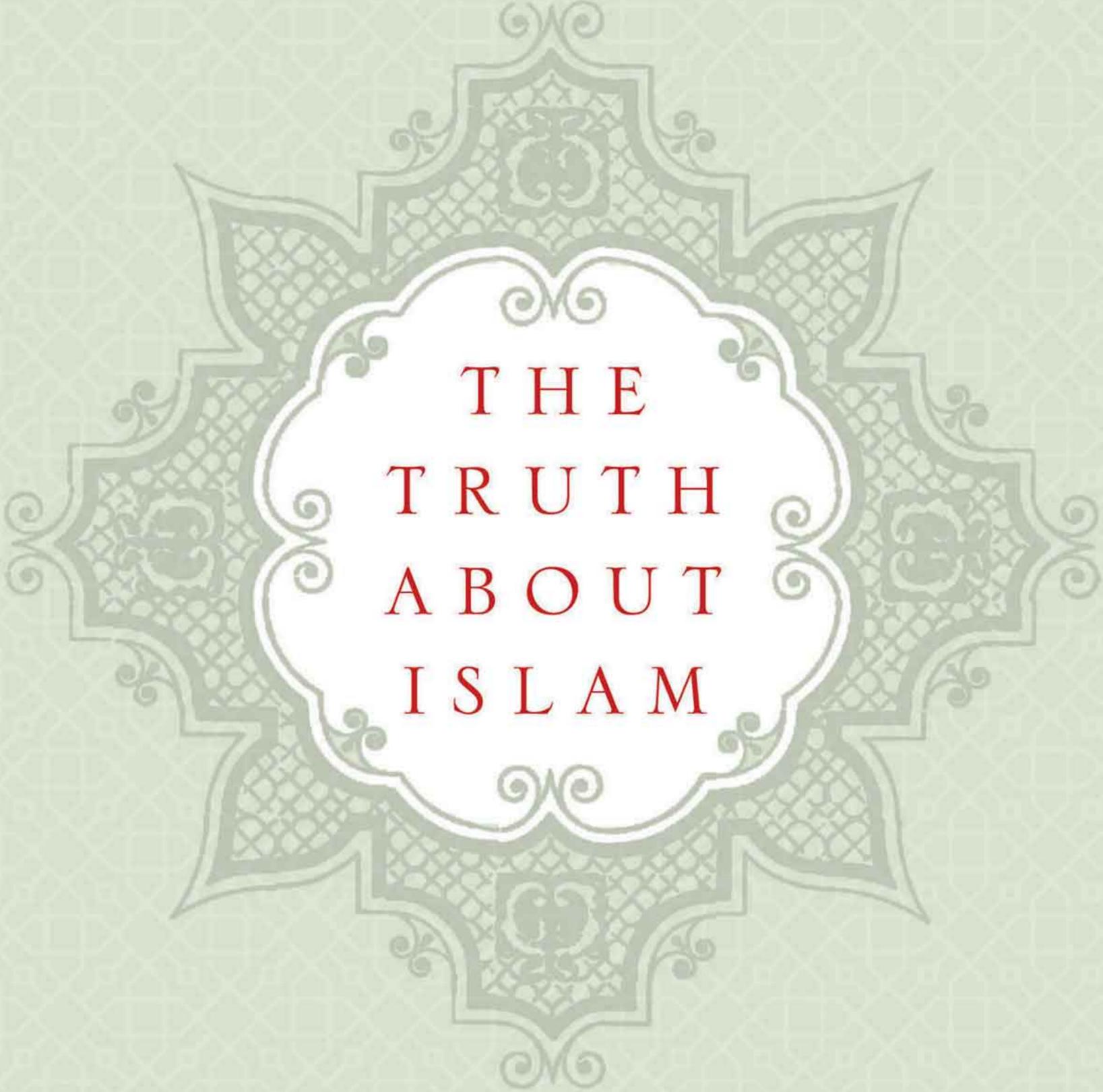
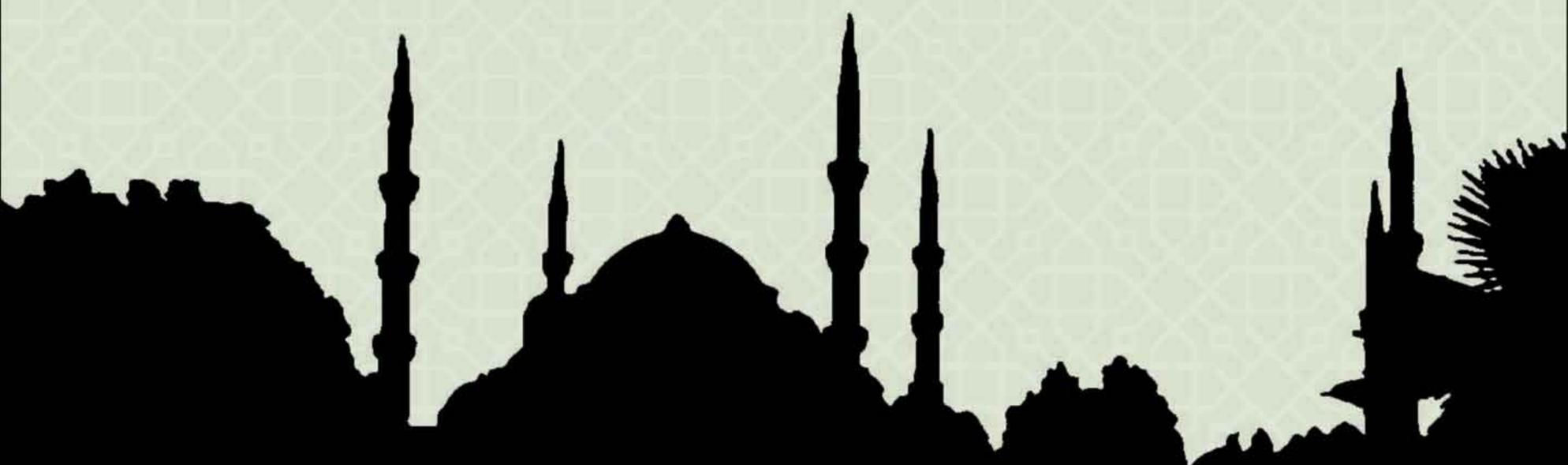


THE NOBLE QUR'AN'S TEACHINGS
IN LIGHT *of the* HOLY BIBLE



THE
TRUTH
ABOUT
ISLAM

ANEES ZAKA & DIANE COLEMAN



FOREWORD BY PETER A. LILLBACK

“A wonderful exposition of the clear differences between Islam and Christianity. While not afraid to be forthright, the authors present the material in a winsome way with a desire to see Muslims won to Christ.” —**Bruce A. McDowell**, coauthor of *Muslims and Christians at the Table*

“A stirring read, this timely book does a thorough job of helping the reader navigate through the fog of religious relativism. While many are interesting in equalizing and downsizing religious claims, the authors have bravely and carefully laid out the distinctive doctrines of Christianity in a helpful and accessible way.” —**Gregg MacDougall**, pastor, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

“Zaka’s passion for Muslim evangelism cannot be expressed more clearly than in this book. His biblical and Reformed understanding of Islam will challenge African-American Bible-believing churches to seriously reach out to the thousands of our own people, young and old, who have left the faith for Islam. Full of Qur’anic and biblical teachings, compared side-by-side, this book is written with truth and grace. It is very rare to find such a book, and I recommend it highly. My own church will use it in reaching out to the nearly twenty thousand Muslims in our area.” —**Wilbert S. Richardson**, pastor, Philadelphia; chairman of the board of the Biblical Institute for Islamic Studies in the USA

“As a minister in the streets, marketplace, homes, and even the mosques, I need help in understanding the truth about Islam. Zaka and Coleman have given me such a practical and discerning tool. Its tables listing excerpts from the Qur’an and Bible are priceless and allow me to begin to understand the Islamic mind so that I can reach my growing Muslim neighbors with the Truth.” —**Kenneth Wallace**, evangelist among Muslims and Jews, Philadelphia

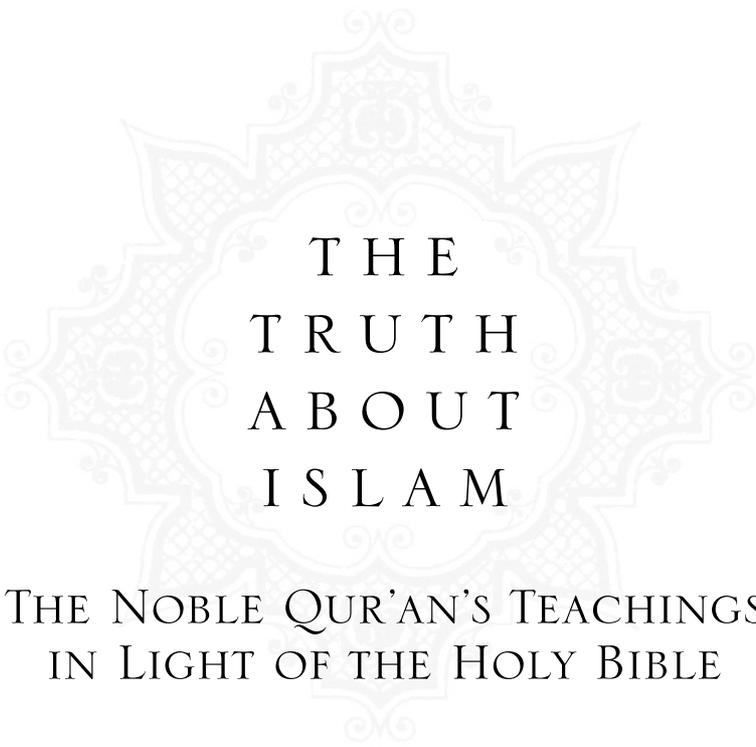
“For those who are ready to biblically love, understand, and evangelize Muslims, this book is a must. Dr. Zaka’s many years and experience in Muslim evangelism make him a leading expert in America in this important subject. We will be using this useful tool to better equip our people as we reach out to the large, growing Muslim population in our community.” —**Luis Centano, American Missionary Fellowship, Philadelphia**

“Surely there are sincere Muslims who misunderstand orthodox Christianity’s incompatibility with their own essential Islamic precepts. This book will crystallize the radical distinctions between biblical Christianity and Islam that have become murky in popular writings and speeches. I can verify Dr. Zaka’s kind regard for Muslims and his earnest desire to allow the Bible to resonate in the hearts of all who, by God’s grace, will hear. This fine book contributes enormously toward better understanding.” —**Robert H. Miller, executive director, Hope for America**

“This much-needed book will foster a deeper appreciation for the Holy Scripture by Christians, when compared to the teachings of the Qur’an. I recommend this excellent work to God’s people everywhere and will use it myself in my own study with Muslim friends.” —**D. Eddie Bhawanie, professor of New Testament studies, American University of Biblical Studies**

“Addressing the volatile issue of Islam and Christianity, this practical masterpiece, written from a Reformed perspective, should be read by both pastors and their parishioners.” —**Darlene M. Quinn, manager of telephone services for publisher, Nashville**

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ANEES ZAKA & DIANE COLEMAN



P U B L I S H I N G

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To

*Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*

*The families God has given us,
natural and “adopted through Christ”*

Sincere Truth-seekers everywhere

True statesmen of our country

*Every faithful Bible preacher and teacher in our land,
especially those in the Presbyterian Church in America*

*The loving memory of the late Dr. James M. Boice,
who preached, taught, and lived
the truth of the gospel*

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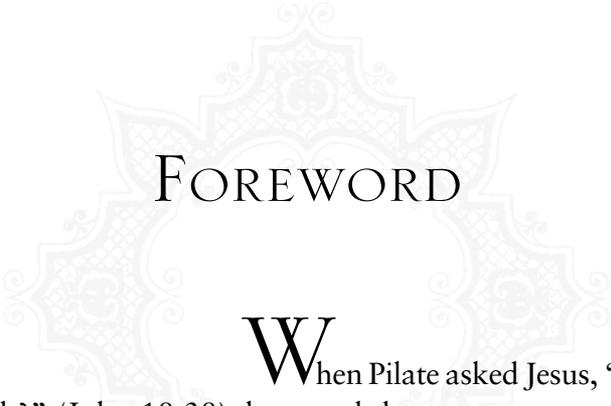
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FOREWORD

When Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38), he posed the supreme question of all of life. But he also posed the most ironic question of all of history. Standing on trial before him was the one who claimed to be “the truth” (John 14:6) and the one who “came into the world to testify to the truth” (John 18:37). In fact, Jesus declared, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37).

Obviously, the quest for Truth and the confrontation over truth claims did not begin in Pilate’s tribunal. Nor did they end there. From Adam’s encounter with two different assertions of truth in Eden (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–5), to Copernicus’s *De Revolutionibus* in the Papal Court, to Luther at the Diet of Worms, to the Founding Fathers of Independence Hall, to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the Holocaust, to the fire and debris of the World Trade Center on 9/11, the cataclysmic implications of the disagreement over Truth have defined the course of human destiny.

What makes Dr. Anees Zaka’s and Mrs. Diane Coleman’s *The Truth about Islam* such an important and compelling work as well as necessary reading for our moment in history is that it insists that Truth exists, and that the claims

for Truth made by both Christianity and Islam must be taken seriously—not only by their own religious adherents, but by all who share life in a pluralistic culture.

Pushing aside certain cultural leaders’ “politically correct” platitudes that encourage us to believe that truth is only personal and therefore entirely relative, our authors declare that the teachings of Islam and Christianity are clear and distinct, and that those doctrines result in powerfully different views of reality, behavior, and culture.

Whether one approaches this book holding to the authors’ sincere and deeply held conviction that Christianity is true, or to the Noble Qur’an’s opposite view of Truth, or even to agnosticism’s or secular liberalism’s total uncertainty regarding Truth characteristics, this study makes one thing clear: Islam and Christianity cannot both be true.

Zaka and Coleman take us to the original sources—the Holy Scriptures and the Noble Qur’an—to compare each faith’s holy text point for point. They do so with conviction, but also with careful scholarship and sincere respect. Their task is apologetic in nature, but their defense of Truth does not lose sight of the ideal of “speaking the truth in love.”

The Truth about Islam, then, is a timely and practical book. The reader interested in the defense of the Christian faith or in missionary and evangelistic outreach will find help for the task. But a sincere Muslim will also be aided by reading this work in learning how a Christian student of Islam views that faith. An unbeliever in Christianity or Islam will be assisted as well in understanding how these two competing faiths contrast based on their official sources.

On a personal note, as one who is deeply concerned both as a pastor and as director of an educational organization committed to reinstilling in our culture the Judeo-Christian

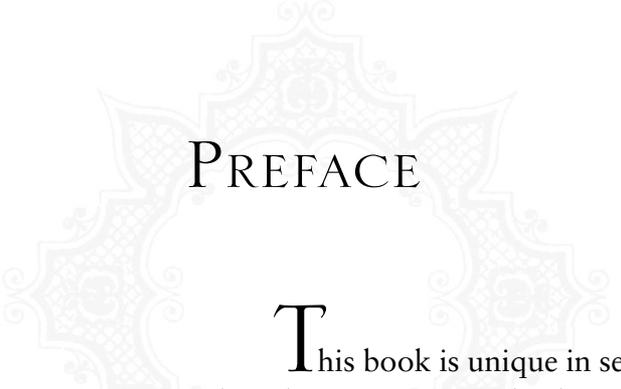
values of America's Founding Fathers, I am grateful that the fruits of our authors' research are capsulized in such thorough and helpful summaries and charts.

And finally, it is certainly helpful for me as a defender and promoter of religious liberty to know that the Noble Qur'an says in Sura 9:29,

Fight those who do not believe in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book [i.e., Christianity], until they pay the Jizya [tax] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

It is also important for me to know that the Holy Scriptures say, "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12) and "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

Peter A. Lillback, Ph.D., Senior Pastor
Proclamation Presbyterian Church
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania



PREFACE

This book is unique in several ways. First, its two authors have contrasting backgrounds: one Western, one Eastern. Both are American citizens and united in fellowship with Christ Jesus through his saving grace. Christ is Lord over all, and in him there is no East or West. Nonetheless, with their diverse backgrounds the authors are able to view issues of faith from differing cultural vantage points. Second, hundreds of Christians bathed the authors in prayer and fasting throughout the book's development. Third, the Qur'anic and biblical texts have been assembled in tables, sometimes placed side by side to facilitate study. Sincere Truth-seekers will be helped by this clear presentation of the actual words of both documents.

We have focused on telling the Truth in love. "Truth matters supremely," writes Os Guinness, "because in the end, without truth there is no freedom. Truth, in fact, is not only essential to freedom; *it is* freedom, and the only way to a free life lies in becoming a person of truth and learning to live in truth. Living in truth is the secret of living free."¹

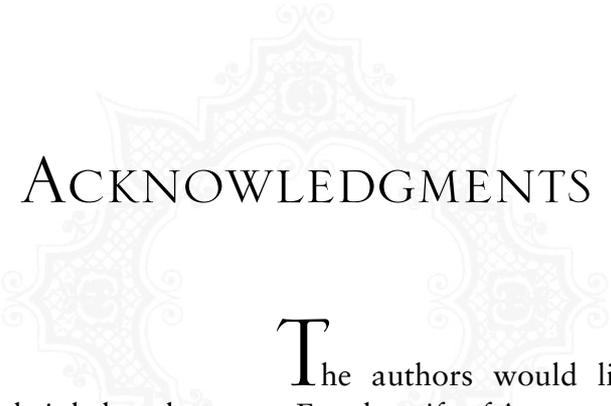
But Truth, especially about ourselves, is seldom sweet. In fact, it is almost invariably bitter and is, for many ears, hard to hear. A great measure of Truth is included in this book,

including the ultimate conviction that *Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, and that *no one comes to the Father except through him*.

This may be an offensive position to some. Although it is not our intent to alienate anyone or be viewed as adversarial, this Truth was given to us by the Creator of the universe, and we, as biblical Christians, are commissioned and committed to deliver this good news to all. We pray for special blessing upon those who read it with earnest minds and open hearts. The authors also wholeheartedly welcome, through the publisher, readers' sincere inquiries.

It is with grateful thanksgiving and devoted worship that we offer this humble work to Christ alone. We pray that it will be pleasing in his sight, and we give him all the glory, the honor, and the majesty in his church worldwide, now and forevermore. Amen.

Anees Zaka



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Additional thanks go to faithful daughters Allison and Juliana, who endured long days as their mother sat at the computer. The grace of God rested upon them continually.

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Finally, heartfelt thanks go to all the committed biblical Christians around the world who faithfully lifted the authors in prayer during the writing. Their petitions for help and guidance were graciously answered by our great God and King. It is a continual joy and delight to serve him with devoted heart, soul, mind, and strength.

“A PRAYER FOR
THE MUSLIM WORLD”



Almighty God,
our heavenly Father,
who hast made of one blood
all nations
and hast promised
that many shall come
from the East
and sit down with Abraham
in thy kingdom:
We pray for
thy prodigal children
in Muslim lands
who are still afar off,
that they may be brought nigh
by the blood of Christ.
Look upon them in pity,
because they are ignorant
of thy truth . . .



INTRODUCTION

T*he Truth about Islam*—a bold title. But Truth is a bold thing. It is not driven by public-opinion polls. Nor can it be manufactured by hyped-up emotion or straitjacketed by flawed human reason. Truth stands firm against a kaleidoscope of cultural forces and is not judged by any human court. It is eternal and infinite. Truth is Divine.

People claim to love and seek Truth. Throughout the ages men have praised its pursuit in poetry and prose, song and sophistry. It appears elusive and unattainable. Truth is so encompassing, so brilliantly complex, so elegant in its harmony and coherence that it surpasses the full comprehension of any mortal. Truth is above and beyond finding out by man-made efforts, residing in the realm of religion, to be apprehended only by faith.

Qur'anic Islam claims to be the faith of Truth, capitalizing the word *Truth* to underscore belief in its divine origin. Islam presents itself as a kissing cousin of Judaism and Christianity and the champion of uncompromising monotheism, with Allah as its sole object of worship. Muhammad is regarded as the final prophet of Allah. The Noble Qur'an, which is the preferred title of Islam's sacred book, is revered as Allah's final word.

Biblical Christianity also lays claim to being the faith of Truth, capitalizing the word *Truth* to honor it as the primary characteristic of and alternative name for the biblical Triune God, Yahweh. *Triune* means “three in one.” God the Father reveals himself to humanity in his Son, Jesus Christ, and manifests himself through the power of the Holy Spirit. Three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—make up the Godhead. Given the title “Messiah” or “Christ,” Jesus is proclaimed as the only Savior of humankind, fulfilling biblical Old Testament prophecy. The books of the biblical New Testament bear witness to his life and mission. Jesus Christ, according to biblical Christians, is Yahweh’s complete and final Word to man and the fullest revelation of Divine Truth.

We have here two very different belief systems. But recently many Muslim and Christian religious leaders have been publicly proclaiming that Islam and Christianity are not so very different. In the book *Islam: A Global Civilization*, prepared and published by the Islamic Affairs Department of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, D.C., we read:

One should in fact properly speak of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, for Islam shares with the other Abrahamic religions their sacred history, the basic ethical teachings contained in the Ten Commandments and above all, belief in the One God. And it renews and repeats the true beliefs of Jews and Christians whose scriptures are mentioned as divinely revealed books in Islam’s own sacred book, the Qur’an.¹

This presentation of Islam by Saudi Arabian nationals clearly claims continuity with Judeo-Christian thought. It echoes the frequently heard “politically correct” view that truth can take many forms and present itself in many ways, with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam being “separate paths on the same mountain to the same God.” This approach, while acknowledging differences between the belief systems, essentially states that those differences don’t ultimately matter. In the effort to find common ground, this perspective blurs the defining edges of all three faiths.

But the edges of Islam have come into sharper focus since September 11, 2001. The intense spotlights that illuminated the burial mounds of debris from the destruction of the World Trade Center have now been trained on Islam. Just as the tower debris was minutely sifted to detect any precious remains of humanity, so too must Islam be sifted to find out what it holds in relation to the Truth.

Religious discussion today follows the drumbeat of secular pundits and media analysts—not the best-qualified participants in this debate. Spiritual truths cannot be reduced to sound bites or painted in broad conceptual strokes. Muslims and Christians have a plethora of misperceptions about one another. Honest and forthright dialogue between believers of both faiths cannot take place when truths about either religion are glossed over, taken out of context, or embellished with falsehood.

Since the attack on the United States—which was, by any sane and moral standard, an evil and appalling deed—many books have been written about Islam: some by Muslims, some by Christians, some by humanists or secularists. These books vary widely in value, some of them suffering from inadvertent inaccuracy, careless attack of one religion or the

other (or both), or dangerous compromise of historic biblical Christian faith.

This book is written on the presuppositional conviction that the One True God reveals himself and his Truth in the Holy Bible. We are certain, based on many convincing proofs, that the text of the Holy Bible has not been corrupted but is a document we can trust to define biblical Christianity. We therefore rely on it as our standard for evaluating all other philosophical or religious positions so that every thought is made obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), who is Lord of all.

Greg L. Bahnsen, in his book *Always Ready*, articulates this position clearly:

The word of the Lord is self-attestingly true and authoritative. It is the criterion we must use in judging all other words. Thus, God's word is unassailable. It must be the rock-bottom foundation of our thinking and living (Matt. 7:24–25). It is our presuppositional starting-point. All our reasoning must be subordinated to God's word, for no man is in a position to reply against it (Rom. 9:20) and any who contend with God will end up having to answer (Job 40:1–5). It must not be the changing opinions of men but the self-attesting, authoritative, ultimately veracious word from God that has the preeminence in our thoughts, for “canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?” (Job 40:9).²

We invite serious and reasonable people of all faiths, particularly those of Islam and Christianity, to read this book with the above understanding in order to derive benefit from it.

As our primary source document for Islam, we will quote from the Noble Qur'an as interpreted into English by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2001 edition). Various Hadiths and Sunnahs (sayings and practices of Muhammad) are cited, since these expand on Qur'anic themes and are used by Islamic religious leaders to define doctrine and develop religious practices. Finally, we occasionally refer to noted Islamic commentators, such as Al-Ghazali, who have been strongly influential in the theological development of Islam.

For biblical references we quote primarily the New International Version of the Holy Bible (1984 edition, International Bible Society). Additionally, major scholars and theologians within the Reformed and Calvinistic tradition of biblical Christianity, past and present, are cited for authoritative exegesis and in-depth analysis.

Many of these excerpts are presented in tables for ease of review. Readers are strongly encouraged to obtain copies of both the Noble Qur'an and the Holy Bible and to read the cited passages completely and within context. Only honest examination of the original doctrinal and historical source texts of each religion and the behaviors taught to believers based on those sources will help us to understand each faith—particularly the truth about Islam.

By presenting information in this manner, we are not seeking to conduct a comparative study between the two faiths. Biblical Christianity and Qur'anic Islam are not equal in terms of doctrine or behavior and are therefore not in that sense comparable. The former represents Divine Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. The latter is a reflection of a particular personality, time, and place, and, as we will see, seriously deviates from the central message of the Old and New Testaments to which it links itself. Because of

this linkage, it is altogether fitting that we should evaluate Islam in the light of the Holy Bible, which Islam itself acknowledges as revelatory in some Qur'anic passages.

When Qur'anic passages seem to reflect some measure of consistency with biblical thought, this is not to be taken as a verification that the Noble Qur'an in its entirety is Divine Truth. There may be points of apparent intersection within the faith traditions, but these are less congruous than they may at first appear.

At the same time, we want to make it clear that sincere and honest questioning of Islamic doctrine and practice does not constitute, and is not intended as, aggression against adherents of that faith. The dialectic approach we take is an effective means of accurately communicating ideas. We intend no disrespect to the Muslim community by our use of probing analytical questions or philosophical rhetoric. This is one of the ways in which Truth is discerned by rational and relational beings.

The Noble Qur'an asserts in Sura 5:82:

And nearest among them in love to the Believers [Muslims] will you find those who say, "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant.

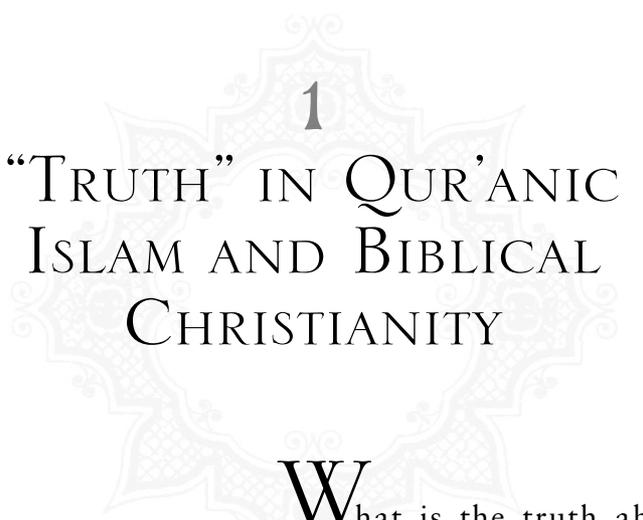
First Peter 3:15 says:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear

INTRODUCTION

conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

We commit this work to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to use it as a means of grace for those whom he chooses to call to himself. May our great and loving Heavenly Father receive all the glory for our humble effort.



1

“TRUTH” IN QUR’ANIC ISLAM AND BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

What is the truth about “Truth”? This is not an exercise in semantic gymnastics. Truth is not a hopelessly abstract idea or a nebulous gut feeling; it is a divine reality. It has characteristics—truths—about it that make it identifiable and knowable. Several of these are familiar to us all.

Judicial proceedings throughout the free world and in Muslim nations require that witnesses promise to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Why are these parameters so clearly and separately defined? The reason is that it is very possible to tell partial truth by withholding or distorting certain facts. It is also possible to add to the truth by bringing in extraneous information, thereby putting a misleading spin on the facts. The oath is designed to prevent these kinds of errors.

Divine Truth, proceeding from the mind of God, more than satisfies the characteristics of judicial truth-telling. It

is “true Truth” (in the words of Christian philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer)—consistent, faithful, dependable, and pure, not contaminated with any error. It is the whole Truth, not partial or incomplete, not requiring anything apart from itself to confirm or substantiate it. And it is nothing but the Truth, without superfluous, misleading, or distracting information.

Divine Truth must be nothing short of perfect. And this is, indeed, what biblical Christianity proclaims.

RELATIVISM AS TRUTH

Where do people go to find Truth these days? Confronted with the bewildering number of belief systems claiming to have the Truth, many people have thrown up their hands and chosen the easy path, which is the philosophy of relativism. Its premise is simple: “Truth is relative. What’s true for me may or may not be true for you. It may be true for me in one instance and not in another. I have my own idea of what is true, and who’s to say it’s not?”

In his book *Renewing the Soul of America*, Charles Crismier counters, “Truth must be what it is and ought to be, not what I want it to be.”¹ Relativism is a capricious approach to Truth. Its most obvious flaw is that it is internally inconsistent. It commits what it condemns by asserting one absolute truth: that there is not and never has been an authority on earth possessing objective Truth applicable to all people at all times. By stating this, relativism itself becomes dogmatic. As Ibn Warraq explains, “There is something inherently illogical in relativism. Relativism can’t be stated, because the proposition that expounds relativism cannot itself be relative.”²

So we must discard relativism as a means for arriving at Divine Truth.

SCIENCE AS TRUTH

Others have embraced science as the foundation of knowledge. In that view Truth must be observable, reproducible, and measurable. At best, however, scientific laws derived by human experience give us *truths*, or portions of the Truth, but not the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. Scientific truths are never complete, nor are they fully dependable. New discoveries often challenge previous "laws." Experimental results sometimes yield conflicting information and require additional protocols to confirm theories, which may later give way to new findings. Science broadens our working knowledge of our physical environment but can never be an efficient tool for understanding spiritual realities such as love, compassion, goodness, and honor.

So, although science can be of service in describing some truths within a larger framework, it too must be discarded as an autonomous criterion or a means of arriving at complete Divine Truth.

TRUTH MUST MAKE ITSELF KNOWN

If we were to proceed through all the disciplines and philosophies of man, we would find none of them, alone or together, sufficient to discover the truth about Divine Truth. Divine Truth, if it is to be known, must somehow take the initiative and reveal itself to us.

THE MORAL LAW

All people are religious. We all believe in something. Some of our beliefs are startlingly consistent across time and space. Warraq, quoting Isaiah Berlin, comments: “No culture that we know lacks the notions of good and bad; true and false. Courage, for example, has, so far as we can tell, been admired in every society known to us. There are universal values. This is an empirical fact about mankind.”³ It is *empirical* because it is something that can be verified by observation or experience, namely our own human behavior.

This consistency among cross-cultural values is referred to as the “moral law,” implanted within human conscience as a means of internal control. Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis, in his masterly work *Mere Christianity*, explains, “We conclude that the Being behind the universe is intensely interested in right conduct—in fair play, unselfishness, courage, good faith, honesty, and truthfulness.”⁴ All the common cultural virtues have Truth at their core—and as their source.

Why do we call the moral law a “law”? It is not like a scientific law, which is inferred from observable behaviors or outcomes. For instance, we know that gravity exists because objects always fall downward. Yet we do not receive our notions of moral law based on what we observe ourselves doing, but from an innate sense that we *should* do right, a sense properly enlightened by scriptural revelation of what “right” is.

In many cases, our sense of responsibility is in antithesis to the acts we actually commit. Human beings frequently behave in ways that are unfair, selfish, cowardly, faithless, dishonest, and deceitful. Although we attempt to justify and often condone such wrong behaviors in creative ways, we

can never completely erase some sense of morality. Though a few may tragically twist and distort their sense of duty to the point of flying fully loaded planes into civilian buildings, there remains a prevailing sense among us that this is appallingly evil. Even when we do not agree on what is right and what is wrong, we all believe—religiously—that some things are right and others are wrong. And amazingly often, despite religious and cultural differences, we do express a shared innate moral sense of where to draw the line.

Lewis concludes that the implantation of this moral law is the way in which the God of the universe makes himself known to us. The Divine Being takes the initiative and reveals himself to us. Having a conscience is a gift from God to assist us in discerning Truth. Biblical Christians often call this gift God's "common grace."

The natural human response to this phenomenon throughout history in every culture—so natural that it must be suppressed to avoid it—has been to ask, Who is behind this moral law? What is his Truth? Who or what can we trust to teach us about his Truth? When we know this Truth, *how should we respond?*

TRUTH IN QUR'ANIC ISLAM

In Islam, the divine source of Truth is Allah, whose name is most often defined by Muslims as "the God." In Islamic thought, the main focus of the concept of Truth is not on knowing Allah in a relational way, but on affirming the revelation that Muhammad received (the Noble Qur'an) and defending him as the final prophet of Allah.

The holy texts of Islam—the Noble Qur'an, the Hadiths (sayings of the prophet Muhammad), and the Sunnah (prac-

tices of Muhammad)—represent the fullest expression of Truth to Muslims. The law of Allah (shari’ah) in these texts is Allah’s will for man. The response of the Muslim is to submit to this law, with its attendant rites and rituals, in the hope of pleasing Allah and attaining personal reward, both here and in the hereafter.

Failure to submit results in eternal damnation: “If anyone contends with the Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of Faith, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell,—what an evil refuge!” (Sura 4:115).

TRUTH IN BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

The Zondervan Exhaustive Concordance for the New International Version of the Holy Bible lists well over two hundred passages containing the word *truth*. In the book of Matthew alone, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth” more than 30 times to call attention to a main point of teaching. Clearly, Truth is a very important concept within biblical thought.

Christians believe that Truth is fully revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of a divine Person, Jesus Christ. The Triune God, Yahweh (whose name means, “I was, I am, I will be”), chose to make himself known to his people through his Son. Jesus boldly proclaims in John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” This is as startling a statement today as it was for first-century listeners! In essence, Jesus is saying: “I am (Yahweh) Truth (the Way and Life).”

Biblical Christianity maintains that Jesus, the perfect representation of Yahweh, is Truth personified (Eph. 4:21). The

main focus of Divine Truth is to bring repentant people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, thereby redeeming them from the sentence of eternal separation from Yahweh. This is salvation for the Christian.

REDEMPTION AND SALVATION

The twin ideas of "redemption" and "salvation" are ancient ones. Used in the books of Exodus and Psalms to describe Yahweh's action in delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, *redemption* is the release of something or someone from bondage or possession through the payment of a redemption price. This deliverance does not come cheaply. It is, in fact, a costly thing and often demands a high payment, which can only be described as sacrificial.

Christian theology states that man, because of his sin nature inherited from Adam and Eve, cannot come into the presence of the perfect and holy God, Yahweh, and cannot have full communion with him. Man has fallen and is under the sentence of death and separation from Yahweh, both on earth and in eternity. But Yahweh desires to have fellowship with each man and woman, for he has created them in his own image as relational beings.

By God's own justice, the price to be paid in order to release someone from this bondage to sin and death is the submission of a perfect will to him, resulting in total and complete righteousness, culminating in the final act of the shedding of blood through the physical death of the earthly body as a perfect sacrifice. This is indeed a costly redemption!

No mere man can accomplish this. No mere mortal can offer perfect submission of his will to Yahweh, nor will the death of his imperfect body yield the perfect blood sacrifice

necessary to redeem himself or anyone else. No mere man in history is able to become fully righteous and follow the divinely implanted moral law perfectly by his own effort, no matter how sincere he may be or how hard he tries. Romans 3:23 states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Man is corrupted by sin and inclined to rebellion. We need only look at ourselves to see that this is true. We are traitors to the Truth and habitual violators of the moral law. This understanding leads biblical Christians to brokenhearted repentance and the realization that our only hope for deliverance is in our dependence on a gracious Savior. This was the response of the people in Acts 2:38: “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.’ ”

Thus, we arrive at the central concept of salvation. Christians believe that God’s incredibly loving plan was to redeem, or buy back, his people by paying their debt for them, graciously offering himself in the perfect Person of Jesus Christ, his Son. Ephesians 1:7–8 states: “In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” This is what Christians hold to be the truth about the Truth of Holy Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

THE NEED FOR REDEMPTION

Truth in biblical thought is always redemptive. Truth in Islamic thought is never redemptive. In biblical Christianity, God compassionately brings his people to himself. In

Islam, Allah is considered "wholly other" and entirely separated from his people.⁵ Allah redeems no one.

Although Islam claims descent from Judeo-Christian thought and purports to honor the "previous Scripture," which is the Holy Bible, salvation through redemption by another is a completely alien idea to Muslims. The acknowledgment of sinners' basic need for salvation is entirely absent from Islamic thought. The message of Islam "concerns men and women as they were created by God—not as fallen beings."⁶ Muslims do not recognize the inherent sin nature of man. Violation of the law of Allah is simply due to human forgetfulness, not because of any internal corruption. Repetitive prayer and Qur'anic recitation are established to assist man's poor memory. "[Faith] means to remember God [Allah] at all times, and marks the highest level of being a Muslim."⁷

MORAL LAW REPLACED

The moral law, implanted within man by Yahweh's common grace, is effectively replaced in Islam with prescribed public behaviors of devotion. Strong community pressure is applied to ensure observance. These behaviors are the primary means for overcoming human forgetfulness and achieving a higher level of submission to Allah.

Publicly enforced devotional behaviors have a tendency to impart a sense of false security to those who engage in them. Some Christian groups adhere to similar kinds of practices. But such behaviors among Christians are generally extrabiblical rituals, established and maintained by human tradition and not sanctioned by Scripture. In Islam, however, public devotional behaviors are derived from and intrinsic to the Qur'anic message.

All deep religious thinkers must agree that ritualistic behaviors are insufficient to meet the spiritual demands of a pure and holy Deity or the spiritual needs of man. Disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and tithing are important in the exercise of biblical Christian faith, but they are only carnal and meaningless motions if not motivated by a loving relationship with the biblical Triune God. They can never fully satisfy man's fundamental need, which is salvation from the bondage of sin, divine forgiveness, and true communion with the Triune God, both in time and in eternity.

BELIEF IN ACTION

This relationship with the Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ has a tremendous impact on the way in which biblical Christians live their lives. Salvation's certainty for the believer has a liberating effect, freeing him from the bondage of habitual sin. Human beings can never be perfect in their earthly existence, but those who are called to be God's adopted children through Christ are no longer compelled to blindly follow their own corrupted wills.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune God, enters into the "temple" of the Christian, as we read in 1 Corinthians 6:19: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" The Spirit enables, empowers, and teaches him to "conduct [himself] in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27).

The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier of the Christian conscience and inscribes the moral law on the hearts of believers, who are to conduct themselves accordingly.

This is biblical belief in action. The apostle Paul continually asks the question "Do you not know . . . ?" and appeals to the knowledge of his readers in his letter to the Romans (6:3, 16; 7:1) and his first letter to the Corinthians (3:16; 5:6; 6:2–3, 9, 15–16, 19; 9:13, 24). He emphasizes that knowing the Truth in Christ and being guided by the active grace of the Holy Spirit will ultimately be manifested in right *living*, which is a greater accomplishment than right *doing*. Any Christian who claims to know the Truth of Christianity and does not live it through the strength of the Holy Spirit is a hypocrite with a false claim to virtue.

ISLAMIC FAITH AND VIRTUE

Islamic faith means "having faith in God [Allah], His angels, His books, His messengers, the Day of Judgment and God's determination of human destiny."⁸ Islamic virtue "means to worship God as if one sees Him, knowing that even if one does not see Him, He sees us."⁹

Islamic faith is primarily a verbal agreement with a set of doctrinal statements and visible participation in acts affirming this agreement to others and to Allah. Admits Farid Esack, internationally known South African Muslim scholar and currently the Brueggemann Chair in Interreligious Studies at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, "One can be totally committed to Islam and yet not have it touch one's inner being."¹⁰ He goes on to confess that "our lives as Muslims are largely devoid of an ongoing and living connection with Allah."¹¹ This deeply human cry for a relationship with the Divine causes the Christian's heart to break with compassion.

THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Faith is rightly compared to a journey. When one goes on a journey, the course must be charted and maintained without deviation. Small variations along the way must constantly be detected and corrected. A single degree of change, followed without correction, will bring one to a final destination many miles from the original goal.

TABLE I According to the Noble Qur'an, Islam is . . .

Characteristic	Sura
the religion accepted by Allah	3:19–20, 84; 110:2
a better religion, requiring man to submit to Allah	2:112; 4:125
bowing to Allah, no one else	6:14, 71, 125; 39:12, 22, 54
believing in Allah and his messenger (Muhammad)	9:74
Muhammad's way	109:6
worshiping Allah	10:104–5
a revelation sent down with the knowledge of Allah	11:14
Allah's favor on men that bow to his will	16:81
Allah's favor upon you	49:17
submitting your will to Allah, who is one	22:34; 27:31, 42, 81
coming to Allah in full submission	49:14
bowing before the lord of the worlds	40:66
calling men to Allah to bow	41:33
believing in the signs of Muhammad and bowing your will to him	43:69
a chosen religion by Allah for you	5:3; 24:55
holding fast to Allah	22:78
the religion of the prophets	42:13
the religion of Truth	9:29, 33; 48:28; 61:9
the most trustworthy religion	2:256; 31:22
the right religion	12:40; 30:30; 45:18
the word of Allah	9:6
desired by unbelievers	15:2
an invitation to all	61:7

This is also true for religion. No matter how valid the starting point may be, religious belief will arrive at the wrong destination if it stays on a steady course that deviates a fraction from the original. This is the great deceit of false religion. It often contains *just enough* truth to appear valid. The course readings *seem* true and consistent. But the follower of such a faith is astonished at the end of life's journey to find himself in a very different place from his expected destination. The right course of faith must originate in pure Truth and continue in the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. Only then will it lead to the glorious destination of eternal fellowship with God.

So let's examine the courses of Islam and Christianity, defined by their sacred documents. Table 1, taken from the Church Without Walls (CWW) Educational Materials, summarizes the Qur'anic passages that define Islam. As you examine Qur'anic teachings about Islam, the following conclusions become apparent:

- Qur'anic Islam is submission to Allah, as a slave submits to his master. It is not a relationship between man and God.
- Qur'anic Islam is to bow before Allah out of fear and not out of love. It is not a fellowship between man and his Creator.
- Qur'anic Islam is a religion of good works, generally defined as physical acts of worship and public devotion. It is not a union between man and God.
- Qur'anic Islam is what you do for Allah, not what Allah does for you. It is not a personal experience of man with God.

HISTORICAL BIBLICAL VIEW OF ISLAM

Qur'anic Islam was well known to the Reformers and fathers of the faith. Martin Luther (1463–1546) regarded it as God's judgment upon Roman corruption, a rod of correction for our sin, and the religion of the "natural man." He called upon the church to pray, repent, and go back to the Word as a means of stopping Islam's influence in the world.

John Calvin (1509–64) stated that Islam was not to be compared to the "True religion," according to the Word of God. He compared it to the teachings of the Pharisees or the papal doctrines appended to the gospels. Calvin noted the distorted biblical stories and rabbinical traditions found in the Noble Qur'an and highlighted its teaching as a departure from the pure and simple Word of God.

HADITHIC DEFINITIONS OF ISLAM

The sayings of Muhammad found in these Hadiths, translated by Thomas Cleary in his book *The Wisdom of the Prophet*, further elucidate the definition of Islam:

One day the Prophet was sitting with some people when the archangel Gabriel came to him and said, "What is faith?"

The Prophet replied, "Faith is to believe in God, in God's angels, and in meeting God; and in the messengers of God; and in the resurrection."

Gabriel said, "What is submission?"

The Prophet replied, "Submission is to serve God and not attribute any partners to God, and to pray

regularly, and to pay the prescribed welfare tax, and to fast during the month of Ramadan.”

Gabriel said, “What is goodness?”

The Prophet replied, “To worship God as if you actually see God; for if you do not see God, God certainly sees you.”¹²

Sufyan Bin Abdullah related, “I said to the Messenger of God, ‘Tell me a statement on Islam such that I need ask no one else but you about it.’ He told me, ‘Say, ‘I believe in God,’ and be upright.”¹³

The Prophet said, “Religion is goodwill.”

He was asked, “Toward whom?”

He said, “Toward God, and toward the Book of God, and toward the Messenger of God, and toward the imams of the Muslims, and toward their communities.”¹⁴

These Hadiths speak for themselves.

What does the Holy Bible tell us about Christianity? The Scriptures in table 2 make the following conclusions clear:

- Biblical Christianity is a relationship between man and Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of his people.
- Biblical Christianity is a restored fellowship and reconciliation between man and his Creator, through the intercession of Jesus Christ.
- Biblical Christianity is a union of man and God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, and in the heart of the Christian believer through the Holy Spirit.

TABLE 2 According to the Bible, Christianity means or is . . .

Characteristic	Reference
to live is Christ	Phil. 1:21
the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes	Rom. 1:16
a righteousness that is by faith from first to last	Rom. 1:17
circumcision of the heart by the Spirit	Rom. 2:29
the message of the cross	1 Cor. 1:18
a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit	2 Cor. 3:6
being transformed into Christ's likeness	2 Cor. 3:18
God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ	2 Cor. 5:19
revelation from Jesus Christ	Gal. 1:12
faith expressing itself through love	Gal. 5:6
to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ	Eph. 1:4
the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast	Eph. 2:9
built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone	Eph. 2:20
love that surpasses knowledge	Eph. 3:19
to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness	Eph. 4:23–24
being like-minded . . . being one in spirit and purpose	Phil. 2:2
bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power	Col. 1:10–11
the kingdom of the Son God loves	Col. 1:13–14
not trying to please men, but God	1 Thess. 2:4
putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet	1 Thess. 5:8–9
the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality	2 Tim. 1:10
the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ	Titus 3:5–6
to look after widows and orphans in their distress	James 1:27
obeying the truth . . . sincere love for your brothers	1 Peter 1:22
the victory that has overcome the world	1 John 5:4
understanding so that we may know him who is true	1 John 5:20
the right to the tree of life	Rev. 22:14
the free gift of the water of life	Rev. 22:17

- Biblical Christianity is a personal experience of man in relationship with God.
- Biblical Christianity is a life of dependence on and faith in Jesus Christ and his perfect life and sacrifice in our place. It is not a religion of good works that must be done to earn salvation or acceptance.
- Biblical Christianity is what God has done for man, not what man can do for God.
- Biblical Christianity is grateful servanthood toward others, in brotherly love.
- Biblical Christianity is an adoption as spiritual children of God, able to approach him as a loving Father, but in holy reverence, respect, and honor as Sovereign Lord.

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST-CENTERED

Biblical Christianity is summarized using three phrases, according to CWW Educational Tract 1:

Faith in Christ
Fellowship with Christ
Following after Christ

The common denominator of these phrases is Christ. In him, Truth is personified. Those who are in Christ exhibit the characteristics shown in table 3, taken from the October 2002 Congregational Record and Bible Reading Notes of Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Norfolk, Virginia.

Faith does not come by rituals of modern religion, the often-flawed witness of believers, the ability to recite the creeds or doctrines of specific denominations, or the out-

TABLE 3 If you are in Christ Jesus by grace through faith, you . . .

Description	Reference
are justified and have peace with God	Rom. 5:1
have died with Christ and to the power of sin's rule	Rom. 6:1–6
are free from condemnation forever	Rom. 8:1
have Christ as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption	1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21
have the mind of Christ	1 Cor. 2:16
are a temple of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price, not your own	1 Cor. 6:19–20
are established in Christ, sealed, and given the Spirit in your heart as a guarantee of your inheritance	2 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 1:13–14
are crucified with Christ and he lives in you	Gal. 2:20
are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ	Eph. 1:3
are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and without blame before him in love	Eph. 1:4
are predestined to adoption as sons of God	Eph. 1:5; 1 John 3:1
are made alive together with Christ	Eph. 2:5
are made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus	Eph. 2:6
have access by one Spirit to the Father	Eph. 2:18
have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him	Eph. 3:12
are delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of his love	Col. 1:13–14
have Christ in you	Col. 1:27
are a slave of righteousness and God	Rom. 6:18, 22
are an heir of God and joint heir with Christ	Rom. 8:17
are complete in Christ	Col. 2:10
are given a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind	2 Tim. 1:7
are sanctified and one with the sanctifier, therefore Jesus calls you his brother	Heb. 2:11
are able to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need	Heb. 4:16
have been given exceedingly great and precious promises and become partakers of the divine nature	2 Peter 1:4
are the salt of the earth and the light of the world	Matt. 5:13–14
are Jesus' friend	John 15:15
are chosen by Jesus and appointed by him to bear lasting fruit	John 15:16

TABLE 3 (continued)

Description	Reference
are a member of the body of Christ	Eph. 5:30
are a new creation	2 Cor. 5:17
are a saint	Eph. 1:1
are holy and righteous	Eph. 4:24
are a life hidden with Christ in God	Col. 3:3
are the elect of God, holy and beloved	Col. 3:12
are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, the people of God	1 Peter 2:9–10
have the ability to do all things through Christ who strengthens you	Phil 4:13
have all your needs supplied according to God's riches in glory by Christ Jesus	Phil 4:19
have the Lord as your strength and confidence	Ps. 27:1; Prov. 3:26
are being led by God to triumph in Christ	2 Cor. 2:14
are able to cast all your worries, fears, and anxieties on God	1 Peter 5:7
are never alone, for Christ is always with you	Matt. 28:20
have your sufficiency from God	2 Cor. 3:5
have God working in you to will and to do his good pleasure	Phil. 2:13
are able to live valiantly, for God will tread down your enemies	Ps. 60:12
will have fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore one day in God's very presence	Ps. 16:11
will have a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory	2 Cor. 4:17
will have glory that shall be revealed in you	Rom. 8:18
will have no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain	Rev. 21:4
are inseparable from the love of God in Christ	Rom. 8:35–39
have certain and unshakable promises causing you to be strong and fearless	Isa. 41:10
are one day to enter into the joy of your Lord	Matt. 25:23
are unable to be defeated	Rom. 8:31
are more than a conqueror through him who loved you	Rom. 8:37
have all things working for your good	Rom. 8:28
have your Heavenly Father pursuing you relentlessly with goodness and mercy all the days of your life	Ps. 23:6

ward observance of ceremonies or traditions associated with worship or lifestyle. The heart of biblical Christianity states that the only route to true paradise, which is never-ending companionship with the biblical Triune God, is complete faith and hope in Christ alone.

The fellowship between God and the believer starts while we are still in this life. The Christian faith is a very personal one and can flourish only if it is based on this ongoing relationship. Unlike the Qur’anic Allah, the biblical Yahweh wants to know his people and be known by them. This is a source of deep joy and abiding hope for the believer. As defined by theologian J. I. Packer, “Knowing God is a relationship calculated to thrill a man’s heart.”¹⁵ Christ calls believers to follow him—which is no easy task! Christ must be the focus of all our endeavors. Christians are not called to lives of ease and comfort. We are called to lives of service and humility, following the example of Jesus Christ. This cannot be done without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Table 4 summarizes the basic characteristics of biblical Christianity and Qur’anic Islam.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

In expanding on the title *The Truth about Islam*, we must ask three revealing questions:

- Is Islam a divinely inspired faith, having all the characteristics of Divine Truth—or was it Muhammad’s human attempt to unite the fragmented Arab people and convince them to abandon paganism?
- Is the Noble Qur’an a revelation of God, as it claims to be, like the Old and New Testaments that came

TABLE 4 Characteristics of Qur'anic Islam and biblical Christianity

Islam	Sura	Christianity	Reference
Human effort	3:132	Work of God	John 3:5
Tradition of men	Sunnah	God's grace	2 Peter 3:18
Earthly dress	33:59	Heavenly dress	Isa. 61:10
Regulated life	17:78	Radiant life	Matt. 5:16
Repressed conscience	58:2-3	Rebuilt character	Matt. 7:24
Fraternity of Ummah	2:143	Fellowship with Christ	Luke 24:32
Separation from Allah	42:49-50	Union with Yahweh	John 1:12
Direction	4:58-59	Discipleship	John 8:31-32
Submission	4:34-35	Service	1 Tim. 6:18
Limited sacrifice	47:36-37	Living sacrifice	Rom. 12:1
Walk alone	74:44-47	Walk with Christ	Col. 2:6
Physical warfare	9:73	Spiritual warfare	1 Tim. 6:12
Recitation and ritual	22:28-30	Running a race	Heb. 12:1
Cultural imperialism	3:110	Spiritual victory	1 John 5:4
Immortality with companions	37:45-49	Immortality with Christ	John 17:3

before it—or is it a document that Muhammad created from his many cross-cultural interactions during his early life as a merchant?

- Is Muhammad the “last of the prophets,” as true prophets are defined according to biblical tradition—or was he a self-appointed messenger, exploiting the religious yearnings of a diverse populace for his own purposes?

The answers will be revealed to us in the light of Scripture and history.

“A PRAYER FOR
THE MUSLIM WORLD”
(CONTINUED)



. . . Take away pride of intellect
and blindness of heart,
and reveal to them
the surpassing beauty and power
of thy Son Jesus Christ.
Convince them
of their sin
in rejecting the atonement
of the only Savior.
Give moral courage
to those who love thee,
that they may boldly
confess thy name . . .