type of pantheism that evolved into polytheism that was defended with henotheism and redefined as monotheism. Smith and Mormonism's "God" is not the God of the Bible, except in an idolatrous way. Smith's "God" was not always God, but became a god and that only through a process known as "Eternal Progression." Since idols are nothing in the world, it could be postulated that Smith's theology ultimately tends toward atheism or no God at all, since idols are not gods either and only exist in the minds of those who create them.

Smith's effort at predicting future events demonstrated his lack of knowing anything about it. To this day, there is no Mormon Temple sitting on the Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri, dedicated by Smith that was to be built in the generation in which he lived. In fact, a faction of Mormonism, the Hedrickites, owns the property and that without any prospect of selling it to the Utah sect.¹⁴³ All Mormons in that generation have long since passed away. Moreover, the Civil War came and went without fulfillment of Smith's projections about it. No foreign nations were involved, the slaves did not rise up against their masters en masse, the world did not end, and Jesus did not return.

Finally, Joseph Smith's view of Jesus, like his view of God, was devoid of biblical fidelity. Rather than an immutable Jesus, who was/is God very God from all eternity, Smith spoke of an ever-evolving "intelligence" that was sired naturally and "literally" into existence by heavenly parents. Jesus became one of billions of their "spirit children." When it came time for Jesus to become the Saviour of the world, Heavenly Father made a conjugal visit to his daughter Mary, to sire the physical body of Jesus.¹⁴⁴ Jesus, therefore, is the product of an incestuous relationship between his humanly "exalted" father and his celestially coequal sister. Eventually, Jesus would merit his "fullness" as a god, but not until after he was resurrected.¹⁴⁵ By biblical deduction, he was a miserable sinner, as his father was, in need of forgiveness and a redeemer. The theological, doctrinal, and prophetic deficiency of Joseph Smith shows clearly that his claim to be a prophet of God in the Biblical sense cannot be true.

6. FINAL THOUGHTS

¹⁴³ See Richard Donald Ouelette, "The Mormon Temple Lot Case: Space, Memory, and Identity in a Divided New Religion" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 2012):337-ff.; Michael De Groote (2009), "Jackson County temple lot saga," *Deseret News*, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705312028/Jackson-County-temple-lot-saga.html> [accessed March 31, 2017].

¹⁴⁴ McConkie 1981:473; 1966:742; Benson 1988:7; Millet and Top 1987:1.9; 2.230; Smith [1954]:1.19-ff.

¹⁴⁵ Some Mormons wish to argue that Jesus was "a God" prior to, as well as during, his earthly visit (see Matthews 1994:12), but such an argument is more in line with the ancient Gnostic and Arian heresy, as well as contemporary Jehovah's Witness doctrine, than it is with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn.1:1). Moreover, if Jesus was not fully God (cf. Col. 1:19; 2:9), then just what kind of god is "a god" that is not fully one?

Since this is the third article in the trilogy examining and evaluating what a biblical prophet was and whether Muhammad and Joseph Smith fit the description, the following final thoughts are offered to tie the examinations and evaluations together into a comprehensive whole.

First, a biblical prophet was a significant, specially called person by God who served as God's spokesperson in at least two different ways. He divulged the special revelation given by God concerning Himself, as well as events and people associated with the nation of Israel. Whenever a biblical prophet spoke in the name of the Lord, his words never contradicted either God's revelation or another biblical prophet. His theology was consistent, in other words. There was only God, his name was Yahweh, and over the course of time, God revealed that His essential being was manifested in three persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. When it came to prognosticating the future, as it dealt with the nation of Israel, and more specifically as the prophecy culminated in the revelation of Jesus Christ as the saviour and redeemer of the world, it, too, was consistent. The biblical prophet did not contradict another biblical prophet. Biblical prophecy ultimately culminated in the person of Jesus Christ, even though at the time the prophet was prophesying, he was unaware of that ramification.

Second, in neither case, whether it was Muhammad or Joseph, did they fit the description of a biblical prophet. Both advocated theologies that contradicted what God had revealed about himself in Holy Scripture that the biblical prophets recorded about Him. In Muhammad's case, Allah was an impersonal, distant deity, who was so exclusive that it was unapproachable. That although contemporary and modern-day, Arabic-speaking Christians may use the term Allah in reference to Yahweh, what they believe about him and what the Muslims believe are two totally different systems of thought. When New Testament theology is considered in contrast to Muhammad's rejection of the Trinity, it becomes clear that what Muhammad advocated about God was at odds with what the biblical prophets had already taught about Him. Muhammad's prophetic calling, as it pertained to the future and the nation of Israel, was also markedly different from the biblical prophet's calling, as Muhammad believed that he was the fulfilment of "the prophet" spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18, rather than the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Muhammad's hostile words and actions toward the Jews placed him outside the designation of being another biblical prophet.

Third, when we turned to the examination of Joseph Smith's alleged calling as a biblical prophet, we find similarities like those found in the person and teachings of Muhammad. Joseph Smith's theology was inconsistent with the claims of the Bible, that there is only one true God, who found expression in His Trinitarian character. In fact, Joseph Smith completely denied the Trinity and chose, instead, to deify humans. There was one god that Smith and the Mormons believed in (henotheism), but there were multiple gods in existence (polytheism), many of whom were "gods in embryo" on earth, that were working their way to the lofty "exalted" state of full godhood, just as "Heavenly Father" had done. God was not always God, in other words, but through the process of "Eternal Progression," God became what he currently is, and because God accomplished such a feat, as did his relatives, then God's offspring, whom he sired with his Heavenly Wife, can do the same.

Joseph Smith's prophetic ability was also uncharacteristic of a biblical prophet in the sense that

the biblical prophet had to be one-hundred percent accurate to be deemed one of God's own. In the two examples presented, which are two of Joseph Smith's most famous prophecies, neither one happened as stated, nor could they. The Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri is still vacant, with all of the expectant Mormons in that generation – whom Smith et al promised would see the Temple and New Jerusalem built while they were alive – all deceased. The Civil War did not bring about the calamity or participants Smith prophesied that it would. Moreover, neither of the prophecies had anything to do with the nation of Israel, much less the person of Jesus Christ, except perhaps indirectly to bolster the persona of Smith's image. Regardless, the prophecies failed, thereby setting Smith outside the description of a biblical prophet.

Therefore, after examining the biblical evidence as to what a biblical prophet was and comparing it with the theological and historical evidence provided by authoritative references found in both Islamic and Mormon camps, the only possible conclusion that can be drawn is that neither Muhammad, nor Joseph Smith, were biblical prophets, as many Muslims and Mormons argue. Instead, they were false prophets according to the biblical standard, who instead of advocating a theology and futuristic outlook consistent with God's revelation recorded by the biblical prophets, they advocated theologies and prophecies that were contrary and erroneous.

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JOSEPH SMITH'S PLAIN & PRECIOUS TRUTHS RESTORED: A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC RESPONSE

ABSTRACT

It has been the claim of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and through his primary writing, the Book of Mormon, that “many plain and precious truths” have been removed from the Bible. Although Smith did not explicitly or concisely elaborate on what those missing truths were, later Dr. Clyde J. Williams of Mormon-owned Brigham Young University provided that concise list. Writing for *Ensign Magazine*, the “official” monthly publication that advises and counsels Latter-day Saints in all things Mormon, in October 2006, Williams argued for at least eight specific doctrines that were “restored” with the calling of the “Prophet” Joseph Smith. Upon examination and rebuttal it is demonstrated that each of the doctrines mentioned – premortal existence, Adam’s fall and human suffering, agency, the atonement, first principles and ordinances, church organization, revelation, and Satan’s identity and methods – were either contradictory presuppositions imposed upon the Bible or doctrines or practices that were not missing from the Bible. Therefore, what Joseph Smith vaguely argued for and wrote about in the Book of Mormon is misleading and false. The Bible remains sufficient for all matters pertaining to Christian faith and practice, as John Calvin and the Reformers concluded years ago, and is emphasized in their stance on *Sola Scriptura*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Joseph Smith was the founder of Mormonism or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Of all the new religious movement leaders who started churches or organizations in nineteenth century America, Smith’s has been the most prolific of them all. Neither Charles Taze Russell (International Bible Students to the Jehovah’s Witnesses), nor Ellen G. White (Seventh Day Adventism), nor Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science) has equaled the influence that Smith and Mormonism have had upon America and many places abroad. Smith’s influence included, among other things, an attack upon the Bible by claiming that it was deficient and erroneous. The writing of the Book of Mormon was alleged proof of the deficiency and error, as it contained the “plain and precious truths” that had been excised from the Bible, leaving it in a state of untrustworthiness, unless interpreted in light of the newly translated “modern revelation.” The object of this article will respond to and rebut Smith’s argument that “many plain and precious truths” are missing from the Bible and demonstrate that his insertions, instead, are erroneous.

1.1. The Bible and the Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith claimed in 1 Nephi 13:26 and 28 that “many plain and precious” truths had been removed from the Bible. The excision took place by authorization from the “great and abominable church” for the express purposes that (1) “they might pervert the right ways of the Lord” and (2) “that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men” (v. 27). Smith never provided a comprehensive list of exactly of what those truths were that maliciously disappeared.

In October 2006, however, the Mormon Church published an article in its *Ensign* magazine that provided a concise explanation of Joseph Smith’s presupposition as stated in 1 Nephi 13:26 and 28. *Ensign* is the official publishing arm of the Mormon Church, whose monthly periodical serves to promote “inspired and loving counsel from apostles and prophets,” as well as “advice from ordinary members who have lived what” the reader may be experiencing. The article is written by Dr. Clyde J. Williams, who is Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. It is entitled, “Plain & Precious Truths Restored” and will serve as a basic outline for the response and rebuttal below.

Dr. Williams discussed eight important doctrines that he believes were removed from the Bible. They are the *Premortal Existence*, *Adam’s Fall and Human Suffering*, *Agency*, *The Atonement*, *First Principles and Ordinances*, *Church Organization*, *Revelation*, and *Satan’s Identity and Methods*.¹ Each will be dealt with below in the same order in which he discusses them. Since the Book of Mormon serves as the standard by which Dr. Williams makes his case, a few comments will be made about it, first, before any commentary or rebuttal is made about the alleged missing “plain and precious truths.” If it is true that the Bible is somehow deficient and the Book of Mormon is its corrector, then everyone naming the name of Christ as his/her saviour needs to pay strict attention.² Conversely, if it turns out that nothing is missing from the Bible, then it must be asked what the motive is behind the claim or accusation that the Bible is wanting?

1.2. The Book of Mormon’s Alleged Authority over the Content of the Bible

A surefire way for any Mormon to vindicate the claim that the Bible is missing many plain and precious truths is simply to provide the manuscript evidence. Instead of doing that, however, Dr. Williams and others regularly argue, “A careful examination of the Book of Mormon reveals many significant insights not found in the Bible.” It is tantamount to saying, if a person will consult with the Operating Thetan III manual written by L. Ron Hubbard of Scientology fame, that person will discover the existence of Xenu. Since Xenu is not found in the Bible, it must have been removed by some nefarious Christian scribe. Such logic, though, is impeccably flawed. Just because something does not appear in the Bible does not necessarily mean some evil person excised it from its pages. Rather, it was never a part of the Bible to begin with.

The fact of the matter is that despite all the effort expended by the Mormon Church and its hopeful apologists to corroborate the Book of Mormon storyline, it remains a work of verifiable controversy.

¹ These are the actual sub-headings in Dr. Williams’ article.

² This would be especially true for everyone subscribing to the Reformed doctrine of Sola Scriptura or that the Bible is sufficient for all matters pertaining to Christian faith and practice. It would mean that the traditionalism and human autonomy that John Calvin, *et al*, fought against was in vain or error and that ultimately God was not sovereign over His creation, but instead was at its mercy.

Archeologically speaking, no one has ever found either the land or city of Zarahemla (Alma 2:26; Omni 1:12-13) or Bountiful (Alma 52:15, 17). No one has ever unearthed a vast Nephite city of cement houses (Helaman 3:7-ff.). Modern-day Mormon apologists are even in conflict with Joseph Smith and the early Mormon leaders over the location of the Hill Cumorah, which is a key site around which the Book of Mormon story is told.³

Textually speaking, left unexplained are textual changes that have a direct bearing upon doctrinal beliefs. Is Mary the mother of God or the mother of the son of God (1 Nephi 11:18, 21, 32)? Will the black man, upon converting to Mormonism, become “white and delightsome” or merely “pure and delightsome” (2 Nephi 30:6)? Are the Lamanites “the principal ancestors of the American Indians” or are the Lamanites now only “among the ancestors of the American Indians”?⁴ Added to all of these issues are the thousands of grammatical and spelling corrections done to the “most correct of any book on earth” (Book of Mormon Introduction 1981 and 2013; Smith 1976: 4.461) and it becomes quite clear that the Book of Mormon fails as a credible document to be referenced to criticize biblical content.

2. DOCTRINES ALLEGEDLY RESTORED

2.1. Premortal Existence⁵

Citing Alma 12:25 from the Book of Mormon, Dr. Williams argues that the doctrine of “Premortal Existence” has been removed from the Bible. What Dr. Williams fails to do, though, is inform the reader that Alma 12:25 mentions nothing about a premortal existence, whereby Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother are busy siring and conceiving spirit children on a celestial planet somewhere in the universe,⁶ creating a family environment that all future Mormons hope to be a part one day when they become gods and goddesses on their own planets as they sire and conceive

³ Joseph Fielding Smith ([1954]: 3.234), “...the Prophet Joseph Smith himself is on record, definitely declaring the present hill [in upstate New York] called Cumorah to be the exact hill spoken of in the Book of Mormon” [emphasis his]. Compare this with John L. Sorenson’s (2013: 142-43) guesstimate of Cumorah’s “possible,” yet “tentative,” location in Veracruz, Mexico, as well as his biting condemnation that the hill is in New York is “manifestly absurd” (688 n82). James Smith and the now defunct FARMS (Foundational for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies) simply concluded that, “Today almost all writers on the Book of Mormon geography agree that...Mormon’s Hill Cumorah [is] situated somewhere in Central America” (*Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited* 1997: 264).

⁴ See the revision between the 1981 Introduction to the Book of Mormon and the new and improved 2013 edition.

⁵ According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (Ludwig 1992:3.1123), Premortal Existence or simply Pre-Existence, “refers to a period of individual conscious an accountable life before birth into mortality on this earth. It is Latter-day Saint doctrine that living things existed as individual spirit beings and possessed varying degrees of intelligence in an active, conscious spirit state before mortal birth and that the spirit continues to live and function in the mortal body. The revelations teach that premortal spirit bodies have general resemblance to their physical counterparts.” Joseph Fielding Smith (1978:29) argued that the doctrine of the Pre-existence is found in the Bible, which contradicts Dr. Williams’ testimony, “but, in the present mutilated form in which this doctrine comes to us through that volume, it is difficult for those who have been enlightened by other revelation to comprehend it.”

⁶ See D&C 76:24; Moses 6:9; *NE* (Mar.) 2017:41; *Liahona* (Mar.) 2017:57; *Ensign* (Dec.) 2016:29; (May) 2016:11; *GP* (2009):9; (Apr.) 2004:60; *Liahona* (May) 2016:11; *TPC* Smith 1998:335; Hinckley 1997:256-57; Brewster 1996:115; *EM* 1992:2.486, 549, 961; 3.1088; 4.1706, 1770; Matthews 1990:188-89; Kimball 1982:25, 327; Cannon 1974:1.1-3; McConkie 1966:84, 516-17; Smith [1960]:3.142-43; Bennett 1950:4; *Hymns* 1948:138; *JD* 1.50; 4.216; 14.300, 302; 24.2-3; 18.32, 293; 24.3; 26.214; *IE* (Nov.) 1909:78; *MFP* 1970:4.203, 205-6; Nelson 1895:738.

their own “premortals” spirit children.⁷ In fact, Dr. Williams fails to mention that the concept “Premortal Existence” does not appear anywhere in the Book of Mormon; neither does “spirit children,” “Heavenly Mother,” or even a “heavenly family.” Alma 12:25 merely refers to the “plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world,” as well as the resurrection. Both redemption and resurrection are clearly discussed within the pages of the Bible (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4-ff. cf. Matt. 22:30-ff.; 1 Cor. 15:1-ff.).

The prophet Jeremiah is typically cited by the Mormons to support their argument for a premortal existence.⁸ Several problems arise, however, when they do that. First, the Book of Jeremiah is in the Bible and not the Book of Mormon. If such a “significant insight” as the premortal existence has been removed from the Bible and is only found in the Book of Mormon, then referring to the Bible to find something that is missing, or even implied as missing, is misleading or deceptive.⁹ If the doctrine is missing from the Bible, then the Mormons need to quit looking in the Bible to find it.

Second, the Mormon acceptance of Jeremiah 1:5 in the Mormon’s own King James Version adaptation has no cross reference to the Book of Mormon that mentions anything about a premortal existence. At best, all a person will find are additional biblical references and more Mormon verbiage noting the “Antemortal Existence of Man.” A footnote at Isaiah 44:24 alluding to 1 Nephi 21:5 to support the premortal existence of human beings is as misleading as the Alma 12:25 reference above. Again, if the doctrine is missing from the Bible, then there is no need to go looking for it there or to twist biblical references to find doctrinal inferences.

Third, the context of Jeremiah’s comment has to do with Yawheh’s omniscience and Jeremiah’s future appointment; not that there is any actual existence of Jeremiah in a family setting prior to his coming to earth to learn how to become a god. Moreover, if Jeremiah already existed, then in each instance where God “formed” or “planned” (Heb. *yatzar*) something or someone in the Old Testament, then it could be argued that those things or persons—e.g. destroyed cities in 2 Kings 19:25 or the nation of Israel in Isaiah 43:1—already existed prior to their coming to be. Reminiscences of Plato’s *Ideas and Forms* immediately come to mind, which is clearly antithetical to the biblical world view.

2.2. Adam’s Fall and Human Suffering

⁷ See D&C 132: 22, 30-31; *EM* 1.8, 422; 2.465-66; Smith 1980: 5.391; Ludlow 1978: 1.2.131; 2.Appendix A; *TPJS* 1976: 300-301; McConkie 1985: 312; 1982: 264, 707; 1979: 1.56-57, 215; 1973: 3.204-205; 1966: 231, 273, 321; Ballard 1966: 211-12; Widtsoe 1960: 201; Smith [1955]: 2.68; *GCR* Oct. 1967: 89; Oct. 1966: 103; Oct. 1954: 17; Apr. 1949: 71; Oct. 1942: 41; Apr. 1938: 24; Oct. 1931: 104; Apr. 1924: 31, 74; Smith 1946: 4.159.

⁸ See *Ensign* Apr. 2016: 7; Apr. 2013: 61; Nov. 2013: 107, 109; Feb. 2012: 35; May 2012: 77, 80; July 2010: 69; Oct. 2010: 23; June 2008: 67; Nov. 2007: 22-23; May 1999, Apr. 1995, Nov. 1993, Jan. 1989, Nov. 1989, May 1986, Nov. 1985, July 1984, May 1981, Aug. 1974 on *LDS Church Magazines 2000* CD-ROM; *NE* Feb. 2015: 13; *IE* Jan. 1962: 18; Jan. 1959: 27; Jan. 1955: 41; Nov. 1955: 844; Dec. 1955: 896; Oct. 1905: 893-94; Aug. 1899: 770-71; *EM* 1992: 1.342-43; 2.721; 3.1123; *Liahona* Apr. 2016:7; Feb. 2015: 58-59; Feb. 2012: 23; May 2012: 77, 80; July 2010: 41; Oct. 2010: 23; June 2008: 25; July 2002: 83, 86; *GCR* Oct. 1970: 115.

⁹ See *Ensign* (Apr.) 2016: 7; (Apr.) 2013: 60; (May) 2012: 77, 81; (Feb.) 2012: 35; (Oct.) 2010: 23; (July) 2010: 69; (June) 2008: 67; (Nov.) 2007: 22-24; (June) 2002: 64.

Dr. Williams presents a curious interpretation of the fall of man and human suffering in order to conclude that both of those subjects are missing from the Bible. He begins by writing, “Many in the Christian world consider the Fall of Adam to be an accident or tragedy.” Is this not an admission that the fall of man is in the Bible and that biblical Christians look back on that event as the starting point of human suffering? If so, then this particular point invalidates the argument that at least one plain and precious truth is not missing from the Bible at all, which further discredits his claims the Book of Mormon contains something that the Bible does not. Also, Dr. Williams seems to imply that the fall of humanity was not tragic. His further commentary on the beneficial nature of the fall, seen below, bears out such an assumption.

He alludes to 2 Nephi 2:22-25 to point out other missing truths that can only be realized by reading the Book of Mormon. The passage itself deals with Adam’s beneficial fall. According to the reference,

[I]f Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. 23 And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin...25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

In other words, the Bible supposedly left out the following details: (1) Sin was “necessary” for Adam to escape the garden, which was really a prison, not a paradise; (2) Had Adam remained untainted by sin that would have been forever a bad thing, making sin a good thing; (3) Adam could not obey God to be “fruitful and multiply” until he disobeyed God; (4) The state of innocence and obedience is also a state of guilt and disobedience; (5) To live in misery is to live joyfully; (6) Performing acts of goodness is contingent upon a person’s knowledge of sin and then acting upon it; (7) Human life is dependent upon Adam’s death; (8) Human purpose is to commit sin, since that results in joy, children, and eventually godhood. Added to these are several other important excisions that Dr. Williams mentions, including: (9) Sin is a “natural weakness...designed to turn us to Christ,” which makes lawlessness synonymous with lawfulness; (10) “Agency and opposition are essential to eternal growth” or godhood; (11) Earthly human beings are currently enduring a “state of probation” to see whether or not they will “choose liberty and eternal life,” as opposed to “captivity and death,” the latter of which is orchestrated by the devil, even though the devil originally advocated liberty and life for everyone, but was overruled by God, who chose Jesus’ plan—which was really God’s plan all along—that wanted liberty and life only for some.¹⁰

A full-blown rebuttal is impossible here. Nevertheless, if sin is “necessary” for anything, then God who is necessary cannot necessarily be. It is an equation fraught with logical impossibilities and endless conundrums after the order of Jesus’ statement that a “house divided against itself cannot stand” (Matt. 12:25). Sin, in other words, is not necessary, but contingent, much like a parasite

¹⁰ But, this story, which is basic to the whole Mormon theological foundation, is ironically not found in the Book of Mormon. It is found in the Book of Moses 4:1-ff. or *Pearl of Great Price*, where the dubious Book of Abraham is also found. See also *TPC Taylor* 2001:40-41; McConkie 1966:27; Smith 1952:15.

relying on its host for survival. Adam no more needed to be disobedient toward God in order to obey God than he needed to commit an act of sin in order to be joyous. Sin always results in death and separation (Rom. 5:12; 6:16, 23; 8:13), which is the message that God delivered to Adam when He commanded him to refrain from eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). To die, you shall surely die,¹¹ was the warning; not, rebelling against God's command will bring an enjoyable brood of children. The Mormon idea that the fall was removed from the Bible cannot stand, because it contradicts everything the Bible has to say about God, creation, humanity, sin, and redemption.

2.3. Agency

According to Dr. Williams, “The principle of man’s right to act according to his own will or desires is a major theme throughout the Book of Mormon.” Whether eight Book of Mormon references constitute “throughout” or not is a matter of opinion.¹² What is certain is that agency or “Free Agency,” as it is sometimes termed, is important to Mormons.¹³ It is so important that Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., (1980:2.7) labeled agency as one of the human family’s “choicest gifts.” Brigham Young (1978:62) called agency a “right” that “God has given to all people who dwell on the earth, and they can legislate and act as they please,” with the caveat that God still legislates the results. Lorenzo Snow (1996:4) argued “Free agency is needed for godhood,” since “the principle of God,” meaning his “nature and character,” resides “in every individual.” Joseph Fielding Smith (1952:15), like Lorenzo Snow, claimed, “There could be no progression, no real existence, without this great gift... It is an eternal principle.” According to Bruce R. McConkie (1985:89), “All of the terms and conditions of the Lord’s eternal plan operate because man has his agency, and none of it would have efficacy, virtue, or force if there were no agency.” Gordon B. Hinckley (1997:55) wrote, “Man is free to choose his own way. There is no predestination in Mormon theology. Free agency is a sacred gift, divinely bestowed.”

Dr. Williams, Joseph Smith, and the rest of the Mormon faithful are correct in concluding that the concept of “Agency,” “free agency,” or even “free will” is found nowhere in the Bible. That does not necessarily mean that some wily scribe(s) removed it. What it means is that because of its description of how sin and its consequences entered the world, the freedom to think and act apart from its influence has been forfeited. The thoughts and intents of man’s heart are only evil

¹¹ At Genesis 2:17 we read, “...the day that you eat from it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you will surely die.” Literally, since phrase *mōt tamūt* is translated “to die, you will die,” with *mōt* being a qal infinitive absolute, which when combined with the qal imperfect verb *tamūt* emphasizes or magnifies the result. Of course, when Adam made the choice to rebel against God by receiving the fruit from Eve, neither one immediately died a physical death. But, their sin caused such a separation between them and God that neither were able to bridge, nor did they even want to, which is why ran away from God unaware that they were already experiencing the very death God had emphatically warned them about. Physically, they were alive, but within their very being they were spiritually dead to the things of God.

¹² He cited Mosiah 2:21; Alma 29:4-5; 41:3, 5; 42:27; Helaman 3:28-29; 7:5; 12:3-6; and 14:30-31 as evidence.

¹³ From January 2001 to April 2017, the main magazine published by the LDS Church, *Ensign*, shows 1,263 occurrences in 178 publications where the word “agency” has either been used or discussed in its teaching articles. In other words, 91% of the magazines since the turn of the new millennia, therefore, have reserved space to discuss this one “major theme” of the Mormon faith.

continually (Gen. 6:5 cf. 8:21; Eccl. 9:3; Jer. 17:9; Mk. 7:21-23; Jn. 3:19; Rom. 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17-19; 5:8). Hence, men and women are not free, but are slaves to sin (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:6, 16-20). Freedom only occurs when Christ sets the sinner free, which comes only through the born again experience associated with spiritual regeneration (Gal. 5:1; Jn. 3:3, 5). Until such time, the sinner only thinks and acts according his nature, which is bound, not free. A byproduct of such bondage is the creation of one's own self-righteous religiosity, whereby the sinner attempts to cover himself with the works of his own hands (Gen. 3:7), then run and hide from God (Gen. 3:8 cf. Psa. 10:4; 119:155; Rom. 3:11, 18).

Given the distorted view of the fall by the Mormons, as seen above, whereby sin is interpreted as a fall upwards toward godhood, it should come as no surprise that they also believe that they now have the right to tell God what they are going to do, whether in matters of morality or eternity. God is at the mercy of the sinner, not the sinner is at the mercy of God. To argue for the biblical view of sin and what it does to place human beings in bondage is to be in league with Satan, which fails to account for the biblical fact that it was Satan who tempted Eve to exercise her "free agency" against God in the first place (Gen. 3:1-5). If Satan wanted to strip humanity of its free agency and save everyone without compulsion, then why encourage Adam and Eve to act freely in a way that would bind them in sin, while presuming they were still free to accept or reject God's plan of salvation later? It is a convoluted conundrum of Pelagian propensity.¹⁴

2.4. *The Atonement*

The fourth "plain and precious truth" allegedly missing from the Bible, according to Dr. Williams, involves the Atonement. However, Dr. Williams fails to discuss the atonement itself. He does not address the 93 references to the atonement found in the Old Testament or the additional 104 references stemming from the Hebrew root *kafar*, which broadly means, "to cover." Moreover, aside from a passing parenthetical referral to Romans 5:11, Dr. Williams says nothing about Jesus Christ's death on the cross to reconcile (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20, 22), propitiate (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10), or redeem (Gal. 3:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18) the sinner unto God. Instead, Dr. Williams has redefined the atonement to include Jesus' salvific mission beginning in the Old Testament,¹⁵ the necessity of the English word "atonement" to appear x-number of times in

¹⁴ Pelagius was the fifth century A.D. British monk who misunderstood the fall of man, as well as the role of God's grace. To him, the fall did not corrupt man to the extent that the Bible portrays humankind afterward. Hence, original sin was denied and God's grace was reinterpreted as an abiding power to enable man to still know and choose between good and evil, as man's will dictated. See Harold O. J. Brown (1988:202).

¹⁵ Williams defers to Jeffrey Holland's conflicted comment found in his book *Christ and the New Covenant* (1997:6-7). Speaking of The Atonement in a separate chapter, Holland wrote, "Our [natural and unregenerate] hearts can—and in their purity, do—desire that which is spiritual and holy rather than that which is 'carnal, sensual, and devilish.' If that were not so, we would be in a hopeless condition indeed, and the idea of real choice would be jeopardized forever" (207). It is incredible that someone could on the one hand be so absolutely right, while denying its truthfulness with something so absolutely wrong. The Apostle Paul made it clear that the natural man in his unregenerate condition has zero desire for God, does not do what is right in God's estimation, nor does he fear God (Rom. 3:10-ff.). Because the natural man is "lost," in bondage to sin, and totally incapable of rescuing himself, he is hopeless, in jeopardy of eternal damnation, and without God in the world. Holland, though, like Dr. Williams, imposes his Pelagian-like interpretation upon the Atonement of Christ in an effort to mitigate the natural man's dire condition. The unregenerate man is "naturally evil," just not "inherently evil" (206), which are why he is capable, in and of himself, of changing

a sacred text to sufficiently account for its importance, and above all, the inclusion of “the obedient efforts of mankind” to merit God’s grace as prerequisite before anyone is saved.¹⁶

The atonement, in other words, is not missing from the Bible, thereby negating Dr. Williams’ premise. What are missing from the Bible are anachronistic allusions to Jesus. Jesus did not show up in Old Testament times, because it was not his time to fulfill God’s plan of redemption on the cross (Matt. 26:18; Jn. 2:4; 7:6, 30). What are missing from the Bible are specific English translations of certain words to appease Mormon presuppositions. Other words have been used, as seen above, some of which are the same, especially in the Old Testament, even though they are understood differently than what the Mormon might expect to qualify those presuppositions. What are missing from the Bible are the efforts of fallen humanity to be able to garner from God his grace, whereby if the human being so chooses, he can save himself.¹⁷ It is missing because salvation is from God and by God, and until God graciously moves to redeem the sinner, the sinner is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1-2), incapable of impressing or wooing God through the sinner’s own boastful and self-righteous acts (Eph. 2:8-9). It is missing because if salvation can be merited, then Jesus died in vain (Gal. 2:21). It is missing because if salvation is a cooperative effort of human works and God’s grace, and not according to God’s grace exclusively, then grace is no longer grace (Rom. 11:6). Clearly, the atonement, along with all of its intertwined doctrines, is not missing from the Bible. What are missing are all the presupposed, twisted, Mormon interpretations about the atonement.

2.5. First Principles and Ordinances

In defense of the presupposition that the Bible is “missing many plain and precious truths” regarding first principles and ordinances, Dr. Williams wrote,

The Old Testament does not clearly teach the principles of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and their interrelationship, but Book of Mormon prophets Nephi, Jacob, Alma, and his son Alma all taught the importance

his condemned stance before God by simply acting on his natural purity. Since Jesus did his part to bring redemption through the atonement, now all the natural man has to do is his part, and then it is onward to exaltation and godhood. Such unabashed distortion of what the atonement is really all about, which is the covering of sin through the blood of Christ, will only leave those Mormons who accept its twisted explanation accursed and on the road to the devil’s hell.

¹⁶ A statement from former Mormon President Joseph Fielding Smith ([1955]:2.27) not only accentuates the works-based salvific structure of Mormonism, but its anti-Christian sentiment by denying the absolute need for God’s grace to save anyone. He wrote, “Man must be redeemed according to law, and his reward must be based on the law of justice. Because of this, the Lord will not give unto men that which they do not merit, but shall reward all men according to their works.” Who needs the atonement of Jesus, though, when redemption is based on human merit at keeping the law?

¹⁷ Joseph Smith (1980:6.365) made a comment along the line of autosoteriology that is often repeated among the Mormon faithful to justify the doctrine itself. Addressing the subject of the resurrection, he said, “I am going on in my progress for eternal life. It is not only necessary that you should be baptized for your dead, but you will have to go through all the ordinances for them, the same as you have gone through to save yourselves. There will be 144,000 saviors on Mount Zion, and with them an innumerable host that no man can number.” Apparently, saving oneself is a prerequisite until one is deceased. Then, it becomes incumbent upon another human being to act as a surrogate “savior” with enough experience in self-salvation that he/she can save others; all it takes is the deceased’s “free agency” approval.

of these principles prior to the coming of Christ.

It should be noted that Williams changes his argument from “many significant doctrines not found in the Bible” to focus on what he perceives is the inadequacy of the Old Testament. Such a change, however, only serves to defeat what he originally set out to prove, which is the deficiency of the whole Bible and not just one portion of it. Clearly faith, repentance, baptism, and the gifts of the Spirit are all taught in the Bible, although not equally nor necessarily, depending on the context and the timeliness of the revelation. While the Old Testament does not mention baptism or the gifts of the Spirit, that in no way signifies that those important “principles” are missing from the Bible. Circumcision in the Old Testament served as the identifying “principle” for the Israelites like baptism later serves as the identifying “principle” for New Testament Christians. While the Old Testament believer may not necessarily have been gifted in the same sense as the New Testament believer, the Spirit of God still filled the Old Testament believer with his temporary presence and enabled him to act or think wisely (Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Deut. 34:9; Ezek. 43:5; Mic. 3:8). Therefore, between changing the structure of his argument and failing to consider the whole of the Bible when discussing his specificities, this particular premise of Dr. Williams fails to support his overall argument.

2.6. Church Organization

Dr. Williams’ next premise deals with church administration, which he claims is the basis for what is found in Doctrine and Covenants (hereafter D&C) Section 20, and something that is not found in the Bible. In D&C 20 there is the high praise of the Book of Mormon (vv. 1-16), commentary on the fall of humanity, the crucifixion, salvific requirements, and the Mormon Trinity (vv. 17-29), more praise for the Book of Mormon (vv. 30-36), a verse dealing with baptismal procedure (v. 37), clarification of church officers and their responsibilities (vv. 38-67), the responsibilities of church members (vv. 68-74), and scripted prayers, church discipline, and church expulsion procedures (vv. 75-84). Most of these beliefs and mandates are also found in Moroni chapters 2-6. That said, with the exception of praise for the Book of Mormon and scripted prayers – the latter of which an argument could be made as something Jesus would forbid (see Matt. 6:5-ff.) – all of the remaining doctrines and beliefs are found in the Bible.

The Fall of Man is found in Genesis 3. The crucifixion of Jesus is found in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19. The salvific requirements are found in John 3, Romans 10, Ephesians 2 and elsewhere. An allusion to the biblical Trinity is seen in Genesis 1:26-27, Judges 13:21-24, and Psalms 33:6-9 and is more explicitly found in Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 3:16-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22), Jesus’ warning (Matt. 12:28-32), and Jesus’ command (Matt. 28:18-20). The Apostle Paul closed his second letter to the Corinthians with, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (13:14). In fact, with the exceptions of the Book of James, and 2 and 3 John, the Trinity is referred to in one way or another throughout the New Testament. Baptism is found 90 times in the New Testament, starting with John the Baptist’s ministry and finishing with Peter’s comment that “baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). Church polity and governance is seen in the calling of Jesus’ disciples

(Matt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20), but more specifically in the early chapters of the Book of Acts, and Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. The responsibilities and behavior of church members can be found throughout the New Testament, culminating in the command to "love one another" (Jn. 13:34; Rom. 13:8; 1 Th. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12, 2 Jn. 5). The subject of church discipline is found in Matthew 18:15-ff. and expulsion of church members in 1 Corinthians 5:1-ff. With so much found in the Bible regarding these subjects, it is hard to fathom that anyone would claim they are missing.

2.7. Revelation

In defense of this particular point, Dr. Williams wrote, "The Book of Mormon demonstrates and teaches the importance of personal revelation for all." The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992:3.1225) listed 11 instances that constitute "personal revelation," ranging from theophanies to angelic visitations to "manifestations of the LIGHT OF CHRIST, by which all men know good from evil." Interestingly, unless such revelation is received by the President of Mormonism, according to BYU Professor Stephen Robinson (1991:17), "the Lord commands them to keep it to themselves (see Alma 12:9)." Williams continued, "From beginning to end it is the classic example that the heavens are still open and that God does indeed speak to men on earth." What is curious is that if the heavens are open and God is still speaking to men on earth, then why cannot such "personal revelation" be openly shared and accepted by everyone? Why is there a need for ecclesiastical sanction, if indeed the revelation is from God? Finally, Williams lauds, "The Book of Mormon also reveals the role and ministry of angels in detail not found in the Bible (see Moroni 7:29-32)." Of course, at least one angel—either Nephi or Moroni—plays an especially large role in Mormon Church development.¹⁸ A question that could be asked is what happened to him? Why does he no longer play an equally important role in Mormon revelation? Surely, if revelation is a continuing occurrence, and angelic ministry is such a large part of it, then where is Nephi or Moroni today, given his importance in early Mormon history and doctrine?¹⁹

The Bible makes it perfectly clear that humanity has not been left without any contemporary communication with God. When Jesus promised the coming of the *Paraclete* or Holy Spirit, he said that the Spirit would not only abide in each Christian (Jn. 14:17), but that he would "bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (Jn. 14:26). Such words of remembrance have been recorded in the New Testament. Given the textual critical effort of many to ensure the integrity of the text, the objective observer will have to admit Jesus' words are still found recorded there. Moreover, when the Spirit comes, "He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to

¹⁸ There is discrepancy over just what the name of the angel was that visited Joseph Smith. According to the *Times and Seasons*, a newspaper edited by Joseph Smith, dated April 15, 1842, page 753, the name of the angel was Nephi. Later, the angel is identified by the more accustomed and accepted name of Moroni.

¹⁹ According to Joseph Smith (1980:1.18-19), when he "had accomplished by [the plates] what was required at [his] hands," the angel Moroni "called for them." Joseph then "delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight." Although the story of Moroni is fondly repeated by the Mormon faithful, there is no record of him returning to deliver any other revelations, once he took the gold plates back into his possession. No explanation was given why he took them either.

come” (Jn. 16:13). A combination of internal witness with external written testimony, in other words, constitutes the divine communication of God that he wishes all Christians to understand and then put into practice. It is not something “new” or outlandish that has nothing to do with Jesus – such as the discovery of the Reformed Egyptian Jewish American Indians – but a focused witness upon Jesus, so that the followers of Jesus would be more like Jesus.

Discussion about angels, their mission for God and ministry toward men, is extensive throughout the Bible, as well. They were around when God created the heavens and the earth (Job 38:7). They assisted one of God’s own, namely Lot, when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1-ff.) and they will be around helping God to carry out the final destruction of wicked humanity, Satan and his minions, and the created order itself at the end of time (Rev. 7:1-12:9; 14:17-20:1). God’s angelic realm will be more noticeably active toward the end of the age than at any time during human existence.²⁰ In the meantime, Hebrews 1:14 tells us that angels are “ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation,” which is consistent with Peter’s observation that angels were interested in the gospel message preached by the prophets (1 Pet. 1:12). In fact, at the end of the age an angel will be seen preaching the gospel to everyone who lives on the earth, regardless of nation, tongue, tribe, or people (Rev. 14:6). There is no reason, therefore, to believe that they are currently inactive, although a caveat has been given respecting certain angels whose sole intent is to pervert the gospel. Paul warned the Galatians, “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). While a majority of angels has been sent to aid and assist humankind, there is a minority of angels, otherwise known as demons, who are up to no good at all. They disguise themselves as angels of light and servants of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14-15), but their message only results in a curse. Space precludes a fuller discussion of both good and bad angels. The Bible, however, is quite adequate to describe their activities, both now and in the future, negating any claim that they are somehow “missing.”

2.8. Satan’s Identity and Methods

Dr. Williams’ last point fails from the outset, since he claims that “The knowledge of Satan and his influence is virtually absent from the Old Testament” [emphasis added]. That is different from what his original argument is all about, which claims that many plain and precious truths had been “taken away” from the Bible or that “many significant doctrines are not found in the Bible.” If such truths were taken away or can no longer be found in the Bible, then they are not “virtually absent.” They are completely absent. Nevertheless, after citing two Christian resources, he resorts to the Book of Mormon as proof that what it has to say about Satan is missing from the Bible.²¹ The

²⁰ Of the 290 references to the English translation *angel* found in the NASB, 73 of them are found in the Book of Revelation, which is three times that found in the next highest occurrence found in the Gospel of Luke.

²¹ The first of his sources, an article written by Theodore H. Gaster in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* is conflicted, if not simply incorrect and in conflict with his second source, Leon Morris’ article on “Satan” in the New Bible Dictionary. Gaster (Buttrick 1962:4.224) claims that, “Nowhere in the OT does Satan appear as a distinctive demonic figure” and then goes on to cite three references in the Old Testament (Job 1-2, Zech. 3:1-2, and 1 Chr. 21:1) where the appellative שָׂטָן refers to a distinctive “superhuman being,” but its name is not “Satan.” Using some rather tenuous grammatical reasoning, Gaster assumes that because of the attending definite article הַ that somehow negates Satan’s identity. Therefore, the name שָׂטָן could apply to anyone, perhaps even Satan himself, though no one

fallacy here is simply begging the question. It assumes what Dr. Williams sets out to prove. Since Dr. Williams presupposes that (1) the Book of Mormon is the great corrector of the Bible, and (2) the Bible is flawed, then the only way fill in the gaps and correct the errors is by accepting his first premise, which just happens to be his conclusion as well. When that occurs, it also affirms that there are all of these plain and precious truths that have been restored, thereby reaffirming the integrity of the Book of Mormon and calling into question the Bible all over again. It is argumentation that Descartes would have been proud.²²

Allusions to Satan and to his methods are quite clear in the Bible, though. Not only are there specific references to him throughout scripture, and more particularly in the New Testament, in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, his tactic is laid out and has been successfully repeated and employed ever since. Satan, who is later identified as “the great dragon...the serpent of old who is called the devil” (Rev. 12:9), approached Eve in the Garden of Eden first with a question, “has God said,” and then a rebuttal. The question dealt with God’s word, much like Dr. Williams, the Mormons, and all others who doubt it. It is not only a question of veracity and integrity, but authority. Satan wanted Eve not only to question her own recollection, but also to question whether or not God could order something contrary to her own rationale. He wanted her to doubt God and then act independently to fill in the blanks. As soon as she doubted and responded in disobedience, the rebuttal followed that led to her temptation and ultimate fall. It is a devious tactic that Satan has used with great success ever since and it begins by asking, “Has God said?”

Therefore, this premise fails, like all of the other premises Dr. Williams has presented thus far. Satan’s identity and his methods are not “virtually absent from the Old Testament” any more than are they realistically missing from the whole of the Bible. What is missing is a presupposition that gives Satan a starring role that is exclusively reserved for the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me” (Jn. 5:39 cf. Lk. 24:27, 44; Heb. 10:7; 2 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 19:10). The Bible is about Jesus, in other words, not about Satan. Too often religious groups, like the Mormons, think that they are doing everyone a favor by expanding upon certain biblical themes, without biblical sanction, when the reality is by doing so they distract attention away from the main theme, which is Jesus himself.²³ What is known about Satan’s character, his ways, and his means from the biblical

knows for certain. Not only does such conflict with basic Hebrew grammar and usage of the definite article (see Ross 2001:59; Chisholm 1998:37), it conflicts with Morris, who identifies שָׂטָן as the diabolical character who is at odds with both God and humanity.

The latter conflict also reveals that Dr. Williams misrepresented Morris as a source by cutting off his statement in mid-course. While Morris (Douglas 1982:1074) did write, “Admittedly we have not yet the fully developed doctrine,” however, Morris continued, “but the activities of ‘the Satan’ are certainly inimical to Job. The OT references to Satan are few, but he is consistently engaged in activities against the best interests of men.” He then goes on to cite examples where he hampers David and Joshua, and then concurs with John’s statement in 1 John 3:8 about the devil sinning from the beginning by asserting “the OT references to him bear this out.”

²² Decartes (Copleston [1960]:4.90-93) is the philosopher who is famous for his dictum, “I think, therefore I am.” But, as Kreeft (2005:94) pointed out, despite its fame, such a statement is actually the logical fallacy of “Begging the Question” or “Arguing in a Circle” (95-96).

²³ One of the five *solae* of the Protestant Reformation is *Solus Christus*. This teaching emphasize that salvation is only through Christ, irrespective of any attention that may or may not be paid to Satan.

corpus is more than sufficient.²⁴ He is not a supporting actor, though, much less a glimmering star worthy of the notoriety that Williams, Smith, and the Mormons wish to afford him. Further expansion upon his character through specious claims aimed at undermining the Bible only serves unjustly to glorify the devil.²⁵

3. CONCLUSION

Dr. Williams wraps up his article by informing the reader that, “We have just scratched the surface. The number of plain and precious truths restored is voluminous.” While those opinions might be a comforting thought to some, based on what he has already presented in this article, they are fleeting. In each example, whether touting the Book of Mormon’s authority or the supposed plain and precious truths missing, what is to be argued has nothing to do with real, actual tangible articles of faith and doctrine that have been removed by some unnamed malicious individual(s). It has to do with presuppositions that are projected onto both the Bible and Christianity. Several passing comments alluding to Plato, Pelagius, and Descartes all serve as kinds of philosophical worldviews that influenced Joseph Smith when he set out to “restore” what he thought was ancient Christianity. Those world views, along with several others not mentioned here, continue to be repeated by persons like Dr. Clyde Williams, in the Mormon effort to persuade the naïve and unwary that Mormonism is another denomination of Christianity, if not Christianity itself.

Earlier, a question about motives was raised and at the end of Dr. Williams’ article, he provided what appears to be the key motive behind the whole plain and precious truths theme: human attainment unto godhood. He wrote, that [Joseph Smith] “was the instrument God used to reveal many lost truths and once again ‘make plain the old paths’ that, if followed, will lead one to exaltation and eternal life.” But, exaltation and eternal life have special connotations in Mormonism that are unrelated to anything a person might find elsewhere. Eternal life means life as a god, for as Bruce McConkie (1966:237) explained, “The word eternal, as used in the name eternal life, is a noun and not an adjective. It is one of the formal names of Deity (Moses 1:3; 7:35; D. & C. 19:11)... God’s life is eternal life; eternal life is God’s life—the expressions are synonymous.” Those who gain eternal life gain life as God’s or “receive exaltation... They are gods.” McConkie repeats the same explanation when discussing separately the subject of Exaltation (257). The ultimate motive for Williams, McConkie, et al, for discrediting the Bible as missing many plain and precious truths and exalting the Book of Mormon, or any other extra-biblical source of authority for that matter, is to emphasize the serpentine promise of godhood, first offered to Eve, if she would simply ask herself, “Has God said?” (Gen. 3:5). The only difference is that Williams, McConkie, and the rest of the Mormon faithful choose to use their own Mormon specific language to express the same

²⁴ As C. Fred Dickason (1975:115) opened his discussion of Satan and Demons, “There is a vast amount of scriptural evidence that Satan actually exists and that he is a person, not just a symbol of evil or a figure of speech. He is an angelic being of wide and powerful influence, a major character on the moral stage of God’s universe. He is an enemy of man and of believers, one whom we should know, respect, and resist in the faith and in the power of the Lord Jesus.”

²⁵ The Mormon beliefs that Satan (aka “Lucifer”) was a spirit child, naturally sired and conceived by Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother in a family, heavenly setting, who had a plan to act as a savior of humankind in opposition to his “spirit brother,” Jesus, and that a war in heaven ensued over rejection of his salvific plan, is plain and simple, unmitigated, diabolical nonsense (see *EM* 1992:1.379; Christensen 1986: “I Have a Question”; *GCR* (Apr.) 1949:27.

goal. Ironically, even that goal is found in the Bible, regardless of its diabolical falsity, thereby, once again, falsifying the whole idea that something plain and precious is missing from the Bible.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the outset of this study, it was hypothesized that significant prophetic parallels existed between Muhammad, the founder of Islam, and Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of Mormonism, and that despite the contentions of some, such as Mormon scholars Hugh Nibley and Arnold Green, who dismissed idea before examining the evidence. After carefully perusing through the data, however, the hypothesis has been confirmed. There are significant prophetic parallels. The five preceding chapters in article format are the evidence leading to the conclusion.

7.1 THE VERSION OF THE BIBLE AVAILABLE TO MUHAMMAD

Prophetic claims inevitably entail revelation from God that is in conformity with other revelations, either written or oral. That does not necessarily mean that all who were God's prophets read or knew the writings or proclamations of other prophets. What it does mean is that when those prophets wrote or spoke God's revelation, there is consistency between the revelations. That fact becomes important when consideration is made concerning what both Muhammad (Article 1) and Joseph Smith (Article 5) produced and wanted others to accept as final or additional revelations from God. Those revelations eventuated in the writing of the Koran and the Book of Mormon. They are two volumes that lack conformity and consistency with previous revelations, but also leave both Muhammad and Joseph Smith standing askew from previous biblical prophets to whom they and their followers wished to align them.

As seen in Article 1, Muhammad claimed to have believed in all the Scriptures that preceded the Koran. The importance of the claim dealt specifically with the "People of the Book," which included both the Jews and the Christians, since he believed that accolade include both groups of people. Although he would accuse both the Jews and Christians of altering or corrupting their respective scriptural texts, he nevertheless still believe that the "original text" was preserved and worthy of Muslim attention, if the Muslim truly wished to attain eternal bliss with Allah one day.

The question then became, what "Book" or Bible was Muhammad alluding to when he made his appeal? Research and history had demonstrated the wide dispersion of both Jews and Christians throughout the Mediterranean area, with the Christians sharing the Gospel message in the Arabian in the vernacular of the people who lived there long before Muhammad ever arrived on the scene. Since the Gospel was shared orally, it was not naturally written down immediately, although as Jesus' disciples and apostles slowly passed, their words and works would eventually end up recorded in the written texts that many today take for granted.

Although Greek was the common language used by most Jews and Gentiles during those evangelistic days, Arabic was most commonly found in Hijaz or Arabian Peninsula. Arabic is a Semitic language similar to that of Aramaic. While some have postulated that an Arabic copy of

the biblical text may have been produced as early as the days of Muhammad, there is no extant evidence of such a text in existence. Nevertheless, the Gospel message was spread throughout the Hijaz with the aid of the Syrians who rendered a version of the Bible, the Syriac Peshitta, in Aramaic that became the Christians aid. This is the Bible version that was available to Muhammad, even though he was illiterate.

The importance of identifying the Syriac Peshitta as the Bible available to Muhammad is that because of the fidelity of those doing the transcribing, we know what informed Muhammad's opinion when he spoke of the "Book" that the Jews and Christians used when speaking to the Arabs in the Hijaz. Moreover, claims of infidelity on their parts, along with later accusations by Muslim scholars that the Bible is no longer identifiable because of all the unscrupulous Jewish and Christians scribes and translators, is without merit. With the exception of a few late additions to the New Testament text, a reputable English translation that many Christians hold in their hands today possesses the same textual content as the Syriac Peshitta enjoyed by Christians during the time when Muhammad lived, as well as by many Syriac Christians today still living in the Middle East.

More importantly, with the identification of the Syriac Peshitta as the version available to Muhammad, it calls into question whether he was indeed a prophet after the order of the biblical prophets. If he was, then his message, which was recorded by his followers and collated in what would become the Koran, should be consistent with the biblical scriptures that preceded it. Yet, charges of textual corruption, the misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 18 pointing to Muhammad, rather than Jesus, the mandate that Muslims are required to believe the Bible, and a contrary depiction of the person of Jesus found in the Koran versus the one found in the Bible, all point to a "prophet" that did not walk in the footsteps of prior biblical prophets. Instead, what we have is an individual who knew nothing much of the Syriac Peshitta's real contents, mainly because he could not read, but avidly listened to several cadres of conflicted heretical voices that shaped his thinking, which culminated in his newfound religion of Islam.

7.2 A TRULY BIBLICAL PROPHET

Please state why you started with the reference to the version of the Bible in the Koran, and with Joseph Smith Jr. view of the Bible (article 5), while only focus on your theme of prophetic claims of the founders of Islam (Muhammad) and Mormonism (Joseph Smith, Jr.) in the middle two paragraphs. Refer also back to your aim in your RP = First chapter

Article 2 is the first in a three-part trilogy dealing with the subject of the biblical prophet and whether the office applied directly to Muhammad (Article 3) and Joseph Smith (Article 4). Article 2 laid the foundation that defines what a biblical prophet is, does, and believed from both the Old and New Testaments perspectives. Not only did Muhammad and Joseph Smith align themselves with the biblical prophets of old—Moses and Jesus being the primary examples—but their followers enthusiastically argue for the same. The only way to either affirm or disaffirm the claims is to understand what the Bible has to say about the office. If both Muhammad and Joseph Smith fulfilled certain criteria, then everyone could be in agreement. Otherwise, since the Bible also addresses the subject of false prophets, which is dealt with in Article 2 as well, then Muhammad and Joseph Smith would fall into that category.

Generally, a biblical prophet was a special person called of God to speak for God as either a foreteller or a forth-teller. As a foreteller, God's prophet would edify, encourage, comfort, and explicate the will of God to God's people, either the Jews of the Old Testament or the Christians in the New Testament. As a forth-teller, God's prophet would make futuristic declarations that centered on the nation of Israel or the Christian church. Jesus Christ was the ultimate centerpiece in all futuristic endeavors, even though the Old Testament prophet only knew him as the coming Messiah. Along with Moses and Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, some specially commissioned prophets—that includes Judas, Silas, Phillip the Evangelist's daughters, and the Apostle Paul—were all provided as classic representations of those who met the criteria necessary to be deemed biblical prophets.

Of course, the counter to a biblical prophet was the false prophet. The false prophet exhibited to varying degrees the outward appearance of authenticity, but inwardly were likened to be "ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Rather than consistently foretell messages that exalted the person of Jesus Christ, he not only is denied his rightful status as the only saviour of humankind, but his place in God's economy as the Son of God. Moreover, as a forth-teller, his prognostications had very little to nothing to do with the nation of Israel or the coming of its Messiah, but they also never happened as predicted. Bad theology coupled with an unreliable record on future events made for someone who would be stoned to death in the Old Testament and someone who would eventually join Satan, the beast, and the ultimate false prophet in the Lake of Fire in the New Testament.

7.3 MUHAMMAD AS A BIBLICAL PROPHET

In this article, three questions are asked to determine the biblical prophethood of Muhammad. Did Muhammad's theology comport with either the Old or New Testaments? Second, is Moses referring to Muhammad as the prophet to come in Deuteronomy 18? Finally, who did Muhammad believe Jesus to be? Although Muhammad and his followers frequently made allusions to the biblical prophets, with Muhammad being one of them, it became quite clear that he did not fit the description of a biblical prophet based on the answers to those three questions.

While Muhammad adhered to a strict monotheism, with contemporary Muslims often making the argument that even Arabic-speaking Christians today use the name "Allah" to describe God, when the theological issue is pressed, Muhammad's Allah is not the Jewish Yahweh. Moreover, given the progressive nature of the New Testament and the advent of the Trinity, Allah does not accurately depict the God either. Instead, what the astute observer finds is an Arabian adaption of a pagan deity, including its name, that Muhammad mixed with both Jewish and the Christian theology. Hence, the Trinity is abjectly denied by Muhammad, which includes the deity of both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The answer to the second question concerning the prophet in Deuteronomy 18 involved ignorance of specific details in the biblical text coupled with the imposition of presuppositional ideas that had nothing to do with the biblical text to support a pretext. Instead of taking notice of Moses' prohibitions against occult behavior, Muhammad, through several confessed incidences in his life, actually promoted involvement in the occult. Then, there was tribal lineage that Moses alludes to that provided another clue as to where the prophet was to derive. He was to be a Jew.

Since Muhammad was not Jewish, the prophetic office spoken about in Deuteronomy 18 is non-applicable to him. Lastly, Moses informs the reader that the Deuteronomic prophet was to make futuristic pronouncements flawlessly at the risk of the people failing to lend him credence. Given that Muhammad and his successors were less than precise handling of the Deuteronomic chapter, whereby he predicted that he was the prophet to come, and it becomes clear that his attempt to divulge the future left him as a false prophet by biblical description.

Further evidence of Muhammad's failure as a biblical prophet was seen in his treatment of several New Testament passages that Jesus made clear dealt with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Without any textual rigor whatsoever, Muhammad and his cohorts made several bold assumptions based on linguistics and textual criticism that had zero support upon examination. There was no support for Periclytos over Paraclete, in other words, the former of which was assumed and interpreted to apply to Muhammad, while the latter was clearly explained by none other than Jesus himself to pertain to the Holy Spirit.

Finally, how Muhammad managed to treat the subject of the person of Jesus resulted in placing him outside the boundary of biblical prophethood. Muhammad believed that Jesus was a creature, similar to the Arian heresy found in the early church days. Muhammad rejected the reality of Jesus' divine sonship by asserting that if Jesus was the Son of God, then not only could the godhood be parted, but that God the Father would have had to engaged in some kind of ethereal sexual relationship with a female deity.

In short, Muhammad's theology was unlike anything any of the biblical prophets shared when God Almighty inspired them to reveal import facts about God and his nature, as well God's people and their future.

7.4 JOSEPH SMITH AS A BIBLICAL PROPHET

The article dealing with Joseph Smith as a biblical prophet followed the same criteria and questioning as that found in the previous article covering Islam's founder, Muhammad. Was Joseph Smith's theology consistent with previous revelations given by the biblical prophets and what was the content and accuracy of his prophecies concerning the future like? By alluding to some of his most authoritative and oft-cited works, starting with the King Follett Discourse and then his prophecies about the Independence, Missouri Temple and the Civil War of 1865, it became clear that Joseph Smith did not fit the description of a biblical prophet.

Smith's God is an exalted man, who was "like us," as human beings, who evolved to his current state. Smith's Jesus did the same thing, only doing that which he saw his Father do. In order to believe both would entail that both were desperate sinners in need of redemption, which further meant that neither could offer redemption to anyone. Whatever kind of gods they might be, among the pantheon of gods and goddesses that Joseph Smith and Mormonism claim also exist, they were not the God of the Bible, who could not sin, lest it result in his own non-existence.

Smith's God was also a single figure, meaning that he denied the Trinitarian nature of God. In fact, Joseph Smith mocked the Trinity. By mocking the Trinity, he also mocked the essential nature

of God, which is manifest in both the persons of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. According to Smith, they were gods, but his denial of the Trinity meant that they had a different essence than that which was necessary in order to be the “one true God.” Smith and his followers attempted to gloss over the conundrum they created by claiming to believe in one God at a time (henotheism), while advocating Tritheism – belief in three separate gods or the Mormon idea of the Trinity – among a plurality of gods and goddesses (polytheism), and arguing that that is the definition of monotheism. Such theological gymnastics and linguistics are antithetical to what the biblical prophets taught about God.

Upon turning to Smith prowess as a predictor of the future, it was discovered that despite the “inspiration” he and his successors received about the building the New Jerusalem and more specifically the Temple that would house the Lord, in Independence, Missouri, during the generation in which they lived, it was all a delusion. Not only have all of the Mormons living at the time of the prophecy (1832) passed away, the tract of land where the Temple was to be built is vacant to this day. Hence, there is no possibility that Smith’s Temple prophecy could ever be fulfilled as he originally gave it.

To prove further that Joseph Smith did not match the qualifications of a biblical prophet, particularly as it pertained to prognosticating the future, his Civil War prophecy was examined and found wanting as well. Although the prophecy itself was lacking in specifics, the details that he did provide were far from accurate. Neither Great Britain, nor the rest of the world, was involved in the fight. The black slaves did not rise up and overwhelm their owners in the manner Smith claimed they would. None of the atmospheric cataclysms manifested. Jesus did not appear at his Second Coming.

Between Joseph Smiths’ false theology and his inability to predict the future, he does not fit alongside those like Moses, Jeremiah, or Jesus. Rather, he fits nicely alongside Muhammad, of Islamic fame, who also propagated a theology in opposition of biblical doctrine and an inability to predict the future.

7.5 JOSEPH SMITH’S MISSING PLAIN AND PRECIOUS TRUTHS

The final article in this study is the concomitant of Article 1. That article dealt with the biblical version available to Muhammad, which turned out to be the Syriac Peshitta. Ultimately, it was shown that because of its integrity and authority, any claims about corruptness or insufficiency were rendered moot by merely appealing to the text. In this fifth article, a similar approach is taken in respect to the Mormon argument, starting with Joseph Smith’s assumption that “many plain and precious truths” have been removed from the Bible. By making such an argument, it opened the way for “another Testament of Jesus Christ,” namely the Book of Mormon, to be introduced as its corrector. Although Joseph Smith was not specific as to what exactly was missing, later Mormon professor and author, Dr. Clyde Williams, did offer at least eight specific “truths” he believed were missing. After going through each lacuna, it was concluded that nothing was missing, except the presuppositions stemming from ideas that Joseph Smith and company wished to impose upon the Bible.

To be specific, the Mormon doctrine of Premortal Existence was not found in the Bible, much less anywhere else in the authoritative books that Mormonism is supposedly built upon. Dr. Williams, though, attempted to find allusions to the doctrine by resorting to the Bible, which was contradiction of his overall premise that all of these truths alluded to by Joseph Smith were “missing.” Dr. Williams, in other words, wanted his proverbial “cake and eat it too.” Clearly, the reason why Premortal Existence is not found in the Bible is simply because it is a non-biblical doctrine of pagan origin that has more in common with Plato than Yahweh.

Adam’s Fall and Human Suffering was found to be wanting as well. Not only is Adam’s fall found in the Bible, the biblical storyline is vastly different than the one told by Dr. Williams and Mormonism. When Adam fell, he did not fall upward toward godhood. When Adam fell, it was not that he was incapable of having children or joy until he did. When Adam fell, he did not need to experience death in order to know how to live. Endless contradictions in the Mormon interpretation of the fall of humanity make it obvious that it is an absurdity, particularly when compared to the account found in the Bible.

Agency, free agency, or free will, is an integral part of Mormon thought. Without it no man can go on to become a god, which is an integral goal of every Mormon male. The main reason why Dr. Williams and the Mormons believe it was missing from the Bible – the Bible makes no allusions to such verbiage whatsoever – is simply because the Bible makes it clear that with the fall of humanity and its ensuing inherited depravity, all human beings are bound to a life of sin, until freed through an act of God’s grace, Jesus’ sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit’s regeneration. In short, Mormon free agency is another imposition upon the Bible, not something that was originally missing.

Dr. Williams then argued that the Atonement was a missing truth, even though he failed to mention that the atonement is discussed hundreds of times throughout the Bible, culminating the atoning sacrifice of Jesus that resulted in the salvation of those brought under his atoning sacrifice at Calvary. What Dr. Williams and the Mormons had done was to anachronistic place Jesus’ sacrifice into the Old Testament and coupled it with human effort to complete the salvific contract supposedly established by Heavenly Father. Since Jesus did his part to atone for the sins of humanity, now humanity must do its legal obligation to keep its end of the bargain. The Bible makes it clear, though, that Jesus was “manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26), which means that there is nothing any human being can offer to complete what Jesus said was “finished” (Jn. 19:30).

In a tactical change of argument, Dr. Williams moved from what was missing from the Bible to what he believed was the insufficiency of the Old Testament, as it pertained to First Principles and Ordinances. Faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift(s) of the Holy Spirit (Ghost) are all found in the Bible. Dr. Williams and the Mormons simply find the content inadequate. Why do they find the content inadequate? Because it does not, once again, fit the overall Mormon ideal of achieving godhood through a legalistically orchestrated explication. While faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift(s) of the Holy Spirit are some of the ordinances that God has ordained for the redemption and sanctification of humanity, Dr. Williams and Mormonism sees them as opportunities they must participate in, in order to garner God’s attention unto salvation.

Church Organization is Dr. Williams' sixth specific plain and precious truth he believed was missing from the Bible. Citing Doctrine & Covenants 20 as evidence, Dr. Williams only repeated the same error from previous assertions. The fall of man, crucifixion of Jesus, salvific requirements, church officers and requirements, et cetera, are all found in the Bible. The one doctrine not found in the Bible, scripted prayers, is actually discussed by Jesus, but in a non-complimentary way. So, it is in the Bible, but not in a manner that lauds it in the way Dr. Williams and the Mormons would like.

Continuing personal Revelation is another important facet to Mormonism. The Book of Mormon, itself, is a classic example of continuing personal revelation. Every Mormon is expected to receive continuing personal revelation from God, even though not all personal revelations are deemed equal by the Mormon hierarchy. It is unfortunate, however, that Joseph Smith, Dr. Williams, and others of the Mormon faithful would use it as a tool to attack the Bible. For the Bible makes it clear that its message is applicable today as when it authors originally received its inspired message. Jesus promised that upon his sending of the Holy Spirit, his followers would not only be reminded of what he said, but that their minds would be led into all the truth. Such an assurance would imply that the Christian would be able to discern when an error or lie came along that attempted to subvert the truth, which would include claims that personal revelation had ceased.

Finally, Dr. Williams argued that Satan's Identity and Method of operation were missing from the Bible. It is almost incredulous that he would make this claim, given that from the beginning, found in the Book of Genesis, Satan has not only been identified as God's archenemy and humanity's primary nemesis, but his strategic plan to undermine God's word and cause humans to act independently of God are crystal clear. What Bible does not do, though, is glorify Satan's role. He takes a back seat, so to speak, to the main character, Jesus Christ, as he works to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8). In Mormonism, though, Satan is a star and continues to be one, as he has been placed on a par with God by making his evil works as important as God's, for without one, one cannot have the other, since that is really what free agency and exaltation unto godhood is all about.

There is nothing missing from the Bible, as it pertains to correct faith and practice consistent with the truth of God. What is missing are all the twists, turns, and contradictions – most of which involve borrowed terms found in the Bible – that Joseph Smith, Dr. Williams, and Mormonism wish to impose upon the Bible, to turn truth into falsehood, darkness into light and heresy into orthodoxy, with the express goal of leaving humanity lost in the darkness of its sin, culminating in the worship of the creature, rather than the Creator.

7.6 RESULTANT EXPECTATIONS

Anyone familiar with the field of Christian apologetics that deal with religious cults and cultism are quite aware of the tactic used by those in the cults to engage in damage control when an idea is postulated that might cast a shadow upon the mother organization. When Hugh Nibley and Arnold Green blithely characterized that whatever parallels that might be discovered between Muhammad and Joseph Smith as "superficial," that was a good indicator of damage control. Since "there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9) and error is not infinite, then even though there may be a wide variety of ways to express error, inevitably there is going to overlap. The study of

Muhammad and Joseph Smith as prophets, along with the ideas they expounded upon, is clear evidence of the inevitability of overlap.

Stated thus, the final results of the study did not come as a surprise. What was satisfying, though, about going through the details was viewing the evidence and developing the arguments to show the truth and errors connected to Muhammad, Joseph Smith, and ultimately, the Bible. Starting with the suppositions that are often taken for granted as true and slowly comparing and weighing the evidence to arrive at the truth brought a sense of achievement, which is satisfying, but also a sense of urgency, remorse, and frustration. Urgency, because billions of Muslims and Mormons are completely oblivious as to what has been written in the preceding chapters. Remorse, that those same billions are destined to a devil's hell, should they never come to a knowledge of the truth about Muhammad, Joseph Smith, and Jesus Christ. Frustration, because there often seems to be no way to get the truth out to those who desperately need to hear it.

Regardless of the objective truth stated in the articles, there will always be those who are so committed to the leader or organization that spinning the truth into what amounts to a lie is common. If it is not faith-promoting or fails to make the adherent feel good, then it is perceived as something false or evil and must be outright rejected or revised to mean something the polar opposite of what the facts dictate. Years ago, the late Mormon General Authority Boyd Packer chastised Mormon scholars and historians – mostly like D. Michael Quinn – for their exposure of historical facts about Mormonism that Packer thought should have never been divulged. “Some things that are true are not very useful.” What he meant by his dismissal was that discovery and explanation of the truth is not beneficial, unless a fictive veneer has first been laid. Unadorned truth could “crush” or destroy members’ faith. It is completely contrary to what Jesus taught, when he said, “The truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31).

Conversely, it is expected that there will be some, in and out of both Mormonism and Islam, as well as elsewhere, that will examine the evidence and reconsider what it is that they believe. Some may even convert to Christianity. How God chooses to work in such circumstances, only He knows for sure. What, at times, is judged by men to be absolutely significant, the Lord discounts as trivial. What, at times men judge as trivial, the Lord exalts as something significant. While it is hoped that this work is significant, only time will tell. What is sure, though, is that this kind of work is typically unpopular, especially in the day and age we live. Challenging faith claims is viewed as an affront by many. It is not “politically correct” or “Christlike” to tear down anyone’s religious belief system, given the acceptance of pluralism as the way, the truth, and the life, rather than the exclusive claims of Jesus.

7.7 FRESH FINDINGS

While several expectations were met, as seen above, there were also several refreshing findings that were brought to the table that previously were either unobserved or not applied in other works, starting with the whole question about the biblical version available to Muhammad. Though many will not give it another thought, in the world of Christian apologetics, particularly as it applies to the cults, coupled with the burgeoning growth of Islam, what was discovered and expanded upon in respect to the Bible and Islam’s cursory acknowledgement of its importance will be crucial if

the Christian is intent on stemming the tide of Islamic expansion. The reason for this is simple: the biblical message completely undermines and destroys the Islamic apologetic that first sees the Bible as corrupted. Since the Bible has not been corrupted, then the Islamic argument, along with everything that proceeds from it, fails at the outset.

Secondly, a clear and refreshing explanation of what a biblical prophet is provides the Christian with a defense that is often taken for granted. With the wave of a hand, many who claim to be prophets of God, including those in both Islam and Mormonism, continue on in their unbiblical ways. By applying what was written above concerning the truly biblical prophet, not only was a substantive argument provided that demonstrated neither Muhammad, nor Joseph Smith, to be prophets, provision was made that went far beyond the casual accusation. Besides, providing the Christian with a concise apologetic on the subject, it forces the Muslim or Mormon to wrestle with the biblical evidence, should remain convinced either that his leader and founder were as he or they claimed.

Third, emphasis upon the fact that Allah is not the God of the Bible helps provide substance to an otherwise tenuous counterargument. Muslims are fond of glibly stating that Allah is the same god that the Jews and Christians worship. Nevertheless, the in-depth examination of the question over whether Allah and Yahweh are the same person clearly showed that they are not. Moreover, an extensive explanation showing that Muhammad was not the Holy Spirit and that the Muslim argument concerning Jesus as a mere creature and that he never claimed to be God's Son provide valuable rebuttal witnesses to those willing to read and think through both the Muslim and Christian arguments on those subjects. Especially valuable was the discovery of the fraud committed by one of Islam's more prominent apologists, as he attributed false claims to one of atheism's more prominent apologists, George Bernard Shaw.

Fourth, broaching the subject of Joseph Smith and "Heavenly Father's" sinfulness, although not necessarily novel, is certainly something that is rarely discussed in academic circles. Perhaps it is too bizarre even to consider. But in order truly understand what it is that many want to achieve – namely, that productive dialogue between Christians and Mormons transpire – agreeing that God the Father was or was not a depraved sinner must occur. Otherwise, as the later cult expert, Walter Martin (1997:128), pointed out years ago, there may be discussion that takes place, but at the end of the day, all the two parties have done is talk past each other. There must be a rational understanding of terms and expressions. Words must be defined. Concepts must be clarified. Agreed upon conclusions must be made. The satisfaction of taking the words of Joseph Smith to their logical end showed not only the falsity of the claims, but the eventual futility of carrying on a dialogue with a Mormon, until those claims are addressed, all of which starts with a clarification of words, concepts, and conclusions. The alternative is wasted time and effort coupled with inevitable confusion.

In short, the five comparative articles dealing with biblical prophecy, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith offers a "new" conversational approach by going below the surface and exposing subjects rarely, if ever, debated or discussed, even though that was not the original intent at the start of the project. Perhaps one problem, though, with such exposure is that the average Muslim or Mormon will know nothing about those subjects, as they are often left in the dark concerning them. As

noted elsewhere, “milk before meat” and preaching or teaching only “faith-promoting” themes are commonplace among such groups. Therefore, most of the members rarely read or hear about certain aberrant histories and doctrines that are a part of the organization’s structure. It will be incumbent, therefore, for the Christian to use some tender loving care when presenting the content discussed in these articles, so as not to alienate the conversationalist’s partner before other conversation topics ensue.

7.8 FURTHER RESEARCH

Although this study was a learning experience, due to space limitations, there were still several questions that are without answers. For example, in Article 1, where the discussion centered on the Bible that was available to Muhammad, why is it that no one, among the several Muslim mosques or religious learning centers that were contacted to write the chapter, knew anything about the Bible that Muhammad referenced? The typical responses were either those of ignorance of the subject or complete silence. Moreover, when the Syriac Peshitta was asked about, the response was even more deafening. That is not to say that some of the imams who responded did not give a gallant effort, but simply that by the end of the exchange, it was almost as if they were astronauts taking their first steps on the moon. They had seen the moon from afar, but when someone took them on the trip to the moon and they stepped out of the capsule, they had no idea where they were at or what they were doing. Frankly, that was puzzling, given that the Koran addresses the Bible many times throughout, but none of the contacts were prepared to give what should have amounted to basic responses. What does that say about the average Muslim who listens to the imams? Does such naïveté open real doors of “dialogue”? Is the Muslim leader or layperson willing to have that dialogue? From all accounts, it is apparent that the Muslims want the non-Muslims to read the Koran and learn more about the Islamic faith. What would that dialogue consist if the Bible available to Muhammad became the centerpiece of the discussion, which was then followed up with several exegetical discussions dealing with what amount to misunderstandings on the part of the Muslim community concerning the Bible, God, Jesus, sin, salvation, and so forth?

Secondly, while discussing the “many plain and precious truths” that were allegedly missing from the Bible, it was noticed that Dr. Williams wrote, “We have just scratched the surface. The number of plain and precious truths restored is voluminous.” If that is so, then may it be concluded that the eight he presented were the core truths that all the other missing truths are based upon? If there are so many of these truths that have been restored, then why has not Dr. Williams or anyone else affiliated with the Mormon Church in an “official” capacity specifically explained just what those truths are? Moreover, since it was demonstrated that every one of the “restored truths” that Dr. Williams presented were not restored at all, given that they were either never lost in the first place or simply were projections inconsistent with biblical faith and practice, then what would that say about the “voluminous” other truths acclaimed to be restored or yet to be restored? This is an area of study that should be examined further to establish its credibility or debunked for its hyperbolicism.

When all five articles are considered in light of the prophetic claims made by either Muhammad and Joseph Smith or their followers, it is readily apparent that neither man fulfilled the office or role of a biblical prophet. The revelations they produced were contrary to biblical teaching and

instruction. Both advocated doctrines about God and Jesus that were clearly at odds with the Bible. Both produced false prophecies stemming from poor exegesis or specific verbiage that even the cleverest grammatical gymnastics could not overcome. Muhammad was not the prophet announced in Deuteronomy 18 and there was no Zion's Temple built in the "New Jerusalem" (i.e. Independence, Missouri) in "this generation." In conclusion, both men were false prophets and these five articles provided the evidence that only "scratch the surface" on explaining why.

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