



Deen Lens

*A book on Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and the questions between them —
written to be read in order, or opened anywhere.*

A. ASAAD



Faith, history, politics, society, and culture — read through a Muslim lens.

Written and edited by A. Asaad.

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PART I

Judaism

*A Muslim look at the Hebrew Bible, the rabbinic tradition, and
where the two faiths part.*

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THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS PART

Every verse cited on these questions, with its wording, its manuscript standing, and the counter-reading, is set out in the appendix: **the plate for Judaism** → p. 125.

01

JUDAISM • CHAPTER 01

Judaism: what a Muslim sees

Where Islam and Judaism agree about God, where they differ about scripture and prophecy, and why the difference is worth stating precisely.

II SEPTEMBER 2026

Of the three faiths that trace themselves to Abraham, Judaism and Islam are the two that describe God in nearly the same words. That is not a courtesy. It is what the texts say.

Where the two agree

The Shema — *Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one* — is not read by Jews as a riddle to be resolved later. It is read as a statement about how many God is. A Muslim reciting *qul huwa Allāhu aḥad* is saying the same thing in a sister language, down to the shared root of *eḥad* and *aḥad*.

The agreement runs further than the count:

- **God has no form.** Maimonides makes incorporeality a principle of faith; the Qur'an says *there is nothing like Him*.
- **God is not a man.** *God is not man to be capricious* (Numbers 23:19) is quoted in Jewish polemic and Muslim polemic for the same purpose.

- **No image, no intermediary.** Neither tradition permits an icon, and neither accepts that anyone stands between the worshipper and God.
- **Law is worship.** Both order daily life through revealed law — dietary rules, purity, fixed prayer, charity — and both treat that ordering as devotion rather than as burden.

A Muslim who understands *tawḥīd* already understands most of what a Jew means by the Shema.

Where the two differ

Stating the agreement honestly means stating the disagreement just as plainly.

Prophecy after Moses. Judaism does not accept Muhammad as a prophet, and Islam holds that prophethood continued through Jesus to Muhammad, both of whom Jews do not accept. There is no way to soften this: it is a real and load-bearing difference.

Jesus. Islam affirms him as Messiah, born of a virgin, a prophet of God — and denies that he was divine, or that he died on the cross. Judaism denies the messianic claim. On this question Islam sits between the other two rather than with either.

Election and the land. Judaism understands itself through covenant with a particular people; Islam addresses a universal community with no chosen lineage. Related political disputes are real and painful, and they are not what this section is about.

The state of the text. Muslims hold that the Torah was true revelation when it was given, and that the text as it stands has been affected by transmission and editing. Jews hold that the Torah in hand is the Torah given. The dashboard above sets out the manuscript record so a reader can see what each claim rests on.

Why the precision matters

It is easy to write about another faith in a way that flatters it into agreement, and just as easy to write in a way that makes it unrecognisable. Both are failures of the same kind.

The Qur'an calls Jews and Christians *People of the Scripture* and instructs Muslims to argue with them *in the best way* — and in the same breath tells Muslims to say: *we believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you; our God and your God is one* (29:46). That verse is the standard this section is trying to hold to: the shared ground stated without exaggeration, and the difference stated without insult.



PART II

Christianity

A Muslim look at Christian doctrine, history, and scripture.

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THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS PART

Every verse cited on these questions, with its wording, its manuscript standing, and the counter-reading, is set out in the appendix: [the plate for Christianity](#) → p. 132.

01

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 01

Understanding Christianity

A high-level, Muslim-authored overview of Christianity — its scale, history, scripture, and core doctrine — setting the stage for the rest of this section.

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What is Christianity?

Christianity is the religion built around the life, teachings, death, and — for nearly all of its adherents — the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (peace be upon him), a Jewish preacher and healer active in Roman-occupied Judea in the early 1st century CE.¹ It is, by most counts, the world's largest religion: an estimated 2.3 billion people, roughly 29% of the world's population, identified as Christian as of 2020.²

Christianity is not a single, unified institution. It comprises three broad historical families — the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches, and the many Protestant traditions that emerged from the 16th-century Reformation — and, depending on how one counts, tens of thousands of individual denominations within them (one widely cited catalogue puts the figure near 45,000).³ These groups disagree with one another on questions as fundamental as the nature of God, and as specific as which day to observe as the Sabbath. The [Christian Denominations](#) → p. 33 page in this section compares twenty of the more prominent ones side by side, with estimated sizes and sources for each.

What holds this diversity together, loosely, is a shared scripture (the Bible), a shared central figure (Jesus), and — for the overwhelming majority, though not literally all self-identified Christians — a shared conviction that Jesus is God incarnate, the second person of a Trinity, who died to atone for the sins of humanity and rose from the dead. That last conviction is precisely where Islam parts ways with mainstream Christianity: the Qur'an honors Jesus as the Messiah, born of the Virgin Mary, but rejects his divinity. **Is Jesus God?** — is the question this section returns to from several directions, and it is worth understanding the Christian answer to it on its own terms before asking why Muslims answer differently.

The rest of this page summarizes that Christian answer, and the beliefs built on it, at a high level; dedicated pages elsewhere in this section go into far more depth on each individual topic.

Holy books

Christians hold as scripture the Bible, a collection of writings divided into the Old Testament (broadly, though not identically, corresponding to the Hebrew Bible of Judaism) and the New Testament (an account of Jesus's life and the early church, along with letters attributed to Paul and others). Christians generally read the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament's claims about its fulfillment. The exact contents of the Old Testament vary by tradition — Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include several books (the Apocrypha, or Deuterocanon) that most Protestant Bibles exclude. See [The Bible](#) → p. 10 for how these collections took shape, and [Is the Injeel \(Gospel\) Corrupted?](#) → p. 47 for how the New Testament's authorship and transmission are understood historically.

Nature of God

Christianity can be broadly categorized into two groups by how they answer the question above: Unitarian and Trinitarian. The former holds that God is One and that Jesus is not God but the Messiah — a minority position historically, though not a new one. The latter, which is the position of the large majority of Christians and of every major denomination compared on the [Christian Denominations](#) → p. 33 page, holds Jesus to be both the Messiah and God, following the doctrine of the Trinity: the Father, the Son — Jesus — and the Holy Spirit are each fully God, co-equal, distinct, and yet one. See [The Trinity](#) → p. 38 for how each side reads the biblical evidence, and its companion [Questions & Answers](#) → p. 57 page for a closer, verse-by-verse treatment.

Original sin

Trinitarian Christianity places heavy emphasis on the universality and severity of sin. The doctrine of Original Sin holds that all humans inherit sinfulness from Adam and Eve (peace be upon them), who committed the first sin — a condition held to be present from birth, not simply acquired through one's own choices, and removable only through atonement. See [Original Sin](#) → p. 41.

Law

Christian doctrine generally holds that the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), given by God to Moses, are impossible for any person to keep perfectly. Any shortcoming is itself a sin, and — combined with the doctrine of Original Sin above — this is taken to make every human being a sinner in need of atonement, rather than an occasional lawbreaker who might simply repent and do better.

Atonement of sin

According to Trinitarian doctrine, sin cannot be forgiven by repentance alone; it requires a sacrificial atonement, a principle Christians trace to Old Testament sacrificial law (see Leviticus 17:11). To atone for the sins of all humankind at once, this reasoning holds, requires the sacrifice not of an animal but of a sinless human being — and only Jesus, being both sinless and divine, qualified. The crucifixion, in this account, was that atoning sacrifice, offered once for all people. See [Atonement of Sins](#) → p.43 and its companion [Questions & Answers](#) → p.78 page, along with [Sin in Christian Thought](#) → p.74 for a closer look at the underlying concept of sin itself.

The crucifixion

The crucifixion of Jesus is understood, in this account, as an act of voluntary obedience to his Father: God the Son sacrificing himself to satisfy the demands of divine justice on behalf of humanity, thereby making those who have faith in him righteous before God. This is one of the sharpest points of disagreement with Islam, which holds that Jesus was not crucified in the way the Gospels describe, and rejects the idea that God's forgiveness requires a blood sacrifice at all. See [The Crucifixion](#) → p.45.

Denominations

Christianity's institutional history runs, in broad strokes, from a single early church, through the 1054 split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church (with the Oriental Orthodox churches having already separated centuries earlier, after the 451 Council of Chalcedon), to the 16th-century Protestant Reformation and its many subsequent divisions. One recurring theological fault line among Protestants is the claim that righteousness comes from faith rather than good works (see, for example, Philippians 3:9) — an emphasis not shared to the same degree by Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. See [Christian Denominations](#) → p.33 for a fuller comparison, and [Major Events in Christian History](#) → p.26 for the fuller timeline behind this summary.

Practice

Differences between Christian traditions show up not only in doctrine but in day-to-day practice: worship style (liturgical or informal), dietary customs (is pork permitted, and are there fasting seasons?), clerical and lay dress, whether and how Christmas and Easter are observed, and which day is kept as the Sabbath (historically Saturday, though most Christians

today observe Sunday in commemoration of the resurrection). None of these differences are incidental — each usually traces back to a specific reading of scripture or church tradition.

Paul and the shape of the New Testament

Paul the Apostle — a former persecutor of the earliest Christians who described himself as converted by a vision of the risen Jesus — is by far the most influential figure in Christian history after Jesus himself, and his letters make up a large portion of the New Testament.⁴ Paul's theology, especially his teaching that Gentile converts need not follow Jewish law, shaped the church that survived and spread; other early Jewish-Christian and Gnostic movements were eventually judged heretical and did not endure in comparable numbers. Most Christians alive today could fairly be described as Pauline Christians in this sense. See [Is the Injeel \(Gospel\) Corrupted?](#) → p. 47 for more on how the New Testament's authorship is understood historically, and [Opinions about Christianity](#) → p. 50 for a closer look at that question.



This section exists to investigate the belief of our Christian brothers and sisters in good faith, and to lay out where and why Islam differs from it — through dialogue, respect, and sincerity, not point-scoring. The [Answering Christianity](#) → p. 91 section takes a more focused, question-and-answer approach to specific objections.

REFERENCES

- 1 “Christianity” — Encyclopedia Britannica and “History of early Christianity” — Encyclopedia Britannica, for Jesus's historical context and the movement's earliest development.
 - 2 “The World's Religious Groups: How Their Sizes Changed from 2010 to 2020” — Pew Research Center, for the global population and percentage figures.
 - 3 “World Christian Encyclopedia” — overview of the ~45,000-denomination figure and its counting methodology, based on the Center for the Study of Global Christianity's World Christian Database.
 - 4 “Christianity” — Encyclopedia Britannica, on Paul the Apostle's role in the early church.
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02

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 02

The Bible

What the Christian Bible is, its Old and New Testament contents, and how its canon differs across Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions — with sources.

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The Bible is the collection of texts Christians hold as scripture, traditionally regarded as written by human authors under divine inspiration.¹ It is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament, largely shared with the Hebrew Bible of Judaism, and the New Testament, unique to Christianity. Each book is divided into chapters, and each chapter into verses, so that a passage can be cited precisely — for example, Genesis 1:1 or John 3:16.

The Old Testament was composed mostly in Hebrew, with a few passages in Aramaic; the New Testament was composed in Koine (common) Greek, the everyday language of the eastern Mediterranean in the 1st century CE.² Because of this, virtually every Bible in use today — in every language, including English — is itself a translation, unlike the Qur'an, which Muslims are required to recite in its original Arabic.

Old Testament

The Old Testament, sometimes called the Hebrew Bible or the Tanakh in Judaism, is organized differently depending on tradition; the grouping below follows the common Christian arrangement by genre.

The Pentateuch (Torah): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

The Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

The Poetical and Wisdom Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

The Prophetic Books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

That list totals 39 books — the Protestant Old Testament. As the next section explains, Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include additional books here.

New Testament

The New Testament is fixed at 27 books across every major Christian tradition — Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox alike — and consists of the four Gospels, a history of the early church, a set of letters (epistles), and a closing apocalyptic text.

The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Acts of the Apostles: Acts

Letters/Epistles: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude

Revelation

Most of the New Testament's letters are attributed to Paul; see [Understanding Christianity](#) → p.6 for his role in shaping it, and [Is the Injeel \(Gospel\) Corrupted?](#) → p.47 for how its authorship and transmission are understood historically.

Why the canon differs by tradition

Because the New Testament is stable at 27 books everywhere, all of the variation between Christian Bibles is in the Old Testament — specifically, whether a tradition follows the shorter Hebrew Masoretic Text (39 books) or the longer Greek Septuagint, an ancient Jewish translation that circulated with several additional books the Reformers later set aside.³

Click a tradition below to see which additional books it includes on top of the shared 39-book Old Testament and 27-book New Testament core:

FIGURE

Books beyond the shared core, by tradition

	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Eastern Orthodox (Greek)	Slavonic / Russian Orthodox	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo
Tobit	○	●	●	●	●
Judith	○	●	●	●	●
Wisdom of Solomon	○	●	●	●	●
Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	○	●	●	●	●
Baruch	○	●	●	●	●
1 Maccabees	○	●	●	●	●
2 Maccabees	○	●	●	●	●
1 Esdras	○	○	●	●	●
3 Maccabees	○	○	●	●	●
Psalms 151	○	○	●	●	●
2 Esdras	○	○	○	●	●
1 Enoch	○	○	○	○	●
Jubilees	○	○	○	○	●
Total books	66	73	76	77	79

Every tradition shares 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books; the rows above are what each adds.

Catholic and Orthodox Bibles (every tab except Protestant) also include extra material inserted directly into Esther and Daniel — the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon — which isn't counted above since it's additional content within existing books, not a separate book.

The Old Testament's 39 books and the New Testament's 27 books are the same across every tradition shown here — only the additional books above vary. Counts are illustrative: some printed editions of the Slavonic and Ethiopian Bibles include a few further texts beyond the two named for each here.

The table below lays out the same comparison with fuller detail on each tradition:

TRADITION	OLD TESTAMENT	TOTAL BOOKS	WHAT'S ADDED BEYOND THE HEBREW 39
Protestant	39 books (Hebrew Masoretic Text)	66	—
Roman Catholic	46 books	73	Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, and 1 & 2 Maccabees (the seven Deuterocanonical books), plus additions to Esther and to Daniel (the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon)
Eastern Orthodox (Greek)	49–51 books	76–78	Everything in the Catholic list, plus 1 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, and Psalm 151 (4 Maccabees is often printed as a non-canonical appendix)
Slavonic / Russian Orthodox	52 books	~79	Everything in the Greek Orthodox list, plus 2 Esdras (the numbering of “Esdras” books famously differs by tradition — see note below)
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo	Broadest canon in regular use	~81	Everything above, plus additional texts such as 1 Enoch and Jubilees, which are considered fully canonical only in this tradition

The books called “Esdras” are the single most confusing point in these comparisons, because the same title is used for different texts — and numbered differently — across traditions. Canonical Ezra and Nehemiah are themselves sometimes labeled “1 Esdras” and “2 Esdras” in Latin Vulgate numbering; a Greek retelling of Ezra-Nehemiah with extra material is called “1 Esdras” in Greek Bibles but “3 Esdras” in the Vulgate and “2 Esdras” in Slavonic Bibles; and a separate Jewish-Christian apocalypse is called “2 Esdras” in most English Apocrypha editions but “4 Esdras” in the Vulgate and “3 Esdras” in Slavonic.⁴ None of this affects the New Testament, and none of it is a live dispute between Christians and Muslims — it is included here only because the Christian scriptures compared throughout this section are not one fixed list, even among Christians themselves. For how these denominational lines map onto belief and practice more broadly, see [Christian Denominations](#) → p.33.

Authorship and dating, book by book

The tables below give each book’s **traditional attribution** — who the book’s title or church tradition says wrote it — alongside where **modern critical scholarship** typically places it, which is often a different, usually anonymous or composite author, and usually a later date. Every suggested author and date here is a widely-cited scholarly proposal, not a certainty; specialists continue to argue over many of them, sometimes by centuries. Read the notes for why.

Old Testament

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
Genesis	Moses	The Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), and Priestly (P) source-writers or schools, later combined	~6th century BCE for the combined text	The text contains doublets — two creation accounts (Genesis 1 and 2) and an interwoven flood story — that alternate between calling God “Elohim” and “YHWH” and sometimes conflict on details, which the Documentary Hypothesis explains as separate sources stitched together rather than one author’s work
Exodus	Moses	The same J, E, and P sources as Genesis	~6th–5th century BCE final form	Like Genesis, shows doubled or conflicting accounts (e.g. two versions of how Moses’s name was revealed to him) attributed to different source strands; Moses is referred to throughout in the third person (“Moses did...”), not “I,” which is unusual for a personal memoir
Leviticus	Moses	The Priestly (P) source or school	Likely exilic/post-exilic	Its formal, repetitive ritual-law style is stylistically distinct from the narrative portions of Genesis and Exodus, marking it as a separate priestly composition

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
Numbers	Moses	J, E, and P sources combined	~6th–5th century BCE final form	Scholars identify Numbers as a Priestly (P) reworking of an earlier non-Priestly text, the same kind of multi-source editing the Documentary Hypothesis proposes for Genesis and Exodus
Deuteronomy	Moses	“The Deuteronomist” — a scribal school linked to King Josiah’s court	Core ~622 BCE; expanded later	Deuteronomy 34 narrates Moses’s own death and burial in the third person — “no one knows his burial place to this day,” and “since then no prophet has arisen in Israel like Moses” — a retrospective statement Moses could not have written about himself
Joshua	Joshua	The Deuteronomistic historian(s)	~7th–6th century BCE	Like Deuteronomy 34, it records Joshua’s own death (24:29-33) and repeatedly uses the phrase “to this day” about customs or landmarks, implying the writer lived long after the events described
Judges	Samuel (per Jewish tradition)	The Deuteronomistic historian(s), reworking older hero-tales	~7th–6th century BCE	The repeated refrain “in those days Israel had no king” (17:6, 21:25) presupposes that the monarchy already existed by the time of writing — placing composition after the period the book describes
Ruth	Samuel (per Jewish tradition)	An anonymous writer, possibly of the post-exilic period	Uncertain — monarchic to post-exilic (5th century BCE)	The closing genealogy (4:18-22) traces the family line down to King David, meaning the book as it stands could not have been completed before David’s reign began — generations after the story’s setting
1 Samuel	Samuel, Gad, Nathan	The Deuteronomistic historian(s), using older court source material	Compiled ~6th century BCE	Samuel’s own death is recorded partway through (25:1), yet the narrative continues for many more chapters afterward — proof that at least the second half cannot be Samuel’s own writing
2 Samuel	Gad, Nathan	The Deuteronomistic historian(s), as with 1 Samuel	Same compilation as 1 Samuel	Covers David’s entire reign, none of which the already-dead Samuel could have witnessed
1 Kings	Jeremiah (per Jewish tradition)	The Deuteronomistic historian(s), drawing on royal annals	Final form ~6th century BCE	The text itself repeatedly cites now-lost source documents by name — “the Book of the Acts of Solomon,” “the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel/Judah” — showing the writer was a later compiler working from records, not an eyewitness

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
2 Kings	Jeremiah (per Jewish tradition)	The Deuteronomistic historian(s), as with 1 Kings	~6th century BCE, extends to 586 BCE	Ends with the Babylonian exile and a Judean king's release from a Babylonian prison decades after Jerusalem's fall — events centuries after Jeremiah's traditional era and impossible for an earlier author to record
1 Chronicles	Ezra (per Jewish tradition)	"The Chronicler" — an anonymous post-exilic priestly writer	Post-exilic, ~4th century BCE	Its genealogies extend several generations past the Babylonian exile (3:17-24), which by itself places the book's composition well after Ezra's own generation
2 Chronicles	Ezra (per Jewish tradition)	The Chronicler, as with 1 Chronicles	Post-exilic, ~4th century BCE	Ends with Persian king Cyrus's decree freeing the Jews from exile (36:22-23) — an explicitly post-exilic event that frames the whole preceding narrative as a retrospective look back at the monarchy
Ezra	Ezra	A later editor incorporating an authentic first-person Ezra memoir	~5th–4th century BCE	The book shifts between first-person ("I, Ezra...") and third-person narration about Ezra within the same text, suggesting an editor wove a genuine Ezra memoir into a larger compiled account
Nehemiah	Nehemiah	A later editor incorporating an authentic first-person Nehemiah memoir	~5th–4th century BCE	Large sections are written consistently in Nehemiah's own first-person voice, which is why scholars treat this "memoir" as more reliably autobiographical than most other historical books
Esther	Anonymous	An anonymous Jewish writer of the Persian era	~4th–3rd century BCE	Uniquely among biblical books, it never mentions God, prayer, or any Jewish religious practice by name, reading more like a Persian court tale than a work of prophecy or law — a genre clue pointing away from any named prophetic author
Job	Anonymous	An anonymous poet, possibly reworking an older folk tale into the prose frame	Disputed — patriarchal era to post-exilic	The prose frame (chapters 1-2 and 42) uses simple, archaic Hebrew, while the poetic dialogues in between use far more sophisticated language and vocabulary — a stylistic seam suggesting a poet expanded an older, simpler story
Psalms	David (for 73 of 150 psalms)	Many separate poets across centuries; final compilers unnamed	~10th–4th century BCE, compiled after the exile	Individual psalms are credited in their own superscriptions to Asaph, the sons of Korah, and Moses as well as David, and the collection's composition is

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
				generally dated across at least five centuries — from as early as the 10th century BCE to the post-exilic period (no earlier than the 5th century BCE) — making single Davidic authorship untenable for the collection as a whole
Proverbs	Solomon	Multiple anonymous wisdom-teacher circles, alongside possibly genuine Solomonic material	Compiled ~6th–4th century BCE	The text itself credits other named sources — “the sayings of Agur,” “the sayings of King Lemuel,” and material “the men of Hezekiah copied out” (25:1) — proving multiple contributors and compilers rather than one author
Ecclesiastes	Solomon (“the Preacher”)	An anonymous wisdom teacher (“Qoheleth”) writing in Solomon’s persona	Most scholars: ~3rd century BCE	Contains Persian loanwords and grammatical features from a much later stage of Hebrew than would have existed in Solomon’s 10th-century BCE court, which is why most linguists reject direct Solomonic authorship
Song of Solomon	Solomon	An anonymous poet, or a compiled anthology of court love-poetry	Disputed — pre-exilic core to post-exilic	Contains a small number of apparent Persian and Greek loanwords, which some scholars read as evidence of later composition or later editorial touch-ups to an older core, despite the Solomonic superscription
Isaiah	The prophet Isaiah (8th century BCE)	The historical Isaiah (chs. 1–39) plus at least one later anonymous prophet or school — often called “Deutero-Isaiah” (chs. 40–55) and “Trito-Isaiah” (chs. 56–66)	8th century BCE core; 6th and post-exilic additions	Chapters 40–55 speak of the Babylonian exile as a present, ongoing reality and name the Persian king Cyrus directly as God’s chosen liberator (44:28, 45:1) — a ruler who lived roughly 150 years after the historical Isaiah, which is why most scholars see a different, later voice here
Jeremiah	The prophet Jeremiah, via his scribe Baruch	Substantially Jeremiah’s own oracles, compiled and expanded by Baruch and later editors	~7th–6th century BCE, with later editorial expansion	The book explicitly describes its own creation — Jeremiah dictating his oracles to Baruch, who wrote them on a scroll (36:4) — and the Greek Septuagint’s version is about one-eighth shorter than the Hebrew text, a variant confirmed by a matching shorter Hebrew manuscript found at Qumran
Lamentations	Jeremiah	An anonymous eyewitness or near-eyewitness poet, not necessarily Jeremiah	Shortly after 586 BCE	The book never names its author; the Jeremiah link comes from a separate later tradition (2 Chronicles 35:25)

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
				about Jeremiah composing laments on a different occasion entirely, and its tightly acrostic poetic structure differs from Jeremiah's known prophetic style
Ezekiel	The prophet Ezekiel	Substantially the prophet Ezekiel himself, per most scholars	~6th century BCE	Almost every vision opens with a precise regnal-year date formula (e.g. "in the thirtieth year..." 1:1), giving the book an internal chronological consistency that most other prophetic books lack, and that most scholars take as a strong sign of single, contemporary authorship
Daniel	The prophet Daniel (6th century BCE)	An anonymous 2nd-century BCE Jewish writer, using the name of a legendary earlier sage	Most critical scholars: ~167–164 BCE	Its "predictions" of Hellenistic political history are extremely precise up through the persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (chs. 8, 11) and then become vague or inaccurate immediately afterward — a pattern most critical scholars read as history written after the fact up to that point, not genuine long-range prophecy; the text's Aramaic also includes Persian and Greek loanwords hard to explain in an authentic 6th-century Babylonian setting. A minority of scholars defend the traditional 6th-century date ¹⁴
Hosea	The prophet Hosea	Substantially the prophet Hosea, with later editorial framing	~8th century BCE	Its opening superscription lists a long span of kings, which some read as an editorial framing device added after Hosea's own lifetime, though the oracles themselves are rarely doubted
Joel	The prophet Joel	An anonymous prophetic writer; identity and period uncertain	9th to 4th century BCE	Unlike most prophetic books, it names no king, foreign invader, or other datable historical event at all — the absence of any internal anchor is exactly why estimates span so many centuries
Amos	The prophet Amos	Substantially the prophet Amos, with later editorial additions	~8th century BCE	Precisely dated by its own superscription to the reigns of named kings, "two years before the earthquake" (1:1) — a level of specific detail that most scholars accept as reliable
Obadiah	The prophet Obadiah	An anonymous prophetic writer	Likely ~6th century BCE	The Old Testament's shortest book, with no superscription naming a king or era — its

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
				date rests entirely on inference from its description of Edom betraying Judah, usually linked to Jerusalem's fall in 586 BCE
Jonah	The prophet Jonah (8th century BCE)	An anonymous post-exilic writer composing a didactic narrative, not the historical Jonah	Many scholars: ~5th–4th century BCE	Unlike other prophetic books, Jonah is written entirely in the third person as a story about a prophet rather than a first-person collection of his own oracles — a genre difference, plus some late-Hebrew vocabulary, that leads most critical scholars to read it as a later parable using an earlier prophet's name
Micah	The prophet Micah	Substantially the prophet Micah, with later editorial additions	~8th century BCE	Alternates abruptly between oracles of judgment and oracles of hope, a shift some scholars attribute to later editorial additions responding to circumstances after Micah's own lifetime
Nahum	The prophet Nahum	Substantially the prophet Nahum	~7th century BCE, before 612 BCE	Entirely concerned with celebrating Nineveh's coming destruction, which anchors it firmly to shortly before Nineveh actually fell in 612 BCE
Habakkuk	The prophet Habakkuk	Substantially the prophet Habakkuk	~7th century BCE	Structured as a dialogue about the rise of the Babylonians ("Chaldeans") as a coming power, anchoring it to the late 7th century BCE just as Babylon was emerging as a threat
Zephaniah	The prophet Zephaniah	Substantially the prophet Zephaniah	~7th century BCE	Internally dated by its own superscription to the reign of King Josiah (1:1), consistent with a 7th-century setting
Haggai	The prophet Haggai	Substantially the prophet Haggai, recorded by a close associate or scribe	520 BCE	Every oracle carries an exact month-and-regnal-year date tied to the Persian king Darius I, an unusually precise internal dating scheme that leaves little room for dispute
Zechariah	The prophet Zechariah	The prophet Zechariah (chs. 1–8) plus an anonymous later writer, sometimes called "Deutero-Zechariah" (chs. 9–14)	Chs. 1–8: ~520–518 BCE. Chs. 9–14: ~5th–4th century BCE	Chapters 1–8 share Haggai's precise dating formulas and concern for rebuilding the Temple, while chapters 9–14 shift abruptly to different vocabulary, apocalyptic imagery, and historical references — a stylistic break sharp enough that most scholars treat the two halves as originally separate works

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
Malachi	“Malachi”	An anonymous prophetic writer — “Malachi” may be a title, not a name	~5th century BCE	The Hebrew word “malachi” means simply “my messenger,” and that exact phrase reappears inside the book itself (3:1) describing a future messenger — leading some scholars to suspect a later editor lifted the title from that verse rather than recording the author’s actual name

New Testament

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
Matthew	The apostle Matthew	An anonymous Jewish-Christian writer or teacher, drawing on Mark, a hypothesized sayings-source (“Q”), and material unique to Matthew	~80–90 CE, after and dependent on Mark	Over 600 of Mark’s roughly 660 verses reappear in Matthew, closely following Mark’s wording and order — an odd pattern if Matthew were an eyewitness apostle relying on a non-eyewitness’s account rather than his own memory; the title “According to Matthew” itself is absent from the text and was added by later church tradition
Mark	John Mark, companion of Peter	An anonymous Christian writer, not necessarily connected to Peter at all	~65–70 CE — the earliest Gospel	The text never names its author; the link to Peter comes from a claim by the 2nd-century writer Papias, not from the Gospel itself, and the Greek shows some unfamiliarity with Palestinian geography that some scholars think is unexpected in a native companion of Peter
Luke	Luke, physician and companion of Paul	An educated Gentile Christian writer; some scholars retain a link to Paul’s circle, others see a later, unconnected author	~80–90 CE	The author’s own opening states he is compiling an “orderly account” from the testimony of “many” earlier writers and eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4) — explicitly describing himself as a second-hand compiler, not a direct eyewitness, and never naming himself
John	The apostle John	A “Johannine community” or school, drawing on a “Beloved Disciple” tradition, likely finalized by a later redactor	~90–100 CE — the latest Gospel	Its source is called only “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” never named as John, and its closing verse (21:24) refers to that disciple in the third person as someone whose testimony “we know is true” — a plural voice suggesting a

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
				different final editor speaking on the source's behalf
Acts	Same author as Luke's Gospel	The same anonymous author proposed for the Gospel of Luke	~80–90 CE, shortly after Luke	Several passages shift without explanation from third-person narration to first-person-plural "we" (e.g. 16:10), which some read as evidence of a travel companion's eyewitness notes and others read as a literary device borrowed from ancient sea-voyage narratives
Romans	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~57 CE	Among the least disputed letters in the New Testament; its style, vocabulary, and theology are consistent with Paul's other undisputed letters
1 Corinthians	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~53–54 CE	Undisputed on the same stylistic and historical grounds as Romans
2 Corinthians	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~55–56 CE	Undisputed, though abrupt shifts in tone across the letter lead some scholars to think it splices together fragments of more than one original letter to the same church
Galatians	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~48–55 CE	Undisputed; the exact date depends on which of Paul's visits to Jerusalem, described elsewhere in Acts, the letter refers to
Ephesians	Paul	A later member of a "Pauline school," writing in Paul's name after his death	If deutero-Pauline (majority view): ~80–100 CE	Roughly a third of its distinctive vocabulary never appears in Paul's undisputed letters, its sentences run markedly longer and more elaborate than Paul's typical style, and it reads in places like a general theological essay rather than a letter addressing a specific church's problems
Philippians	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~54–62 CE, written from prison	Undisputed, though an abrupt tonal shift at 3:2 leads some scholars to think it combines more than one original letter into one
Colossians	Paul	Disputed between Paul himself and a later member of a Pauline school	~54–62 CE if authentic, ~70–80 CE if not	No scholarly consensus; roughly a quarter of its vocabulary is otherwise unattested in Paul, and its more developed, cosmic view of Christ leads some scholars to see a later hand building on Paul's ideas
1 Thessalonians	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~50–51 CE	Widely considered Paul's earliest surviving letter, and

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
				among the earliest writings in the entire New Testament, on both historical and stylistic grounds
2 Thessalonians	Paul	Disputed between Paul himself and a later imitator	Close to 1 Thessalonians if authentic, later if not	Its description of the end times reads, to some scholars, as a corrective response to 1 Thessalonians written by someone other than Paul, rather than Paul's own follow-up to his earlier letter
1 Timothy	Paul	An anonymous early 2nd-century church leader, writing in Paul's name to consolidate church order	Most critical scholars: early-to-mid 2nd century CE	Describes a settled church structure of bishops and deacons with formal qualifications (3:1-13) that most scholars associate with a later, more institutionalized stage of church organization than Paul's own charismatic, less formal communities; over a third of its vocabulary is otherwise unattested in Paul's undisputed letters
2 Timothy	Paul	Same proposal as 1 Timothy	Same debate as 1 Timothy	Grouped with 1 Timothy and Titus as the "Pastoral Epistles" on the same vocabulary and church-structure grounds
Titus	Paul	Same proposal as 1 Timothy	Same debate as 1 Timothy	Grouped with 1 & 2 Timothy as the "Pastoral Epistles" on the same vocabulary and church-structure grounds
Philemon	Paul	Paul — no serious alternative proposed	~54–62 CE	Undisputed; the shortest of Paul's letters, and its personal, situational content matches Paul's undisputed style closely
Hebrews	Anonymous; linked to Paul in some early tradition	Unknown; historically proposed candidates include Apollos (suggested by Martin Luther), Barnabas, and Priscilla (proposed by Adolf von Harnack) — none broadly accepted ¹⁵	~60–95 CE	Its Greek style, theological emphases, and vocabulary all differ substantially enough from Paul's undisputed letters that most scholars consider Pauline authorship increasingly indefensible; even the early church father Origen concluded "only God knows" who wrote it
James	James, "brother of the Lord"	An anonymous Hellenistic Jewish-Christian teacher, possibly writing in James's name	~40s–60s CE if authentic; many scholars prefer ~70–100 CE	Written in polished, literary Greek that some scholars consider advanced for a Galilean laborer, and it engages general ethical themes without addressing any of the specific Jewish-Christian controversies (circumcision, food laws) closely associated with the historical James's known leadership in Jerusalem

BOOK	TRADITIONAL AUTHOR	MODERN SCHOLARS SUGGEST	ESTIMATED DATE	NOTE (THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION)
1 Peter	The apostle Peter	Possibly a secretary (amanuensis) writing on Peter's behalf, or a later writer in a "Petrine circle" in Rome	Many scholars: ~70–90 CE	Its polished literary Greek and sophisticated, extensive use of the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) are considered by many too advanced for a Galilean fisherman whose native language was Aramaic
2 Peter	The apostle Peter	An anonymous early-to-mid 2nd-century writer, likely from the same "Petrine circle" tradition	Widely regarded as the New Testament's latest-written book, ~100–150 CE	Explicitly refers to "all his [Paul's] letters" as an already-gathered, authoritative body of writings (3:15-16) — implying a period well after Paul's death, once his letters had been collected — and it borrows extensively, in places nearly word for word, from the Epistle of Jude
1 John	The apostle John	An anonymous member of the Johannine community or school	~90–100 CE	Never claims to be written by an apostle, or even by anyone named John — it is completely anonymous from its opening line, unlike most other New Testament letters
2 John	John, "the Elder"	An anonymous leader within the Johannine community, self-titled "the Elder"	~90–100 CE	The author identifies himself only by the title "the Elder," never as an apostle or by the name John
3 John	John, "the Elder"	The same proposal as 2 John	~90–100 CE	Uses the identical self-designation, "the Elder," as 2 John
Jude	Jude, "brother of James" (a half-brother of Jesus)	Unknown; possibly an anonymous writer invoking Jude's name	~60s CE if authentic; many scholars prefer ~90–100 CE	Nearly all of its content overlaps closely with 2 Peter 2, and it quotes the non-canonical Book of Enoch directly as authoritative prophecy (1:14-15) — a detail later church authorities found troubling enough to question the letter's place in the canon
Revelation	The apostle John	An early Christian prophet named John, distinct from the apostle and from the Gospel's author — often called "John of Patmos"	Most scholars: ~95–96 CE, under Emperor Domitian	The author names himself only as "John," never claiming to be an apostle or otherwise identifying himself further; his precise identity remains an open scholarly question, with no consensus on whether he is the same "John" associated with the Gospel

Why authorship attribution is often disputed

A few recurring patterns explain most of the gaps between traditional attribution and modern scholarship above:

- **The Gospels never name their authors.** All four are formally anonymous texts; their traditional titles (“According to Matthew,” and so on) were attached by church tradition starting in the 2nd century, not claimed by the books themselves.⁵
- **Writing in a revered figure’s name was an accepted practice in antiquity,** not necessarily viewed as forgery the way it would be today. Many scholars think several New Testament letters were written this way — by students or admirers continuing a teacher’s legacy after his death — which is why the “Pastoral Epistles” (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) and 2 Peter are so widely doubted.⁶
- **Linguistic and stylistic analysis** — vocabulary, sentence complexity, and command of Greek — is used to argue that a given letter’s Greek is too polished, or too different from an author’s other known writing, to be from the same hand. This is the main argument against Peter having personally written 1 and 2 Peter, and against several disputed Pauline letters.⁷
- **Theological development within a text** can suggest it postdates the events or figures it claims — for example, church structures (bishops, elders) described in the Pastoral Epistles that scholars associate with a later stage of church organization than Paul’s own lifetime.
- **For the Torah specifically,** the Documentary Hypothesis holds that Genesis through Deuteronomy were assembled from several older source documents (conventionally labeled J, E, P, and D) rather than written by Moses as a single author — a theory driven by duplicate and sometimes contradictory accounts of the same events within the text itself.⁸

None of this is a live dispute between Christians and Muslims specifically — it is standard historical-critical scholarship practiced by Christian, Jewish, and secular scholars alike, and it is included here because the “book by book” table above only makes sense in light of it.

Textual variants: why no two ancient manuscripts agree exactly

No original manuscript (“autograph”) survives for any book of the Bible. Everything that exists today is a copy — usually a copy of a copy of a copy — hand-transcribed by scribes for over a thousand years before the invention of printing. Across many thousands of surviving manuscripts, no two are identical: some differences are accidental (a skipped line, a misspelled word, a scribe “correcting” what looked like an error), and a smaller number appear to be intentional theological or harmonizing edits. Reconstructing the most probable original wording from this evidence is the discipline of textual criticism.⁹ Three of the best-known examples:

- **Mark 16:9-20 (the “longer ending”).** The two earliest and most reliable surviving manuscripts of Mark end abruptly at 16:8; most textual critics consider verses 9-20 a later addition, written in a noticeably different style, that was added to give the Gospel a more conventional resurrection-appearance ending. Most modern Bible translations still print it, but flag it as absent from the earliest manuscripts.¹⁰
- **John 7:53-8:11 (the “woman caught in adultery”).** This well-known story is missing from virtually all the earliest Greek manuscripts of John, and in the manuscripts that do

include it, it appears in different locations — after John 7:36, after John 21:25, or even inserted into Luke in a few copies. Most scholars think it may preserve an authentic early tradition about Jesus that was not originally part of any Gospel, and was inserted into John later.¹¹

- **1 John 5:7-8 (the “Comma Johanneum”).** Some later manuscripts and early printed Bibles (including the King James Version) add an explicit Trinitarian formula here — “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.” It is absent from virtually every Greek manuscript before the 14th century and does not appear in Jerome’s original Latin Vulgate; nearly all modern critical scholars, including Trinitarian ones, regard it as a later theological gloss that was not part of the original letter.¹²

The Old Testament has its own version of this problem: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947-56) gave scholars Hebrew manuscripts roughly a thousand years older than any previously known, and while they confirmed the surprising overall stability of the text scribes had transmitted since antiquity, they also showed real variation existed — most strikingly, the Greek Septuagint’s version of Jeremiah, long known to be shorter than the Hebrew text, turned out to match a Hebrew manuscript found at Qumran, confirming that more than one edition of Jeremiah once genuinely circulated.¹³

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03

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 03

Major Events in Christian History

An interactive timeline of Christianity from the crucifixion through the councils, the Great Schism, the Reformation, and into the modern global church — with sources.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

Click any event below to expand its summary, or filter by era. The full narrative, with sources, follows underneath.

📌 A NOTE ON PERSPECTIVE

This timeline traces Christian history **as Christians themselves understand it** — the events, dates, and framing below are drawn from Christian tradition and mainstream historiography of Christianity, not from a neutral or interfaith consensus. Most entries are ordinary historical events (a council convened, a treaty signed, a preacher active in a given year) that any historian would accept. A few are not: most notably the **resurrection** of Jesus, which this page lists as a dated “event” because Christians hold it as one, but which Islam does not accept at all. Islam’s account of the crucifixion itself also differs sharply from the Christian one — the Qur’an denies that Jesus was killed on the cross in the way the Gospels describe (Qur’an 4:157). See [The Crucifixion](#) → p.

⁴⁵ for that difference in full, and **Understanding Christianity** → p.6 for how this section as a whole approaches Christian belief from a Muslim perspective.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY

30 AD • The Crucifixion and Resurrection

Jesus of Nazareth was crucified under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. Christians believe he rose from the dead three days later, an event commemorated annually at Easter.

50 AD • The Council of Jerusalem

The first major church council decided that Gentile converts need not follow Jewish ceremonial law or be circumcised, opening Christianity to non-Jewish populations (Acts 15:1-29).

64 AD • Persecution under Nero

Following the Great Fire of Rome, Nero blamed and executed Christians as scapegoats. Tradition holds both Peter and Paul were martyred in this period.

IMPERIAL CHRISTIANITY

313 AD • The Edict of Milan

Constantine and Licinius granted religious tolerance empire-wide, ending systematic Roman persecution of Christians.

325 AD • The Council of Nicaea

The first ecumenical council affirmed Jesus's full divinity against Arianism, producing the original Nicene Creed.

380 AD • Christianity becomes the Roman state religion

Emperor Theodosius I's Edict of Thessalonica made Nicene Christianity the official religion of the empire.

451 AD • The Council of Chalcedon

Defined Christ as two natures united in one person, a decision that led to the separation of the Oriental Orthodox churches.

MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY

1054 AD • The Great Schism

The final break between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, over the filioque clause, papal authority, and liturgical practice.

1095 AD • The First Crusade

Pope Urban II called for a military expedition to reclaim Jerusalem from Muslim rule; Crusaders captured the city in 1099.

REFORMATION ERA

1517 AD • Luther's Ninety-five Theses

Criticizing the sale of indulgences, Luther's theses are traditionally said to have been posted on the Wittenberg church door on October 31, 1517.

1534 AD • The English Reformation

Henry VIII broke with Rome after the Pope refused to annul his marriage; the Act of Supremacy named the English monarch head of the Church of England.

1545-1563 AD • The Council of Trent

The Catholic Church's comprehensive doctrinal response to Protestantism, launching the Counter-Reformation.

1648 AD • The Peace of Westphalia

Ended the devastating Thirty Years' War and confirmed religious toleration for Lutherans and Calvinists within the Holy Roman Empire.

MODERN CHRISTIANITY**1738 AD • The Methodist movement**

John Wesley's evangelical conversion led to field preaching outside formal church structures; American Methodism organized as its own denomination by 1784.

1906 AD • The Azusa Street Revival

Led by William J. Seymour in Los Angeles, this interracial revival launched the global Pentecostal movement.

1962-1965 AD • The Second Vatican Council

Called by Pope John XXIII for the church's "updating" (*aggiornamento*): the vernacular Mass, greater lay participation, and ecumenical dialogue.

Early Christianity (30–313 AD)

The foundational period of Christianity, spanning from Jesus's ministry through nearly three centuries of growth under Roman persecution — the transformation of a small Jewish sect into a movement spanning the Mediterranean world.

30 AD — The Crucifixion and Resurrection. In the Christian account, Jesus of Nazareth was crucified under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius, and Christians believe he rose from the dead three days later — an event recorded in all four Gospels (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20–21) and commemorated annually at Easter. Neither claim is accepted in Islam: the Qur'an denies that Jesus was crucified in this way, and the resurrection built on it is, correspondingly, not part of Islamic belief. See [The Crucifixion](#) → p.45 for the Islamic account.¹

50 AD — The Council of Jerusalem. The first major church council addressed whether Gentile converts must follow Jewish ceremonial law (Acts 15:1-29). Peter, James, and Paul played key roles; the council determined Gentiles need not be circumcised or follow all Mosaic dietary law, opening Christianity to non-Jewish populations.²

64 AD — Persecution under Nero. Following the Great Fire of Rome, Nero blamed Christians and began systematic persecution; the historian Tacitus records Christians being thrown to dogs or crucified and burned (*Annals* 15.44). Tradition holds both Peter and Paul

were martyred in this period, which began intermittent Roman persecution lasting until 313 AD.³

Characteristics of the period: rapid missionary expansion from Jerusalem to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch; formation of core doctrine on Jesus's divinity, salvation, and the Trinity; a developing church hierarchy of bishops, presbyters, and deacons; the writing and gradual canonization of the New Testament; martyrdom (Polycarp, Perpetua, Felicity); and confrontation with early alternative movements such as Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Montanism.

Imperial Christianity (313–476 AD)

Christianity's transition from a persecuted minority to the Roman Empire's official religion, and the establishment of orthodox theology through ecumenical councils.

313 AD — The Edict of Milan. Constantine and Licinius granted religious tolerance empire-wide; Christians gained legal protection and restitution for confiscated property, ending systematic persecution.⁴

325 AD — The Council of Nicaea. The first ecumenical council, convened to address the Arian controversy (Arius taught Jesus was a created being, subordinate to the Father). The council affirmed Jesus's full divinity as "consubstantial" (*homoousios*) with the Father, producing the original Nicene Creed — later expanded at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 into the fuller Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed still recited in churches today.⁵

380 AD — Christianity becomes the Roman state religion. Emperor Theodosius I's Edict of Thessalonica made Nicene Christianity official; pagan temples were closed and non-Nicene groups such as the Arians declared heretical.⁶

451 AD — The Council of Chalcedon. The fourth ecumenical council defined the hypostatic union — Christ as two natures united in one person — rejecting both Nestorianism and Eutychianism. Its decisions led to the separation of the Oriental Orthodox churches (Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and others).⁷

Characteristics: intense Christological debate; church-state alliance; construction of great basilicas; the rise of monasticism (Anthony, Pachomius, later Benedict); patristic theologians such as Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and John Chrysostom; and Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation (382–405 AD).

Medieval Christianity (476–1517 AD)

Christianity's dominance in Europe, the split between East and West, the Crusades, and the height of papal power.

1054 AD — The Great Schism. The final break between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, over the *filioque* clause, papal authority, and liturgical practice; mutual excommunications between Cardinal Humbert and Patriarch Michael Cerularius

were only lifted in 1965, by a joint declaration of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I timed to coincide with Vatican II's closing session.⁸

1095 AD — The First Crusade. Pope Urban II called for a military expedition to reclaim Jerusalem from Muslim rule; Crusaders captured the city in 1099. Eight major crusades followed over two centuries (1095–1291), with lasting effects on Christian-Muslim relations.⁹

Other developments: Charlemagne's coronation as Holy Roman Emperor (800); growing East-West alienation (1054–1204); the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars (1209–1229); and the Western Schism of competing popes (1378–1417).

Characteristics: papal supremacy claims, peaking under Innocent III; scholasticism, integrating Aristotelian philosophy with theology (Aquinas, Anselm); the founding of universities (Bologna 1088, Paris 1150, Oxford 1167, Cambridge 1209); new religious orders (Franciscans 1209, Dominicans 1216); Gothic cathedral architecture; growth of Marian devotion, pilgrimage, and relic veneration; and inquisitions against heresy, notably in Spain (1478).

Reformation Era (1517–1648 AD)

The Protestant Reformation shattered Western Christian unity and produced the Catholic Church's own comprehensive response.

1517 AD — Luther's 95 Theses. Luther's theses, criticizing the sale of indulgences, are traditionally said to have been posted on the Wittenberg church door on October 31, 1517. His teaching emphasized salvation by faith alone, scripture alone, and grace alone; excommunicated in 1521, he famously declared at the Diet of Worms that same year, "Here I stand, I can do no other."¹⁰

1534 AD — The English Reformation. Henry VIII broke with Rome after the Pope refused to annul his marriage; the Act of Supremacy named the English monarch head of the Church of England — a break driven by political rather than primarily theological motives.¹¹

1545–1563 AD — The Council of Trent. The Catholic Church's comprehensive response to Protestantism, clarifying doctrine on justification, the sacraments, and scripture and tradition, while addressing clerical abuses and launching the Counter-Reformation.¹²

Other developments: Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536); the founding of the Jesuits (1540); the Peace of Augsburg (1555); and the devastating Thirty Years' War, ending with the Peace of Westphalia (1618–1648), which confirmed religious toleration for Lutherans and extended it to Calvinists.¹³

Characteristics: an emphasis on biblical authority and the priesthood of all believers; vernacular Bible translation (Tyndale, Luther); the printing press accelerating the Reformation's spread; religious wars across Europe; the Radical Reformation (Anabaptists, Mennonites); and Catholic missionary expansion into Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Modern Christianity (1648–present)

Global expansion, denominational proliferation, and engagement with secularization, science, and pluralism — a shift from European dominance to a truly worldwide faith.

1738 AD — The Methodist movement. John Wesley’s evangelical conversion led to field preaching outside formal church structures, emphasizing personal and social holiness; American Methodism organized as a separate denomination by 1784.¹⁴

1906 AD — The Azusa Street Revival. Led by William J. Seymour in Los Angeles, emphasizing speaking in tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit’s baptism, in interracial worship unusual for its time; it launched the global Pentecostal movement. See [Christian Denominations](#) → p.33 for its estimated size today alongside other traditions.¹⁵

1962–1965 AD — The Second Vatican Council. Called by Pope John XXIII for the church’s “updating” (*aggiornamento*): the Mass in vernacular languages, greater lay participation, improved relations with Judaism and other faiths, ecumenical dialogue, and an affirmation of religious freedom as a human right.¹⁶

Other developments: the Great Awakenings in America; the “Great Century” of Protestant missions (1793–1910); the founding of the World Council of Churches (1948); the rise of liberation theology in Latin America; and explosive church growth across the Global South in the late 20th century.

Characteristics: denominational diversity numbering in the thousands (see [Christian Denominations](#) → p.33); Christianity’s center of gravity shifting to Africa, Asia, and Latin America; the 20th-century evangelical movement; ongoing ecumenical dialogue; Christian involvement in abolition, civil rights, and other social movements; declining church attendance and rising religious disaffiliation in the West; and continued persecution of Christians in many regions of the world.

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04

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 04

Christian Denominations

A comparison of major Christian denominations — Trinitarian, Unitarian, and other views of God — with their founding dates, founders, estimated size, and sources.

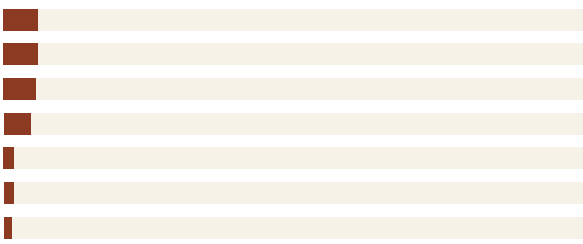
30 NOVEMBER 2020

Christianity has more denominations than perhaps any other religion — commonly estimated in the tens of thousands once every regional and independent body is counted. The table below compares some of the more prominent ones: how each understands the nature of God (Trinitarian, Unitarian, or another view), when and by whom it was founded, roughly how large it is today, and a linked source for each. A chart of the twelve numerically largest follows the table's introduction below.

FIGURE

Estimated global adherents — twelve largest traditions

Roman Catholic Church	1.36B
Pentecostal (denominational)	280M
Eastern Orthodox Church	220M
Baptist	100M
Anglican / Episcopal	85M

Methodist		80M
Reformed / Presbyterian		80M
Lutheran		75M
Oriental Orthodox churches		62M
Oneness Pentecostal		24M
Seventh-day Adventist		22M
LDS (Mormons)		17M

Figures are rough, order-of-magnitude estimates, not censuses — compiled from each communion's own reporting where published (e.g. the Vatican, the Lutheran World Federation, the Anglican Communion) and from independent researchers otherwise (e.g. Pew Research / the Center for the Study of Global Christianity for Pentecostalism). Showing the twelve largest by estimated size; the full table below covers all twenty, including smaller and newer movements, with a source for every figure.

DENOMINATION	NATURE OF GOD	YEAR FOUNDED	FOUNDER	EST. ADHERENTS	BRIEF BELIEFS
Roman Catholic Church	Trinity	Traditionally 1st century; distinct Western institution after the 1054 Great Schism	Jesus Christ, with St. Peter as first Bishop of Rome (per Catholic teaching)	~1.36 billion	World's largest Christian body; holds Mary (peace be upon her) as Mother of God but not divine herself, alongside doctrines of her Immaculate Conception and bodily Assumption; recognizes papal authority.
Eastern Orthodox Church	Trinity	Traditionally 1st century; distinct Eastern communion after 1054	Apostolic — no single post-apostolic founder	~220 million	Rejects papal supremacy; strong emphasis on icons and the unbroken continuity of apostolic tradition.
Oriental Orthodox churches (Coptic, Armenian, Syriac, Ethiopian, and others)	Trinity	Distinct communion after the 451 Council of Chalcedon; individual churches earlier (e.g. Armenian Apostolic, state religion from 301)	Varies by church — e.g. St. Mark the Evangelist (Coptic tradition), St. Gregory the Illuminator (Armenian)	~60 million	Miaphysite Christology (Christ's divine and human natures united as one) — rejected the "two natures" formula agreed at Chalcedon.
Assyrian Church of the East	Trinity	Distinct communion after the 431 Council of Ephesus	Apostolic; historically associated with the Christology of Nestorius	~400,000	Emphasizes a sharp distinction between Christ's divine and human natures; historically spread across Persia and Central Asia.
Lutheran	Trinity	1517–1521	Martin Luther	~75 million	Salvation by faith alone (<i>sola fide</i>) and scripture alone (<i>sola scriptura</i>); rejects papal authority and

DENOMINATION	NATURE OF GOD	YEAR FOUNDED	FOUNDER	EST. ADHERENTS	BRIEF BELIEFS
					the sale of indulgences.
Reformed / Presbyterian	Trinity	1536 (Geneva); 1560 (Scotland)	John Calvin; John Knox	~80 million	Emphasizes God's sovereignty and predestination; governed by elders (presbyters) rather than bishops.
Anglican / Episcopal	Trinity	1534	King Henry VIII (break from Rome); doctrine later shaped by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer	~85 million	Retains much Catholic liturgy and a bishop-led structure while affirming Reformation theology.
Anabaptist (Mennonite, Amish, Hutterite)	Trinity	1525 (Zurich); Mennonite branch from 1536; Amish split in 1693	Conrad Grebel and the Swiss Brethren; Menno Simons (Mennonite); Jakob Ammann (Amish)	~2.1 million	Believer's (adult) baptism only; pacifism; separation of church and state.
Baptist	Trinity	1609 (Amsterdam)	John Smyth	~100 million	Believer's baptism by full immersion; congregational governance; wide internal diversity (Southern Baptist, American Baptist, and others).
Methodist	Trinity	1738	John Wesley (with Charles Wesley)	~80 million	Emphasizes personal holiness, social reform, and free-will (Arminian) theology over strict predestination.
Pentecostal (Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, and others)	Trinity	1906 (Azusa Street Revival); earlier roots at Topeka, 1901	William J. Seymour (Azusa Street); Charles Parham (earlier Topeka revival)	~280 million	Emphasizes baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and other spiritual gifts.
Oneness Pentecostal (United Pentecostal Church, and others)	Other — Modalist ("Oneness"): God is a single person who reveals Himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, not	1914–1916, splitting from the Assemblies of God	Frank Ewart; Glenn Cook	~24 million	Baptizes "in the name of Jesus" only, rather than the traditional Trinitarian formula.

DENOMINATION	NATURE OF GOD	YEAR FOUNDED	FOUNDER	EST. ADHERENTS	BRIEF BELIEFS
	three eternally distinct persons				
Seventh-day Adventist	Trinity	1863 (organized); Millerite roots from the 1830s–40s	Ellen G. White, James White, Joseph Bates	~22 million	Observes Saturday, the seventh day, as the Sabbath; emphasizes Christ's imminent second coming.
Jehovah's Witnesses	Unitarian — God the Father alone is Almighty God; Jesus is Michael the Archangel, God's first creation, not co-eternal with the Father	1870s (Bible Student movement); renamed 1931	Charles Taze Russell; reorganized under Joseph Rutherford	~8.7 million	Rejects the Trinity, blood transfusions, and participation in politics or military service; known for door-to-door evangelism.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)	Other — a Godhead of three distinct, separate divine beings (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) united in purpose but not in a single being	1830	Joseph Smith	~17.2 million	Restorationist; accepts the Book of Mormon alongside the Bible as scripture; teaches that humans can progress toward godhood.
Christian Science (Church of Christ, Scientist)	Other — God as an impersonal divine Principle or Mind; sin, disease, and matter are regarded as ultimately unreal	1879	Mary Baker Eddy	Not disclosed by the church; independently estimated well under 100,000 today, down from a reported peak near 268,000 in 1936	Relies on prayer rather than medicine for healing; central text is Eddy's <i>Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures</i> .
Christadelphians	Unitarian — God the Father alone is God; Jesus is His literal son, who did not exist prior to his human birth	Teachings from 1848; name adopted 1864	John Thomas	~50,000	Rejects the Trinity and the natural immortality of the soul; teaches immortality is granted only to the saved.
Unitarian Universalism	Historically Unitarian; today non-creedal and theologically pluralistic — many congregations no longer identify as Christian	1961 (merger); Unitarian roots to 1568 (Transylvania), Universalist roots to 1779 (first congregation, Gloucester, Massachusetts)	No single founder — the American Unitarian Association (1825) merged with the Universalist Church of America	~150,000 (US/Canada congregational membership)	Historically rejected the Trinity and the doctrine of eternal hell; today welcomes a wide range of beliefs, including humanist and non-theist members.

DENOMINATION	NATURE OF GOD	YEAR FOUNDED	FOUNDER	EST. ADHERENTS	BRIEF BELIEFS
<i>Iglesia ni Cristo</i>	Unitarian — God the Father alone is the one true God; Jesus is a created, exalted man rather than God, though revered as the one mediator	1914 (Philippines)	Felix Y. Manalo	~2.3 million (INC does not publish official figures; independently estimated)	Teaches it is the one true church, restored in the “last days”; worships congregationally in large, purpose-built temples.
<i>World Mission Society Church of God</i>	Other — believes in both “God the Father” and “God the Mother” as two distinct divine persons	1964 (South Korea)	Ahn Sahng-hong	~3.6 million (self-reported by the church; independent verification unavailable)	Observes the Sabbath and biblical feast days; regards a living woman, Zahng Gil-jah, as the Second Coming of Christ and “God the Mother.”

Most of the world’s roughly two billion Christians belong to the Roman Catholic, Eastern/Oriental Orthodox, and mainline or Pentecostal Protestant traditions at the top of this table — all of which affirm the Trinity, whatever else divides them. The Unitarian and “Other” entries further down are numerically much smaller, but are worth including precisely because they show that even the most basic question — whether God is one person or three — has never had a single, universal answer within movements that call themselves Christian. Population figures throughout are necessarily approximate: several groups (*Iglesia ni Cristo*, the World Mission Society Church of God, Christian Science) do not publish independently verifiable membership statistics, and even well-documented communions count members by different standards (baptized, active, or self-identified).

05

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 05

The Trinity

What the doctrine of the Trinity actually claims — one God in three persons — the verses cited on each side, and how the doctrine developed historically.

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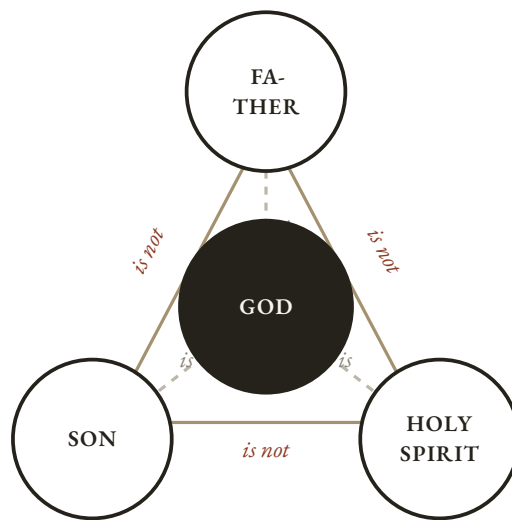
Beliefs about the nature of God differ significantly across Christian denominations (see [Christian Denominations](#) → p.33 for how this splits by tradition). The doctrine held by the majority of the world's churches is that God has a triune nature — the Trinity — which defines God as one Being who exists eternally as three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Put simply, it is “one God in three persons.”¹ The three persons are not to be confused with one another — the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father — yet all three are said to be co-equal and co-eternal, “each God, whole and entire.” Each person is said to play a different role in how God relates to the world: in the plan of salvation, the Father is said to have sent the Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for the sins of mankind, while the Holy Spirit sanctifies believers and inspires them in daily life.

A key element of the doctrine is the incarnation: the second person of the Trinity, the Son, is said to have taken on human flesh in the person of Jesus. Jesus is thus held to be the God-man, with two natures — one divine, one human — fully God and fully man at once. As a result of the incarnation, Trinitarian doctrine holds that humanity has been permanently incorporated into the Godhead: the Son retains an inseparable divine and human nature forever, even after

the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension — existing in heaven as a glorified man who is, at the same time, God.

A diagram of the doctrine

Christians have long used a simple diagram, the *Shield of the Trinity*, to summarize this relationship at a glance. It dates to at least the 12th century and became especially popular in 13th-century English manuscripts, though the English name “Shield of the Trinity” itself only came into common use in the 20th century — earlier writers called it the *Scutum Fidei*, Latin for “shield of faith.”²



The Scutum Fidei (“Shield of Faith”), a medieval diagram summarizing the doctrine: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each God, but none of the three is identical to either of the other two.

How the doctrine developed

The word “Trinity” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. Trinitarian Christians hold that the concept is nonetheless implicit in how the New Testament speaks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together — for instance in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) — but the fully worked-out doctrine took shape gradually, through several centuries of controversy and debate.³ The First Council of Nicaea (325 AD) affirmed the Son’s full divinity against Arianism; the First Council of Constantinople (381 AD) extended this to the Holy Spirit; and the doctrine’s classic formulation — “one substance, three persons” — is usually credited to the Athanasian Creed, compiled around 500 AD, well over four centuries after Jesus.⁴ See [Major Events in Christian History](#) → p.26 for these councils in their fuller historical context.

How Trinitarians and Unitarians each read the evidence

Trinitarians justify the doctrine through verses such as [Genesis 1:26](#) (“Let us make mankind in our image”) and [Matthew 28:19](#) (the baptismal formula “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”). They further point to the miracles attributed to Jesus in the New Testament, and to his statement “I am” in [John 8:58](#), read as a deliberate echo of God’s self-naming in [Exodus 3:14](#).

Unitarian Christians, by contrast, argue for the absolute oneness of God from verses like [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) (“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one”) and [Isaiah 45:5-6](#) (“I am the Lord, and there is no other”), together with New Testament verses such as [John 17:3](#) and [Mark 12:28-34](#), where Jesus himself affirms that same oneness.⁵ Unitarian Christian churches remain a small minority — see [Christian Denominations](#) → p. 33 for where groups like Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christadelphians, and Iglesia ni Cristo fall on this question relative to the Trinitarian majority.

For a detailed question-and-answer treatment of the doctrine and the arguments on both sides, see [The Trinity: Questions & Answers](#) → p. 57.

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 - 5 “Unitarianism and Universalism” — [Encyclopedia Britannica](#), for the Unitarian Christian position and its history.
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06

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 06

Original Sin

The Christian doctrine that Adam and Eve's first sin is inherited by all humanity, and the Old Testament account it rests on.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

The concept of Original Sin centers on the event where Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) ate the forbidden fruit — the first sin committed by mankind. In Christian doctrine, this sin extends across generations, such that all human beings are born sinners.

The temptation by the serpent

The first sin is depicted in the following verses, where Eve is tempted by the serpent:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Genesis 3:1-7

וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?' ... But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes... she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

Passed down to the fourth generation

The following verse is used to justify why the original sin is understood to propagate across generations of mankind:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 5:9

לֹא-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַנָּא

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

For a Muslim response to the idea that one person's sin can be inherited or transferred to others, see [Sin in Christian Thought](#) → p.74.

07

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 07

Atonement of Sins

The Christian doctrine that sin requires a sinless blood sacrifice — and why it points to Jesus's crucifixion.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

Since all human beings are held to be sinners because of original sin, Christian doctrine holds that an atonement is required to be forgiven by God the Father — following the Old Testament practice of the Jews, which required an offering for forgiveness.

Blood sacrifice

Blood sacrifice is presented as required for forgiveness in the Old Testament:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 17:11

כִּי נַפֶּשׁ הַבָּשָׂר בַּדָּם הוּא וְאֲנִי נָתַתִּיו לָכֶם עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר
עַל-נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

A worthy offering, in this account, must itself be sinless — and since all human beings are held to be sinners, only Jesus (peace be upon him) could satisfy that requirement, being sinless. This is the core teaching of Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament. In his letter to the Romans, for example:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 6:23

τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἀμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν χριστῷ
ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

For a Muslim response to whether human sacrifice is actually necessary for forgiveness, according to the Old Testament's own words, see [Sin in Christian Thought](#) → p.74. For a detailed question-and-answer treatment of this topic, see [Atonement of Sins: Questions & Answers](#) → p.78.

08

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 08

The Crucifixion

The Christian account of the crucifixion as the human sacrifice that atones for humanity's sins.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

In Christian doctrine, the atonement of sins is accomplished through human sacrifice — specifically, the sacrifice of a sinless human being, Jesus (peace be upon him). This act of offering is what's referred to as the crucifixion. Below is a verse from the Gospel of John describing part of the event:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 19:17-18

ὁ οὖν πιλάτος ἀκούσας τῶν λόγων τούτων ἤγαγεν ἔξω τὸν ἰησοῦν... ἐκραύγασαν οὖν ἐκεῖνοι, ἄρον ἄρον, σταύρωσον αὐτόν.

...and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

A complete description of the event, according to the Gospels, can be found in John 19:17-30, Matthew 27:33-50, Mark 15:22-37, and Luke 23:32-49.

Muslims do not accept this account of Jesus's death — for the Muslim view of what happened, and why the crucifixion isn't required for forgiveness, see [Atonement of Sins](#) → p. 43 and [Sin in Christian Thought](#) → p. 74.

Is the Injeel (Gospel) Corrupted?

A response to the claim that today's New Testament is the unaltered word of God: anonymous authorship, and a selection of internal contradictions.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

Muslims believe in the Gospel (Injeel) and the Torah as revelations from God. The reason Muslims commonly say today's Injeel has been corrupted or changed is that what exists today is not the original Gospel God revealed — so when Muslims say they believe in the Injeel, they mean the original text, not the text as it circulates now. This page lays out why.

Who wrote the Gospels?

The four Gospels we have today were written by scribes whose identities are, historically speaking, unknown. “Matthew,” “Mark,” “Luke,” and “John” are convenient labels rather than confirmed authorship. A summary from the *Oxford Bible Study* edition:

GOSPEL	WHAT THE SCHOLARSHIP SAYS
Matthew	“Most scholars hold that the author/editor is someone other than the disciple Matthew (even if, as here, he is referred to as Matthew out of convenience).”
Mark	“Mark was written anonymously. The designation ‘according to Mark’ was added in the second century CE, as Gospels began to circulate beyond audiences for whom they were written.”

GOSPEL	WHAT THE SCHOLARSHIP SAYS
Luke	“By the second century, the author... was identified as Luke, a physician and travelling companion of Paul... Yet even defenders of the traditional identification recognize difficulties with that connection.”
John	“Like the other Gospels, this one never names an author... Today most scholars think that Johannine traditions stem from an unidentified follower of Jesus, not one of the twelve disciples.”

The *World History Encyclopedia* puts it plainly: the original gospel texts circulated for roughly a hundred years with no names attached; the names were assigned by Church Fathers in the second century, and none of the writers signed their work or directly claimed to be an eyewitness (Luke is a partial exception, saying he interviewed witnesses, without further detail). The Church Fathers were themselves aware of a basic problem — the first disciples were Galilean fishermen unlikely to have written the level of Greek found in these documents.

The scope of the Injeel

The Injeel refers specifically to the book revealed to Jesus (peace be upon him) — the Gospel proper, not the later letters of Paul, which were never presented as revelation given to Jesus but as Paul’s own correspondence to various communities (Romans, Corinthians, and so on). Some Christians use “Injeel” more broadly to mean the whole New Testament; this page respects that usage while noting the distinction.

“God-breathed,” and what that should mean

Christian doctrine holds the Bible as a whole to be “God-breathed”:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

2 Timothy 3:16

πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμόν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

If a text is genuinely God-breathed, we should expect it to be internally consistent — in its grammar, its structure, and above all its teaching, since God cannot contradict Himself from one book to another. A book with real contradictions is not God-breathed; at minimum, it suggests the text has been altered from what its “inspired” authors originally wrote. Below is a small selection of examples — many more could be listed.

A few Old Testament examples

QUESTION	THE TEXTS
Who was Shelah’s father?	Genesis 11:12 (NRSV): “When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah.” Luke 3:35-36 (NRSV): “...son of Shelah, son of

QUESTION	THE TEXTS
	Cainan , son of Arphaxad...” — Luke’s genealogy inserts an extra generation, Cainan, between Shelah and Arphaxad.
How old was Ahaziah when he began to reign?	2 Kings 8:26 (NRSV): twenty-two years old. 2 Chronicles 22:2 (NRSV): forty-two years old — for the same king, with the same mother named in both verses. Some modern translations (NIV, ESV) harmonize the numbers; NRSV, KJV, and NKJV do not.
Are children punished for their parents’ sins?	Exodus 20:5 (NRSV): God “punishing children for iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation.” Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 (NRSV): “children shall not be put to death for their parents... the person who sins shall die.” See Sin in Christian Thought → p.74 for more on this specific tension.

A few New Testament examples

QUESTION	THE TEXTS
How many generations between Jesus and David?	Matthew 1:1-17 counts 28 generations; Luke 3:23-38 counts 43 — two different genealogies for the same lineage.
Was Jesus’s testimony about himself valid?	John 5:31 (NRSV): “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.” John 8:14 (NRSV): “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid.” The underlying Greek word (ἀληθής) is identical in both verses — NRSV simply translates it differently (“true” vs. “valid”) to soften the contradiction.
Did Jesus come to judge the world?	John 9:39 : “I came into this world for judgment.” John 12:47 : “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” Again, the same underlying Greek construction in both verses.
Is Abraham an example of salvation by faith alone, or by works?	Romans 4 : Abraham received the promise “through the righteousness that comes by faith.” James 2:21-24 (NRSV): “Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac... You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” Compare also Galatians 2:16 (“no one will be justified by the works of the law”) directly against James 2:24 (“justified by works and not by faith alone”) — a genuine doctrinal fault line within the New Testament itself, not just a wording quirk.
Was the stone already rolled away when the women arrived at the tomb?	Matthew 28:1-2 : an angel arrives and rolls the stone away as the women watch. Mark 16:3-4 , Luke 24:1-2 , and John 20:1 : the stone is already rolled away when they arrive. The four resurrection accounts also disagree on how many angels or men were at the tomb (one in Matthew and Mark, two in Luke and John) and on what the women did afterward (told the disciples immediately in Matthew and Luke; “said nothing to anyone” in Mark).

None of this is offered to diminish the sincerity of Christian belief — it’s offered because the claim under examination is specifically that today’s text is unaltered and without error. Internal contradictions like these are exactly the kind of evidence that leads Muslims to conclude the Gospel as it exists today is not identical to what was originally revealed, even while affirming that an original, uncorrupted revelation was indeed given to Jesus.

10

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 10

Is the Bible the Word of God?

On the anonymous authorship of the Gospels, what 'God-breathed' should imply about a perfect text, and a working list of internal contradictions.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

The Injeel

Muslims believe in the Gospel (Injeel) and the Torah (Tawrah) — but Muslims also reject the truthfulness of the Gospel as it exists in the Bible today, mainly because we believe it has been altered from the original revelation God gave. So when we say Muslims believe in the Injeel and the Torah, we mean the original texts as revealed by God, not necessarily the documents that carry those names now.

Who wrote the Christian Gospels?

The Gospels we have today were written by scribes whose identities are actually unknown. Though we refer to them as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, these are names of convenience for the books, not necessarily the names of their authors. Here is a summary from the *Oxford Bible Study*:

PAGE	GOSPEL	AUTHORSHIP
1781	Matthew	“... most scholars hold that the author/editor is someone other than the disciple Matthew (even if, as here, he is referred to as Matthew out of convenience)”
1829	Mark	“ Mark was written anonymously. The designation ‘according to Mark’ was added in the second century CE, as Gospels began to circulate beyond audiences for whom they were written.”
1865	Luke	“By the second century, the author of the Gospel and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, was identified as Luke, a physician who was a travelling companion and co-worker with Paul... Yet, even defenders of the traditional identification recognize difficulties with that connection. ”
1917	John	“ Like the other Gospels, this one never names an author. Since at least the late second century CE, tradition has attributed the authorship of the Gospel to Jesus’s disciple, John the son of Zebedee... Today most scholars think that Johannine traditions stem from an unidentified follower of Jesus, not one of the twelve disciples. ”

According to the [World History Encyclopedia](#):

“*The original texts of the gospels had existed for about a hundred years with no names. The Church Fathers in the 2nd century CE assigned the names; none of the writers signed their work. The gospels are not eyewitness accounts; none of the gospel writers ever directly claimed to be an eyewitness. One exception is Luke, who says he interviewed witnesses but gives no further details. In their attempt to provide backgrounds for the writers the Church Fathers tried to align them as close to the original circle of Jesus as possible. They were also aware of a fundamental problem: the first disciples of Jesus were fishermen from Galilee who could not read and write the level of Greek in these documents.*

The same summary is cited by [Wikipedia](#).

The scope of the Injeel

As Fouad Marsi has noted, the Injeel refers specifically to the book revealed to Jesus (peace be upon him). On that view, its scope covers the Gospels of Jesus and not the writings of Paul, since Paul’s letters — to the Romans, the Corinthians, and others — were never presented as revelation given to Jesus. We respect that others hold a broader view, treating the whole New Testament as the Injeel.

Is the Bible “God-breathed”?

Christians commonly claim the Bible is God-breathed — that its writing was directly inspired by God — and therefore cannot be considered corrupted. Paul makes this claim about scripture directly:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

2 Timothy 3:16

πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανάρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

Taking this seriously: if a book is God-breathed, and God is perfect, we should expect a perfect book — consistent in its grammar, its structure, and above all its teaching. That is the standard the next section holds it to.

Selected contradictions

A book with real contradictions is not God-breathed, since God cannot contradict Himself from one page to the next — it would suggest the text has been altered, or that a given passage was never inspired to begin with. What follows is a working list, not an exhaustive one.

Old Testament: contradictions on names

This section concerns the New Testament's own view of the Old Testament — since Christians hold that 2 Timothy 3:16 applies to the Old Testament as well.

Who was Shelah's father?

- **Genesis 11:12** (NRSV): When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah.
- **Luke 3:35-36** (NRSV): ...the son of Serug, son of Reu, son of Peleg, son of Eber, son of Shelah, son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah, son of Lamech...

Both passages trace the same line. Read across the fuller genealogy, the two disagree on what sits between Shelah and Noah:

VERSES	GENEALOGY (NRSV)
Genesis 11:10-16	Noah > Shem > Arpachshad > Shelah > Eber > Peleg
Luke 3:35-36	Noah > Shem > Arphaxad > Cainan > Shelah > Eber > Peleg

Genesis makes Arpachshad the father of Shelah directly; Luke inserts Cainan between them. Some editions treat "Arpachshad" and "Arphaxad" as the same name (a Hebrew/Greek transliteration difference), but that doesn't account for the extra generation.

Who was Basemath's father?

- **Genesis 26:34** (NRSV): When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of **Elon the Hittite**.
- **Genesis 36:3** (NRSV): ...and Basemath, **Ishmael's daughter**, sister of Nebaioth.

Both describe the same wife of Esau — with two different fathers named (and Genesis 36:2 separately names Elon the Hittite as the father of Esau's *other* wife, Adah).

Old Testament: contradictions on numbers

How many supervisors did Solomon have?

- **1 Kings 5:16** (NRSV): besides Solomon's **three thousand three hundred** supervisors who were over the work.
- **2 Chronicles 2:2** (NRSV): Solomon conscripted seventy thousand laborers and eighty thousand stonecutters, with **three thousand six hundred** to oversee them.

How old was Ahaziah when he began to reign?

- **2 Kings 8:26** (NRSV): Ahaziah was **twenty-two years old** when he began to reign.
- **2 Chronicles 22:2** (NRSV): Ahaziah was **forty-two years old** when he began to reign.

Some modern translations (NIV, ESV) harmonize this figure; others (NRSV, KJV, NKJV) keep the two numbers as they are in the underlying manuscripts.

How old was Jehoiachin when he began to reign?

- **2 Kings 24:8** (NRSV): Jehoiachin was **eighteen years old** when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem.
- **2 Chronicles 36:9** (NRSV): Jehoiachin was **eight years old** when he began to reign; he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem.

Old Testament: contradictions on events and ideas

Are children punished for their parents' sins?

- **Exodus 20:5** (NRSV): "...for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, **punishing children for the iniquity of parents**, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me."
- **Deuteronomy 24:16** (NRSV): "Parents shall not be put to death for their children, **nor shall children be put to death for their parents** only for their own crimes may persons be put to death."
- **Ezekiel 18:20** (NRSV): "The person who sins shall die. **A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent**, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child."

New Testament: contradictions on events and ideas

Had the ruler's daughter died, or was she gravely ill?

- **Matthew 9:18** (NRSV): "My daughter has **just died** but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."
- **Mark 5:23** (NRSV): "My little daughter is **at the point of death**. Come and lay your hands on her..."
- **Luke 8:42** (NRSV): "...for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, **who was dying**."

All three accounts agree she eventually died, but they disagree on what was said to Jesus (peace be upon him) *before* he arrived — dead, in Matthew, versus still dying in Mark and Luke.

When did the disciples notice the withered fig tree?

- **Matthew 21:19-20** (NRSV): the tree withers at once, and the disciples are amazed **on the spot**.
- **Mark 11:20-21** (NRSV): **the next morning**, as they passed by, they saw it withered to its roots.

How many times would the rooster crow before Peter's denial?

- **Matthew 26:34** (NRSV): "...this very night, **before the cock crows**, you will deny me three times."
- **Mark 14:30** (NRSV): "...this very night, **before the cock crows twice**, you will deny me three times."

Who bought the field with the money from Jesus's betrayal?

- **Matthew 27:6-7** (NRSV): **the chief priests** used the silver to buy the potter's field.
- **Acts 1:16-19** (NRSV): **Judas himself** acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness.

Is Abraham an example of salvation through faith alone?

- **Romans 4** (NRSV, paraphrased): Abraham received the promise **through the righteousness that comes by faith**, not through the law.
- **James 2:21-24** (NRSV): "Was not our ancestor Abraham **justified by works** when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?... You see that a person is justified by works **and not by faith alone**."

Are we justified by works?

- **Galatians 2:16** (NRSV): "...a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... no one will be justified by the works of the law."
- **James 2:24** (NRSV): "You see that a person is **justified by works and not by faith alone**."

New Testament: contradictions in the life of Jesus

Arranged in the order the events occur in his life (peace be upon him).

How many generations between Jesus and David?

- **Matthew 1:1-17**: 28 generations.
- **Luke 3:23-38**: 43 generations.

Did the centurion go to Jesus himself?

- **Matthew 8:5-6** (NRSV): **a centurion came to him** directly.
- **Luke 7:2-3** (NRSV): the centurion **sent Jewish elders** to Jesus on his behalf.

How many demoniacs met Jesus at the Gadarenes/Gerasenes?

- **Matthew 8:28** (NRSV): **two demoniacs** came out of the tombs to meet him.
- **Mark 5:1-2** and **Luke 8:26-37** (NRSV): **one man** with an unclean spirit met him.

How many blind men did Jesus heal at Jericho?

- **Matthew 20:29-31** (NRSV): **two blind men** sitting by the roadside.
- **Mark 10:46-47** and **Luke 18:35-43** (NRSV): **one blind man** (named Bartimaeus in Mark).

Was Jesus's testimony about himself valid?

- **John 5:31-32** (NRSV): "If I testify about myself, **my testimony is not true.**"
- **John 8:13-14** (NRSV): "Even if I testify on my own behalf, **my testimony is valid.**"

The underlying Greek word translated "true" in 5:31 and "valid" in 8:14 is the same word, ἀληθής — the English translation differs even though the original text doesn't.

Did Jesus come to judge the world?

- **John 9:39** (NRSV): "I came into this world **for judgment.**"
- **John 12:47** (NRSV): "...for **I came not to judge the world**, but to save the world."

What day was Jesus crucified?

- **Mark 14:12, 17; 15:25** (NRSV): the Passover meal is prepared and eaten, then Jesus is crucified the next morning — placing the crucifixion on the *second* day of Passover.
- **John 13:1, 18:28, 19:14** (NRSV): Jesus is taken to Pilate, and to the Jewish leaders, *before* the Passover meal is eaten — placing the crucifixion on the *first* day of Passover.

What time was Jesus crucified?

- **Mark 15:25** (NRSV): **nine o'clock in the morning.**
- **John 19:13-14** (NRSV): still before Pilate, **about noon.**

Did both criminals mock Jesus on the cross?

- **Matthew 27:44** and **Mark 15:32** (NRSV): **both** bandits crucified with him taunted him.
- **Luke 23:39-40** (NRSV): **one** taunted him; **the other rebuked the first** and defended Jesus.

When did the women arrive at the tomb?

- **Mark 16:2** (NRSV): very early, **after the sun had risen.**
- **John 20:1** (NRSV): early, **while it was still dark.**

Was the stone already rolled away when they arrived?

- **Matthew 28:1-2** (NRSV): an angel **rolls back the stone** in front of them.

- **Mark 16:3-4, Luke 24:1-2, John 20:1** (NRSV): they arrive to find the stone **already** rolled away.

Who did they find at the tomb?

- **Matthew 28:2** (NRSV): **one angel**, seated on the stone.
- **Mark 16:5** (NRSV): **one young man**, seated inside.
- **Luke 24:4** (NRSV): **two men** in dazzling clothes.
- **John 20:11-12** (NRSV): **two angels**, seated where the body had lain.

What did the women do after leaving the tomb?

- **Matthew 28:8** (NRSV): ran, **with fear and great joy**, to tell the disciples.
- **Mark 16:8** (NRSV): fled in terror and **said nothing to anyone**.
- **Luke 24:8-11** and **John 20:2** (NRSV): went and told the disciples directly.

Where this leaves the question

None of this is offered as a complete catalogue — only a representative sample of the kind of internal tension that, on the Christian’s own “God-breathed” standard, is worth explaining rather than setting aside. For a closer look at how these documents came to take their current form, see *Is the Injeel (Gospel) Corrupted?* → p.47

11

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER II

The Trinity: Questions & Answers

A point-by-point walk through the Bible's own words on the nature of God and Jesus, and how they weigh against the doctrine of the Trinity.

I JANUARY 2018

This page continues from **The Trinity** → p. 38, and works through specific objections and questions in more depth. In the name of God, the Almighty, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful — the intention behind these questions is to seek the truth, not to attack any religion. Where a question touches on something sensitive, it is asked in a spirit of honest dialogue, not hostility.

Summary

Before the detailed discussion, here is the shape of the argument in six questions:

1. Who is God according to the Old Testament — a triune God, or absolutely one in nature?

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 6:4

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

TRANSLATION • ESV

2. Who is God according to Jesus (peace be upon him)? A triune God, or absolutely one in nature?

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 17:3

αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωή, ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας ἰησοῦν χριστόν.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

TRANSLATION • ESV

3. Who did the Israelites worship according to Jesus — a triune being, or the one absolute God, the Father?

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 8:54

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· Ἐὰν ἐγὼ δοξάσω ἑμαυτόν, ἡ δόξα μου οὐδέν ἐστιν· ἔστιν ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ δοξάζων με, ὃν ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐστιν,

Jesus answered, 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, He is our God.'

TRANSLATION • ESV

4. Will there be any God to come after the God of the Israelites?

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Isaiah 43:10-11

אַתֶּם עֵדֵי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְעַבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּי לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּ וְתֵאֱמַרְנָה לִּי
וְתִבְיֵנוּ כִּי־אֲנִי הוּא לִפְנֵי לֹא־נֻצַּר אֵל וְאַחֲרִי לֹא יִהְיֶה׃ ס
אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה וְאֵין מִבְּלַעַדִּי מוֹשִׁיעַ׃

You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.

TRANSLATION • ESV

5. When Jesus was given the perfect opportunity to teach the Trinity — asked directly for the greatest commandment — did he correct the Jewish belief in one supreme God, the Father, and teach a triune nature instead?

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 12:28-34

εἰ δὲ ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια, ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

TRANSLATION • ESV

6. If righteousness came through the Law, Christ’s crucifixion would have been unnecessary, according to Paul — yet Jesus said he came not to abolish the Law. Whose teaching takes precedence?

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Galatians 2:21

οὐκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 5:17-19

μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Detailed questions

QUESTION 1
Q If Jesus is God, then he is omniscient. If he is omniscient, why is he not knowledgeable of the time of his return?

A ♦ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT *Matthew 24:36*
 περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μόνος.
 But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.
 TRANSLATION • ESV

One common response is that Jesus did not know the hour because he also possesses a human nature, and only the Father — in his fully divine nature — knows. But if that is the reasoning, why is it *only* the Father who is said to know? What of the Holy Spirit, who is also said to be fully God and not human?

QUESTION 2
Q If the three persons of the Trinity are all equal, why would Jesus say the Father is greater than him?

A ♦ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT *John 14:28*
 ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν, ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς. εἰ ἠγαπᾶτέ με ἐχάρητε ἂν, ὅτι πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ μείζων μου ἐστίν.
 You heard me say to you, I am going away, and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.
 TRANSLATION • ESV

QUESTION 3
Q If Jesus is God and equal to the Father, why would he call the Father his own God?

A

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 20:17

λέγει αὐτῇ ἰησοῦς, μὴ μου ἄπτου, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς, ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν.

Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

QUESTION 4
Q Christianity teaches that Jesus is a mediator between God and men — so why did he himself worship and serve the Father directly, without a mediator?

A

Jesus’s own words in the Gospels, when tempted, were to quote the command to worship God alone:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 4:10

τότε λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ ἰησοῦς, ὕπαγε, σατανᾶ· γέγραπται γάρ, κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις.

Then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

That command traces back to the Old Testament:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 6:13-15

אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא וְאֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד וּבְשֵׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע לֹא תִלְכוּן אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים מֵאֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי אֵל קִנָּא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּקִרְבְּךָ פֶּן־יִיחָרָה אַף־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּךָ וְהִשְׁמִידְךָ מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה

It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you — for the

Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God — lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Given how strongly this Old Testament warning is worded, it seems risky to associate a partner with the Father, if He is indeed a jealous God in that sense. Jesus also instructed his followers to pray directly to the Father:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 6:6

σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχῃ, εἰσελθε εἰς τὸ ταμεῖόν σου καὶ κλείσας τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι.

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Q **QUESTION 5**
If Jesus is God, how do we reconcile this with the Bible calling God invisible?

A

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

1 Timothy 1:17

λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ ἰησοῦς, ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον.

To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Q **QUESTION 6**
If Jesus is God and part of the Trinity, why did he not clarify this when directly asked for the greatest commandment?

A

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 12:28-34

εἰ δὲ ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια, ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe

said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

TRANSLATION • ESV

Recall from John 8:54 (above) that Jesus knew the Jews believed in one absolute supreme being, the Father alone. This encounter was the perfect opportunity to teach the scribe a new, triune nature of God — instead, he restated the *shema*, the core of Jewish monotheism: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Since Jesus himself was a Jew who upheld this belief, should we not follow the same God he worshipped, exactly as he taught in Matthew 4:10 above?

QUESTION 7

Q If Jesus is God, why does he call the Father the ONLY true God?

A

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 17:3

αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας ἰησοῦν χριστόν.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Read plainly, this statement suggests that if the Trinity existed, any other persons associated with the Father as God would not be “true” gods by Jesus’s own words.

QUESTION 8

Q If the atonement of sins required a sacrifice (per Leviticus 17:11), and Jesus is repeatedly called ‘Son of Man’ in the Gospels — how does that square with the Old Testament’s insistence that God is not a man?

A

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Numbers 23:19

לֹא אִישׁ אֶל׃ וְיִכְיָזֵב וּבֶן־אָדָם וַיִּתְּנָהֶם הָהוּא אָמַר׃ וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה וְדָבָר
וְלֹא יְקִימָנָה׃

God is not man, that he should lie, or a Son of Man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Ezekiel 28:2

בֶּן-אָדָם אָמַר לְנָגִיד צֹר כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה יֵעַן גָּבַהּ לִבְךָ וַתֹּאמֶר
אֵל אֲנִי מוֹשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁבְּתִי בְּלֵב יַמִּים וְאַתָּה אָדָם וְלֹא-אֵל וַתֵּתֶן
לִבְךָ כְּלֵב אֱלֹהִים:

Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord God: Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Hosea 11:9

לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה חֲרוֹן אַפִּי לֹא אָשׁוּב לְשַׁחַת אֶפְרַיִם כִּי אֵל אֲנִי
וְלֹא-אִישׁ בְּקִרְבִּי קְדוֹשׁ וְלֹא אָבוֹא בְּעִיר:

I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

TRANSLATION • ESV

QUESTION 9

Q If we cannot be saved by keeping the Law, why did Jesus say he came to fulfill it rather than abolish it — including the prohibition on pork?

A Paul's letters give the basis for why, in much Christian teaching, the Law cannot save:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 4:15

ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται, οὗ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος, οὐδὲ παράβασις.

For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 7:9

ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ· ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν,

I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 8:1-4

Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Galatians 2:21

οὐκ ἄθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

TRANSLATION • ESV

And yet, in his own words, Jesus said the opposite:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 5:17-19

μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας·

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

TRANSLATION • ESV

If Paul relaxed the Law where Jesus said not to, whose teaching should take precedence? This question extends to food laws as well — the Torah is explicit that pork is unclean:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 11:7

וְאֶת־הַחֲזִיר כִּי־מִפְרִיס פֶּרֶסָה הוּא וְשָׁסַע שֶׁסַּע פֶּרֶסָה וְהוּא גֵרָה
לֹא־יֵגַר טָמֵא הוּא לָכֶם:

And the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 14:8

וְאֶת־הַחֲזִיר כִּי־מִפְרָסִים פֶּרְסָה הוּא וְלֹא גִרָה טֶמֶא הוּא לָכֶם
מִבְשָׂרָם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ וּבְנִבְלָתָם לֹא תִגְעוּ: ס

And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.

TRANSLATION • ESV

As a Jew, Jesus himself would not have eaten pork, keeping kosher — the Jewish equivalent of halal. Jesus is also recorded warning that not everyone who calls him “Lord” but disregards the Father’s will is truly known by him:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 7:21-23

οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι, κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ’
ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name...’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

To be clear: any Muslim who eats pork is not following Islam properly — a Muslim is someone who follows the Torah, Gospel, and Qur’an in their original teaching, and none of these permit it. Some Christians have argued that Jesus was sent to the Gentiles too, who did not follow the Torah’s food laws — but among the Gentiles were both those who accepted Jesus and those who did not; the question is which group’s practice should be taken as normative. Finally, some of Paul’s own writings appear to support upholding the Law, which is not always emphasized — and if righteousness truly could not come through the Law, that raises the further question of what the crucifixion was for, if Paul elsewhere affirms the Law’s continuing place.

Q **QUESTION 10**
If God does not change, how could He go from strictly one to three-in-one?

A

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Malachi 3:6

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שֵׁנִיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי־יַעֲקֹב לֹא כִלִיתֶם:

For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

TRANSLATION • ESV

QUESTION 11
Q If God died for our sins on the cross, who was governing the world and the heavens in the meantime?

A The common Christian response is that only the human part of Jesus died, not his divine nature. But if the divine nature did not die, it raises the question of why the death is still spoken of as God dying for humanity's sins in the first place.

QUESTION 12
Q If Jesus is both fully man and fully God, shouldn't he have said so plainly — 'I am God' — rather than leaving it to inference?

A Miracles are sometimes offered as proof of Jesus's divinity, but earlier prophets also performed miracles by God's permission, not their own power. And even taking the miracles as evidence, how do we reconcile them with Jesus's own statement that the Father is "the only true God" (John 17:3)? A claim of this magnitude — that one is God incarnate, and that eternal salvation depends on believing it — would seem to call for a direct, explicit declaration, not an inference from indirect statements. Searching the Gospels for the words "I am God" spoken by Jesus himself turns up nothing explicit; the closest candidate is this exchange, which the Qur'an itself addresses:

✻ QUR'AN

Al-Ma'idah (The Table) 5:116-118

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي
 وَأُمِّي إِلَهَيْنِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا
 لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقٍّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا
 أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَالِمُ الْغُيُوبِ

And [beware the Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?'" He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen. I said not to them except what You commanded me — to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord."

Turning to the Bible directly, the verse most often cited as Jesus claiming divinity is his statement to the Pharisees:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 8:58

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ.

Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

The usual argument is that this echoes God’s self-revelation to Moses:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Exodus 3:13-14

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים הַנֵּה אָנֹכִי בֹא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי
 לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ־לִי מַה־שְּׁמוֹ מָה אֶמָּר
 אֲלֵהֶם:
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה

Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel... and they ask me, What is his name? what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

But this reading is worth testing against other uses of the same Greek phrase, ἐγὼ εἰμὶ (“ego eimi”), elsewhere in John. The man born blind, once healed, uses the identical phrase to mean simply “I am the man”:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 9:8-9

ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγεν ὅτι Ἐγὼ εἰμι.

The neighbors... were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ... He kept saying, “I am the man.”

TRANSLATION • ESV

The Samaritan woman receives the same phrase from Jesus meaning “I am the Messiah you’re expecting”:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 4:25-26

λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι.

The woman said, “I know that Messiah is coming... When he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

TRANSLATION • ESV

And again in a warning to unbelievers:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 8:24

ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν.

I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.

TRANSLATION • ESV

If “ego eimi” does not, by itself, imply deity in these other instances, the same caution should arguably apply to John 8:58. An alternative reading of “before Abraham was, I am” is that Jesus existed beforehand in God’s knowledge and plan — comparable to Paul’s own language about believers:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Ephesians 1:4

καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου,

even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

TRANSLATION • ESV

No one takes this to mean believers literally pre-existed the world; the same reasoning could apply to Jesus’s statement about Abraham, without invoking incarnation of a pre-existent divine person.

QUESTION 13

Q If salvation is through believing Jesus is God, why does Jesus himself say salvation is ‘from the Jews’?

A

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 4:22

ὁμοῖς προσκυνεῖτε ὃ οὐκ οἴδατε· ἡμεῖς προσκυνούμεν ὃ οἶδμεν, ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν.

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

TRANSLATION • ESV

QUESTION 14
Q Does 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30) mean one being, or one in purpose?

A

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 10:30

ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἓν ἐσμεν.

I and the Father are one.

TRANSLATION • ESV

This verse is the strongest single candidate for explicit divinity. But if Jesus and the Father are one *being*, how do we make sense of Jesus praying to the Father (Luke 22:42) or crying out to God (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34) — was he praying to himself? Jesus later uses the identical language of unity to describe his relationship with his disciples:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 17:11

καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰσὶν, καὶ γὰρ πρὸς σὲ ἔρχομαι.
 πᾶτερ ἅγιε, τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι, ἵνα ὥσιν ἐν καθὼς
 ἡμεῖς.

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 17:20-23

ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ γὰρ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν
 ὧσιν,

that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us... that they may become perfectly one.

TRANSLATION • ESV

If “one” in 17:11 and 17:20-23 means unity of purpose among many distinct people rather than identity of being, the same reading fits 10:30 as well: Jesus and the Father share one purpose and mission — to worship the Father alone and to follow His prophets — not one single being.

QUESTION 15
Q Why does Jesus object to being called 'good,' and accept being called a prophet without correction?

A ♦ **GREEK NEW TESTAMENT** *Mark 10:18*
 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός.
 And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.'
 TRANSLATION • ESV

The same episode is recorded in Luke 18:19. By contrast, when others call Jesus a prophet, he does not correct them:

♦ **GREEK NEW TESTAMENT** *John 4:17-22*
 λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ.
 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."
 TRANSLATION • ESV

♦ **GREEK NEW TESTAMENT** *Matthew 21:10-11*
 οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι ἔλεγον, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ προφήτης ἰησοῦς ὁ ἀπὸ ναζαρέθ τῆς γαλιλαίας.
 And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."
 TRANSLATION • ESV

QUESTION 16
Q Do even Christian theologians admit the Trinity is difficult to understand — and what should that suggest?

A The Christian apologist James White has written candidly about this:

🗣️ **QUOTED**

"For many Christians, the Trinity is an abstract principle, a confusing and difficult doctrine that they believe, although they are not really sure why in their honest moments." — James White, *Loving the Trinity*, Christian Research Journal, vol. 21, no. 22.

Yet the Bible itself says:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

1 Corinthians 14:33

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλὰ εἰρήνης. ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων,

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,

TRANSLATION • ESV

As Einstein put it, “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved through understanding” — and, “If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” A doctrine this central to who God is should, ideally, be statable plainly.

📌 FINAL NOTE

While faith often calls believers to accept what they cannot fully see or verify firsthand, it still seems reasonable to ask that the risk of getting something this fundamental wrong should be small. On the reading offered throughout this page, upholding the absolute oneness of God — as the Law states, and as Jesus himself reaffirmed in Mark 12:28-34 and John 17:3 — is the safer ground. Associating a partner with God, by contrast, carries real risk, and Scripture repeatedly warns against it:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Isaiah 44:6-8

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגֹאֲלִי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרֹן
וּמִבְלַעַדִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים:

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Exodus 20:3

לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל־פָּנַי

You shall have no other gods before me.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Psalms 16:4

יִרְבּוּ עֲצֻבוֹתַם אַחֲרַי מִהָרֹץ בִּלְאִסְדִּי נִסְכֵּיהֶם מִדָּם וּבִלְאִשָּׁא
אֶת־שְׁמוֹתֶם עַל־שִׁפְתָּי:

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

TRANSLATION • ESV

None of this is said to diminish Jesus (peace be upon him). To believe he is a prophet and not God (John 4:22), to follow the Law he upheld (Matthew 5:17-19), to avoid pork as he did, and to pray as he prayed, is — on this reading — closer to following Jesus, not further from it.

12

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 12

Sin in Christian Thought

Is human sacrifice really necessary for the forgiveness of sin? A look at what the Old Testament itself says about inherited guilt and substitution.

I JANUARY 2018

Christian doctrine holds that Jesus (peace be upon him) died for the sins of all humanity — that the Messiah had to be the blood sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of sin, in other words a human sacrifice. Does the Old Testament, which Christians hold to be equally God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), actually support that?

QUESTION 1
Q If human sacrifice is necessary for the forgiveness of sin, why did God refuse when Moses offered himself as atonement for his people?

A

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Exodus 32:30-35

וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֶת וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם אַתֶּם חָטֵאתֶם חֲטָאָה גְדֹלָה

The next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’ So Moses returned to the Lord and said, ‘Alas, this people has sinned a great sin... But now, if you will forgive their sin — but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.’ But the Lord said to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

In a dialogue with Christian friends, I once asked, “Is blood sacrifice the only way for the forgiveness of sin?” — the answer was yes. At the time I hadn’t read much of the Old Testament, so I went looking, and found the verse above. It shows plainly that atonement through the sacrifice of one person for the sins of another is not what God emphasizes here. Instead, God says the opposite: “whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book” — the one who sinned against God is the one God will hold accountable, not a substitute.

QUESTION 2
Q If a substitute like Jesus can bear another’s sin, why does God elsewhere insist that only the one who sinned shall be put to death?

A

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 24:16

לֹא־יָוִמְתּוּ אָבוֹת עַל־בְּנֵים וּבְנֵים לֹא־יָוִמְתּוּ עַל־אָבוֹת אִישׁ בְּחַטָּאוֹ
 יוֹמְתּוֹ:

Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.

TRANSLATION • ESV

The first clause alone is decisive: one person cannot be put to death for the sins of another. The second makes it explicit — “each one shall be put to death for his own sin.”

QUESTION 3
Q Does the rest of the Old Testament reinforce this, and what does it say about whether good deeds can outweigh sin?

A

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Ezekiel 18:1-4

הֵן כָּל־הַנֶּפְשׁוֹת לִי הִנֵּה כֹנֶנֶשׁ הָאָב וְכֹנֶנֶשׁ הַבֶּן לִי־הִנֵּה הַנֶּפֶשׁ
 הַחַטָּאת הִיא תָמוּת:

Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Ezekiel 18:20-24

הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחַטָּאת הִיא תָמוּת בֶּן לֹא־יִשָּׂא בַעֲוֹן הָאָב

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him.

TRANSLATION • ESV

In one conversation, Christian friends asked (in Tagalog), “*kaya mo bang bayaran ang kasalanan mo?*” — “can you afford to pay for your sins?” I answered that I would simply stop the bad I do and do more good instead. I was told that isn’t enough on its own — yet that is exactly what God says above: turning from wickedness to do what is just and right means the person “shall surely live,” with the past transgressions not held against them.

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Ezekiel 18:26-27

בְּשׁוּב־צִדִּיק מִצְדָּקָתוֹ וְעָשָׂה עוֹל וּמָת עָלֵיהֶם

When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life.

TRANSLATION • ESV

The same principle recurs in Jeremiah, where God describes a future time when the old proverb about inherited guilt will no longer be repeated:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Jeremiah 31:29-30

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם לֹא־יֹאמְרוּ עוֹד אָבוֹת אָכְלוּ בֶסֶר וְשָׁנַי בָּנִים תִּקְהָיְנָה:

In those days they shall no longer say, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Taken together, these verses suggest that human sacrifice is not what the God of the Old Testament asks for — turning away from sin and doing good is.

See also [Original Sin](#) → p. 41 and [Atonement of Sins](#) → p. 43 for the doctrines this directly responds to.

13

CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 13

Atonement of Sins: Questions & Answers

Does forgiveness in Jewish scripture require blood sacrifice? A closer look at Leviticus, repentance, and the many paths to atonement in the Hebrew Bible.

I JANUARY 2018

This page continues from **Atonement of Sins** →p.43, drawing on the work of Rabbi Stuart Federow to examine what the Hebrew Bible itself says about how sin is atoned for. Some framing has been added around the Rabbi's original work and is presented separately below to keep the two clearly distinct. In keeping with Jewish convention of not writing the divine name lightly, "Gd" is used throughout, as in the source material; Bible quotations are given as they appear in their respective translations.

The Gd-man relationship was never limited to animal sacrifices, nor was it ever the only means by which a human being obtained forgiveness from Gd for wrongdoing.

The centrality of animal sacrifice ceased not with the Roman destruction of the Second Temple, but with the earlier destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians. The vast majority of Jews never returned to the Promised Land even when Cyrus of Persia permitted and encouraged it — by the time Jesus was born, roughly 80% of the world's Jewish commu-

nity lived outside the Promised Land and were unconcerned about the cessation of sacrifice. Diaspora Jews, then and now, do not worry that Gd withholds forgiveness without a blood sacrifice, because scripture makes clear that other means of obtaining forgiveness were always given.

Does atonement require blood?

Those who argue blood sacrifice is required point to Leviticus 17:11:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 17:11

כִּי נַפֶּשׁ הַבֶּשָׂר בַּדָּם הוּא וְאֲנִי נֹתַתִּיו לָכֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר
עַל־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם כִּי־הַדָּם הוּא בְּנַפְשׁ יְכַפֵּר:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Read in context, however, this verse is part of a prohibition against eating or drinking the blood of a sacrifice — a distinction meant to separate Israelite worship from pagan practice, where many pagans consumed the blood of sacrifices believing it incorporated their gods into their own bodies (this may even be the origin of the Christian rite of communion). The fuller passage, Leviticus 17:10-14, reads:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 17:10-14

וְאִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲשֶׁר יֹאכַל כָּל־דָּם וְנֹתַתִּי
פָּנַי בְּנַפְשׁוֹ הָאֹכֵל אֶת־הַדָּם וְהִכְרַתִּי אֹתוֹ מִקֶּרֶב עַמִּי:

If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Scripture itself provides for atonement without blood at all. If someone could not afford a blood sacrifice, a flour offering was accepted instead:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 5:11-13

וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ לְשְׁתֵּי תוֹרִים אֹךְ לְשְׁנֵי בְנֵי-יוֹנָה וְהֵבִיא אֶת-קֶרְבָּנוֹ
אֲשֶׁר חֲטָא עֲשִׂיתָ הָאֹפֶה סֵלֶת לְחֹטֵאת

But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering... Thus the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed in any one of these things, and he shall be forgiven.

TRANSLATION • ESV

If forgiveness required blood specifically, the poor would have no path to it — but Gd does not exclude anyone from forgiveness on the basis of wealth. This is unambiguous proof within the text itself that blood was never the sole requirement.

Elsewhere in scripture, forgiveness is granted with no sacrifice at all. When Jonah finally delivered Gd's warning to Nineveh, the city repented through fasting, not sacrifice:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Jonah 3:1-10

וַיֵּרָא הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם כִּי-שָׁבוּ מִדֶּרֶכָם הָרָעָה וַיִּנָּחֶם הָאֱלֹהִים
עַל-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת-לָהֶם וְלֹא עָשָׂה:

And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them... Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way... When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Notably, the text does not say Gd saw their sacrifice — Nineveh was never commanded to offer one — nor does it say Gd saw that they had the “right faith.” It says Gd saw what they did: their works. Nor were the Ninevites required to convert; their repentance was accepted as Gentiles. Elsewhere, atonement is made through incense rather than blood:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Numbers 16:47 (17:12H)

וַיִּקַּח אֶהָרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּרָץ אֶל-תּוֹךְ הַקְהָל וְהִנֵּה הַחֵל הַנֶּגֶף
בָּעָם וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-הַקְטֹרֶת וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל-הָעָם:

And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

TRANSLATION • KJV

And through an offering of jewelry, with no blood shed:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Numbers 31:50

וּנְקָרָב אֶת־קֶרְבָּן יְהוָה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר מָצָא כְּלִי־זָהָב אֶצְעָדָה וְצִמִּיד טַבַּעַת
עֲגִיל וְכוּמָז לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֵׁינוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

We have therefore brought an oblation for the Lord, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the Lord.

TRANSLATION • KJV

And through a live coal touching the mouth of the prophet Isaiah:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Isaiah 6:6-7

וַיַּעַף אֵלַי אֶחָד מִן־הַשְּׂרָפִים וּבִידּוֹ רִצְפָּה בְּמִלְקָחִים לָקַח מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

TRANSLATION • KJV

It is true that without the Temple, no sacrifice — bloody or otherwise — can be offered today. But that is not why Jews do not believe blood sacrifice is required; rather, it is *why* Gd gave multiple methods of atonement in the first place. There was a period in Israel's history when the people became overly consumed with sacrificial ceremony, and Gd rebuked them for it, reminding them that His laws mattered more than the rituals:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Jeremiah 7:22-23

לֹא דִבַּרְתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה צִוִּיֹּאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
עַל־דְּבָרִי עוֹלָה וְזָבַח:

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

TRANSLATION • KJV

Unintentional sins

Of all the methods given for atonement, sacrifice was in fact the weakest, because it applied to only one category of sin: unintentional sins committed through ignorance, and only those. This is stated repeatedly across Leviticus and Numbers:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 4:1-5

דִּבֶּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר נֶפֶשׁ כִּי-תַחַטָּא בְשִׁגְגָה מִכָּל מִצְוֹת יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשֶׂינָהּ

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done... then let him bring for his sin... a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 4:13-16

וְאִם כָּל-עֵדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁגּוּ וְנִעְלָם דְּבַר מֵעֵינֵי הַקֹּהֵל

And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty... then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 4:22-24

אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא יַחַטָּא וַעֲשָׂה אֶחָת מִכָּל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲלֵהֶיוּ אֲשֶׁר
לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂינָהּ בְּשִׁגְגָה

When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty... he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 4:27-29

וְאִם-נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת תַּחַטָּא בְשִׁגְגָה מֵעַם הָאָרֶץ

And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty... then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Leviticus 5:15-16

נֶפֶשׁ כִּי־תִמְעַל מֵעַל וְחָטְאָהּ בְּשִׁגְגָה מִקֳדָשֵׁי יְהוָה

If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord... the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Numbers 15:22-29

וְכִי תִשְׁגּוּ וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה:

And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments... then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering... And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance.

TRANSLATION • KJV

Intentional sins

Unintentional sin was covered by sacrifice; sins committed on purpose were treated differently. A deliberate, presumptuous sin was punished, not simply offered away:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Numbers 15:30

וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־תַּעֲשֶׂהָ בְיָד רָמָה מִן־הָאֶזְרָח וּמִן־הַגֵּר אֶת־יְהוָה הוּא מְגִדֶּה וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מִקֶּרֶב עַמָּהּ:

But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

TRANSLATION • KJV

Gd is a righteous judge: intentional sin required repentance and restitution, and often punishment, precisely because it was committed on purpose — for example, restitution for theft or damaged property:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Exodus 22:3-14

אִם-הַמֵּצָא תִמָּצֵא בְיָדוֹ הַגְּנֵבָה מִשּׁוֹר עַד-חֲמֹר עַד-שֶׁה חַיִּים שְׁנִיִּם
יִשְׁלֹם:

If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double. If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten... of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Numbers 5:6-7

דִּבֶּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ אִו-אִשָּׁה כִּי יַעֲשׂוּ מִכָּל-חַטָּאת הָאֵלֶּם לְמַעַל
מֵעַל בִּיהוָה

Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof.

TRANSLATION • KJV

Wouldn't it be a fairer society if a thief who stole and stripped your car had to replace it, and pay you an additional 20% besides?

There were other methods of atonement that scripture treats as superior to the sacrificial system altogether — chief among them teshuvah, repentance and returning to Gd:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

2 Chronicles 7:14

וַיִּכְנְעוּ עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנַי וַיֵּשְׁבוּ
מִדִּרְכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 4:29

וּבְקִשְׁתֶּם מֵשֶׁם אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמָצָאתָ כִּי תִדְרֹשְׁנוּ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ
וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ:

But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Job 33:26

יַעֲתֵר אֶל־אֱלֹהֵי וַיִּרְצֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא פָּנָיו בְּתִרְוַעָה וַיֵּשֶׁב לְאִנּוּשׁ צְדִיקָתוֹ:

He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness.

TRANSLATION • KJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Psalm 34:14

נָצַר לְשׁוֹנֶה מִרָע וּשְׁפָתֶיךָ מִדִּבַּר מִרְמָה:

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

TRANSLATION • KJV



PART III

Islam

Core beliefs and starting points for understanding Islam.

01	Overview of Islam	87
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THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS PART

Every verse cited on these questions, with its wording, its manuscript standing, and the counter-reading, is set out in the appendix: **the plate for Islam** → p. 153.

01

ISLAM • CHAPTER 01

Overview of Islam

A brief overview of the core beliefs of Muslims: God, the Qur'an, the prophets, and mercy.

17 NOVEMBER 2020

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy. Let me begin with the sincerest intention, all for the sake of truth. Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you!)

Holy Book

Islam's holy book is the Qur'an. It is believed by Muslims to be the literal word of God, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the Angel Gabriel.

Nature of God

The nature of God in Islam is Absolute Monotheism — Muslims believe in One God only, a concept known as Tawhid. God is clearly described in Chapter 112 of the Qur'an:

 QUR'AN
Al-Ikhlās (Sincerity) 112:1-4

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
 اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
 لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
 وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, “He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him.”

TRANSLATION • ABDEL HALEEM

Merciful God

Islam emphasizes that God is the Most Merciful. It does not require any human sacrifice, as in some Christian beliefs — only sincere repentance and forgiveness from believers.

 QUR'AN
Az-Zumar (The Throngs) 39:53

قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ
 اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say, ‘[God says], My servants who have harmed yourselves by your own excess, do not despair of God’s mercy. God forgives all sins: He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’

TRANSLATION • ABDEL HALEEM

Belief in the Torah and the Gospel

The Qur’an affirms the truth of the Torah and the Gospel as revelations given by God to Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them both), respectively.

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of 'Imran) 3:3

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ
وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

Step by step, He has sent the Scripture down to you [Prophet] with the Truth, confirming what went before: He sent down the Torah and the Gospel.

TRANSLATION • ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Al-Ma'idah (The Feast) 5:46

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ ۚ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

We sent Jesus, son of Mary, in their footsteps, to confirm the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospel with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed — a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God.

TRANSLATION • ABDEL HALEEM

Belief in the Prophets

Muslims believe in many prophets, including — among others — Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Jacob, Joseph, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, and Jesus (peace and blessings be upon them all), in addition to the final prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

 QUR'AN

Al-Baqarah (The Cow) 2:136

قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ
النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

So [you believers], say, ‘We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him.’

TRANSLATION • ABDEL HALEEM



PART IV

Answering Christianity

Short question-and-answer pieces responding to common Christian objections.

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01

ANSWERING CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 01

Muslim Response: Allah is the Best of Deceivers in Surah 3:54

A respectful response to a Christian concern about the Arabic root m-k-r, Ibn Kathir's commentary, and God's saving of Jesus.

1 SEPTEMBER 2026

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy. May God guide us all while we seek the truth and make us among the truthful. The claim in the title is not mine, but it is something most non-Muslims would want to believe, at least as inferred from the question posted by a Christian below:

QUESTION I

Q Surah 3:54 - reading from the original text of the Arabic, it says there that Allah is the "Khayr al-Makireen." The original text or root word of Makireen, or "mkr", refers to deceit, practice, or circumvention. It was actually in the text as "deceivers" rather than "planners." It was then understood as "planners" when scholars like Ibn Kathir said it refers to a divine plan to thwart evil schemes.

A Introduction

1. Most, if not all, Muslims have a *printed Qur'an in Arabic* at home with some having the translations as well, while most Christians have their printed Bible not in its original Hebrew (Old Testament) or Aramaic and Greek (New Testament) but in translation (Filipinos who know English, and English-speaking countries generally, go for the KJV, NKJV, NIV, ESV, and so on).
2. All Muslims are required to recite verses from the Qur'an in Arabic at least five times a day when they pray. Most Christians pray in church in their own language, so those who do not speak Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek will not recite the Bible in those languages.

Both points above can easily be verified by attending a church service, or by searching for church worship on YouTube. Do the same for how Muslims pray and you will find that no Muslim prays using a translation, so respectfully, it is pointless to hide a meaning under a translation. And I am not putting Christianity in a bad light here: non-Jewish, non-Greek, and non-Aramaic Christians pray and study the Bible in a translation in their own language for ease of understanding, and no part of their service requires them to recite the Bible in its original language. That brings a risk, though — the risk of never reading, hearing, or studying the original wording, because a translation stands in its place. A hidden meaning therefore has a high probability of being widely disseminated before it is detected; and once it is detected and corrected, the old version of the translation usually remains in heavy use among those who are not yet aware.

This is not to say that Christians are content to have a meaning hidden in their translations; they do sincerely want to make sure everything is correct. What I am saying is that there is a high risk of spreading an incorrect meaning when no one is required to read, recite, or study the original texts, and everyone simply uses the translation they are comfortable with.

Ibn Kathir's English-Translated Tafsir Uses 'Deceiving'

Ibn Kathir was an Arab writing commentary in Arabic. Here is [Ibn Kathir's tafsir of Surah 3:54, translated into English](#), where the English translation itself says that Allah deceived the evil plotters. So Ibn Kathir or the translator of his tafsir did not try to avoid (or, to put it strongly, to hide) the word 'deceiving' in favor of 'planning' only.

Here is another English translation of Surah 3:54, which does not use ‘Best of Planners’ but ‘Best of Schemers’.

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:54

وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَكِرِينَ

The [disbelievers] schemed but God also schemed; God is the Best of Schemers.

TRANSLATION • M.A.S. ABDEL HALEEM

So why does this translator use ‘Best of Schemers’? If the aim were concealment, would they not all have worked to use ‘Best of Planners’ throughout? The answer is that it is pointless to hide a meaning in a translation when the Arabic is required of all Muslims for prayer, learning, and study. The original word will always be exposed, **but we use reason to make sense of it — see the questions that follow.**

We can also look into the technical meaning of ‘mkr’, which can simply be checked in an Arabic–English dictionary, but let’s just grant the asker the ‘deceiver’ meaning and use logic and reasoning to explain this.

Question 1: Should we think of you as bad for saving your mother and sister?

Suppose your mother was kidnapped by a criminal who also planned a deception to trick your sister into being kidnapped, and suppose you made a plan of your own to outwit him. Both of you made a deceptive plan — the criminal to kidnap, you to rescue — and you won and saved your mother and sister. That would make you the Best of Planners, or the Best of Deceivers in a limited sense, because your deception was carried out in good faith to save your mother and sister. No reasonable police officer, and no reasonable person, would come after you and think you bad for deceiving the kidnappers in order to save them.

Question 2: Should we think of God as bad for saving Jesus?

If you assume the Qur’an is true, and your problem is that God in the Qur’an is the Best of Deceivers, then by the explanation in the previous section, Question 1, there is no problem here — **unless we set reason aside.**

Whether or not Christians believe that God saved Jesus, to think badly of someone for saving Jesus — or for saving the innocent from a wrongdoer — is, respectfully, either a failure of reasoning or simply inhumane.

Question 3: If God cannot outmaneuver Satan because Satan should be the Best of Deceivers, then would that mean that God in Christianity is deceived by Satan?

We have no problem with God outmaneuvering or deceiving the disbelievers in order to save the believers, because we do not consider God bad for showing mercy to the innocent. We believe God is all-powerful and can easily defeat the Best of Deceivers; and following the reasoning posted by the Christian, we would then have to call God the Best of the Best of Deceivers after defeating Satan — yet we never think of God in a bad light for it, because no reasonable person should think God bad for saving believers. Otherwise, if God cannot beat Satan because Satan is the Best of Deceivers, would that not suggest that God can be deceived by Satan?

Question 4: If God is all-knowing, then He knew that the angel He created would become the Best of Deceivers. Would that make God the God/Creator of the Best of Deceivers in Christianity?

In Islam, we believe that God created Satan and sent him down to earth as a test for humanity, and we do not consider God bad for doing so. Through this test, God distinguishes among His creation those who choose good and deserve Heaven from those who choose evil and deserve Hell. For us, that is fair.

It is similar to attorneys, teachers, engineers, and doctors having to take board examinations. The government does not require these examinations out of bad intentions, but to determine who deserves to practise these professions. This benefits citizens by ensuring that they receive qualified practitioners.

So is God in Christianity the Creator/God of Satan, the Best of Deceivers?

Question 5: God deceived people in the Bible; should we think of God in the Bible as bad?

In the book of Kings, God caused the Assyrian army to flee.

Since this topic is often raised by Christians (based on my research), some people also compare it with passages in the Bible that involve deception. For example, in 1 Kings 22:20–22:

◆ BIBLE

1 Kings 22:20-22

And the Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' Then one said one thing, and another said another, until a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, saying, 'I will entice him.' 'How?' the Lord asked him. He replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then the Lord said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.'

TRANSLATION • NRSV

If we read the context starting from 1 Kings 21:1, we find that Ahab is the King of Israel who took possession of Naboth's vineyard unfairly, which Ahab regretted, humbling himself after God's warning. In 1 Kings 22:1–4, after three years without war, Ahab was visited by King Jehoshaphat, and Ahab invited the said king to fight at Ramoth-gilead, on the condition that Ahab ask the Lord whether this was favorable to God. Accordingly, Ahab gathered all of the prophets to prophesy, and all were in favor of fighting at Ramoth-gilead. However, King Jehoshaphat wanted to consult further, so Ahab consulted Micaiah, although Micaiah was known to Ahab as unfavorable to him. Micaiah's vision in 1 Kings 22:20–22 then showed that God was not in favor of Ahab's plan, and that the Lord permitted the lying spirit to make all of the prophets Ahab had consulted before Micaiah lie to him.

Conclusion

From the question posted, we therefore conclude that the asker has a problem with God deceiving, even if it is done to save the innocent or the believers. With that said, we respectfully conclude that the God in Christianity cannot defeat Satan in deception, because Satan is the Best of Deceivers and because they believe their God cannot deceive. Therefore, following this reasoning, we can conclude that the God in Christianity has been deceived all along. In addition, we see a lot of passages in the Bible where Yahweh deceives people, and Christians believe that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament as well. This leaves the asker to question his Bible and their God as well: why did their God deceive?

The above reasoning simply follows the logic of the question posted; it is not my intention to paint Christianity in a bad light. I also doubt that this is the picture the Christian brother wanted to paint of Christianity, but I understand if his intention is to find mistakes to prove the truth of his religion. However, this is not helpful for finding the truth. Truth can stand on its own even if we grant the opposing religion its judgement of our belief, because reasoning, logic, and scriptural evidence will always support the truth. If any of these do not support a claim, then that claim is likely to be false or too risky to believe in. And why would I stick to my religion if the other side has the truth? This is a constant reminder first and foremost for myself, and I encourage the asker to step back, study, and ponder their questions.

Finally, if you think I made a mistake, I'm happy to be corrected, and I hope you've read the entirety of this response. May God guide us all. Take care.

02

ANSWERING CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 02

Muslim Response: Is Allah the Same God Referred to in the Bible?

An etymological look at the name of God in Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic, and how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each conceive of that God.

13 NOVEMBER 2018

Some non-Muslims claim that Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) is not the same God referred to in the Bible by Moses, Jesus, and the other prophets (peace be upon them).

QUESTION 1
Q Is the above statement true?

A Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you) Alhamdulillah! (praise be to God)

Historically, Islam builds its foundation on the previous revelations — the Torah and the Gospel (see [Qur'anic Abrogation](#) → p.104) — so it should be straightforward for

Muslims to believe the God referred to by Moses and Jesus in those revelations is the same God referred to in the Qur'an.

However, we Muslims have reservations about how authentic the Bible's text is today — we don't know with certainty which verses are genuine revelation. What we are sure of is that the religion preached by Moses (see Deuteronomy 6:4) and by Jesus (see Matthew 5:17-19 and John 17:3) refers to one absolute supreme being: the Almighty God, Allah. Any Bible verse affirming the absolute oneness of God is welcome to Muslim ears.

Let's investigate how Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon them all) referred to God etymologically — starting with the name in Arabic, then Hebrew, then Aramaic — before turning to the concept of God in each of the three faiths.

🕒 THE NAME OF GOD IN ARABIC

The name Allah is written الله, composed of the consonants Alif, Lam, Lam, Hah. The vowels are supplied by the *tashkil* (small marks above and below the letters), giving the fully-voweled form ألله. The name means “the one and only true God.”

🕒 THE NAME OF GOD IN HEBREW

The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew (the language of Moses) with some Aramaic (the language of Jesus), a Semitic language closely related to Arabic. The name Allah, spelled in Hebrew, is אלה — Aleph, Lamed, Lamed, He. Removing one Lamed gives אל, which in Hebrew is “God.” (One of the seven Hebrew words sharing these three consonants is indeed “curse,” but vowel-pointing — *niqqud* — distinguishes “curse” (אלה, Alah/Oloh) from “god” (אלה, Eloh), just as Arabic *tashkil* distinguishes similarly-spelled words.)

Arabic also has “ilah” (God), spelled with vowels as إله — Alif, Lam, Hah — which is the same root as the Hebrew אלה. Etymologically, the word for God in Hebrew and Arabic is the same.

🕒 THE NAME OF GOD IN ARAMAIC

In Aramaic, the language of Jesus, God is pronounced “Aalah” (eastern) or “Aaloh” (western), spelled ܐܠܗ in Imperial Aramaic letters — Ālap, Lāmadh, Hē. Jesus therefore referred to God as “Aalah,” close to “Allah” — unsurprising, since Arab Christians today use the name “Allah” for God as well.

As a conclusion: the name Allah in Arabic is indeed “God” in Hebrew and Aramaic — contrary to claims that Allah is a moon god, a “curse god,” or a devil.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

Sharing a name is not the same as sharing a concept. Among the three faiths, only Islam and Judaism pray to the same one absolute being (pure monotheism), while Christianity prays to a triune God to accommodate the divinity of Jesus.

We understand if Christian readers object and point to Jewish evidence for a triune God — we are genuinely interested in seeing it. For now, it’s worth hearing directly from Jewish voices on this question: several rabbis have spoken publicly about the closeness between the Jewish and Muslim concept of God — one has said he can freely recite the Muslim declaration of faith, “there is no god but Allah,” because the underlying concept of God is exactly the Jewish one; another has noted that Muslims took Judaism as a second subject of study in school precisely because both religions share the same core belief in one God, unlike Trinitarian Christianity; a third has said a Jew is permitted to pray in a mosque but not in a Trinitarian church, since Islam is unambiguously monotheistic. Jews *have* prayed in mosques historically for exactly this reason.

Jesus himself was a practicing Jew, and the Qur’an addresses the “People of the Scripture” (Jews and Christians) directly on this point:

 QUR’AN

Al-‘Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:64

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ
إِلَّا اللَّهَ

Say, ‘O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you — that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah.’ But if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims.’

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

By “People of the Scripture” the Qur’an means Jews and Christians who received the Torah and the Gospel respectively — referring to the original scriptures containing their

original message, which, unfortunately, is nowhere to be found in full today (a point Christian scholarship itself acknowledges). Where the New Testament as it stands today says God has taken a son, the Qur'an rejects this directly:

❦ QUR'AN

An-Nisa (The Women) 4:171

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ
إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah... And do not say, 'Three'; desist — it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

🗨 FINAL MESSAGE

It's hard for Muslims to understand a claim to Jewish heritage that Judaism's own core beliefs — as given to Moses, whom the New Testament itself frames as a bringer of law and wrath (Romans 4:15) — would seem to undercut, since that framing is precisely what the doctrine of the crucifixion depends on. We may have real differences, but as our Jewish brothers have said, the political conflicts between Muslims and Jews in the region have nothing to do with the religions themselves.

Alhamdulillah! (praise be to God) Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you)

03

ANSWERING CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 03

Muslim Response: Does Allah Bring About Both Good and Evil?

If the Qur'an's God brings about both good and evil, is that a contradiction of His righteousness? A look at free will, evil as a test, and the purpose of Satan.

3 SEPTEMBER 2018

Whereas the God of the Qur'an brings about both good and evil, the God of the Bible never engages in evil and is singularly righteous (1 John 1:5).

QUESTION 1
Q Is the above statement true?

A Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you) Alhamdulillah! (praise be to God) Thank you very much for this question.

If we interpret the statement at face value, it seems to suggest the God of the Qur'an is not righteous, since He also brings evil to human beings. Let's investigate whether that's actually what the Qur'an teaches.

God by definition should be loving and caring, and should never bring forth evil to His creation. However, God by definition is also the creator of everything — hence God created Satan as well. Anything evil is from Satan, not from God. Still, if God loves us, He should have clearly warned us of Satan and given us reason for creating him in the first place.

In Islam, everything around us is well-planned according to the will of Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) from the very start of creation — nothing is a coincidence, and Allah knows ahead of time what our actions will be. Yet we are also taught that we have our own free will in our decision-making. At first glance these seem mutually exclusive, but they are not: our freely-willed decisions end up matching what God already knew would happen. Holding both together — nothing is a coincidence, and yet we act with free will — is itself one reason Allah is the one and only true God, since these attributes are difficult to reconcile and hard to fully comprehend.

Given that, it's fair to say Allah brings forth goodness to us, not evil — it is up to us whether to follow Allah or follow Satan. Whatever we decide is, by design, our own free will. If we follow Allah, then goodness is from Him. If we follow Satan, there is no goodness in it, and the absence of goodness is evil.

While evil is from Satan, we also said God created him in the first place — so in that sense, everything we receive, even the fruits of Satan's work, ultimately traces back to the will of Allah. What's the reason for that? How can a loving and caring God create evil for human beings? In Islam, Allah created evil **as a test**. Without a test — without the presence of evil — what would be the point of heaven and hell? Allah created heaven and hell for those who deserve them, and there must be some way to sort human beings into those who deserve heaven and those who deserve hell.

Consider how universities select their students: entrance exams aren't there out of malice, but to determine who is prepared to succeed, which ultimately benefits everyone by ensuring qualified practitioners in fields like law, medicine, and engineering. Applying the same logic, Allah tests us as well — not because He needs to find out (He already knows), but so that the distinction between those who follow Him and those who follow Satan is made manifest. Unlike university entrance exams, though, Allah — the Most Merciful — has already told us the answer to the test: trust Him and follow Him alone, not Satan, who is our clear enemy.

God in the Old Testament similarly acts through what might look like evil for a greater purpose — for instance, causing the Assyrian army to flee in the book of Kings — which suggests this tension between God's sovereignty and the presence of evil in the world is not unique to the Qur'an; it runs through the Bible's own narrative as well.

May the God of Jesus (peace be upon him) guide us all. Take care.

04

ANSWERING CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 04

Muslim Response: Qur'anic Abrogation (2:106 and 16:101)

*Do the Qur'an's own verses on abrogation mean Allah changes past revelations at will?
A look at what 'ayah' actually means in each verse.*

26 AUGUST 2018

Non-Muslims sometimes use the following verses to argue for a “rule of abrogation” that would justify contradictions within the Qur'an:

 QUR'AN

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2:106

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it. Do you not know that Allah is over all things competent?

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

 QUR'AN

An-Nabl (The Bee) 16:101

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَّكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنْزِلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ
بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

And when We substitute a verse in place of a verse — and Allah is most knowing of what He sends down — they say, ‘You, [O Muhammad], are but an inventor [of lies].’ But most of them do not know.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

Q **QUESTION I**
Do these verses imply that Allah changes past revelations if He deems it necessary?

A Thank you very much for this question. Assalamu ‘Alaikum! (peace be upon you) Alhamdulillah! (praise be to God)

As Muslims, we believe that the Qur’an in its Arabic form is the literal word of Allah (God), and it should hold itself to the highest standard: internal consistency, from the very first page to the last. But don’t take my word for it — the Qur’an itself invites scrutiny. Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) issues an open challenge to produce anything comparable to it:

 QUR'AN

Al-Isra (The Night Journey) 17:88

قُلْ لِّئِنْ أَجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا
الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ

Say, ‘If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur’an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they were to each other assistants.’

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

 QUR'AN

Hud 11:13

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ

Or do they say, ‘He invented it’? Say, ‘Then bring ten surahs like it that have been invented and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah, if you should be truthful.’

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

 QUR'AN

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2:23

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ

And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

Let's analyze the verses being questioned.

 FIRST VERSE: 2:106

Islam is the religion of Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) from the very beginning — not a later invention. Its core belief is simple: One Absolute God, and a Muslim is simply “one who submits to the will of the Almighty God.” By that definition, every prophet Allah sent was a Muslim: from Adam, to Moses, to Jesus (peace be upon them), to the final prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) — all of them taught the absolute oneness of God.

Allah first revealed the Torah to Moses, who taught this same oneness:

 HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 6:4

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

TRANSLATION • ESV

Years later, Allah revealed the Gospel to the Children of Israel through Jesus. If Allah is consistent with His own words, the Gospel's foundation must rest on the Torah, and being also full of wisdom, it must build on the Torah rather than repeat it identically — and that is exactly what happened. Jesus explicitly affirmed the Torah:

 GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 5:17-19

μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

TRANSLATION • ESV

He also taught the absolute oneness of God:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 17:3

αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωή, ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σέ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας ἰησοῦν χριστόν.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

TRANSLATION • ESV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 12:28-34

Ἄκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστιν

‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one... There is no other commandment greater than these.’

And the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher... he is one, and there is no other besides him.’

TRANSLATION • ESV

And submitted entirely to God’s will:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 5:30

Οὐ δύναμαι ἐγὼ ποιεῖν ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐδέν· καθὼς ἀκούω κρίνω

I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

TRANSLATION • ESV

So the Gospel encompasses and builds on the Torah rather than abrogating it — an “old edition” not forgotten but confirmed by a “new edition.” The Qur’an, analogously, is the latest edition, building its foundation on the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel:



QUR’AN

An-Nisaa (The Women) 4:163

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the book [of Psalms].

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

✻ QUR'AN

Al-Ma'idah (The Table) 5:46

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ

And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

There is no changing in the words of God, from the earliest revelations to the last:

✻ QUR'AN

Yunus (Jonah) 10:64

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ
اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. No change is there in the words of Allah. That is what is the great attainment.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

So verse 2:106 is meant to show that later revelations build on earlier ones, preserving consistency rather than contradiction — as Allah says:

✻ QUR'AN

An-Nisa (The Women) 4:82

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ
اِخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

🕒 SECOND VERSE: 16:101

Does the Qur'an substitute previous revelations? To some extent, yes — much like a new edition of a science textbook substitutes an old one without teaching a totally different subject. It builds on the previous edition, which can still be used as a reference even though it has been superseded. That's not a contradiction; it's simply how revelation works. Allah told the Prophet to refer to the earlier scriptures precisely because they confirm the Qur'an:

🌟 QUR'AN

Yunus (Jonah) 10:94

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters.

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

Verse 16:101 refers to the time the Prophet announced new revelations, and the objection recorded in the verse (“you are but an inventor of lies”) is the accusation that the new revelation was substituting the previous scriptures — which is exactly what a new edition does, without discarding the old one.

🕒 WHY DOESN'T 2:106 REFER TO QUR'ANIC VERSES THEMSELVES?

The key is the Arabic word translated “verse”: *آيَة* (ayah). Ayah does not only mean “verse” — depending on context it can mean a miracle or sign (as in the nine signs given to Moses, 17:101), a portent for people to take heed from (as with the drowning of Noah's people, 25:37), or a specific token given as proof (as with Zechariah's sign in 19:10). Reading “verse” literally into 2:106 doesn't hold up:

- “Cause to be forgotten” cannot apply to a Qur'anic verse — it remains part of the Qur'an forever and can't be forgotten.
- “We replace it with one better than it or similar to it” would be meaningless if Allah meant one of His own verses — why would He invalidate a verse only to replace it with something similar?
- Read as a miracle, sign, or portent, every word of the verse makes sense: miracles genuinely can be forgotten over time (we only know of Moses's and Jesus's miracles because the Qur'an records them), and God does indeed replace one miracle with one greater than it, as in the miracles shown to Pharaoh:

 QUR'AN

Az-Zukhruf (Ornaments of Gold) 43:46-48

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِۦ

And certainly did We send Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his establishment... And We showed them not a sign except that it was greater than its sister, and We seized them with affliction that perhaps they might return [to faith].

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

 FINAL MESSAGE

As Muslims, we hold that Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) knows best the true meaning of every verse He revealed, but we trust there is no contradiction in the Qur'an, as He says:

 QUR'AN

Ali 'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:7

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ ءَايَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

It is He who has sent down to you the Book; in it are verses precise — they are the foundation of the Book — and others unspecific... But those firm in knowledge say, 'We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord.'

TRANSLATION • SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL

05

ANSWERING CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 05

Muslim Response: Jesus Was Born Miraculously

The Qur'an's own account of Mary and Jesus — miraculous birth, infancy speech, and miracles performed by God's permission rather than Jesus's own power.

3 FEBRUARY 2018

Jesus's miracles are also depicted in the Qur'an — speaking as an infant, healing the sick, raising the dead, and giving life to shaped clay by God's permission. The following verses confirm that Jesus is the Messiah:

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:45

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَكَةُ يَمْرُؤُا إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ
عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

The angels said, ‘Mary, God gives you news of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, who will be held in honour in this world and the next, who will be brought near to God.’

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

QUESTION I
Q What are your thoughts on these, considering Jesus is called God in the Bible but a prophet in the Qur'an?

A Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you) To understand the question, we first need the Trinitarian belief in view: God as one Being existing eternally as three distinct persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “one God in three persons.” Trinitarians further hold that Jesus was born miraculously of the virgin Mary and performed several miracles, and take both as proof of his divinity.

The virgin birth is supported by Bible verses such as:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 1:18

τοῦ δὲ ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ ἡ γένεσις οὕτως ἦν. μνηστευθείσης τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ μαρίας τῷ ἰωσήφ, πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εὗρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

TRANSLATION • NRSV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Luke 1:30-31

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος αὐτῇ, μὴ φοβοῦ, μαριάμ, εὗρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ· καὶ ἰδοὺ συλλήμψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν

The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.’

TRANSLATION • NRSV

These are only part of an extensive account — Luke gives the most detailed description of the birth — and the miracles continue through his life and ministry to the Children of Israel (his healing of the sick, restoring the withered hand, raising Jairus's

daughter, stilling the storm, and more are recorded across Matthew, Mark, and Luke). None of that is new to Christian readers. What is interesting to Muslims and Christians alike is what the Qur'an itself says about these same events.

Do Muslims believe in the miracles performed by Jesus? The answer is: it depends on how you look at it. If the claim is that Jesus performed these miracles by his own power, Muslims don't believe that. If the claim is that Jesus performed them the way Moses and the other prophets performed theirs — not by their own power, but through the power of the One who sent them, Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) — then yes, absolutely.

Let the Qur'an speak for itself, arranged by section:

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF MARY

QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:35

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا
فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

'Imran's wife said, 'Lord, I have dedicated what is growing in my womb entirely to You; so accept this from me. You are the One who hears and knows all.'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:37

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا

Her Lord graciously accepted her and made her grow in goodness, and entrusted her to the charge of Zachariah. Whenever Zachariah went in to see her in her sanctuary, he found her supplied with provisions. He said, 'Mary, how is it you have these provisions?' and she said, 'They are from God: God provides limitlessly for whoever He will.'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:42-43

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَكَةُ يَمْرِيْمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ
عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

The angels said to Mary: ‘Mary, God has chosen you and made you pure: He has truly chosen you above all women. Mary, be devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself in worship, bow down with those who pray.’

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 NEWS OF THE CHILD, AND THE ANNUNCIATION

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:45-46

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَكَةُ يَمْرِيْمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ
الْمَسِيْحُ عِيسَىٰ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ

The angels said, ‘Mary, God gives you news of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, who will be held in honour in this world and the next, who will be one of those brought near to God. He will speak to people in his infancy and in his adulthood. He will be one of the righteous.’

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:47

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ
يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ

She said, ‘My Lord, how can I have a son when no man has touched me?’ [The angel] said, ‘This is how God creates what He will: when He has ordained something, He only says, ‘Be,’ and it is.’

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Al-'Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:49

وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ أَنِّي
أَخْلُقُ لَكُم مِّنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ
اللَّهِ

He will send him as a messenger to the Children of Israel: 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird; I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life with God's permission...'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

Note the repeated qualifier — *with God's permission*. The Qur'an is explicit throughout that these are not Jesus's own powers.

 MARY WITHDRAWS, AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

 QUR'AN

Maryam (Mary) 19:17

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا
سَوِيًّا

and secluded herself away; We sent Our Spirit to appear before her in the form of a normal human.

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Maryam (Mary) 19:20

قَالَتْ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا

She said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste,'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Al-Anbiya (The Prophets) 21:91

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا
ءَايَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her from Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for all people.

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 JESUS SPEAKS IN HIS INFANCY

When Mary's people accused her, she pointed to the infant Jesus:

 QUR'AN

Maryam (Mary) 19:29

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا

She pointed at him. They said, 'How can we converse with an infant?'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

 QUR'AN

Maryam (Mary) 19:30-32

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ءَاتَانِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا

[But] he said: 'I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scripture; made me a prophet; made blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless.'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

Jesus's first recorded words, from his own infant mouth, are a declaration that he is a servant of God and a prophet — not a claim to divinity.

 FINAL THOUGHTS

Alhamdulillah! (praise be to God) I believe the verses above are clear enough to defend the belief. In summary: Muslims believe Jesus is the Messiah, a prophet of Allah, born miraculously, who performed miracles such as bringing the dead to life — but always with the permission of the One who sent him, Allah. As the Qur'an has God say directly to Jesus:

 QUR'AN
Al-Ma'idah (The Table) 5:110

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَلَدَتِكَ
إِذْ أَيْدُتُكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ

Then God will say, 'Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour to you and to your mother: how I strengthened you with the holy spirit... how, by My leave, you fashioned the shape of a bird out of clay, breathed into it, and it became, by My leave, a bird; how, by My leave, you healed the blind person and the leper; how, by My leave, you brought the dead back to life...'

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

If you're interested in why Jesus is not God in the Muslim view specifically, that's a discussion for another page. Truly, Allah loves those who seek Him, and Allah knows best. Take care and Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you)

06

ANSWERING CHRISTIANITY • CHAPTER 06

Muslim Response: Qur'an 10:94

If the Qur'an tells Muslims in doubt to ask those who read the previous scriptures, does that mean Muslims must accept the Bible's claim that Jesus is God?

20 JANUARY 2018

Consider the following verse of the Qur'an:

 QUR'AN

Yunus (Jonah) 10:94

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

So if you [Prophet] are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, ask those who have been reading the scriptures before you. The Truth has come to you from your Lord, so be in no doubt and do not deny God's signs —

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

QUESTION I
Q What are your thoughts on this, knowing that Jesus is referred to as God by Christians in the Bible, whereas in the Qur'an he is a prophet?

A May God guide us as we investigate this verse. I begin with a sincere intention for the sake of Allah (may He be glorified and exalted).

Let me set the scope of the question. The “previous scriptures” mentioned in 10:94 are the Torah and the Gospel, both part of the Christian Bible. The verse tells Muslims in doubt to refer to those previous scriptures for verification — so the question being asked is: since those scriptures are part of the Bible, does referring to them mean Muslims must acknowledge the divinity of Jesus, since that is what the church teaches the Bible says?

Jesus plays a pivotal role in both religions, and the core difference can be summarized simply: Trinitarian Christians believe Jesus is God and part of a Triune God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal and one in essence. Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet, reject his divinity and the concept of a Triune God, and hold to pure monotheism, the absolute oneness of God.

We can address the question through three sub-questions: was Jesus referred to as a prophet in the Bible? Did Jesus ever claim in the Bible to be God? And did Jesus teach the absolute oneness of God, or a triune nature?

Was Jesus called a prophet in the Bible?

Yes — repeatedly, and without correction from him:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 4:17-22

λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ.

The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.’ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship...

TRANSLATION • NKJV

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 21:10-11

οἱ δὲ ὄχλοι ἔλεγον, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ προφήτης ἰησοῦς ὁ ἀπὸ ναζαρέθ τῆς γαλιλαίας.

And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ So the multitudes said, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.’

TRANSLATION • NKJV

Further instances appear in Matthew 21:11, Luke 7:16, 7:39, and 24:19, and John 6:14, 7:40, and 9:17. And when someone called Jesus “good,” he pointedly declined the title, reserving it for God alone — implying he is not God:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 10:18

ὁ δὲ ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός.

So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.’

TRANSLATION • NKJV

This is also recorded in Luke 18:19.

Did Jesus ever claim to be God?

There is no verse where Jesus explicitly says he is God. Some point to John 8:58’s “I am” as an echo of God’s self-naming in Exodus 3:14 — but this is not explicit, depends heavily on translation, and doesn’t sit well with Jesus’s other explicit teaching on the nature of God (below). Notably, the same Greek phrase (ἐγὼ εἰμί, “I am”) is used by the blind man in John 9:8-9, translated there as merely “I am the man” — if the translation were applied consistently, the blind man’s statement would carry the same weight, which no one suggests.

In fact, Jesus explicitly preached the absolute oneness of God:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

John 17:3

αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γινώσκωσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας ἰησοῦν χριστόν.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

TRANSLATION • NKJV

Some argue this was simply Jesus humbling himself before the Father rather than a literal statement — but that requires assuming the plain statement is false, which is a large assumption to rest a doctrine on, and it still requires separate proof that Jesus elsewhere claimed to be God and that the Father is not the only true God. When Jesus was directly asked for the most important commandment, he had every opportunity to teach the Trinity to an educated scribe — and didn’t:

◆ GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 12:28-34

Ἄκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστὶν

Jesus answered, ‘The most important is: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one... There is no other commandment greater than these.’ And the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher... he is one, and there is no other besides him.’

TRANSLATION • NKJV

This is not what we’d expect if Jesus intended to correct a monotheistic Jew’s understanding of God — on the contrary, it supports the Qur’an’s claim that he taught

the absolute oneness of God. The Old Testament itself is full of the same claim, which is why it remains the belief of the Jews to this day:

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Exodus 20:2-4

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods upon My Face.

TRANSLATION • NKJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

TRANSLATION • NKJV

◆ HEBREW BIBLE

Isaiah 45:5-6

אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד זֹלָתִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים

I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me.

TRANSLATION • NKJV

So does referring to the previous scriptures support the Trinity?

The context of 10:94 is the time of Moses and Pharaoh — the “previous scriptures” it points to there are principally the Torah, though the principle generalizes to the Gospel as well. And the Qur'an does explicitly affirm the Torah, the Gospel, and all the prophets before Muhammad:

✽ QUR'AN

An-Nisaa (The Women) 4:163

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the book [of Psalms].

TRANSLATION • OXFORD / ABDEL HALEEM

So the previous scriptures are indeed acknowledged. The remaining tension some Christian readers raise is this: if Muslims must ask those who read the previous scriptures, and some of them (Trinitarian Christians) say God is triune, isn't that a

contradiction with the Qur'an's repeated, emphatic insistence that He has no partners? Not once we recognize what the verses above actually show: the Bible, read on its own terms, has Jesus calling himself neither God nor claiming divinity, and has him affirming the very oneness of God that the Qur'an teaches. The Qur'an doesn't ask Muslims to adopt whatever any given reader of the earlier scriptures believes — it asks them to notice that the earlier scriptures, properly read, agree with it.

In summary, we Muslims believe in the God of Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all), who — according to the Bible's own words above — is One, and to whom we should not associate partners.

Truly, Allah (may He be glorified and exalted) loves those who seek Him, and Allah knows best. Take care and Assalamu 'Alaikum! (peace be upon you)



APPENDIX

The Plates

Three evidence dashboards, bound apart from the text: every verse each side cites, the manuscript record behind it, and the questions each tradition finds hardest — counted, coloured, and set out on one page.

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The Tanakh and the Oral Torah, audited

The third of these dashboards, on the scripture Islam and Judaism have most in common. There is no Trinity to measure here: Judaism reads its own oneness texts as Muslims read them, so what this page examines instead is the state of the text, the layers of the tradition built on it, and the places where Jews and Muslims genuinely differ.

FIGURE I.1

At a glance

VERSES ON GOD’S ONENESS

10

stating it outright, with two ambiguous passages listed beside them

BIBLICAL SCROLLS AT QUM-RAN

~230

a thousand years older than the previous oldest Hebrew copies, and not all of one text form

LAYERS OF THE ORAL TORAH

6

from the Mishnah to the codes, each carrying a different weight in law

How this is scored

The Christianity dashboard weighs how directly a verse states its claim, how secure its wording is, and whose words they are. Only the first of those does much work here, because the claim being tested is one Judaism and Islam agree on: clarity is marked verse by verse, and the two passages Christian readers cite against that agreement are listed with them rather than left out. Textual security is handled whole, in the manuscript record, since the Hebrew text has a documented history of stabilisation rather than a per-verse dispute.

This page is written by a Muslim. Judaism is not on trial here for believing what it believes about God — on that question this journal thinks it is right. The hard questions below are about the text and the tradition, which is where the disagreements actually are.

FIGURE I.2

Oneness, in the Tanakh's own words

The last two are marked ambiguous: they are the passages read by others as evidence of plurality, and they belong in the list for that reason.

■ Explicit ■ Ambiguous

Deuteronomy 6:4 The Shema

Explicit

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.” JPS 1985

The confession recited twice daily, and the verse Jesus quotes in Mark 12:29 when asked which commandment is first. Judaism and Islam read it the same way.

Deuteronomy 4:35 Deuteronomy

Explicit

יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין עוֹד מִלְּבָדוֹ

“The LORD alone is God; there is none beside Him.” JPS 1985

Deuteronomy 4:39 Deuteronomy

Explicit

כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל-הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד

“The LORD alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other.” JPS 1985

Exodus 20:2–3 The Decalogue

Explicit

אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ ... לֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פָּנַי

“I the LORD am your God... You shall have no other gods besides Me.” JPS 1985

Isaiah 43:10–11 Isaiah

Explicit

לִפְנֵי לֹא-נִוצַר אֵל וְאַחֲרַי לֹא יִהְיֶה ... אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה וְאֵין מִבְּלַעֲדִי מוֹשִׁיעַ

“No god was formed before Me, and after Me none shall exist... I alone am the LORD, and there is no savior but Me.” JPS 1985

Isaiah 44:6 Isaiah

Explicit

אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן וּמִבְּלַעֲדִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים

“I am the first and I am the last, and there is no god but Me.” JPS 1985

Isaiah 45:5 Isaiah

Explicit

אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד זוֹלָתִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים

“I am the LORD and there is none else; beside Me, there is no god.” JPS 1985

Numbers 23:19 Numbers

Explicit

לֹא אִישׁ אֵל וְכִזָּב וּבֶן-אָדָם וַיִּתְּנָהּ

“God is not man to be capricious, or mortal to change His mind.” JPS 1985

Cited in Jewish polemic against incarnation, and by Muslims for the same purpose: whatever God is, He is not a man.

Hosea 11:9 Hosea

Explicit

כִּי אֵל אֲנִי וְלֹא-אִישׁ בְּקִרְבִּי קְדוֹשׁ

“For I am God, not man, the Holy One in your midst.” JPS 1985

Malachi 3:6 Malachi

Explicit

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁנִיתִי

“For I am the LORD — I have not changed.” JPS 1985

Genesis 1:26 Genesis

Ambiguous

נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” JPS 1985

The plural Christian readers cite for the Trinity. Jewish commentary reads it as address to the heavenly court, or as a plural of deliberation; the next verse, describing the act, is singular throughout.

Psalms 110:1 Psalms

Ambiguous

נָאֻם יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי שֵׁב לִימִינִי

“The LORD said to my lord, “Sit at My right hand.” JPS 1985

The most-quoted verse of the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament. The two words rendered “LORD” and “lord” are different in Hebrew: the first is the divine name, the second adoni, used of human masters throughout the Bible.

FIGURE I.3**The manuscript record**

What survives, in what order, and what each witness shows. Dates BCE and CE as marked.

The entries marked as redaction are editorial stages, not surviving objects: they are what critical scholarship reconstructs from the text itself, and dates for them are estimates. Each is listed with the traditional reading beside it, and the questions below take the argument up properly.

■ Composition ■ Redaction ■ Manuscript ■ Ancient version ■ Apparatus

● **Composition and collection**

c. 1200–165 BCE

COMPOSITION

The books were written and gathered across roughly a millennium; the three divisions — Torah, Prophets, Writings — closed at different times, with the Writings last. Traditional and critical accounts of authorship differ sharply, and the difference is set out below rather than settled here.

● **The scroll found in the Temple**

622 BCE

REDACTION

2 Kings 22 reports a scroll of the law found during Josiah’s repairs, and a reform carried out on the strength of it — sacrifice centralised in Jerusalem, which is what Deuteronomy demands and the earlier books do not. Critical scholarship reads that scroll as a form of Deuteronomy written shortly before it was produced; the traditional reading is that a long-neglected copy was recovered.

● **The Ketef Hinnom amulets**

c. 600 BCE

MANUSCRIPT

Two silver scrolls found near Jerusalem carrying the Priestly Blessing of Numbers 6:24–26 — the oldest known text of any biblical passage, and evidence that wording now in the Torah was already fixed before the exile.

● The Deuteronomistic History

c. 600–550 BCE

REDACTION

Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings share a vocabulary and a thesis — that exile followed from breaking the covenant — and most critics take them to have been edited into one continuous work, in a first edition under Josiah and a second after Jerusalem fell. The books name no author, and the tradition assigns them by inference rather than by claim.

● The Priestly redaction

c. 550–450 BCE

REDACTION

Priestly material — Genesis 1, the tabernacle chapters, most of Leviticus — is widely held to have been combined with older narrative during and after the exile. The flood account is the standard exhibit: two counts of the animals and two reckonings of the days, interleaved rather than harmonised. Traditional commentary reads the same doublets as complementary detail with a purpose.

● Ezra reads the Torah publicly

c. 444 BCE

REDACTION

Nehemiah 8 describes the Torah read aloud to the assembled people with Levites explaining it. Traditionally this is restoration after neglect; critically it is the point at which the Torah becomes the community's constitution in something close to its final shape. A later legend (2 Esdras 14) has Ezra dictating the burnt scriptures afresh — a book Jews and Christians both treat as apocryphal, and one that Muslim polemic has sometimes leaned on further than it will bear.

● The scribes and the tiqqune soferim

c. 400–100 BCE

REDACTION

The soferim counted the letters of the text and fixed its wording. The tradition also preserves a list of about eighteen places where, it says, the scribes altered a phrase out of reverence, softening an expression that spoke too plainly of God. The list is the tradition's own record, published rather than concealed — which is both an admission that the wording moved and evidence of how closely it was watched.

● The Septuagint

from c. 250 BCE

ANCIENT VERSION

The Greek translation made in Alexandria. It differs from the later Hebrew standard in places — a shorter Jeremiah, a different Daniel, different chronologies in Genesis — and it is the text the New Testament writers usually quote.

● The Dead Sea Scrolls

c. 250 BCE – 68 CE

MANUSCRIPT

Around 230 biblical manuscripts from Qumran, a thousand years older than the previous oldest Hebrew copies. The great Isaiah scroll is close to the received text; other scrolls agree instead with the Septuagint or the Samaritan Pentateuch, showing that more than one text form was in use.

Check it yourself: [The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls](#)

● The Samaritan Pentateuch

text form by c. 100 BCE

ANCIENT VERSION

The Torah as kept by the Samaritans, differing from the Jewish text in some 6,000 places — most of them spelling, but including the commandment to build the altar on Mount Gerizim rather than Ebal.

● The consonantal text standardised

c. 90–200 CE

REDACTION

After the Temple fell, one text form displaced the others in Jewish use, while rabbinic discussion was still weighing the standing of Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and Esther. What came out of it was a single consonantal text — the one the Masoretes would later point. The variety visible at Qumran does not reappear after this.

● The Masoretes

c. 600–1000 CE

APPARATUS

Generations of scribes in Tiberias and Babylonia added vowels, accents and marginal counts to a consonantal text that had carried none, and recorded every departure they would not make. The apparatus is why the Hebrew text is so stable after them.

The Aleppo Codex

c. 930 CE

MANUSCRIPT

The Masoretic text at its most authoritative, vocalised by Aaron ben Asher and used by Maimonides as his standard. About a third of it, including most of the Torah, was lost after 1947.

Check it yourself: [The Aleppo Codex online](#)

The Leningrad Codex

1008 CE

MANUSCRIPT

The oldest complete Masoretic Bible, and the base text of the printed scholarly editions — Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia and its successors — from which most modern translations of the Hebrew Bible are made.

The hard questions about the Tanakh

Put as an opponent would put them, then answered.

Did Moses write the Torah?

The text reports Moses's own death and burial (Deuteronomy 34), names places by later names, and repeats several narratives in different wording. Critical scholarship since the nineteenth century has read it as edited from multiple strands.

The answer given: The traditional answer attributes the closing verses to Joshua and treats the doublets as deliberate repetition with a legal or rhetorical purpose. Documentary theory itself is far less settled than it was: the classic four-source division is now widely modified or rejected, though almost no critical scholar returns to single authorship.

Which Hebrew text is the Hebrew text?

Qumran shows several text forms circulating at once — proto-Masoretic, Septuagint-like, Samaritan-like — so the standard text is one line among several, fixed after the Temple fell.

The answer given: The proto-Masoretic line is attested at Qumran too and is the one the rabbis carried forward; the Masoretes then guarded it with an apparatus of counts and notes that makes later drift visible. What the variety shows is that stabilisation happened at a datable point, not that the wording was invented at it.

What happened to the divine name?

The four letters YHWH appear some 6,800 times, but the reading tradition substitutes Adonai, and most English Bibles print "the LORD" instead of the name.

The answer given: The substitution is a fence around reverence, not a loss: the consonants stand in every manuscript, and the vowels of Adonai written under them are what produced the hybrid "Jehovah" in Christian Bibles. Muslims and Jews are on the same side of this one — the name is treated as too weighty to handle casually.

Do the messianic passages point to Jesus?

Christian readings take Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 as predictions of Jesus; Jewish readings take them as referring to Isaiah's own time, to Israel as the servant, and to David's distress.

The answer given: Judaism answers on the plain sense: *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 means a young woman, and the sign is given to Ahaz in his own crisis; the servant of Isaiah is named as Israel nine times in the surrounding chapters. Islam sides with neither wholesale — it affirms Jesus as Messiah, and denies that he was divine or that he died on the cross.

FIGURE I.4

The Oral Torah, layer by layer

Rabbinic Judaism holds that the written Torah came with an oral one. These are the layers it was eventually written into; the bar shows how binding each is taken to be when the law is worked out.

Mishnah

c. 200 CE, Judah ha-Nasi

×1

The first written code of the Oral Torah: six orders of terse legal rulings, often preserving the minority opinion beside the majority one so that later readers can see what was rejected and why.

Tosefta

c. 250 CE ×0.6

A parallel collection of the same period, fuller in wording, holding material the Mishnah left out. Used to interpret the Mishnah rather than to override it.

Jerusalem Talmud

c. 400 CE, Galilee ×0.7

The Palestinian commentary on the Mishnah, left unfinished when the academies declined. Authoritative, but yields to the Babylonian where the two conflict.

Babylonian Talmud

c. 500–600 CE ×1

The central text of rabbinic Judaism: Mishnah plus the Gemara that argues over it, in about 2.5 million words. Its arguments, not only its conclusions, are the object of study.

Midrash

c. 400–1000 CE ×0.4

Verse-by-verse exposition, legal (halakhic) and homiletic (aggadic). Aggadic material carries no binding force in law, a distinction the tradition states explicitly.

The codes

Mishneh Torah 1180; Shulchan Aruch 1565 ×0.9

Maimonides and later Joseph Karo distilled the argument into rulings. The codes are where most practice is actually taken from today, with commentaries recording where communities differ.

The weights are a reading of standard halakhic practice, not a figure any text states. Aggadic material is deliberately low: the tradition itself says stories do not settle law.

The hard questions about the Oral Torah

Put as an opponent would put them, then answered.

Where does an oral Torah come from?

The claim is that a second body of teaching was given at Sinai alongside the written text and transmitted by mouth for over a millennium before anyone wrote it down.

The answer given: The rabbinic answer is that a written code cannot be applied without one: the Torah commands rest on the Sabbath without defining work, and slaughter "as I have commanded you" without recording the command. The Karaites rejected the claim outright and read the text alone — a live counter-position within Judaism itself.

How reliable is a corpus that argues with itself?

The Talmud preserves contradictory rulings side by side, attributes sayings differently in its two versions, and reaches no conclusion on many questions.

The answer given: That is the design. The corpus records the reasoning so later readers can weigh it, and states the rule for deciding when the argument is not resolved. Judaism does not claim the Talmud is inerrant revelation — the claim is much narrower than the one made for the Torah, and the two are not treated alike.

What about the passages quoted against the Talmud online?

A small set of lines is circulated as proof that the Talmud sanctions terrible things. They appear across polemical sites, usually without context and often in mistranslation.

The answer given: Almost all of them are misquoted, cut from a rejected minority opinion, or lifted from a discussion that concludes the opposite. This page has no interest in that literature. A disagreement about God is not helped by inventing evidence, and Muslims who argue that way should expect the same treatment of their own books.

Read next to the other two dashboards, this one is the control. The same instruments are applied, the same objections are raised, and the answers are given at their strongest — including where they tell against the writer's own position. A Muslim reading of the Hebrew Bible has nothing to gain from treating it unfairly.

What the cited verses actually say

Both sides of the Trinity question quote scripture. This page puts every verse commonly cited by each side into one table and asks three measurable questions of it: how directly does it state the claim it is cited for, how secure is its wording in the earliest manuscripts, and whose words are they?

FIGURE 2.1

At a glance

CITED FOR THE TRINITY

22%

evidence strength across 33 verses — 5 state the claim outright, 12 rest on a disputed reading

CITED FOR ABSOLUTE ONE-NESS

84%

evidence strength across 49 verses — 48 state the claim outright, 0 rest on a disputed reading

CONTESTED WORDING

12

passages whose reading turns on a manuscript variant, a translation choice, or — in 1 — a later insertion

FIGURE 2.2

How the score works

Each verse is scored **clarity** × **textual security** × **speaker**, and a side’s strength is the average across the verses it cites. A verse that says the thing outright counts fully; one that needs an argument to reach the claim counts less; a reading missing from the earliest manuscripts counts for nothing, however explicit it reads today. And it matters whose words they are: God speaking in the first person, and Jesus in his own words, count fully, while Paul, the apostles, and the anonymous narrators — who report and interpret the teaching rather than being it — count for half.

CLARITY

■ Explicit	×1
------------	----

TEXTUAL SECURITY

■ Attested	×1
------------	----

WHOSE WORDS

■ God (first person)	×1
----------------------	----

Implicit	×0.6	Translation-dependent	×0.5	Jesus	×1
Ambiguous	×0.25	Punctuation-dependent	×0.5	A prophet	×0.75
No evidence	×0	Manuscript variant	×0.35	An apostle	×0.5
		Later insertion	×0	Paul	×0.5
				Narrator	×0.5

What this does not measure: whether a doctrine is true. A Trinitarian reply to a low score here is that the doctrine was revealed progressively and is drawn from scripture taken as a whole rather than from any single proof-text. That reply is a real one, and the table below is meant to let you weigh it — every verse is listed with its wording, its reading, and the counter-reading.

FIGURE 2.3

How directly each verse states its claim

Counts of verses by how much argument is needed to get from the text to the claim.

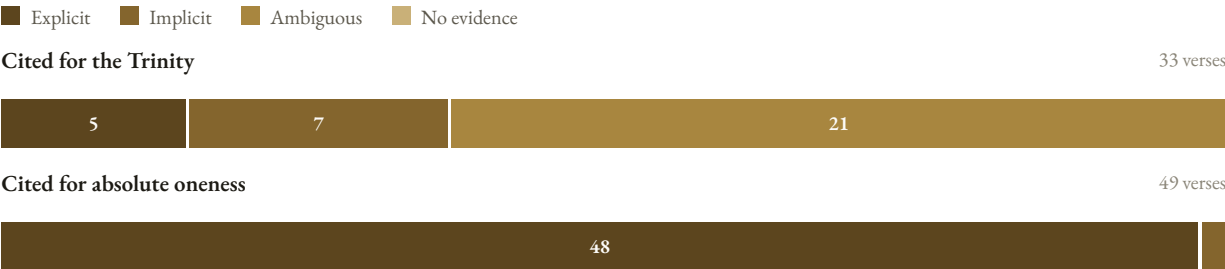


FIGURE 2.4

Accuracy check: are the explicit ones original?

Stating the claim outright only counts if the sentence was there to begin with. Every verse above that reads as explicit, audited against the manuscript record.

■ Cited for the Trinity — 5 explicit, 2 with contested wording

1 Timothy 3:16 Manuscript variant scores 0.18
NA28 and UBS5 read ὅς (“who”); the reading “God” comes from a later alteration of the two-letter abbreviation. Modern translations read “he was revealed in the flesh”.
Check it yourself: Codex Sinaiticus (facsimile) · INTF manuscript room · Compare translations

1 John 5:7–8 Later insertion scores 0.00
No modern critical edition prints it: NA28 and UBS5 omit it, Metzger’s Textual Commentary treats it as a gloss that entered the Latin tradition and reached the Greek only in the sixteenth century, and the NRSV, NIV, ESV and NASB all leave it out.
Check it yourself: Codex Sinaiticus (facsimile) · INTF manuscript room · Compare translations

■ Cited for absolute oneness — 48 explicit, 0 with contested wording
48 — are stable in the earliest manuscripts — no variant, no translation dispute, no later addition.

FIGURE 2.5

How secure the wording is

Counts of verses by the state of the text itself — whether the reading is stable in the earliest manuscripts, or depends on a variant, a translation choice, or a later addition.

■ Attested ■ Translation-dependent ■ Punctuation-dependent ■ Manuscript variant ■ Later insertion



FIGURE 2.6

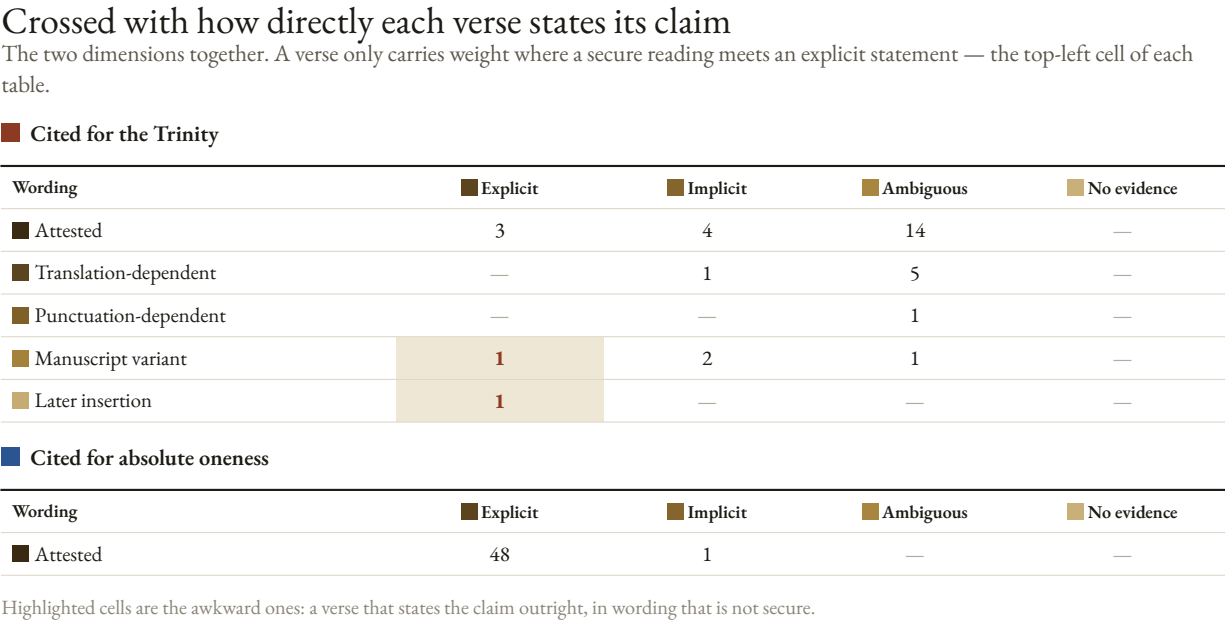


FIGURE 2.7

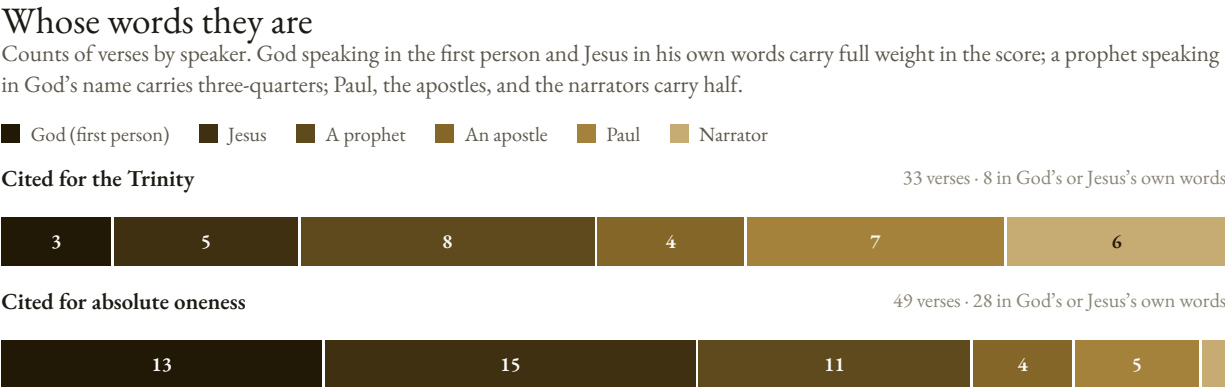


FIGURE 2.8



Cited for the Trinity

Speaker	Explicit	Implicit	Ambiguous	No evidence	Contested
God (first person)	—	1	2	—	1
Jesus	1	—	4	—	—
A prophet	—	—	8	—	4
An apostle	2	1	1	—	2
Paul	2	3	2	—	4
Narrator	—	2	4	—	1

Cited for absolute oneness

Speaker	Explicit	Implicit	Ambiguous	No evidence	Contested
God (first person)	13	—	—	—	—
Jesus	15	—	—	—	—
A prophet	11	—	—	—	—
An apostle	3	1	—	—	—
Paul	5	—	—	—	—
Narrator	1	—	—	—	—

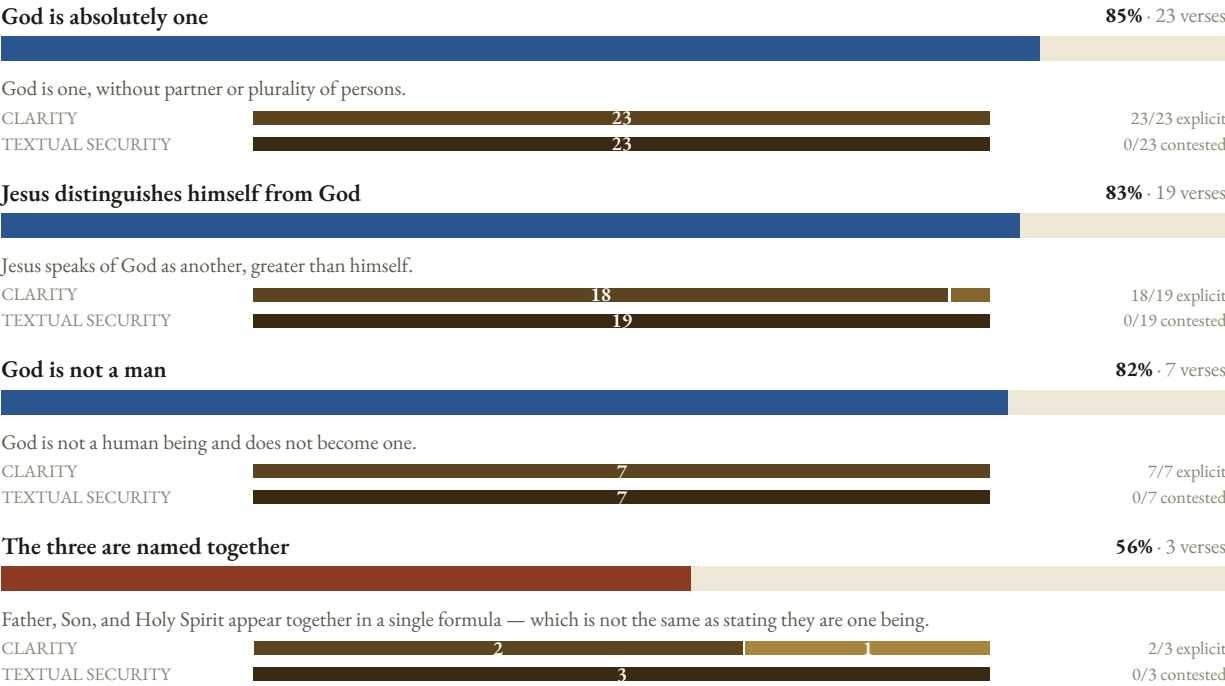
FIGURE 2.9

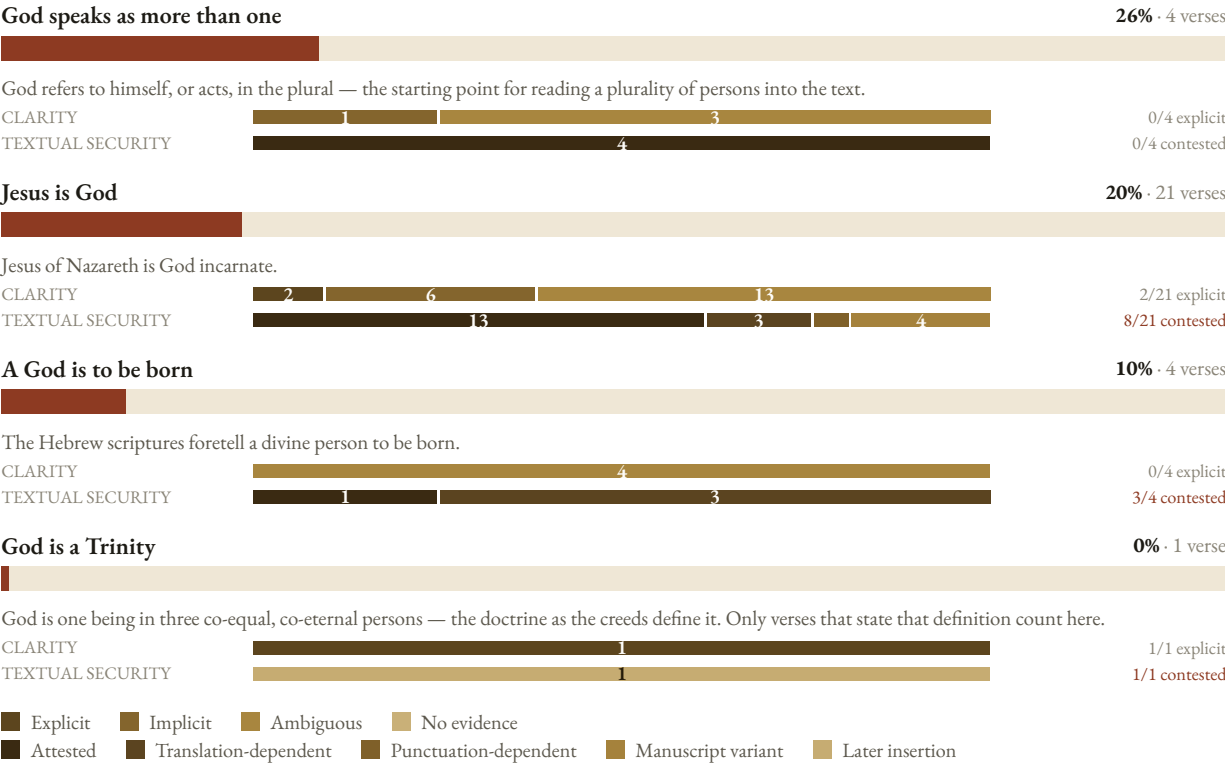
Strength of the evidence, claim by claim

Average score of the verses cited for each proposition.

How “Trinity” is tagged: a verse counts toward the Trinity only when it states the definition itself — three persons in one God, co-equal and co-eternal, as the creeds put it. Naming the Father, Son, and Spirit together in one formula, or a plural such as “let us”, is tagged as its own claim instead: both are steps toward the doctrine, but neither states it.

Cited for the Trinity Cited for absolute oneness





- **Isaiah** c. 700 BCE
PROPHET **ABSOLUTE ONENESS**
The most emphatic statements in the Hebrew Bible: "Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me."
Isaiah 43:10; 44:6; 45:5

JESUS AND THE APOSTLES

- **Jesus** c. 30 CE
PROPHET **ABSOLUTE ONENESS**
Asked directly for the first commandment, he recites the Shema. In prayer he calls the Father "the only true God". He does not use the word Trinity, and no gospel records him defining one.
Mark 12:29; John 17:3
- **The apostles in Jerusalem** c. 30–60 CE
APOSTLE **ABSOLUTE ONENESS**
The earliest preaching calls Jesus "a man attested to you by God" and "his servant Jesus". Baptism in Acts is in the name of Jesus alone.
Acts 2:22; 3:13; James 2:19
- **Paul** c. 50–65 CE
APOSTLE **CONTESTED**
Writes "for us there is one God, the Father", yet also the exalted language later read as an argument for divinity. Paul never states three co-equal persons.
1 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:6–11

THE EARLY CHURCH

- **The Didache in use** c. 100 CE
EARLY CHRISTIANS **CONTESTED**
The earliest surviving church manual. It gives the triadic baptismal formula, and in the same breath its eucharistic prayers address God as "our Father" and call Jesus "your servant" (pais) — the language of a servant of God, not of a co-equal person.
Didache 7–10
- **The Gospel of John written** c. 90–110 CE
APOSTLE **CONTESTED**
The latest of the four gospels carries both the prologue's "the Word was God" and Jesus's own prayer naming the Father as the only true God.
John 1:1 against John 17:3
- **Ignatius of Antioch** c. 110 CE
PRIEST OR COUNCIL **CONTESTED**
Calls Jesus "our God" in passing, but describes no Trinity and no shared essence.
Letters to the Ephesians and Romans
- **The Ebionites** c. 100–300 CE
EARLY CHRISTIANS **ABSOLUTE ONENESS**
A Jewish-Christian community that kept the Law and held Jesus to be the Messiah — a righteous man chosen by God, not God incarnate. They were described by their opponents, whose accounts are all that survive of them.
Irenaeus, Against Heresies I.26; Eusebius, History III.27
- **The Nazarenes** c. 100–400 CE
EARLY CHRISTIANS **ABSOLUTE ONENESS**
Jewish followers of Jesus who kept the Sabbath and circumcision and used a Hebrew gospel. Jerome reports them as believing in the Messiah while remaining, in his phrase, neither Jews nor Christians in the eyes of either camp.
Epiphanius, Panarion 29; Jerome, Letter 112

Justin Martyr

c. 150 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL CONTESTED

Argues for the Logos as divine — but explicitly as “another God”, numerically distinct from and subordinate to the Father. Not the later doctrine.

Dialogue with Trypho

The adoptionists at Rome

c. 190 CE

EARLY CHRISTIANS ABSOLUTE ONENESS

A congregation in Rome teaching that Jesus was a man on whom the Spirit descended at his baptism. Their opponents complain that they claimed this had been the ordinary belief of the Roman church until the previous generation.

Theodotus of Byzantium; Eusebius, History V.28

Tertullian

c. 200 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL TRINITY

First surviving use of trinitas and of “three persons, one substance” — roughly 170 years after Jesus. He still held the Son subordinate in some respects.

Against Praxeas

The monarchians

c. 220 CE

EARLY CHRISTIANS CONTESTED

A widely held position insisting on one God without distinct persons — the Father, Son and Spirit as modes of one being. Tertullian complains that “the simple, the majority of believers” were on this side. Not the Trinity, but not the unitarian reading either.

Sabellius; Praxeas, in Tertullian’s Against Praxeas

Origen

c. 230 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL CONTESTED

Teaches an eternally begotten Son who is nonetheless subordinate to the Father — a position later judged inadequate on both sides of the fourth-century dispute.

On First Principles

Paul of Samosata

c. 260 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL ABSOLUTE ONENESS

The bishop of Antioch — one of the great sees — taught that Jesus was a man in whom the Word of God dwelt. He was deposed for it, which records both the position and the fact that a major bishop held it.

Deposed by the Synod of Antioch, 268 CE

THE COUNCILS**The Arian controversy**

c. 318 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL CONTESTED

Arius holds the Son to be created and not co-eternal; large parts of the church agree. The question is openly undecided three centuries after Jesus.

Arius against Alexander of Alexandria

First Council of Nicaea

325 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL TRINITY

Defines the Son as homoousios — of one substance with the Father — by an assembly of bishops convened by the emperor Constantine. The creed of 325 says of the Holy Spirit only “and in the Holy Spirit”.

The Nicene Creed

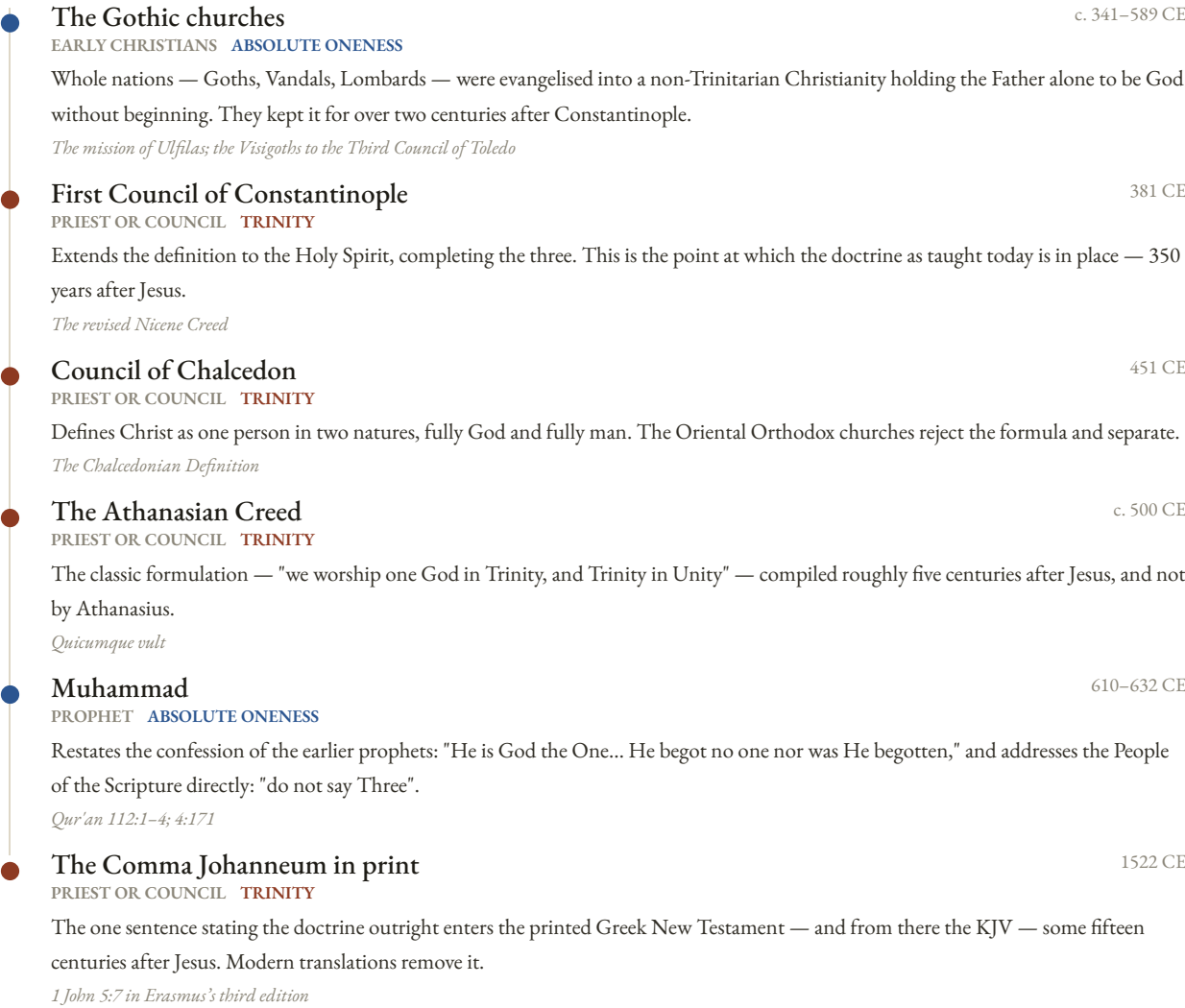
The Council of Rimini

359 CE

PRIEST OR COUNCIL CONTESTED

A larger assembly than Nicaea adopted a creed dropping the word homoousios. Jerome’s summary is the famous one: “the whole world groaned and marvelled to find itself Arian.” Thirty-four years after Nicaea, the question was still open.

Jerome, Dialogue against the Luciferians



7 / 7 prophets on this timeline teach absolute oneness, and 6 / 6 entries that teach the Trinity come from a priest, a church father, or a council — not from a prophet.

Trinitarians hold that the doctrine was always implicit in scripture and that the councils defined rather than invented it. What the dates show is when it was first stated in the terms used today — not, by itself, when it was first believed.

FIGURE 2.II

Two patterns in Jesus’s own words

Tagged separately from the claims, because they cut across them: a verse can be cited for the Trinity and still be a prayer. Neither pattern affects the scores above.

JESUS PRAYING	JESUS CALLS THE FATHER HIS GOD
8	3

Verses in which Jesus prays, asks, or submits his will to another — addressed to the one he calls Father.

Verses in which Jesus, in his own words, calls the Father “my God”.

A note on these stages: they follow the Christian narrative of Jesus’s life, because that is where the verses being examined come from. Muslims do not accept the crucifixion or the resurrection — the Qur’an states that he was neither killed nor crucified, but that it was made to appear so, and that God raised him to Himself (4:157–158).

EARLY LIFE

The gospels record no prayer and no “my God” saying from his early life. The one saying they keep from his boyhood speaks of God as his Father — another to whom he belongs:

Luke 2:49 “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

MINISTRY

John 17:5 Jesus praying also cited for the Trinity

“Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.”

John 17:3 Jesus praying

“This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

John 11:41–42 Jesus praying

“Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me.”

Luke 6:12 Jesus praying

“He went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God.”

Hebrews 5:7 Jesus praying

“He offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death.”

CRUCIFIXION

Matthew 26:39 Jesus praying

“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”

Matthew 27:46 Jesus calls the Father his God Jesus praying

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Luke 23:46 Jesus praying

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

John 20:17 Jesus calls the Father his God

“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Revelation 3:12 Jesus calls the Father his God

“I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God... the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.”

FIGURE 2.12

The contested passages

These are the verses where the argument depends on which text you are reading. Each is listed with the manuscript or translation detail that decides it.

Isaiah 9:6 Translation-dependent

“For unto us a child is born... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” KJV

The KJV renders the naming in the future; the NRSV renders the same Hebrew in the past — “a child has been born for us... he is named” — describing a child already born, in the manner of Hebrew throne-names.

Hebrew perfect verbs; compare KJV/NIV “shall be called” with NRSV/JPS “is named”.

Hebraists read the verbs as perfects — a birth already past — which is how the NRSV and the JPS Tanakh render them; the names are read as a throne-name describing God, not the child.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Isaiah 7:14 Translation-dependent

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” KJV

The Hebrew is ‘almah, a young woman; the specific word for virgin is betulah. “God with us” is a name given to a child, as names like Elijah (“my God is the Lord”) are given to people.

Hebrew ‘almah rendered parthenos in the Septuagint; NRSV reads “the young woman”.

Standard lexicons gloss ‘almah as “young woman”; the virgin reading enters through the Septuagint’s parthenos, and the NRSV returns to “the young woman”.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Psalms 45:6 Translation-dependent

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” KJV

A wedding psalm addressed to the king. The same Hebrew can be read “Your throne is a throne of God” (NRSV footnote, JPS), which removes the address to the king as God.

The JPS Tanakh and the NRSV footnote read “your throne is a throne of God” — addressed to the king, not naming him God.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Micah 5:2 Translation-dependent

“Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” KJV

The Hebrew phrase means “from ancient days”; the NRSV reads “from of old, from ancient days”, used elsewhere of ordinary antiquity rather than eternity.

Modern translations render the phrase “from of old, from ancient days” rather than “from everlasting”, the same wording used elsewhere of ordinary antiquity.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Titus 2:13 Translation-dependent

“The manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” NRSV

Whether one person or two are named depends on how the Greek article is construed; older translations read “of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”, naming two.

The Granville Sharp construction; compare KJV, ASV margin.

The Granville Sharp construction is disputed in application to titles like this; older versions render two persons, “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Hebrews 1:8 Translation-dependent

“But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”” NRSV

A quotation of Psalm 45:6, carrying that verse’s translation problem with it. Two verses later the same passage has God anointing him “beyond your companions”.

Inherits the Psalm 45:6 problem; the NRSV footnotes the alternative “God is your throne forever and ever”.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Romans 9:5 Punctuation-dependent

“...from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever.” ^{NRSV}

The earliest manuscripts have no punctuation. Placing a full stop before “God” turns the clause into a doxology to the Father — the reading the NRSV footnotes and the RSV prints.

Punctuation here is an editorial decision, not a manuscript one; the RSV prints, and the NRSV footnotes, the reading that makes the clause a doxology to God the Father.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

Zechariah 12:10 Manuscript variant

“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” ^{KJV}

The reading turns on one Hebrew word; a substantial manuscript tradition and several translations read “on him whom they have pierced”, which removes the identification.

Masoretic 'elav (“to me”) against manuscripts and versions reading 'elav (“to him”).

The Masoretic text reads “to me”; a substantial group of manuscripts and the ancient versions read “to him”, and critical commentaries flag the reading as uncertain.

Check it yourself: [Compare translations](#)

John 1:18 Manuscript variant

“It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.” ^{NRSV}

The earliest papyri read “only-begotten God”; a large later tradition reads “only-begotten Son”. The Trinitarian reading depends on which family of manuscripts is followed.

monogenēs theos (P66, P75, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus) against monogenēs huios (Alexandrinus, Byzantine majority).

NA28 prints μονογενὴς θεός on the strength of P66 and P75; the later majority tradition reads υἱός, and translations follow one or the other.

Check it yourself: [Codex Sinaiticus \(facsimile\)](#) · [Codex Vaticanus \(facsimile\)](#) · [Papyri at CSNTM](#) · [Compare translations](#)

Acts 20:28 Manuscript variant

“To shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.” ^{NRSV}

Manuscripts divide between “church of God” and “church of the Lord”, and the last phrase can be rendered “with his own blood” or “with the blood of his own”. The inference depends on both choices.

theou (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus) against kyriou (P74, Alexandrinus, Ephraemi).

NA28 prints θεοῦ but the editors rate the decision as difficult, and translations still divide between “church of God” and “church of the Lord”.

Check it yourself: [Codex Sinaiticus \(facsimile\)](#) · [Codex Vaticanus \(facsimile\)](#) · [Compare translations](#)

1 Timothy 3:16 Manuscript variant

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” ^{KJV}

As the KJV reads it, this is explicit. The earliest manuscripts read “who was revealed in the flesh”; the change is one of two letters in an abbreviation, and modern critical editions and translations follow the older reading.

ΟΣ (“who”) in Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus*, Ephraemi*, 33 against ΘΣ (“God”) in the later Byzantine tradition.*

NA28 and UBS5 read ὅς (“who”); the reading “God” comes from a later alteration of the two-letter abbreviation. Modern translations read “he was revealed in the flesh”.

Check it yourself: [Codex Sinaiticus \(facsimile\)](#) · [INTF manuscript room](#) · [Compare translations](#)

1 John 5:7–8 Later insertion

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” ^{KJV}

The only sentence in the Bible that states the doctrine outright — and it is not part of the letter. It appears in no Greek manuscript before the fourteenth century, in no early version, and is quoted by no Greek father during the Arian controversy, where it would have been decisive. Modern translations omit it.

The Comma Johanneum; absent from every Greek manuscript before the 14th century and from the earliest Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Ethiopic versions.

No modern critical edition prints it: NA28 and UBS5 omit it, Metzger’s Textual Commentary treats it as a gloss that entered the Latin tradition and reached the Greek only in the sixteenth century, and the NRSV, NIV, ESV and NASB all leave it out.

Check it yourself: [Codex Sinaiticus \(facsimile\)](#) · [INTF manuscript room](#) · [Compare translations](#)

FIGURE 2.13

Every verse in the comparison

All 82 verses, strongest first. Score is clarity × textual security × speaker.

Verse	Cited for	Speaker	Reading	Clarity	Text	Score
Matthew 28:19 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The strongest triadic formula in the New Testament: it names the three together in one phrase. It does not say they are one being, co-equal or co-eternal — the content of the doctrine — and the book of Acts records baptism in the name of Jesus alone.	1.00
Deuteronomy 32:39 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me.”	1.00
Exodus 20:2–4 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am the Lord your God... you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol.”	1.00
Isaiah 42:8 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other.”	1.00
Isaiah 43:10–11 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.”	1.00
Isaiah 44:6 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”	1.00
Isaiah 44:8 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.”	1.00
Isaiah 45:5–6 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god... there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.”	1.00
Isaiah 45:18 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am the Lord, and there is no other.”	1.00
Isaiah 46:5 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, as though we were alike?”	1.00
Isaiah 46:9–10 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me.”	1.00
Isaiah 48:12 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“I am He; I am the first, and I am the last.”	1.00
Hosea 13:4 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“You know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.”	1.00
Hosea 11:9 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ God (first person)	Attested	Explicit	“For I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst.”	1.00
Mark 12:29 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” Asked directly which commandment is first, Jesus answers with the Shema — after the ministry, and without qualification.	1.00
Mark 12:32–34 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“‘You are right, Teacher... ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’... Jesus said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’” The scribe restates strict oneness and Jesus commends the answer rather than correcting it.	1.00
John 17:3 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” In prayer, Jesus applies “the only true God” to the Father and places himself in the separate category of the one sent.	1.00
John 14:28 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“The Father is greater than I.”	1.00
John 20:17 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Spoken by the risen Jesus, eleven verses before Thomas’s confession in the same chapter.	1.00

Verse	Cited for	Speaker	Reading	Clarity	Text	Score
Mark 10:18 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.”	1.00
Mark 13:32 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” A limit on the Son’s knowledge stated by contrast with the Father’s.	1.00
John 5:30 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“I can do nothing on my own... because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”	1.00
John 8:40 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“You are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.”	1.00
Matthew 26:39 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Two wills, one submitted to the other.	1.00
Revelation 3:12 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God... the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.” The glorified Christ speaks of “my God” four times in a single verse.	1.00
Luke 2:49 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” The only saying from his boyhood that the gospels record. It speaks of God as his Father — another to whom he belongs and answers.	1.00
Matthew 27:46 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” From the cross, quoting Psalm 22:1. The one crying out and the one cried out to are not the same.	1.00
Luke 23:46 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” His last words entrust his spirit to another.	1.00
John 11:41–42 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Jesus	Attested	Explicit	“Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me.” Said before raising Lazarus — the miracle is asked for, and granted, by another.	1.00
Deuteronomy 4:12 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice.”	0.75
Deuteronomy 4:15 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely.”	0.75
Deuteronomy 4:35 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him.”	0.75
Deuteronomy 4:39 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“The Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.”	0.75
Deuteronomy 6:4–5 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” The Shema, the confession Jesus himself calls the first of all the commandments (Mark 12:29).	0.75
Deuteronomy 6:14 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you.”	0.75
Deuteronomy 13:6–8 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“If anyone secretly entices you — even if it is your brother... saying, “Let us go worship other gods” — you must not yield.”	0.75
Malachi 2:10 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?”	0.75
Numbers 23:19 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind.”	0.75
1 Samuel 15:29 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“He is not a human being, that he should change his mind.”	0.75
Psalms 146:3 Hebrew Bible	■ Oneness	■ A prophet	Attested	Explicit	“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help.”	0.75
Genesis 1:26 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ God (first person)	Attested	Implicit	“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.”” A first-person plural does not fix a number. “Let us” can address angels, or be a	0.60

Verse	Cited for	Speaker	Reading	Clarity	Text	Score
					plural of majesty or deliberation; nothing in the passage limits it to three.	
2 Corinthians 13:13 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Attested	Explicit	“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” A benediction naming three, in which “God” is used of the Father as distinct from Christ — the usual Pauline pattern.	0.50
John 20:28 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ An apostle	Attested	Explicit	“Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”” The most direct address of Jesus as God in the gospels, and secure in the manuscripts. Read against verse 17, where the risen Jesus calls the Father “my God and your God”, and verse 31, where the stated purpose is belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.	0.50
1 Corinthians 8:6 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Paul	Attested	Explicit	“Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ.” Paul places “one God” and “the Father” in apposition, and gives Christ the separate title of Lord.	0.50
1 Timothy 2:5 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Paul	Attested	Explicit	“For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human.”	0.50
1 Timothy 6:15–16 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Paul	Attested	Explicit	“The blessed and only Sovereign... who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.”	0.50
Ephesians 4:6 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Paul	Attested	Explicit	“One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”	0.50
1 Corinthians 15:28 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Paul	Attested	Explicit	“Then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.”	0.50
Acts 2:22 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ An apostle	Attested	Explicit	“Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him.” The first recorded sermon of the church describes Jesus as a man through whom God acted.	0.50
Acts 3:13 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ An apostle	Attested	Explicit	“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus.”	0.50
James 2:19 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ An apostle	Attested	Explicit	“You believe that God is one; you do well.”	0.50
Luke 6:12 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ Narrator	Attested	Explicit	“He went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God.” The gospels describe prayer as his settled habit, not a single episode.	0.50
John 1:1 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Narrator	Attested	Implicit	“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The clause distinguishes the Word from “God” and then predicates theos of it, without the article. Whether that is identity of being or of character is exactly what is disputed; the verse does not settle it.	0.30
Colossians 2:9 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Attested	Implicit	“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” Indwelling language. The same letter calls Christ “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (1:15), and Ephesians 3:19 prays that believers be “filled with all the fullness of God”.	0.30
Hebrews 1:3 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ An apostle	Attested	Implicit	“He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.” A reflection and an imprint are, by the terms of the metaphor, not the thing itself.	0.30
Hebrews 5:7 New Testament	■ Oneness	■ An apostle	Attested	Implicit	“He offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death.”	0.30
John 10:30 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Jesus	Attested	Ambiguous	“The Father and I are one.” The Greek “one” is neuter — one thing, not one person. Jesus prays for his disciples “that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:22), using the same word of a unity nobody reads as shared divinity.	0.25
John 8:58 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Jesus	Attested	Ambiguous	“Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” The Greek egō eimi is ordinary speech and is used by the healed blind man in the same gospel (John 9:9). Its force	0.25

Verse	Cited for	Speaker	Reading	Clarity	Text	Score
					here depends on hearing an allusion to Exodus 3:14, which the text does not make.	
John 14:9 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Jesus	Attested	Ambiguous	“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Read as representation rather than identity, this matches the same discourse, where Jesus says the words are not his own but the Father’s (John 14:24) and the Father is greater than he is (14:28).	0.25
John 17:5 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Jesus	Attested	Ambiguous	“Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.” Pre-existent glory is asked for as a gift from another, in a prayer that two verses earlier calls the Father “the only true God”.	0.25
Revelation 1:8 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ God (first person)	Attested	Ambiguous	“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” The speaker here is named as “the Lord God”; identifying him with Jesus requires importing the title from a different speaker later in the book.	0.25
Psalms 110:1 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Attested	Ambiguous	“The Lord says to my lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” The second “lord” is adoni, the form used for human superiors throughout the Hebrew Bible, not the divine name. The verse distinguishes the two rather than identifying them.	0.19
Proverbs 8:22–23 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Attested	Ambiguous	“The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.” Wisdom is personified as a woman throughout Proverbs 8–9. Read as a person of the Godhead, the passage says that person was created — which Trinitarian doctrine denies.	0.19
Isaiah 48:16 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Attested	Ambiguous	“And now the Lord God has sent me and his spirit.” The speaker is the prophet; God sending a prophet and his spirit names a sender and two sent, not three co-equal persons.	0.19
Daniel 7:13–14 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Attested	Ambiguous	“I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.” The figure is brought before God and given dominion by him. Receiving authority from another marks him out as distinct from, and subordinate to, the giver.	0.19
1 Timothy 3:16 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Manuscript variant	Explicit	“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” As the KJV reads it, this is explicit. The earliest manuscripts read “who was revealed in the flesh”; the change is one of two letters in an abbreviation, and modern critical editions and translations follow the older reading.	0.18
Titus 2:13 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Translation-dependent	Implicit	“The manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Whether one person or two are named depends on how the Greek article is construed; older translations read “of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”, naming two.	0.15
Genesis 18:1–3 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ Narrator	Attested	Ambiguous	“He looked up and saw three men standing near him... My lord, if I find favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant.” The text calls them men and, later, angels (Genesis 19:1). Reading the three as persons of the Godhead is an inference laid on the narrative, not a statement in it.	0.13
Genesis 19:24 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ Narrator	Attested	Ambiguous	“Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.” Third-person self-reference is ordinary Hebrew idiom and appears elsewhere of a single speaker; it does not by itself establish two persons.	0.13
John 5:18 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Narrator	Attested	Ambiguous	“He was... calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.” This reports the charge his opponents made, not a claim Jesus states. His reply begins, “The Son can do nothing on his own” (verse 19).	0.13
Philippians 2:6 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Attested	Ambiguous	“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.” “Form of God” (morphē theou) is contrasted in the next line with “form of a slave”; the passage turns on humility,	0.13

Verse	Cited for	Speaker	Reading	Clarity	Text	Score
					and says equality was not seized — which presumes it was not already possessed.	
Matthew 1:23 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Narrator	Attested	Ambiguous	“They shall name him Emmanuel, which means, “God is with us.”” A name whose meaning is a sentence about God, of the same kind as Isaiah (“the Lord saves”) or Eliab (“my God is father”). The child in Matthew is in fact named Jesus.	0.13
John 1:18 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Narrator	Manuscript variant	Implicit	“It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.” The earliest papyri read “only-begotten God”; a large later tradition reads “only-begotten Son”. The Trinitarian reading depends on which family of manuscripts is followed.	0.11
Acts 20:28 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Manuscript variant	Implicit	“To shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.” Manuscripts divide between “church of God” and “church of the Lord”, and the last phrase can be rendered “with his own blood” or “with the blood of his own”. The inference depends on both choices.	0.11
Isaiah 9:6 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Translation-dependent	Ambiguous	“For unto us a child is born... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” The KJV renders the naming in the future; the NRSV renders the same Hebrew in the past — “a child has been born for us... he is named” — describing a child already born, in the manner of Hebrew throne-names.	0.09
Isaiah 7:14 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Translation-dependent	Ambiguous	“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” The Hebrew is ‘almah, a young woman; the specific word for virgin is betulah. “God with us” is a name given to a child, as names like Elijah (“my God is the Lord”) are given to people.	0.09
Psalms 45:6 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Translation-dependent	Ambiguous	“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” A wedding psalm addressed to the king. The same Hebrew can be read “Your throne is a throne of God” (NRSV footnote, JPS), which removes the address to the king as God.	0.09
Micah 5:2 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ A prophet	Translation-dependent	Ambiguous	“Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” The Hebrew phrase means “from ancient days”; the NRSV reads “from of old, from ancient days”, used elsewhere of ordinary antiquity rather than eternity.	0.09
Zechariah 12:10 Hebrew Bible	■ Trinity	■ God (first person)	Manuscript variant	Ambiguous	“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” The reading turns on one Hebrew word; a substantial manuscript tradition and several translations read “on him whom they have pierced”, which removes the identification.	0.09
Romans 9:5 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ Paul	Punctuation-dependent	Ambiguous	“...from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever.” The earliest manuscripts have no punctuation. Placing a full stop before “God” turns the clause into a doxology to the Father — the reading the NRSV footnotes and the RSV prints.	0.06
Hebrews 1:8 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ An apostle	Translation-dependent	Ambiguous	“But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”” A quotation of Psalm 45:6, carrying that verse’s translation problem with it. Two verses later the same passage has God anointing him “beyond your companions”.	0.06
1 John 5:7–8 New Testament	■ Trinity	■ An apostle	Later insertion	Explicit	“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” The only sentence in the Bible that states the doctrine outright — and it is not part of the letter. It appears in no Greek manuscript before the fourteenth century, in no early version, and is quoted by no Greek father during the Arian controversy, where it would have been decisive. Modern translations omit it.	0.00

FIGURE 2.14

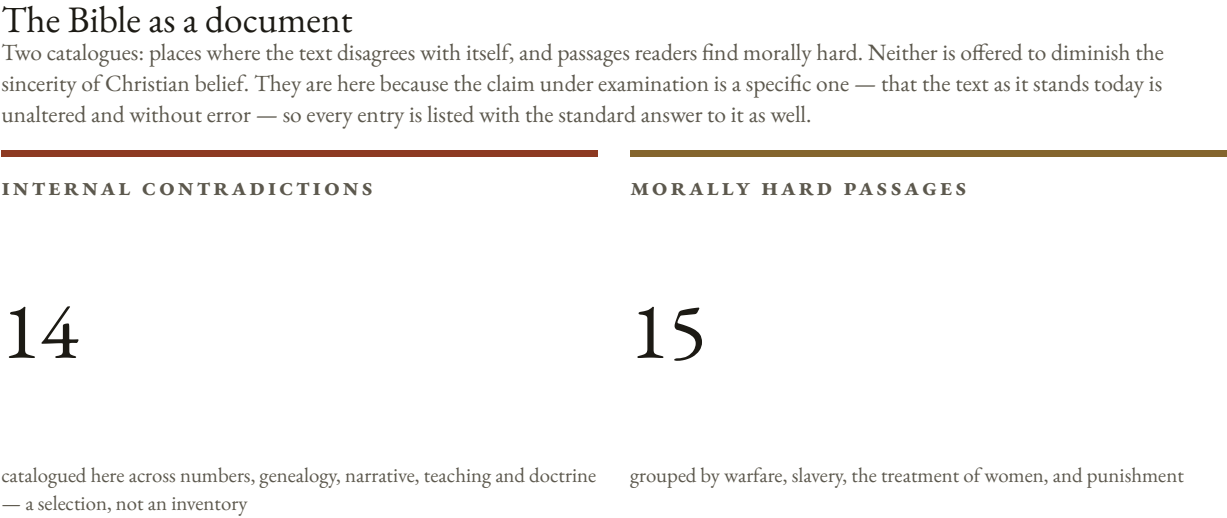
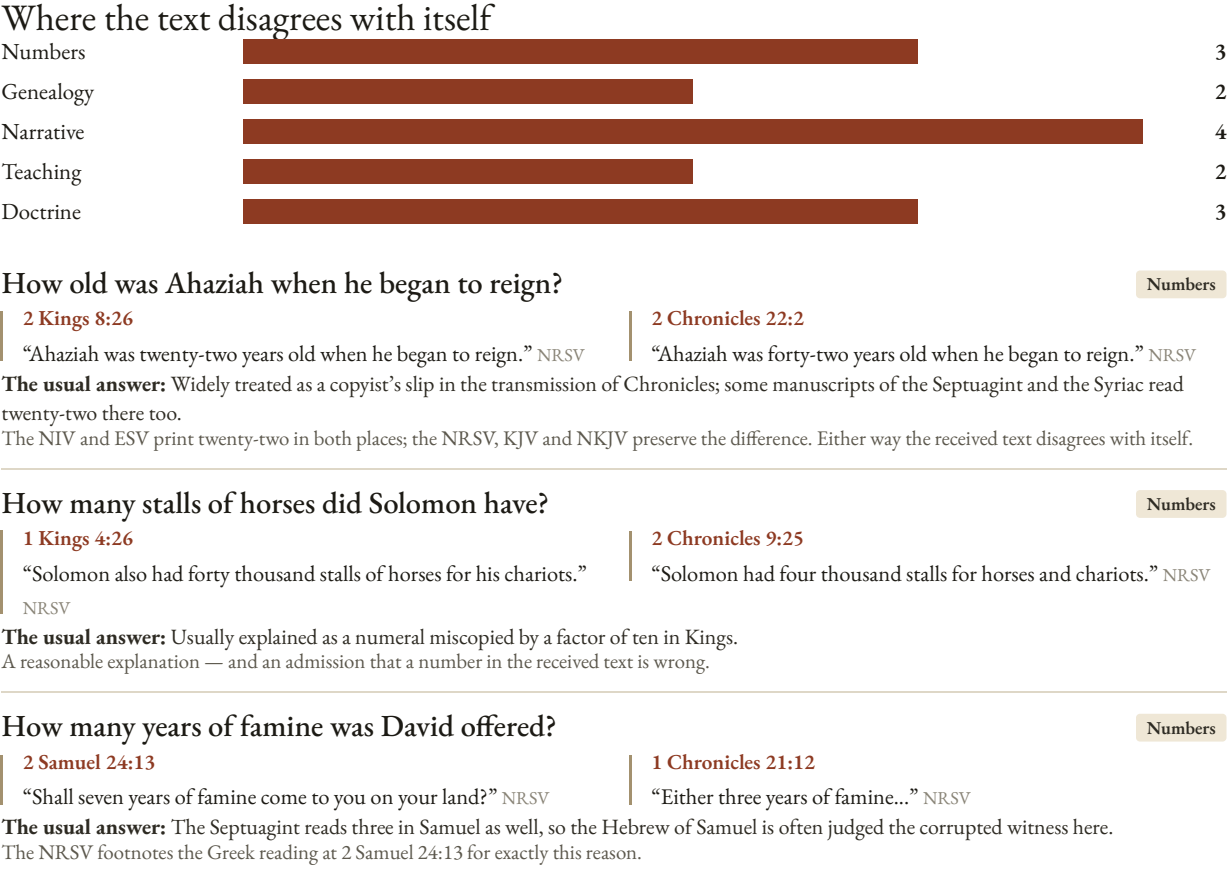


FIGURE 2.15



Who incited David to take the census?

Narrative

2 Samuel 24:1

“The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, “Go, count Israel and Judah.”” *NRSV*

1 Chronicles 21:1

“Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to count the people of Israel.” *NRSV*

The usual answer: Commonly harmonised as God permitting what Satan directly instigates — the Chronicler writing later, with a developed idea of a tempter.

That developed idea is itself the point: the two books describe the same event with different agents.

Who was Shelah’s father?

Genealogy

Genesis 11:12

“When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah.” *NRSV*

Luke 3:35–36

“...son of Shelah, son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad...” *NRSV*

The usual answer: Luke follows the Septuagint, which includes a generation (Cainan) the Hebrew text does not.

Both readings cannot be the inerrant record of the same lineage; one tradition has a generation the other lacks.

Through whom does Jesus descend from David?

Genealogy

Matthew 1:6–16

“David was the father of Solomon... and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary.” *NRSV*

Luke 3:23–31

“Jesus... was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli... son of Nathan, son of David.” *NRSV*

The usual answer: The traditional answer is that Matthew gives Joseph’s legal line through Solomon and Luke gives Mary’s line through Nathan, with Heli as Joseph’s father-in-law.

Neither text says so. Luke names Heli as Joseph’s father, and the two lists differ in length as well as in names.

How did Judas die, and who bought the field?

Narrative

Matthew 27:5–7

“Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests... bought with them the potter’s field.” *NRSV*

Acts 1:18

“Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.” *NRSV*

The usual answer: Harmonised by supposing the rope or branch gave way after death, and that the priests bought the field on Judas’s behalf with his money.

A possible sequence, but neither writer describes it; each account reads as complete on its own.

Was the stone already rolled away when the women arrived?

Narrative

Matthew 28:1–2

“An angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.” *NRSV*

Mark 16:4

“When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.” *NRSV*

The usual answer: Often read as Matthew narrating out of sequence — describing an earlier earthquake and opening rather than something the women watch.

The four accounts also differ on how many figures were at the tomb, and on whether the women told anyone (Mark 16:8 says they said nothing).

When did Jesus drive the traders from the temple?

Narrative

John 2:13–16

“The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem... he drove all of them out of the temple.” *NRSV*

Mark 11:15–17

“Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling.” *NRSV*

The usual answer: Some hold that it happened twice, at the start and again at the end of the ministry.

The Synoptics place it in the final week and make it the trigger for his arrest; John places it at the opening of the ministry.

Is Jesus’s testimony about himself valid?

Teaching

John 5:31

“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.” *NRSV*

John 8:14

“Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid.” *NRSV*

The usual answer: Read as addressing different situations: what would count as valid in a court, against what is true in fact.

The same Greek word (ἀληθής) stands in both verses; the *NRSV* renders it “true” in one and “valid” in the other.

Did Jesus come to judge the world?

Teaching

John 9:39

“I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see.” NRSV

John 12:47

“I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” NRSV

The usual answer: Distinguished as purpose against effect: he comes to save, and the encounter itself sifts those who refuse. A coherent reading — but it is a reading, not what either sentence says on its own.

Is a person justified by faith alone, or by works?

Doctrine

Galatians 2:16

“A person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... for no one will be justified by the works of the law.” NRSV

James 2:24

“You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” NRSV

The usual answer: The classic answer is that Paul means works of the Mosaic law before faith, and James means the works that follow from a living faith. Both writers argue from the same example, Abraham, and reach opposite conclusions about him. Luther called James “an epistle of straw” over precisely this.

Are children punished for the sins of their parents?

Doctrine

Exodus 20:5

“...punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.” NRSV

Ezekiel 18:20

“A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child.” NRSV

The usual answer: Read as consequence against guilt: sin damages the generations that follow, while legal culpability stays with the sinner. Deuteronomy 24:16 states the same limit as a rule of law, and Jeremiah 31:29–30 presents the change as something new.

Has anyone ever seen God?

Doctrine

Genesis 32:30

“For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.” NRSV

John 1:18

“No one has ever seen God.” NRSV

The usual answer: Distinguished as seeing a manifestation or an angelic form against seeing the divine essence, which no one can survive (Exodus 33:20). Exodus 33:11 says the Lord spoke to Moses “face to face, as one speaks to a friend” nine verses before 33:20 says no one may see his face and live.

FIGURE 2.16

Passages readers find morally hard

Listed with the interpretive answer each is usually given. Several turn on whether a passage describes what happened or prescribes what should happen — a distinction worth holding onto while reading them.

Warfare		5
Slavery		3
Women		4
Punishment		3

Deuteronomy 20:16–17 Warfare

“You must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them.” NRSV

A standing command to leave no survivors in the cities of the promised land.

The usual answer: Commonly read as a bounded, one-time judgement on specific nations rather than a general law, and — following archaeologists and many Old Testament scholars — as conventional ancient Near Eastern war rhetoric rather than a description of what happened.

1 Samuel 15:3 Warfare

“Now go and attack Amalek... kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.” ^{NRSV}

Infants are named explicitly among those to be killed.

The usual answer: Read as a judicial act against a people described as attacking Israel’s stragglers (Deuteronomy 25:17–19), and again as formulaic totality language typical of the period.

Numbers 31:17–18 Warfare

“Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man by sleeping with him. But all the young girls who have not known a man by sleeping with him, keep alive for yourselves.” ^{NRSV}

Captive girls are spared and kept, after everyone else is killed.

The usual answer: Defenders argue “keep alive for yourselves” means absorbed into households under the protections of Deuteronomy 21:10–14, not taken as concubines; the passage itself does not say which.

Psalms 137:9 Warfare

“Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!” ^{NRSV}

A blessing pronounced on those who kill infants.

The usual answer: A lament written in exile: the psalm records the cry of a traumatised people rather than prescribing conduct, and no command endorses it. Descriptive, not prescriptive — the standard and reasonable reading.

Hosea 13:16 Warfare

“Their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open.” ^{NRSV}

Stated as the punishment God brings on Samaria.

The usual answer: Read as a prophetic announcement of what an invading army will do, in the vivid idiom of the prophets, rather than an instruction.

2 Kings 2:23–24 Punishment

“He cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys.” ^{NRSV}

Children mauled for mocking a prophet.

The usual answer: Often argued that the Hebrew allows young men rather than small children, and that the mockery is a public rejection of the prophet — though the text still has the curse answered with mauling.

Leviticus 25:44–46 Slavery

“You may acquire male and female slaves from among the nations around you... you may keep them as a possession for your children after you, to inherit as property.” ^{NRSV}

Chattel slavery, inheritable, explicitly permitted.

The usual answer: Read as regulating an institution universal in the ancient world rather than instituting it, and as markedly more restrictive than surrounding law codes — with the trajectory of scripture running toward Philemon and abolition.

Exodus 21:20–21 Slavery

“When a slaveowner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished. But if the slave survives a day or two, there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner’s property.” ^{NRSV}

A beating that kills after two days carries no penalty, on the grounds of ownership.

The usual answer: Defended as a limit on an existing practice — the first ancient code to punish an owner for killing a slave at all — with the delay read as evidence that death was not intended.

Ephesians 6:5 Slavery

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ.” ^{NRSV}

The New Testament instructs slaves to obey rather than condemning slavery.

The usual answer: Read as pastoral advice to people with no power to change their position, alongside Galatians 3:28 and Paul’s appeal to Philemon to receive Onesimus “no longer as a slave”.

Deuteronomy 22:28–29 Women

“If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her... the man shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman’s father, and she shall become his wife.” ^{NRSV}

The victim is married to her attacker, and the payment goes to her father.

The usual answer: Argued to cover seduction rather than rape (the rape case being verses 25–27, where the man is put to death), and to secure a future for a woman who would otherwise be destitute — with the marriage permanent so that he can never discard her.

Deuteronomy 25:11–12 Women

“You shall cut off her hand; show no pity.” ^{NRSV}

Mutilation prescribed for a woman intervening in a fight.

The usual answer: Some Hebraists argue the idiom denotes a fine rather than literal amputation; the plain sense of the received text is amputation.

1 Timothy 2:11–12 Women

“Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.” ^{NRSV}

Women barred from teaching and from authority, on the basis of Eve.

The usual answer: Read by many as addressed to a specific situation in Ephesus rather than a universal rule, and set against Romans 16, where Paul commends Phoebe as a deacon and Junia as prominent among the apostles.

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 Women Text disputed

“Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak.” ^{NRSV}

An absolute prohibition, three chapters after Paul regulates how women prophesy in the assembly (11:5).

The usual answer: A significant body of scholarship treats these verses as a later marginal note that entered the text — in some manuscripts they appear after verse 40 — which would resolve the tension with chapter 11.

Deuteronomy 21:18–21 Punishment

“Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death.” ^{NRSV}

Death by stoning for a stubborn and rebellious son.

The usual answer: Rabbinic tradition set the evidentiary bar so high that the Talmud concludes the case never occurred and was given to be studied rather than applied; the requirement that both parents accuse him also limits it.

Judges 11:30–39 Punishment

“He did with her according to the vow he had made.” ^{NRSV}

Jephthah’s daughter is offered after a vow to sacrifice whatever came out of his house.

The usual answer: Some read the vow as fulfilled by lifelong celibacy rather than death; either way Judges narrates the period as one in which “all the people did what was right in their own eyes”, and does not commend him for it.

A note on method: the answers above are given at their strongest, and several of them are good. The question this section raises is narrower than “is the Bible good” — it is whether a text carrying these features can also carry the claim of being preserved without error. Muslims hold that the Torah and the Gospel were true revelation when given; what is in question is the state of the text now.

The Qur'an and the hadith, audited

The companion to the Christianity dashboard, running the same instruments over Islam's own sources. Where a question is hard it is listed as a question — the variant readings, the copies 'Uthmān had destroyed, the erased text under the Sanaa manuscript, the two centuries before the hadith collections — each with the answer Muslim scholarship gives, so the reader can weigh both.

FIGURE 3.1

At a glance

VERSES ON GOD'S ONENESS

14

every one of them states it outright rather than by inference

CANONICAL READINGS

10

seven fixed by Ibn Mujahid, later ten — differing in vowelings and dialect, not in doctrine

GRADES OF HADITH

4

sound, good, weak, fabricated — published openly, and only the first two establish law or creed

How this is scored

The Christianity dashboard weighs three things: how directly a verse states its claim, how secure its wording is in the manuscripts, and whose words they are. Applied here, the first two behave differently. Clarity still varies verse by verse, so it is marked. Textual integrity does not vary in the same way — there is one received text — so instead of a per-verse mark this page sets out the transmission history and the manuscript witnesses whole and lets the reader judge them. Speaker does not apply at all: the Qur'an is one voice from beginning to end.

This page is written by a Muslim and the conclusion it reaches is a Muslim one. What it tries not to do is win by asymmetry: every objection raised against the Bible on the companion page has its counterpart raised here.

FIGURE 3.2

Oneness, in the Qur'an's own words

Every verse here states God's oneness directly; none needs an inference to reach it, which is the difference the companion dashboard measures verse by verse.

112:1–4 Al-Ikhlās

Explicit

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ . اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ . لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ . وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

“Say, “He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him.”” Abdel Haleem

A whole surah given to the definition: one, uncaused, unbegotten, without equal. It denies sonship and comparability in the same breath as it affirms oneness.

2:163 Al-Baqarah

Explicit

وَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

“Your God is the one God: there is no god except Him.” Abdel Haleem

2:255 Ayat al-Kursi

Explicit

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

“God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful.” Abdel Haleem

3:18 Al-Imran

Explicit

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

“God bears witness that there is no god but Him.” Abdel Haleem

4:171 An-Nisa

Explicit

وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ

“Do not say, “Three” — stop, that is better for you — God is only one God.” Abdel Haleem

Addressed to the People of the Scripture by name, and answering the Trinity directly rather than by implication.

5:73 Al-Ma'idah

Explicit

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ

“Those people who say that God is the third of three are defying the truth.” Abdel Haleem

6:102 Al-An'am

Explicit

ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“This is God, your Lord, there is no god but Him, the Creator of all things.” Abdel Haleem

16:51 An-Nahl

Explicit

لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ

“Do not take two gods: He is only one God.” Abdel Haleem

The prohibition is of two before it is of three — the objection is to plurality as such, not to a particular number.

17:111 Al-Isra

Explicit

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ

“Praise be to God, who has never had a child, who has no partner in His rule.” Abdel Haleem

21:22 Al-Anbiya

Explicit

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَآِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا

“If there had been in heaven or earth any gods but Him, both heaven and earth would be in ruins.” Abdel Haleem

An argument rather than an assertion: the verse reasons from the order of the world to a single will behind it.

23:91 Al-Mu'minun

Explicit

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ

“God has never had a child. Nor is there any god beside Him.” Abdel Haleem

37:4 As-Saffat

Explicit

إِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ

“Truly your God is One.” Abdel Haleem

42:11 Ash-Shura

Explicit

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing.” Abdel Haleem

The verse most often cited against anthropomorphism: whatever is said of God, likeness to creation is excluded.

47:19 Muhammad

Explicit

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“So know that there is no god but God.” Abdel Haleem

FIGURE 3.3

From recitation to the printed page

The route the text travelled, and the physical evidence at each stage. Dates are CE.

■ Revelation ■ Compilation ■ Manuscript ■ Reading

- **Revelation and memorisation** 610–632 CE
REVELATION
 Revealed in portions across twenty-three years, memorised by the companions as it came and written down by appointed scribes — Zayd ibn Thabit among them — on whatever was to hand. Recitation and writing ran in parallel from the start.
- **The first collection** c. 633 CE
COMPILATION
 After the battle of Yamama killed a number of memorisers, Abu Bakr ordered the written material gathered into a single copy under Zayd ibn Thabit, kept afterwards with Hafsa.
- **The 'Uthmānic codex** c. 650 CE
COMPILATION
 'Uthmān had standard copies made from Hafsa's collection in the Qurayshi orthography and sent to the main garrison cities, ordering other written material destroyed. Every printed Qur'an today descends from this recension.
- **The Birmingham folios** radiocarbon 568–645 CE
MANUSCRIPT
 Two parchment leaves at the University of Birmingham, carrying parts of surahs 18–20 in Hijazi script, radiocarbon-dated with 95.4% confidence to 568–645 CE. Their text matches the modern one.
 Check it yourself: [University of Birmingham](#)
- **The Sanaa palimpsest** c. 650–700 CE
MANUSCRIPT
 A manuscript with two layers. The upper text is standard; the lower, erased text is a non-'Uthmānic companion codex, differing in word order, in some pronouns and synonyms, and in surah order — the most significant variant witness known.
 Check it yourself: [Corpus Coranicum \(BBAW\)](#)
- **The Topkapi and Samarkand codices** 8th–9th century CE
MANUSCRIPT
 Two of the oldest near-complete copies. Both are traditionally ascribed to 'Uthmān himself; palaeography places them later, and both agree with the received text in wording.
 Check it yourself: [UNESCO Memory of the World](#)
- **The readings codified** c. 936 CE
READING
 Ibn Mujahid limited the accepted recitations to seven, later extended to ten. The readings differ in vowelings, dialect and occasionally a word; Hafṣ 'an 'Asim is the reading in most print today, Warsh 'an Nafi' across much of North and West Africa.

The hard questions about the Qur'an

Put as an opponent would put them, then answered.

If the Qur'an is preserved, why are there ten readings?

The canonical qira'at differ: 1:4 is read mālik ("master") in some and malik ("king") in others; other places differ in vowelings, in a pronoun, or in a verb form.

The answer given: The readings are themselves transmitted, named and mass-transmitted rather than accidental; the tradition treats them as revealed modes of recitation. The differences are of vowelings and dialect, and where a word differs the two readings complement rather than contradict. No reading produces a different doctrine.

Why did 'Uthmān destroy the other copies?

Companions held personal codices — Ibn Mas'ūd's and Ubayy's among them — which differed in surah order and in some annotations. 'Uthmān had them destroyed.

The answer given: The reported motive is disputes over recitation between garrisons. Standardising on one written form settled the orthography while leaving the ten readings in place. The differences reported for those codices are of arrangement and marginal notes rather than of doctrine, though the destruction means we cannot now examine them.

What about the erased text under the Sanaa manuscript?

The lower layer of the Sanaa palimpsest is a companion codex differing from the standard text in word order, pronouns, synonyms and surah order.

The answer given: It is the strongest physical evidence of the non-ʿUthmānic codices the sources describe, and it matches what they describe: variation of the kind the tradition itself reports for Ibn Masʿūd, not a different message. Its existence is an argument for the sources' honesty as much as a problem for the text.

FIGURE 3.4

How a hadith is graded

Hadith are reports about the Prophet, not revelation, and they are not accepted as a block. Each is graded on its chain of narrators and on its content; the bar shows the weight each grade carries in law and creed.

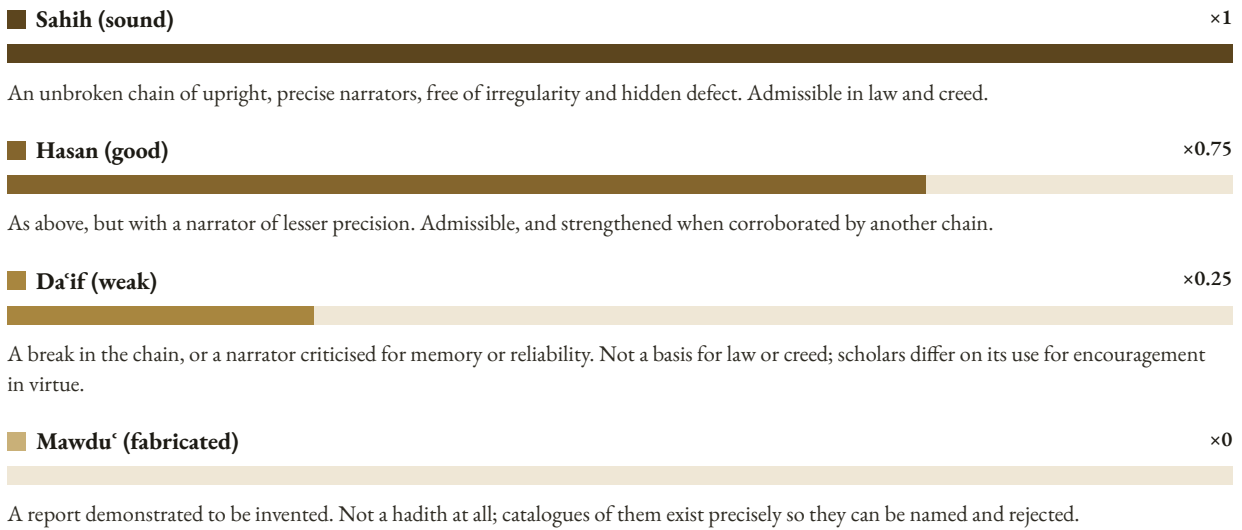


FIGURE 3.5

The major collections

Counts follow each collection's own numbering and include reports repeated with different chains, which is why the distinct totals are much lower.

Collection	Compiler	Reports	Note
Sahih al-Bukhari	Muhammad al-Bukhari d. 870 CE	~7,275 with repetition (~2,600 distinct)	Selected from a far larger body he had gathered; the selection criteria, not the size, are the point.
Sahih Muslim	Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj d. 875 CE	~7,500 with repetition (~3,000 distinct)	Arranged by topic with the variant chains of each report grouped together, which makes his method visible.
Sunan Abi Dawud	Abu Dawud al-Sijistani d. 889 CE	~4,800	Focused on reports bearing on law; he notes weakness in the material where he finds it.
Jami' al-Tirmidhi	Muhammad al-Tirmidhi d. 892 CE	~3,950	Grades most reports explicitly and records the legal positions built on them — an early published apparatus.
Sunan al-Nasa'i	Ahmad al-Nasa'i d. 915 CE	~5,700	The strictest of the four Sunan in the narrators it admits.
Sunan Ibn Majah	Ibn Majah al-Qazwini d. 887 CE	~4,340	The last of the six to be counted canonical, and the one holding the largest share of weak material.

Collection	Compiler	Reports	Note
Al-Muwatta	Malik ibn Anas d. 795 CE	~1,720	The earliest surviving collection, written a century before the six — and evidence that written transmission began well before them.
Musnad Ahmad	Ahmad ibn Hanbal d. 855 CE	~27,000	Arranged by narrator rather than topic, and deliberately inclusive — it holds sound and weak reports together, to be sorted afterwards.

The hard questions about hadith

Put as an opponent would put them, then answered.

The collections were compiled two centuries later. Why trust them?

Bukhari died in 870, some 238 years after the Prophet. Any report in his book passed through several intermediaries first.

The answer given: Every report carries its chain, and the chain is the object of study: an entire discipline ('ilm al-rijal) catalogues the narrators by date, teachers, students, memory and character, so a chain can be tested rather than trusted. Earlier written material exists — the Sahifa of Hammam ibn Munabbih, the Muwatta a century before Bukhari.

Weak and fabricated hadith exist. Does that undermine the corpus?

The tradition itself records fabrication on a large scale, by sectarians, storytellers and partisans.

The answer given: It records it because it hunted for it. Weakness is published rather than concealed: the grades are stated, the fabrications catalogued by name, and no weak report may establish law or creed. A corpus that names its own forgeries is in a different position from one that cannot identify them.

Do Muslims hold hadith to the same standard as the Qur'an?

The two are often quoted side by side, which can suggest equal authority.

The answer given: No, and the distinction is explicit. The Qur'an is held to be mass-transmitted in word; hadith are reports about the Prophet, graded individually, and the great majority are transmitted by single chains. A hadith contradicting the Qur'an is rejected on that ground alone.

What the two dashboards are for, taken together: not to score a win, but to show that the same questions can be put to both libraries, and to let the reader see which answers hold. A reader who finishes this page unconvinced has at least seen the objections stated fairly, which is the least a claim about God deserves.