



The Islamic Dilemma, Answered

An argument circulating among Christian apologists holds that the Qur'an traps Islam by affirming the Bible. Four of its claims can be checked in an afternoon. Here is what the checking returns.

- The Qur'an affirms the *Injīl*, the revelation given to Jesus. The four-Gospel canon is a different object.
- The claim that Islam teaches self-earned salvation is refuted by a report agreed upon by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
- Its closing appeal rests on the letters of Paul, whose apostolic claim Islam does not accept.

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The perfection argument is empty

The argument runs: the Qur'an claims perfection, and a single error would destroy that claim.

Notice what is missing. No error is produced. A conditional is built, the reader is invited to imagine the antecedent satisfied, and the matter is left there.

An argument of that shape carries no weight against any book. Applied to the Bible it would read identically.

Turning the standard around

Accept the rule, that one demonstrated error is fatal, and apply it to the Christian canon:

- **1 John 5:7-8** is judged spurious by every modern critical edition, absent from every known Greek manuscript save eight, and first attested in Greek around 1362 CE.
- **Mark 16:9-20** is missing from Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. Vaticanus leaves a blank column where the Gospel stops.
- **1 Timothy 3:16** required converting OC to ΘC, a change of two strokes.

B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1994), 647–649, 573–574.



Does Islam teach salvation by works?

A standard claim contrasts a Qur'anic scheme of good deeds offsetting bad against a Christian gospel of unearned grace.

The claim is checkable, and it fails.

ʿĀ'isha reported that the Prophet said none of you will enter Paradise by his deeds. His companions asked whether this included him. He answered that it included him also, unless Allah should cover him with his mercy.

The report is *muttafaqun ʿalayh*, agreed upon by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the highest tier of authentication in Sunni Islam.

Entry into Paradise is by the *rahma* of Allah. It was so for the Prophet himself.

ورحمتي وسعت كل شيء

And my mercy encompasses all things. (Q 7:156)

The contrast collapses, and the appeal built on it collapses with it.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6464; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2818. Cf. Q 2:111–112.



The nature of God

The Trinity is set opposite Qur'anic monotheism and presented as the teaching of the Bible.

The word does not occur in the Bible. The doctrine was formulated across the fourth and fifth centuries in the councils.

Its clearest scriptural expression is the passage at 1 John 5:7-8 that every critical edition removes, and which Christian textual scholars have already withdrawn.

What Jesus said when asked

In the earliest Gospel, Jesus is asked which commandment is first. He answers by reciting the Shema: hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

He is affirming the strictest monotheism in the Hebrew scriptures.

Mark 12:28–29; cf. Deuteronomy 6:4.



Surah 2:255 against 1 Timothy 2:5

These two verses are paired on the question of mediation between God and man. Both ends of the pairing are unsound.

Āyat al-Kursī does not deny intercession. It states that nobody intercedes with Allah except by his permission. The verse regulates intercession and grounds it in divine permission.

Shafā'a is established doctrine in Islam, affirmed in the Qur'an and detailed at length in the hadith corpus. A verse specifying the condition under which intercession occurs is a poor choice for proving that Islam has none.

At the other end, 1 Timothy is a Pastoral Epistle. The substantial majority of critical scholars judge the Pastorals pseudepigraphic and date them between 80 and 100 CE, decades after the death of the man whose name they carry.

A document written by an unknown hand, two generations after Jesus, in another man's name, is offered as evidence of what Jesus taught about his own role.

D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, 2005), 554–561.



Is the Injil the Christian Gospel?

The whole argument requires that the *Injil* the Qur'an affirms and the Christian Gospel be one object.

They are not.

The Qur'an uses *Injil* only in the singular and never reaches for the available Arabic plural, *al-anājil*. No Qur'anic usage betrays awareness of multiple Gospels.

The referent is the revelation given to Jesus, on the pattern of the Torah given to Moses and the Qur'an given to Muhammad.

The four-Gospel canon is a collection of narratives written about Jesus by later hands. Once the two are distinguished, the argument has no subject left to work on.

S. H. Griffith, "Gospel," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2:342–343.



Where the appeal rests

The argument closes by leaving argument behind. You are told that all have sinned, that Christ died for sinners, that receiving him confers the right to become a child of God, and that confessing Jesus as Lord brings salvation. You are asked to pray and receive him today.

Look at the citations carrying that appeal.

- Romans 3:23
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 10:9
- John 1:12

Three of the four are Paul.

The doctrine of substitutionary death and the mechanism by which confession secures salvation rest on the letters of a man who never met Jesus during his ministry, who grounded his commission in a private vision, and whose claim to apostolic office falls inside an interval Islam holds closed to prophetic mediation.

The Prophet said: the prophets are brothers, their religion is one, and there is no prophet between us.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3258; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2365.



The verdict

- An argument with no evidence inside it.
- A claim about Islam refuted by the first hadith anyone would check.
- A verse-pairing that misreads both verses.
- An identification the Qur'an's own vocabulary refuses.
- A closing appeal built on Paul.

It travels on the assumption that nobody hearing it will look anything up.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ

Or do they have partners who have ordained for them a religion which Allah has not permitted? (Q 42:21)

Read the full reply

The Qur'anic vocabulary, the manuscript record, and the standing of the Pauline corpus are set out in full at:

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