Finding Injil

What Were the Sahih Hadith of the Messiah?



Aleph Funk

Albrecht Dürer, Saint Jerome in His Study (1514), engraving.
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What Were the Sahih Hadith of the Messiah?

A Qur’an-centered inquiry into the teachings of Jesus and the communities that transmitted them.

WORKING MANUSCRIPT

Version 0.17p consolidated · Essene horizon and prayer traditions · 1 November 2026

This consolidated edition retains the selected Dürer cover, Chapter 22A and the published Duganized Chapters 4A–4C, with Chapter 13A on Luke, Chapter 4D on translation and Chapter 37B including the Ali addition. The existing sayings dossiers and Qurʾānic commitment register remain intact.

About this draft

This working manuscript assembles the original Finding Injil fragment and the subsequent research dossiers. It opens with the Aḥmad–Paraclete thesis and develops the source comparisons across forty-four numbered chapters and twelve intercalated chapters (4A–4D, 13A, 22A, 27A, 34A, 37A–37B, 41A and 41B). Appendix A preserves the original fourteen pilot sayings; the companion Critical Sayings Collection, Volume I, edition 1.9, now catalogs FI-001–FI-066. The bibliography, editorial record, Qur'anic concordance, Shiʿi source-use guide and Appendix F adversarial commitments register remain parts of the master manuscript.

The first-person voice belongs to the proposed book. New connective prose has been drafted from the supplied materials for the author's review. The expanded chapters distinguish the supplied research framework from newly consulted sources and from the book's comparative interpretations. Historical inference and Qur'anic evaluation remain separate judgments. Sources consulted only in summary are labeled accordingly.

This consolidated edition retains forty-four numbered chapters, twelve intercalated chapters, 66 FI sayings dossiers, and 178 QC identifiers. The Luke, translation and Ibn Masʿūd chapters are source-critical additions. All original claim grades remain unchanged.

Chapter 37A, "Different Trinities under Qur'anic Judgment: Shirk, Kufr and Fisq," entered the manuscript in version 0.16. It compares Christian doctrines and devotional practices under a liberal interpretive proposal while documenting the Qur'an's explicit judgments in 5:72–73, classical exegetical objections and Appendix F claim units. The distinct historical and Qur'anic assessments retain their original evidentiary boundaries.

Footnotes provide working references. Scripture passages are generally cited in the text, with English wording paraphrased unless an exact phrase is being examined. Greek forms and transliterated religious terms should receive specialist proofing before publication. The final appendix records corrections to earlier notes and the checks still required.

The contents entries are clickable. Chapter and subsection headings use Word's navigation styles so that the manuscript can be revised and expanded in place.

Prepared from the files supplied for Finding Injil.
Original research archive retained separately.

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Preface

I began Finding Injil with a question about obedience. The Qur’an speaks of revelation given to Jesus, directs the People of the Gospel toward what God revealed within it, and asks believers to acknowledge the messengers who came before Muhammad. I wanted to understand what taking those instructions seriously would require of a Muslim who opens the New Testament. The question also concerned Christians I love. Their worship, their hopes for salvation, and the teachings they attribute to Jesus deserve sustained attention.[1]

My earlier book, Who Are the Quranists?, explored the controversy over the authority of hadith. Work on that question left me with a further obligation. Muslims have spent centuries examining reports about Muhammad, comparing their wording and asking who transmitted them. Jesus is also a messenger whom the Qur’an commands us to honor. If that commitment means anything, we should make a comparable effort to examine his surviving teachings.

The title of this book retains the question I wrote at the beginning of the project: What were the sahih hadith of the Messiah? Using the language of hadith for the Gospels invites a specific kind of inquiry. A Gospel brings together remembered sayings, scenes from a life, and an author’s understanding of their significance. We have to establish who is speaking in each passage. Whose words are we assessing: the narrator’s theological comment, or a saying attributed to Jesus? The evidence is different in each case.

My first working hierarchy favored Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke. John received the lowest initial rating. I associated it with a developed Logos theology and assumed that the sayings most useful to this project would appear elsewhere. That was my starting guess, as the original manuscript records. The research made John central.

The change came through Aḥmad. Qur’an 61:6 presents Jesus announcing a messenger who will come after him. I read that announcement alongside the figure promised in John 16, who speaks what he hears and guides those who receive him into truth. This identification is the book’s opening thesis. It makes the Fourth Gospel a witness we have a Qur’anic reason to investigate closely, including the passages that Christians have used to argue for Jesus’s divinity.

That investigation has widened the book. Daniel and the Enochic writings give the Son of Man a history. Isaiah supplies a language of divine glory and a servant’s commission, while the Ascension of Isaiah takes a reader through the heavens to an exalted Beloved who receives his mission from the Most High. These texts let us ask how early readers understood a heavenly agent who remained dependent upon God. The question reaches into the theology of the Spirit and into the Shiʿi distinction between an authorized bearer of divine guidance and religious excess.

[1] Aleph Funk, Finding Injil: What Were the Sahih Hadith of the Messiah?, supplied manuscript fragment, pp. 3–12, especially the purposes stated on pp. 7–9. This preface recasts that account in light of the later Research Dossier, version 7 (21 October 2026).

The earthly history matters equally. James's place in the Jerusalem movement changes how we read Paul. Accounts of the Ebionites and Nazoraeans complicate the familiar story of a single original church. The Qur'anic account of Maryam raises questions about the controversies surrounding Jesus's conception. Even the infant's speech can be examined as a transmitted report, with the Magi offering a proposed route of testimony that deserves a careful test.

The project's original aims remain in place. I want a coherent account of the scriptures the Qur'an asks us to respect, and a way of judging sayings attributed to the Messiah. A reconstruction of Christian law belongs within that task. So does the practical question of what Muslims might recover from Jesus's prophetic Sunnah.

I write from a Qur'an-centered theological commitment. That commitment supplies the reason for the investigation and the criterion by which I assess its religious implications. Historical claims still need historical evidence. I can find a scriptural interpretation persuasive while its proposed chain of transmission remains unproved. I owe the reader both judgments.

Peace and blessings upon Jesus and upon all of God's messengers. I intend that invocation throughout the book, including where repeated honorifics would interrupt the prose.

PART I · SIZING UP THE SEARCH

1. Aḥmad and the Fourth Gospel

Qur'an 61:6 places an announcement on the lips of Jesus: a messenger will follow him, and his name is Aḥmad. John 16 presents Jesus preparing his disciples for a departure and a coming guide. The promised figure will speak from what he hears. My thesis is that these passages preserve a connected prophetic expectation, and that the Qur'an directs us toward an authentic element of Jesus's teaching within the Johannine farewell discourse.[2]

This is where my own thesis creates a problem I have to face. John contains the Gospel material most frequently used to justify claims about the Messiah's divinity. A Muslim who accepts the Aḥmad–Paraclete identification therefore acquires a reason to read that material with particular care. The question reaches beyond locating one prediction. It concerns what kind of book has preserved it, how its sources were assembled, and what its authors understood Jesus to be.

Ali Ataie and the Johannine Injil

Ali J. Ataie's 2016 dissertation, Authenticating the Johannine Injil, advances a comprehensive Muslim reading of the Fourth Gospel. Through a Sunnite "polemirenic" hermeneutic he identifies the text of John with the Injil affirmed by the Qur'an. His argument reads the Johannine Jesus through the theomystical teachings of al-Junayd, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn ʿArabī, while also engaging the Gospel's historical and cultural setting. In the dissertation's abstract, this reading presents Jesus as a sanctified agent of God within a rigorously monotheistic theology (Ataie 2016, abstract).

The scale of Ataie's claim matters to my inquiry. He asks whether the Fourth Gospel, including material that has supported Trinitarian interpretations, can be read as a coherent witness to tawḥīd. That is a substantial proposal for Muslim engagement with John, especially for a book whose opening argument connects Qur'an 61:6 to the farewell discourse.

For my own source register, his authentication is a theological and interpretive claim requiring a separate historical test at the level of each saying. A plausible monotheistic reading helps identify what a text could mean. Attribution to Jesus, the date of the tradition, its witnesses, and the history of its redaction require evidence of their own. The FI dossier grades therefore remain tied to passage-level attestation and transmission, with Ataie's proposal registered as a relevant interpretive comparison.

[2] Qur'an 61:6; 5:46–48; John 16:7–15. The Aḥmad identification and proposed redactional direction are the author's hypotheses, recorded in Research Dossier v7, version-2 addendum A and Case Study 01. They are distinguished from the history of later Muslim interpretation.

The instruction to judge by the Injil

In Qur'an 5:46–48, the Injil belongs within a sequence of divine guidance. The People of the Gospel are told to judge by what Allah revealed in it. The Qur'an confirms earlier revelation while standing over it as a criterion. My reading treats this combination as a continuing responsibility to recover and apply guidance. It gives theological importance to the survival of authentic teaching amid the complicated histories of the books now called Gospels.

Several different objects can be intended when a person says Injil. One is the revelation given to Jesus. Another is the body of his teachings preserved through disciples and communities. A written Gospel adds a narrative arrangement and a voice that explains what those teachings mean. The four canonical Gospels provide overlapping access to this history. Their individual claims require examination before we can decide what relation each bears to the revelation the Qur'an affirms.

The plural-covenant reading developed in my original manuscript takes Qur'an 5:48 seriously as a statement about differentiated law. The question for Christians then becomes practical. Which commandments remain theirs? What does fidelity to the Messiah require? The inquiry into Aḥmad opens a much larger inquiry into the surviving Injil.

The promised speaker

John's Paraclete sayings occur in 14:16–17, 14:26, 15:26–27, 16:7–11 and 16:13–15. The term paraklētos can be rendered advocate, helper or comforter, with each English choice bringing a slightly different emphasis. In John 16 the figure's work includes testimony and judgment. His speech depends on received knowledge, and his coming is connected to Jesus's departure.

I am especially interested in that description of received speech. John 5:30 also describes Jesus acting from what he hears, under the authority of the one who sent him. A pattern of prophetic agency can therefore be investigated within John itself. The later messenger reading asks whether the promised figure belongs within this same pattern, continuing a mission through divine authorization.

We have to read the rest of the promise too. John 16:14–15 makes the coming guide glorify Jesus and receive what belongs to him. John 15:26 already uses the title Spirit of Truth. These features belong in the evidence for the identification. A chapter built around Aḥmad must explain how the proposed messenger fulfills the promise as it survives, including its emphasis on the Messiah.

An early Muslim reading

Sean W. Anthony's study of Ibn Isḥāq supplies a documented stage in the interpretation's history. The eighth-century Muslim historian transmitted an Arabic adaptation of John 15–16 that identifies the promised figure with Muhammad. Anthony argues that a Christian

Palestinian Aramaic Gospel lies behind the adaptation. This gives us a specific transmission question involving an identifiable language tradition.[3]

The working dossier records Anthony's objections to treating Qur'an 61:6 as an original reference to John. I have to answer that objection. Establishing that early Muslims interpreted the Paraclete as Muhammad supports a history of reception. The further claim that Jesus originally announced Muhammad requires an argument about the Gospel tradition and the Qur'anic witness together.

The Greek question belongs inside the case rather than at its margins. The classical adjective periklytos (περικλυτός) means renowned or celebrated, a striking semantic neighbor of Arabic Aḥmad. The received Gospel instead writes paraklētos (παράκλητος), advocate or helper. The proposed relationship between these terms is an actual philological problem: each has the principal consonants P-R-K-L-T-S, and in an unvowelled Semitic transcription the sequence could be ambiguous. The surviving Greek Gospel witnesses favor paraklētos, but they cannot alone recover every earlier saying or bilingual wordplay behind the evangelist's wording. I therefore treat the periklytos possibility as a principal research hypothesis, with the task of tracing its route through Aramaic and Greek sources rather than assuming its failure from the absence of a known Greek copy reading that form.

The named promise across three alphabets

The historical test begins with three terms. John's Greek has paraklētos, a title with legal and representational force. Greek also possesses periklytos, a genuine ancient adjective for someone spoken of with acclaim. The Qur'an names Aḥmad, a form from the Arabic root of praise. The two Greek terms have distinct vowel patterns and different semantic histories, while their written consonants P-R-K-L-T-S coincide. Richard Worthington's 2020 study develops the possibility of wordplay or re-vocalization in Semitic transmission. A lexical correspondence becomes historically interesting once a transmission mechanism has been proposed: a Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, or Arabic consonantal intermediary; a Greek retelling of a prior title; or an interpretation circulating within a bilingual Jewish-Christian community.[4]

The objection from Joseph Schacht

The objection against an original Greek periklytos reading deserves its full force. Joseph Schacht, writing on Aḥmad in the second Encyclopaedia of Islam, reasoned from the history of the Greek Gospel and its translations, together with the infrequency of periklytos in Greek contemporary with early Christianity. He concluded that the proposed

[3] Sean W. Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete: New Light on Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15:23–16:11," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 79.2 (2016): 255–278, DOI 10.1017/S0041977X16000458. Relevant final-journal text and page images checked in John Passes 01–02, especially pp. 260–261 and 267–268. Primary CPA edition and manuscript collation remains open.

[4] LSJ, s.v. περικλυτός, https://atlas.perseus.tufts.edu/dictionaries/entry/urn:cite2:scaife-viewer:dictionaries.v1:lsj-n81551/ ; Richard Worthington, "You Say Periklute, I Say Paraclete," Religious Inquiries 9.17 (2020):129–168, doi:10.22034/ri.2019.100718, especially pp. 150–155.

replacement of paraklētos by periklytos was impossible. This is the strongest conventional textual objection: the known Greek witnesses and ancient versional tradition agree on the conventional title, and an otherwise uncommon Greek epithet cannot become the original merely because it fits an Arabic name. That conclusion must enter our reconstruction as an affirmative datum about transmission.[5]

Schacht addresses most directly a conjectured Greek reading displaced throughout the extant textual tradition. My further hypothesis concerns an earlier saying and the possibilities of a consonantal intermediary, bilingual pun, or source-level theological reinterpretation before our oldest recoverable Greek form. The surviving evidence has yet to establish any of those particular events. The absence of a Greek periklytos witness is a major problem for the literal substitution model, while the fate of a pre-Greek promise turns on the reconstruction of earlier languages, communities, and literary layers. We can investigate that wider proposal without treating the logic of possibility as a recovered manuscript.

An unvowelled spelling establishes a possible channel, and we must investigate whether a historical writer actually used it. John's surviving Greek texts exhibit paraklētos. The title periklytos as an original Gospel wording has no Greek witness yet identified in this archive. That observation makes it necessary to seek earlier source forms rather than to substitute a preferred word into a critical edition. More important, the possibility of a deliberately double-voiced title might survive even if every surviving Greek copy retained the same conventional spelling. We should investigate the history of the spoken prediction, its descriptions of hearing and speaking, and its interpretation as an announcement of a later prophetic messenger.[6]

One constraint favors attention to John's source layers rather than a purely semantic argument. The historical Jesus most probably addressed his followers in Aramaic, whereas periklytos and paraklētos are Greek. A claim that Jesus pronounced either Greek title has an additional burden of proof. If the title passed through translation, the earlier Aramaic expression, the choice of Greek equivalent, and its later Arabic identification are different events. Ibn Isḥāq's al-Mnaḥmanā, connected by Sean Anthony with Christian Palestinian Aramaic, provides a documented later segment of precisely this kind of multilingual reception. It gives the inquiry a real transmitted object, even though it does not directly recover Jesus's own speech.[7]

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[5] Joseph Schacht, “Aḥmad,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 267; Schacht’s wording is quoted by Stephen N. Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse: The Advents of the Paraclete, Aḥmad and Comforter,” originally published 1997, revised web text, University of California Merced Hurqalya site, https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/73. The EI² entry itself was not independently opened in this editing pass.

[6] Worthington (2020), pp. 151–155; Seyyed Saeed Reza Montazery and Saeed Karimpur, “The History of the Idea of a Literal Connection Between the Words Ahmad and Paraclete,” Religious Inquiries 7.13 (2018):113–129, doi:10.22034/ri.2018.63739. Montazery and Karimpur dispute the alleged antiquity of the literal periklytos substitution; the two studies are interlocutors.

[7] Sean W. Anthony, “Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 79.2 (2016):255–278, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X16000458 ; compare Worthington (2020).

The proposed redaction

I argue that the received John 14 was grafted before the older farewell tradition preserved in John 15–17. The order matters. Before the reader reaches the coming speaker in John 16, chapter 14 has already identified the guide and placed his teaching inside the disciples' remembrance of Jesus. I read this as competition over the promise, conducted by preserving the older words while putting an interpretive gate in front of them. Recovering the prophetic announcement behind that arrangement is central to this book.[8]

The proposed graft concerns the chapter's received shape and its placement. An editor could assemble that chapter from inherited sayings, including language of Jesus's dependence on the Father. Within it, 14:15–26 carries the most concentrated interpretation of the Paraclete. The older farewell tradition could also have undergone revision on its way into chapters 15–17. The argument therefore requires a history of the passages as well as a date for their arrangement.

I use "competing" to describe the struggle over what authority the promised speaker could claim. A prefatory farewell can preserve an earlier promise while supplying the terms under which readers accept it. Chapter 3 develops the evidence for that operation and examines the rival account in which chapters 15–17 expand an earlier John 14. The proposal remains an authorial reconstruction whose historical support must be assessed independently of my commitment to Qur'an 61:6.

[8] John Redaction Research Pass 03, "John 14 as a Competing Farewell" (29 October 2026), direction-of-dependence audit. The proposed chronology, the interpretation of competition and the Aḥmad identification are separately recorded authorial claims. Exact verse allocations in Sasse's original article, von Wahlde, Ataie and Audlin remain outside the independently checked material.

2. What Would Count as a Sahih Saying?

The Gospels reach us as books. A historian working on an individual saying has to look inside the book's account of itself, then follow the wording across other witnesses. The word sahih, used here as a research analogy, asks how much confidence a report deserves. We cannot simply carry the label over and leave the method behind. The surviving Christian sources rarely provide the narrator-by-narrator chains familiar from Islamic hadith collections, so I need to say how I will assess them.[9]

The first task is attribution. John 1:1 belongs to the evangelist's prologue. Thomas speaks in John 20:28. Jesus is represented as speaking in John 10:30. All these passages matter for Johannine theology, yet only the last is directly a report of Jesus's own words. A reconstructed collection of his sayings must keep that difference visible.

The several histories of a passage

A passage has a history of composition and a history of copying. An author may use an older saying in a later book; a surviving manuscript may copy that book centuries afterward. The earliest extant copy establishes a witness to the wording it preserves. It supplies one point in the larger history of the tradition.

A separate question concerns the historical event. A secure fourth-century manuscript can preserve a report composed much earlier. Conversely, an early literary witness can record a belief that its author inherited without having observed the event. The date of the witness and the credibility of the report need separate entries in the research record.

Agreement among texts also needs examination. Matthew and Luke frequently reproduce material shared with Mark. Where copying explains their agreement, the presence of a saying in several Gospels gives a record of circulation. The case for independent testimony depends on the source relationship. Q, special Matthean material, and other proposed sources belong to reconstructions of those relationships; their status should remain visible in every comparison.

The interpretation of a saying introduces another layer. A phrase may be well preserved while readers disagree about what it means. The Unitarian arguments concerning John's Greek are particularly important here. A judgment that a sentence can sustain a tawḥīd-compatible reading differs from a judgment that Jesus certainly uttered the surviving Greek sentence.

Qur'anic consonance and historical confidence

The Qur'an supplies the normative criterion of this project. A report that presents Jesus worshiping God, teaching mercy, or directing people toward judgment has an evident place in a Qur'an-centered reconstruction. Its agreement with that framework is a reason to

[9] Original Finding Injil fragment, pp. 7–10; Research Dossier v7, "Claim and confidence discipline" and "Grading protocol." The separate historical and theological assessments are the method proposed for this book, rather than a reported consensus method for Gospel criticism.

investigate it closely. Historical confidence also depends on the witnesses and on the account we can give of its transmission.

The converse situation is possible. An early text can preserve a theological view I reject. Its early date would still tell us something about the beliefs circulating at that time. If I exclude that evidence because I dislike its theology, I lose the history I am trying to explain.

I therefore use separate working assessments for textual attestation, historical confidence, and Qur'anic interpretation. Literary dependence is recorded alongside them. The resulting file tells a reader what survives, what is inferred, and why a theological conclusion has been proposed. A single authenticity label can be considered only after those judgments have been made.

A practical example

Mark 10:18 represents Jesus questioning why he is called good and locating goodness in God alone. Matthew 19:17 preserves a related exchange with different wording. The comparison invites an inquiry into how a saying was transmitted and whether an editor changed its theological effect. That inquiry requires the manuscript variants within Matthew as well as the relation between the Gospels.

This is where ranking whole Gospels lets us down. A report in Mark may have strong reasons for inclusion in a sayings collection, while another passage in the same book requires a different judgment. John can preserve language compatible with prophetic dependence even where its narrator offers a developed account of the Logos. The relevant unit is the passage and its transmission history.

Sources carried by opponents

Jewish-Christian Gospels often survive through writers who opposed the communities using them. An ancient quotation is valuable evidence, and its setting matters. The quoted wording may have been selected to make a theological opponent look unreasonable. A paraphrase may combine beliefs that belonged to different groups. What words have actually survived, and in what circumstances does this witness present them? Those are the questions our record has to answer.

The same discipline applies to modern advocates. A contemporary restorationist author can identify a neglected passage and offer an important interpretation. The author's reconstruction still needs to be traced back to its ancient sources. History Valley discussions belong in the research history as routes toward texts and arguments. Detailed claims from an episode require the episode or a transcript to be checked before entering the manuscript as attributed scholarship.

Appendix A applies this method to a first set of sayings. Its entries are pilot assessments with explicit limits. They provide a working format for the larger collection of the Messiah's teachings.

PART II · REOPENING JOHN

3. John 14 and the Competing Farewell

At John 14:31, Jesus tells the disciples to rise and leave. Then he keeps speaking for three chapters. The departure finally occurs at 18:1. I take that seam seriously. My argument is that the received chapter 14 is a later competing farewell placed before older material. Its closing formula survives because the compiler kept both discourses, including the one the new farewell was meant to govern.[10]

The first chapter the reader encounters can be the later intervention. On my reconstruction, chapter 14 gets to tell us who the guide is before the older promise in John 16 gets to speak. That is an editorial advantage. It also comes at a literary cost: the departure announced at 14:31 no longer leads directly into a departure. The hypothesis must explain both the advantage and the awkwardness.

Ataie's complete-Gospel reading offers an instructive comparison for these chapters. I want to know how it explains the repeated Paraclete promises and the seam after John 14:31, and whether its treatment of the final narrative can help pose sharper questions about earlier layers of the tradition. The dissertation's abstract establishes the overall theological proposal; a detailed evaluation of its treatment of John 14–17 remains a page-specific research task (Ataie 2016).

Repeated promises

John 14 and John 16 return to Jesus's departure and the disciples' distress. Both discuss a coming guide. Teachings about seeing Jesus again recur, and the relationship between the disciples and the Father receives further treatment. Raymond E. Brown's 1967 study identifies the five Paraclete passages and examines their place in this larger pattern.

A tradition can preserve a promise and then preserve an attempt to take control of its meaning. The second writer need not erase the first. Familiar words carry authority; repeating them can make a revision look like continuity. That is my reading of these farewells: chapter 14 competes with the expectation still audible in chapters 15–17.

The change of emphasis is clearest in the teaching clauses. John 16:12 anticipates speech the disciples cannot yet bear; 16:13 promises guidance through what the coming speaker hears. John 14:26 joins teaching to remembrance of what Jesus has already said. My argument concerns what happens when that remembrance-centered formulation is placed before the more open promise. It gives a reader an authorized account of how further teaching should relate to an already transmitted message.

[10] Raymond E. Brown, "The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel," New Testament Studies 13.2 (1967): 113–132, DOI 10.1017/S0028688500018221. Compare John 14:31 with 18:1. The supplied dossier summarizes the literary problem; the age of individual sayings and their placement in a final edition remain separate questions. Publisher extract and displayed footnotes checked in John Pass 01; full-body reading remains open.

What a prefatory graft accomplishes

The proposed revision works through a cluster of expressions. The disciples already know the Spirit in 14:17, where the world is described as unable to receive it. The question at 14:22 asks about a manifestation to the disciples rather than to the world; the answer locates the Father and Jesus with the person who keeps the word. At 14:26 the apposition explicitly identifies the advocate as the Holy Spirit. Together these clauses place the promise within an account of recognized presence and fidelity to Jesus's teaching.[11]

By the time we reach 16:12–13, chapter 14 has supplied the guide's identity. The open promise of received speech can now be heard through that prior definition. This is the force of the arrangement. I argue that its concentrated explanatory work points to a later attempt to control an inherited promise. The reading order is visible on the page; the direction of composition still has to be established against rival accounts.

The Greek sets a limit on how far the remembrance clause can be pressed. John 14:26 has two coordinated verbs, didaxei and hypomnēsei: the guide will teach and will remind. The words specifying everything Jesus said belong with the reminder. Teaching remains a function in its own right. I therefore argue for a framing that ties the coming teacher to Jesus's remembered instruction; the syntax leaves room for that teacher to say something the disciples have yet to understand.

That room becomes explicit in John 16. Jesus leaves things unsaid in 16:12 because his listeners cannot presently bear them, and the coming guide will speak from what is heard. Boring's discussion gives weight to new content in this promise. For the present reconstruction, the question is how much authority that opening leaves to a later bearer and how chapter 14 channels its reception. The dependence of the speaker on a divine source is central to the earlier prophetic expectation I am seeking.[12]

The editor's proposed aim is intelligible within disputes over authorized teaching. A promise of further guidance can support someone who claims to complete an unfinished disclosure. Placing an account of communal presence and remembrance before it makes such a claim answerable to a prior interpretation. The retained oracle continues to speak, which explains why a reader can still encounter the future-directed expectation in chapter 16. This is the competitive mechanism I propose; the editor's identity and the occasion of the revision remain historically unestablished.

"Later" here refers to a stage in the Gospel's formation. The hypothesis assigns the editor a dispute over the promise's authority within that earlier history. The book's subsequent identification of the promised messenger with Aḥmad introduces a further question about

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[11] Michael W. Holmes, ed., The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition (2010), John 14:12–31; 15:4–7, 26–27; 16:5–15; 17:20–23. Greek text checked against the Faithlife distribution in John Pass 03. The comments on ordering and editorial purpose are the author's reconstruction.
https://raw.githubusercontent.com/Faithlife/SBLGNT/master/data/sblgnt/text/John.txt

[12] M. Eugene Boring, "The Influence of Christian Prophecy on the Johannine Portrayal of the Paraclete and Jesus," New Testament Studies 25.1 (1978): 113–123, doi:10.1017/S0028688500001235. The publisher's displayed note engaging Congar was checked directly: it interprets 16:12–13 as promising new content. That argument is used here for the scope of the promise; Boring is not cited as establishing the later-John-14 chronology.

the surviving tradition and the Qur'anic report. An ancient editorial intervention has to be dated from evidence available for that intervention.

The five promises together

John 14:16–17 promises another advocate and identifies the figure as the Spirit of Truth. The promise concerns an enduring presence with the disciples. At 14:26 the Father sends the Paraclete in Jesus's name, and the work includes teaching and remembrance. John 15:26–27 connects the guide's testimony with the testimony of people who have accompanied Jesus from the beginning. These clauses give each promise an audience and a purpose.[13]

The departure condition in 16:7–11 makes the coming of the advocate depend on Jesus's going. Jesus undertakes to send the figure. The surrounding explanation relates the world's judgment to belief in Jesus and to his return to the Father. A reconstruction of an earlier oracle has to account for that surrounding speech as well as the announcement of arrival.

John 16:12–15 opens a space for further teaching because the disciples cannot yet bear everything Jesus has to say. Verse 13 also calls the guide the Spirit of Truth, and the following verses tie the guide's work to Jesus's glorification. Those clauses survive in the older-tradition side of the comparison. My proposal for the later chapter 14 concerns its explicit framing of that tradition. A further claim that the Spirit titles in 15:26 or 16:13 entered during harmonization requires a clause-specific argument of its own.

The strongest form of the human-successor thesis must explain the complete promise, including judgment in 16:8–11 and the relationship to Jesus in 16:14–15. Spirit language can also describe the authority expressed through prophetic speakers, as the comparison with First John will show. I retain the received wording in the apparatus while investigating those possibilities. Any proposed removal belongs in a reconstruction with its evidence and explanatory cost stated beside it.

Sasse's precedent and the objection it drew

The reverse direction has a scholarly precedent. Keener's survey, drawing on Berg, places Hermann Sasse among those who regarded John 14 as a revision. Stolle's account of Sasse's 1925 study describes an older human-Paraclete expectation followed by a correction toward the Holy Spirit. Sasse connected the earlier figure with the Gospel's original author. This is a precursor to the kind of editorial mechanism proposed here, with a different identification of the figure.[14]

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[13] Michael W. Holmes, ed., The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition (2010), John 5:30; 7:16–18; 11:51; 12:49; 13:36; 14:5, 16–17, 26, 31; 15:15, 26–27; 16:5, 7–15; 18:1; 20:22. Selected clauses and controls were checked in John Redaction Pass 01 (28 October 2026), against the Faithlife distribution. This is an edition-level comparison; a manuscript-by-manuscript apparatus remains open.

[14] Hermann Sasse, "Der Paraklet im Johannesevangelium," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 24 (1925): 260–277. Access in this pass is through Craig S. Keener's survey, "Unity of the Discourse," online note 7997, which reports Sasse's reverse priority through Berg, and Volker Stolle, "Hermann Sasse als Neutestamentler," in Werner Klän, ed., Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976) (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht,

Its difficulties are also documented. Roloff challenges Sasse's assignment of the Spirit identifications in 14:26 and 16:13 to secondary interpolation, and objects that the forensic work of the Paraclete receives insufficient attention. That criticism applies to any reconstruction that selects an earlier source chiefly by whether its theology suits the interpreter.[15]

My claim about the prefatory chapter can be tested while the Spirit of Truth titles remain in the text. A later John 14 could sharpen the identity and function of a figure already described through Spirit language. Recovering a still earlier human oracle is a further operation. For that operation I need evidence about the title's use for inspired agency or a demonstrable textual layer, together with an explanation of the guide's exposure of the world's error. This preserves the stronger recovery hypothesis as a question with specified obligations.

Why I argue for the later John 14

I favor the later-John-14 sequence because it gives a purpose to the concentrated framing placed before the future-directed promise. The identification in 14:26, the already recognized presence in 14:17 and the appeal to remembrance work together as an account of how subsequent teaching should be received. An editor could use this account to bring an inherited expectation under a more specific interpretation while preserving its authoritative wording. This cumulative explanatory fit is the positive case for the direction advanced here.

The competing expansion model gives a straightforward explanation of the departure formula: a discourse once ended at 14:31, and chapters 15–17 were subsequently placed before the departure in 18:1. Under my reconstruction, the compiler preserves the closing formula of a later prefatory farewell. Each account pays an editorial cost. The formula identifies a problem of arrangement; its wording alone leaves the direction of the addition undecided.[16]

The content also permits alternative histories. A later chapter 16 could develop an earlier promise of teaching in chapter 14, or a writer could deliberately repeat themes within one farewell. The case for a corrective preface therefore depends on showing why its particular specifications answer an already available expectation. I assign that role to the

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2020), pp. 21–22. Stolle's printed pages were checked in the publisher preview. Sasse's original article remains uncollated.

[15] Jürgen Roloff, "Der johanneische 'Lieblingsjünger' und der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit," New Testament Studies 15.1 (1968): 129–151, p. 148 n. 3, doi:10.1017/S0028688500018981. The note displayed by Cambridge Core was read directly. It challenges Sasse's interpolation claims at 14:26 and 16:13 and his treatment of the Paraclete's forensic role; the full article body was not consulted for this pass.

[16] Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of John: A Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), "Introductory issues. 13:1–17:26," subsection "Unity of the Discourse," including online notes 7997 and 8007–8017. The online reproduction was consulted; its note numbering is retained because print-page correspondence has not been verified. Keener surveys competing sequences and develops the case for the final discourse's coherence. https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/world/the-gospel-of-john/26

combination of explicit identification with remembrance. At present this is an inference from literary relationships, with the chapter's relative date still contested.

Other passages keep the argument from becoming a simple division by theology. John 14:12 promises greater works, while 14:24 attributes Jesus's word to the Father and 14:28 places the Father above him. Abiding presence already belongs to 15:4–7; chapter 17 also connects future believers with the unity of Jesus and the Father. These overlaps are compatible with an editor drawing on inherited material. They constrain any claim that John 14 contains only closure or that everything in 15–17 belongs to an untouched prophetic source.

The Greek evidence establishes a terminus for the form of the text copied by Papyrus 66 and by the great fourth-century codices. It does not identify the author of an earlier Paraclete saying or establish that each theological clarification originated at the same time. Our strongest surviving comparison at 14:26 comes from the Old Syriac Sinaitic version, whose 'that Spirit, the Paraclete' rearranges the Greek apposition and omits 'Holy'. Raymond Brown recorded this versional difference, and George Johnston explored literary and theological strata in the Paraclete tradition. I take their material as a basis for a positive redactional inquiry, beginning with a direct alignment of the Syriac, Greek, and other versions. The omission of the adjective is an attested difference; the removal or reassignment of the whole apposition remains a further reconstruction to test.[17]

What the Old Syriac witness actually says

John 14:26 supplies a rare control on the evolution of the Paraclete's titles. The received Greek begins with the Paraclete and identifies it appositionally as the Holy Spirit. The Old Syriac Sinaitic text instead places the Spirit first, then the Paraclete, and lacks the adjective 'Holy'. Its pronouns are feminine, agreeing with Syriac rūḥā rather than Greek paraklētos. This is a real ancient variant in the versional tradition, with effects on grammatical emphasis and the presentation of a personal messenger. The version is generally dated from its surviving manuscript to the fourth or fifth century, with questions surrounding the earlier history of the translation.[18]

The Sinaitic variation makes a comparison with the other versions worthwhile. Its cause remains open: an underlying Greek difference, a translator's choice and a change during Syriac transmission would produce different histories. The first task is to establish what

[17] Research Dossier v7, Case Study 01, "Greek manuscript audit," identifies P66 as containing John 14:26 and portions of John 16, and P75 as ending within John 15. These coverage claims have not been independently checked against facsimiles for this draft. The manuscript's copy date and a proposed date of literary revision require separate arguments.

[18] George Johnston, The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 31–32, subject to further direct pagination check; Raymond E. Brown, "The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel," New Testament Studies 13 (1967), note at p. 114: "Holy" omitted in Old Syriac Sinaitic; Johannes van Oort, "The Holy Spirit as feminine," HTS 72 (2016), https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/3225/7763 ; Syriaca.org, Old Syriac John, https://syriaca.org/work/9516.

each witness preserves at this exact point. The book's proposed human-successor reconstruction will also have to explain the other Spirit identifications across John 14–16.[19]

The Curetonian comparison requires a coverage check at the level of the clause. Lewis's 1910 list of facsimiles specifies John 14:26b on the photographed leaf; the catalogue's gap also extends into verse 26. I therefore leave the opening title unfilled in the Curetonian column of this collation. The surviving later portion gives us a separate task concerning the teaching and remembrance clauses. A reference to "John 14:26" alone conceals that boundary.[20]

The comparison now distinguishes an observed versional reading from a damaged or unavailable passage. The shorter Sinaitic title supplies evidence for variation within transmission. Establishing an earlier Greek text behind that form requires an account of the translator's habits and the Greek witnesses. The direct image-level collation of the Old Syriac words remains open.

The surviving Old Syriac corpus has expanded beyond the two complete-or-fragmentary codices customarily called Sinaitic and Curetonian. Sebastian Brock identified folios from a further sixth-century Gospel manuscript reused in the Sinai palimpsests Sin. syr. M37N and M39N: six folios in the former and seventeen and a half in the latter, all belonging to one manuscript. Grigory Kessel subsequently identified another, distinct Old Syriac Gospel witness among the undertexts of Vat. iber. 4, folios 1 and 5. Its recoverable passage is Matthew 11:30–12:26, particularly close to Curetonianus; Kessel dates the Gospel hand to the first half of the sixth century. Iskandar Bcheiry, "The Scriptio Infima of Vat. iber. 4: A Glimpse into Old-Syriac Tradition of the Gospels," The Vatican Library Review 5.1 (2026): 25–33, DOI 10.1163/27728641-00402004, reports preliminary decipherment of Matthew 8–9 in Vat. iber. 4, folios 6 and 10. This statement follows the published abstract; the full article has yet to be collated. Palimpsest research is enlarging the manuscript inventory, even as these particular fragments leave John 14:26 unattested. The variation in that verse continues to rest on the Old Syriac Sinaitic witness itself, not on an imagined reading in the newly identified leaves.[21]

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[19] George A. Kiraz, Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, vol. 4: John (Brill, 1996); Brown (1967); van Oort (2016). For the attested versional text compare Burkitt, Evangelion da-Mepharreshe, vol. 1: Text (1904), pp. 510–511.

[20] Agnes Smith Lewis, The Old Syriac Gospels or Evangelion da-Mepharreshe (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910), contents, list of facsimiles: Curetonian John 14:21–23, 26b–28. The University of Helsinki Syriac manuscript guide also lists the gap extending from John 14:23 into 14:26. Printed English coverage metadata was checked; the Syriac leaf was not independently deciphered in Pass 02. F. C. Burkitt, Evangelion da-Mepharreshe, vol. 1: Text (Cambridge, 1904), pp. 510–511, gives the printed text, English rendering and apparatus. The earlier volume-2 locator is corrected here.

[21] Sebastian P. Brock, "Two Hitherto Unattested Passages of the Old Syriac Gospels in Palimpsests from St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai," Deltion Biblikon Meleton 31.1 (2016): 7–18 (Sin. syr. M37N, M39N); Grigory Kessel, "A New (Double Palimpsest) Witness to the Old Syriac Gospels (Vat. iber. 4, ff. 1 & 5)," New Testament Studies 69.2 (2023): 210–221, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688522000182. Kessel identifies Matt 11:30–12:26 and a separate manuscript from the M37N/M39N witness. For additional Vat. iber. 4 material, see Iskandar Bcheiry, "The Scriptio Infima of Vat. iber. 4: A Glimpse into Old-Syriac Tradition of the Gospels," Vatican Library Review

The literary evidence reaches further back than the surviving Syriac copy. Hans Windisch argued in 1927 that the Johannine Paraclete sayings were inserted from an earlier pre-Christian source. George Johnston's 1970 monograph surveys that position and editorial alternatives. Brown opposed a wholesale interpolation hypothesis while accepting the importance of literary composition and the distinct functions of the Paraclete passages. The dispute establishes that the relation of Spirit and Paraclete is a substantial scholarly problem. The proposed Johannine identification can be investigated as the outcome of interpretation at an early stage, long before the creeds formalized the Spirit's place in Trinitarian doctrine.[22]

A promise expressed in the present

The Peshitta at John 14:17 ends with a clause conventionally rendered “and is in you.” Its Syriac contains the suffixed preposition b-khon and the pronominal copula hū. The SBL Greek edition used in this comparison prints the future estai. That difference should remain visible when the promise is translated: the reader’s impression of when the presence begins depends partly on the textual form being read.[23]

For the graft hypothesis, the present copular reading records a form in which the promise is located within the disciples’ existing relation to the Spirit. That placement belongs among the features the proposed editor’s interpretation needs to explain. Its versional transmission has a separate history: the Peshitta wording cannot by itself date the chapter’s composition. A later human bearer would also require an account of how the final text’s already-present Spirit relates to the earlier expectation being reconstructed.

The Spirit in the final narrative

John 20:22 describes the risen Jesus breathing upon the disciples and directing them to receive the Holy Spirit. Reading this alongside the departure condition in 16:7 introduces a further question about the Gospel’s own timetable. Does the scene fulfill the earlier promise, inaugurate one stage of it, or preserve a distinct tradition about empowerment?

The graft hypothesis treats 20:22 as a control on the final Gospel’s fulfillment scheme. A retrospective editor could connect an inherited promise with this narrated reception of the Spirit. Establishing that connection as an editorial act requires independent work on the scene; I retain it in the text and leave its compositional relationship to chapter 14 open. The

5.1 (2026): 25–33, https://doi.org/10.1163/27728641-00402004 (abstract consulted; preliminary reading of Matt 8–9 on ff. 6 + 10). Neither set is evidence for an unattested form of John 14:26.

[22] Hans Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” Festgabe für A. Jülicher (1927):110–137; George Johnston, The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John, chapter 6 (1970), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511659607.007 ; Raymond E. Brown, “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel,” NTS 13 (1967):113–114 and passim.

[23] BFBS Peshitta, John 14:17, as displayed in Dukhrana Biblical Research, Analysis of Peshitta verse John 14:17; the site identifies its base as the BFBS 1905/1920 Peshitta. Syriac clause w-bkhon hū, with a present copular rendering. Compare the future estai in the SBLGNT clause recorded in John Redaction Pass 01. A Greek manuscript allocation is not claimed.

human-successor reconstruction must explain both the earlier expectation it proposes and the reception scheme through which the finished Gospel presents it.

Competition over the authority to speak

Calling the figure the Holy Spirit can coexist with claims to fresh prophetic speech. Tertullian's Against Praxeas links the Paraclete with continuing prophecy while interpreting the farewell promises through his account of Father, Son and Spirit. This reception supplies a historical control on any claim that Spirit identification automatically closes revelation. The kind of limitation proposed for John 14 concerns which continuity a speaker must claim and how that claim is judged.[24]

A rival interpretation can preserve substantial openness while changing who is entitled to define it. The proposed chapter 14 graft gives the future guide an identity within the disciples' remembered relation to Jesus. Later prophetic claimants could still appeal to that identity. The hypothesis concerns an attempt to regulate the promise's authority, whose effects could remain contested after the Gospel reached its received form. Attributing the revision to a named faction would require evidence beyond the literary pattern examined here.

Transmission through Aramaic and Arabic

Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic adaptation provides a later witness to the promise. Anthony connects al-Mnaḥmanā with Christian Palestinian Aramaic. His text adopts rūḥ al-qisṭ, although his note reports rūḥ al-quds in most Arabic manuscripts. The lexical argument therefore depends partly on an explicit choice among transmitted readings.[25]

Anthony also describes changes to Father language and to the sender at John 15:26. These details belong in the reception history. For the comparison I keep the chosen Arabic text beside its alternatives, then ask which features require a Palestinian Aramaic source and which could have arisen during adaptation.

The book's central Johannine argument is therefore directional: the received John 14 is a later competing farewell placed before an older prophetic tradition carried in John 15–17. Its location gives the interpretation of that tradition to the reader in advance. I pursue the Aḥmad identification through the promise that remains visible within this arrangement, while the language witnesses test which earlier forms can be recovered. The chronological claim and the identification of the original speaker remain separately answerable to evidence.

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[24] Tertullian, Against Praxeas 1–2 and 25, public English translation at New Advent, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0317.htm. Chapters 1–2 connect the Paraclete with continuing prophecy; chapter 25 reads the farewell promises within his account of Father, Son and Spirit. This is a reception control. It supplies no date for a proposed redaction of John 14.

[25] Sean W. Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete: New Light on Ibn Isḥāq's (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15:23–16:11," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 79.2 (2016): 255–278, DOI 10.1017/S0041977X16000458. Relevant final-journal text and page images checked in John Passes 01–02, especially pp. 260–261 and 267–268. Primary CPA edition and manuscript collation remains open.

4. Aramaic John and the History of Redaction

An Aramaic John can mean a spoken saying, a written source, or a translated Gospel preserved centuries later. The phrase has carried all these meanings in the research. Before arguing over it, we need to say which of those things we mean.[26]

The fullest hypothesis proposes that the entire Fourth Gospel was first composed in Aramaic and subsequently translated into Greek. C. F. Burney made this case in The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel in 1922. Charles C. Torrey advanced a related argument in his 1923 study. Their proposals belong to a substantial history of debate about the Gospel's language.

A narrower hypothesis concerns particular sayings or source materials. An author composing in Greek could draw on Aramaic teaching, think through Semitic idioms, or inherit translated oral tradition. A linguistic feature that fits such a setting requires further work before it can establish a complete lost Aramaic book.

Burney, Torrey and Dodd

Burney and Torrey sought evidence in the form of John's Greek, including constructions they thought more readily explained through an Aramaic original. The value of their work for this project lies in individual proposals that can be tested. A persuasive example should identify the Greek difficulty, supply the proposed Aramaic wording, and explain how translation produced the surviving text.

C. H. Dodd observed that their retrotranslations often diverged. They could agree that a passage had a Semitic character while proposing different originals or different supposed mistranslations. That disagreement matters because a recoverable source should place constraints on the reconstruction. If we can adjust the back-translation however we like, it tells us less than a reading another witness independently supports.[27]

The book will retain the Aramaic hypothesis at several levels. A particular saying may have an Aramaic history even where the entire-Gospel theory remains unestablished. The Palestinian setting of a tradition can also be examined independently of the language in which the final book was composed.

The surviving versions

Old Syriac John, the Peshitta, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic Gospel texts are witnesses to translation and reception. Their word choices can preserve readings of interest and

[26] C. F. Burney, The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922); Charles C. Torrey, "The Aramaic Origin of the Gospel of John," Harvard Theological Review 16.4 (1923): 305–344, DOI 10.1017/S001781600001378X. For the distinct Palestinian Aramaic translation tradition, see Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete."

[27] C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge University Press, 1953), "Rabbinic Judaism," pp. 74–96, DOI 10.1017/CBO9780511520334.004. The publisher's chapter extract explicitly discusses divergent retrotranslations in Burney and Torrey and the criticism by Matthew Black.

show how an ancient audience understood the Greek. Their existence by itself establishes a history of Aramaic Christian use. Recovering a first-century original requires an additional argument concerning priority.

Christian Palestinian Aramaic deserves particular attention because of its role in Anthony's account of Ibn Isḥāq. It is a Western Aramaic tradition with its own manuscript history. Its relation to an Arabic adaptation can be studied from surviving evidence even while the proposed language of John's earliest composition remains disputed.

An apparatus for this project should therefore identify the witness behind every line. Greek manuscript text, a Syriac translation, and a modern retrotranslation should occupy separately labeled entries. A blank where a witness does not survive carries information that a conjectural completion would conceal.

Periklutos and the consonantal transmission experiment

A useful experiment places two Greek lemmas side by side: παράκλητος (paraklētos), the person summoned to assist or represent another, and περικλυτός (periklytos), the renowned or widely celebrated one. Their consonant sequences agree: P-R-K-L-T-S. They differ chiefly in vowels, exactly the type of information that Semitic alphabets can represent incompletely. The lexeme periklytos is securely ancient: the major Greek dictionaries cite Homer and Hesiod and searchable corpora preserve later literary uses. Its meaning corresponds approximately with the praise-related designation Aḥmad. Worthington's proposal is that a Jewish-Christian or Semitic transmission environment could preserve a double entendre or permit re-vocalization between two Greek terms.[28]

How much does Worthington establish?

Richard Worthington gives this experiment a published formulation in "You Say Periklute, I Say Paraclete" (2020), appearing in Religious Inquiries, a journal published by the University of Religions and Denominations in Qom. At present it is the one article in this book's specialist bibliography developing the particular Semitic-consonantal wordplay mechanism in sustained detail. The study offers a model to test; its venue and its originality do not supply independent attestation of an ancient source. Windisch, Johnston, Brown, and Johannine redaction scholarship support investigating composite farewell discourses. They are separate sources for that literary question, rather than independent confirmations of Worthington's linguistic proposal.[29]

Worthington's own formulation also limits the claim we can assign him. After outlining how a translator might have re-vocalized a Semitic transcription of an original periklytos,

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[28] LSJ, s.v. περικλυτός, Homer Iliad 1.607, Odyssey 8.287, Hesiod Theogony 571; Perseus Greek Vocabulary Tool, https://vocab.perseus.org/lemma/64714/ ; Worthington (2020), pp. 151–155.

[29] Richard Worthington, "You Say Periklute, I Say Paraclete: Towards a Reconciliation Between the Bible and the Quran," Religious Inquiries 9, no. 17 (2020): 129–168, esp. 151–155; open PDF https://www.wisdomlib.org/uploads/journals/religious-inquiries/2020-issue-17-113824.pdf; journal/publisher metadata: https://doaj.org/article/a1c281dff4cf475eb0f321c4b1a8feb3. This is one sustained published mechanism in the present dossier, not a claim that no other scholar discusses the terms.

he writes, “Of course, I do not think this would have happened.” His preferred argument concerns possible wordplay available to Jewish-Christian readers while the received Gospel still says paraklētos. Accordingly, citing Worthington as proof of a changed original Greek word would misstate his position. My stronger hypothesis of an early prophetic promise remains available for investigation, with this article supplying one possible linguistic mechanism and the early Johannine source analysis supplying a different category of evidence.[30]

This experiment needs documentary discipline. We require the actual consonantal spelling in each extant Syriac Gospel and Arabic or Palestinian Aramaic citation, evidence that the appropriate title was a live Greek word in the relevant linguistic community, and a plausible date for re-vocalization or intentional wordplay. Montazery and Karimpur argue that the literal Greek-substitution claim emerged within modern polemics, while Anthony supplies the earlier Palestinian Aramaic evidence for a title meaning comforter. Neither claim independently identifies the first-century referent of a lost prophetic promise. The textual hypothesis must be evaluated against their distinct evidence, with later interpretation kept apart from early source reconstruction.[31]

Schacht’s verdict, and what it decides

Schacht’s objection should be quoted rather than summarized away. In the Encyclopaedia of Islam article “Aḥmad,” he invokes “the history of the text and of the translations of the Gospel” and, noting how rarely periklytos occurred in contemporary Greek, declares that this “shows this to be impossible.” The judgment concerns a proposed correction of the Greek Gospel. The manuscripts and translations known to us provide substantial reason to prefer paraklētos as the actual Greek written reading, and a rare classical epithet is a poor candidate for an unattested original Koine title. Those constraints limit any claim of straightforward textual replacement.[32]

An argument from an earlier Semitic speech tradition has a narrower evidentiary target. It asks whether a title, expectation, or interpretive wordplay could have circulated prior to the standardized Greek literary wording. Agreement among extant Greek witnesses cannot give us direct access to every earlier Aramaic utterance. It does, however, create a significant burden of evidence for a specific re-vocalization route. Until an older consonantal form and its reading environment are identified, the proposed correspondence remains a historical mechanism under investigation. Schacht’s verdict

[30] Worthington (2020), p. 152, following the counterfactual translation experiment. His discussion explicitly separates a conjectured Greek mistranslation, which he rejects as historical reconstruction, from proposed multilingual wordplay; see pp. 151–155.

[31] Montazery and Karimpur (2018); Sean W. Anthony (2016); Worthington (2020). For the distinction between early manuscripts and oral/literary sources see H. A. G. Houghton, “The Text of the Gospel and Letters of John,” Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies (2018).

[32] Joseph Schacht, “Aḥmad,” EI² 1:267 (1960), as quoted in Stephen N. Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” original publication 1997, revised 2017–18 text, https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/73. The two short quotations preserve the cited text as reproduced by Lambden; the EI² page should be checked against the printed or Brill version before publication.

stands as a strong rebuttal of a documented Greek emendation and an important obstacle to a deeper source reconstruction.

Did the Greek conjecture begin with George Sale?

Montazery and Karimpur, in “The History of the Idea of a Literal Connection” (2018), trace the alleged substitution to George Sale’s 1734 Qur’an translation and criticize his treatment of the Gospel of Barnabas. Their account of the origin is itself contested by an earlier scholarly finding: Sean W. Anthony’s 2016 article cites Ludovico Marracci’s Refutatio Alcorani (1698), pages 26–27 and 719, as an antecedent for the periklytos conjecture, predating Sale. Anthony thus provides a concrete reason to revise any unqualified claim that Sale originated the Greek proposal. Early Muslim identifications of the Paraclete with Muhammad, the later conjecture that the Greek word was corrupted, and modern explanations of a possible Semitic wordplay remain distinct episodes in the reception history.[33]

The 2018 article remains useful for cataloguing early Muslim appeals to the Paraclete and later disputes over the Gospel’s wording. Its proposed dating of the first Greek substitution conjecture requires reconsideration in light of Marracci. Its own evidence also distinguishes the eighth-century identification of the Paraclete with Aḥmad from claims that a particular Greek noun had been replaced. This distinction is essential for the book’s history of the argument: an identification can be old even when a particular philological explanation for it appears much later.

The Paraclete's functions also matter to the linguistic question. In John 16 the figure hears and speaks, announces what is coming, judges the world, and follows Jesus's departure. These are tasks a prophet could perform. John 14 assigns a corresponding role of teaching and remembrance to the Spirit. A history in which a human successor prophecy was interpreted into the language of continuing communal inspiration can explain why the final narrative contains both portraits. The 14:31 seam and the repetitive discourse give this theory a literary setting, while the Sinaitic Syriac variation and the documentary history of al-Mnaḥmanā provide language-level points at which to inspect its transmission.[34]

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[33] Seyyed Saeed Reza Montazery and Saeed Karimpur, “The History of the Idea of a Literal Connection between the Words ‘Ahmad’ and ‘Paraclete’ in the Qur’an and the Gospel of John,” Religious Inquiries 7, no. 13 (2018): 113–129, esp. 124–128, https://www.wisdomlib.org/uploads/journals/religious-inquiries/2018-issue-13-63739.pdf. Sean W. Anthony, “Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete,” BSOAS 79, no. 2 (2016): 255–278, his discussion of Marracci and n. 86, https://almuslih.org/wp-content/uploads/Library/Anthony%2C%20S%20-%20Mu%E1%B8%A5ammad%2C%20Mena%E1%B8%A5em.pdf. Anthony dates the conjecture before Sale; Marracci’s 1698 Latin pages still require direct collation.

[34] John 14:16–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15; John 14:31 and 18:1; Ruth Sheridan, “The Paraclete and Jesus in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” Pacifica 20 (2007):125–141, https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X0702000201 ; Anthony (2016).

Audlin's restored Gospel

James David Audlin's reconstruction is one of the research leads associated with the project. It proposes an earlier form of John that differs sharply from the canonical Gospel and links its history to John the Presbyter. The current archive contains descriptions and bibliographic leads for this work. It does not contain a complete critical examination of Audlin's text.[35]

His individual readings can be brought into the same procedure used for Burney and Torrey. What surviving wording does a proposal explain? Which assumption about translation or editing makes the proposal work? What independent witness would favor it over another reconstruction? Those questions permit the book to use a modern restoration as an interlocutor while keeping the proposed original distinct from an ancient manuscript.

Redaction and the age of a saying

Redaction criticism asks how an author or editor arranged inherited material. The models associated with Brown and Urban C. von Wahlde offer different accounts of Johannine development. A multi-edition model can explain recurring themes and uneven transitions, although assigning individual verses to a particular edition requires detailed justification. The archive's most recent Aramaic discussion also names John Breck's treatment of the Paraclete sayings as units with their own histories. These works remain part of the reading program for a fuller version of this chapter.[36]

The chapter 3 argument proposes that John 14 received its governing form after the older farewell tradition it precedes. That sequence allows older sayings inside the later chapter and subsequent editing within chapters 15–17. Dating a formulation and dating its placement require distinct evidence. An Aramaic-looking expression has to be examined within that history, since a writer steeped in Semitic scripture could also introduce it during revision.

The first comparison now aligns the five Greek units and selected Peshitta clauses. The Old Syriac coverage check and the Palestinian Aramaic source register identify where further primary-language work is required. The following sections set out the findings and the historical tests they permit.

Received speech across John

The received-speech formula has identifiable controls elsewhere in the Gospel. Jesus judges according to what he hears in 5:30 and attributes his teaching to the sender in 7:16–18. At 12:49, the Father supplies the command concerning his speech. John 15:15 then describes

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[35] James David Audlin, The Gospel of John: A Restoration of the Intended Original Version with a Translation and Commentaries, as identified in the project's Aramaic-John research discussion and Dossier v7. His complete reconstruction has not been examined for this manuscript; individual proposals remain research leads.

[36] Brown, "The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel"; Urban C. von Wahlde, The Gospel and Letters of John (2010), identified in the Aramaic-John discussion. The latter's multi-edition reconstruction has not been independently audited in this draft. A publication edition should supply exact loci for each proposed layer.

the disciples receiving what Jesus heard from the Father. These passages allow us to test the promise against the author's treatment of authorized teaching.[37]

John 11:51 makes the comparison especially useful. The narrator says Caiaphas did not speak from himself and calls the utterance prophecy. The expression aph' heautou also occurs in the Paraclete promise. A human speaker can therefore occupy this pattern within John, even when the narrator assigns his words a significance beyond his intention. The observation supports investigating prophetic agency. A particular later messenger still needs distinguishing evidence.

The Syriac comparison introduces a further control. Peshitta 14:10 uses men napshī for Jesus speaking "from myself"; 16:13 has men reʿyān napsheh, expressing the source as the speaker's own mind or thought. The latter phrase makes the idea more explicit in Syriac. I record the difference as a translation feature. Recovering a particular Aramaic utterance behind the Greek would require an independently constrained reconstruction.[38]

Prophetic speakers and the Spirit

First John provides a setting in which Spirit language is connected with human speech. In 4:1, the instruction to test spirits leads immediately to the presence of false prophets. The Spirit of Truth appears again at 4:6 within a dispute over whose teaching people hear. The letter also calls Jesus an advocate with the Father in 2:1. These comparisons give the inquiry a Johannine vocabulary for exploring authorized speakers.[39]

Boring examines how Christian prophetic activity could shape the portraits of Jesus and the Paraclete. Sheridan's account emphasizes the successor's mediation of Jesus's continuing presence. These approaches raise a historical question for this book: what evidence would distinguish an individual successor promise from a community's authorization of continuing inspired teaching? The surviving functions offer a basis for comparison, while the Gospel's relation to the letters needs its own literary argument.[40]

The promise's audience and fulfillment language belong to the proposed history of its interpretation. Under the later-John-14 reconstruction, the account of continuing presence and remembrance helps identify what the prefatory discourse does to the inherited

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[37] Michael W. Holmes, ed., The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition (2010), John 5:30; 7:16–18; 11:51; 12:49; 13:36; 14:5, 16–17, 26, 31; 15:15, 26–27; 16:5, 7–15; 18:1; 20:22. Selected clauses and controls were checked in John Redaction Pass 01 (28 October 2026), against the Faithlife distribution. This is an edition-level comparison; a manuscript-by-manuscript apparatus remains open.

[38] Dukhrana Biblical Research, BFBS Peshitta and SEDRA analysis of John 14:10 and 16:13, checked 28 October 2026. The comparison concerns men napshī and men reʿyān napsheh. English glosses are prepared for this manuscript. The digital edition is distinguished from an independently read ancient manuscript.

[39] SBLGNT, 1 John 2:1 and 4:1–6, checked in John Redaction Pass 01. Shared vocabulary supports comparison; the direction of literary dependence and the authorship of the Gospel and letter are separate questions.

[40] M. Eugene Boring, "The Influence of Christian Prophecy on the Johannine Portrayal of the Paraclete and Jesus," New Testament Studies 25.1 (1978): 113–123, doi:10.1017/S0028688500001235, publisher extract and displayed notes checked in Pass 01; full-body reading remains open. Ruth Sheridan, "The Paraclete and Jesus in the Johannine Farewell Discourse," Pacifica 20 (2007): 125–141, doi:10.1177/1030570X0702000201, relevant opening and conclusion, especially p. 140, checked in that pass.

expectation. The reader still needs an explanation of the apostolic audience in 15:27 and the Spirit reception at 20:22. A communal-prophecy account must likewise explain the speaker's distinct agency and the further teaching anticipated in 16:12–13. Each model is tested against the wording that survives.

Gender within a single Syriac text

The Peshitta supplies a useful internal control on grammatical gender. At John 1:33, the forms describing the Spirit's descent and remaining are feminine. John 14:26 uses masculine reference in its account of teaching and remembrance, and 16:13 has masculine hū with the guide's action. All these observations come from the same digital presentation of the BFBS Peshitta. A reader can check the forms without first choosing a theory of Johannine authorship.[41]

The Sinaitic feminine forms therefore need comparison with the local syntax and vocabulary of each Syriac witness. In the Greek, paraklētos is masculine and pneuma is neuter, which already complicates an English argument based on "he." The Peshitta's internal variation adds another reason to treat agreement patterns as linguistic evidence. Dating a theological change from a pronoun alone would require further controls.

The Peshitta at 14:26 retains the expression rūḥā d-qudshā and both teaching and remembrance. The holiness expression also appears at 1:33 and 20:22. These controls establish a distribution within this version. They leave the origin of the Sinaitic shortening as a distinct question concerning translation or transmission.[42]

Dating the Palestinian Aramaic wording

Anthony reports a Greek loanword in the early Codex Climaci witness and a comforter rendering in later Palestinian Aramaic Gospel witnesses, including a lectionary dated 1029. He also cites a sixth- or seventh-century CPA translation of Cyril using both forms within a short span. Those edition passages still require direct collation.[43]

For the research record, coexistence and replacement need different tests. Coexistence would allow an interpreter to choose a familiar loanword in one setting and an explanatory equivalent in another. A claim of replacement requires dated evidence showing a change within a transmission line. This distinction changes what I ask of the

[41] Dukhrana Biblical Research, BFBS Peshitta / SEDRA at John 1:33 (feminine participles for descent and remaining), 14:26 (masculine reference in the teaching and remembrance clauses), and 16:13 (hū and the guide's action), checked 28 October 2026. This is a selected internal comparison within the displayed edition; no historical sequence of grammatical genders is inferred.

[42] BFBS Peshitta, John 1:33, 14:26 and 20:22, directly compared in the Dukhrana edition, 28 October 2026. For the distinct reported Sinaitic form see Brown (1967), p. 114 n. 3, and van Oort (2016). A complete study of title shortening in the Old Syriac remains open.

[43] Sean W. Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete," BSOAS 79.2 (2016): 255–278, pp. 267–268, including nn. 54–60. Final published pages and page images checked. The report points to PSLG, CCR and CCPA, including CCPA 5:193a for Cyril. The CPA editions and manuscript images have not been directly collated for this manuscript.

earlier Christian material: which text was translated, what function did its wording serve, and how securely can its date be assigned?

A later Gospel witness can preserve an older reading, although the route by which it does so must remain part of the argument. The available comforter tradition supplies a concrete lead for that investigation. A lexical link to a later Muslim interpretation leaves the historical attribution of the first-century promise to be established separately.

Testing the later-graft sequence

The first test concerns direction. I propose chapter 14's received form as the later competing farewell, and compare it with the expansion and unified-composition accounts on the same evidence. The departure formula at 14:31 permits more than one sequence. The apparent discontinuity at 16:5 also survives a simple removal of chapter 14, because Peter has already asked about Jesus's destination in 13:36. Any reconstruction that moves the question in chapter 13 must record that additional operation. A literary explanation based on what the disciples are asking at that moment remains a comparator.[44]

A useful result would be an asymmetric relationship: wording in chapter 14 that requires an identifiable earlier formulation in 15–17, or independent evidence that dates the relevant forms. A demonstrated dependence in the opposite direction would weigh against my chronology. Zumstein's rereading approach asks how a later passage interprets an earlier one; its direction must be established for each proposed relationship. Von Wahlde's precise verse allocations remain a direct-reading task in the present register.[45]

The history of a Johannine community also needs evidence independent of the editorial sequence proposed to explain it. Hägerland challenges the two-level-drama inference, while Méndez disputes the necessity of the specific community often reconstructed behind the Gospel and letters. Their arguments deserve separate examination. They caution against using a community reconstructed from a passage as independent proof of the passage's date.[46]

I keep a reconstruction record with the received clause beside every proposed change and identify the evidence that makes the change necessary. Shared vocabulary is tested against ordinary Johannine usage. The hypothesis gains strength if the same stated criteria explain adjacent material whose theology I have no reason to prefer. It loses strength if preserving

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[44] Michael W. Holmes, ed., The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition (2010), John 5:30; 7:16–18; 11:51; 12:49; 13:36; 14:5, 16–17, 26, 31; 15:15, 26–27; 16:5, 7–15; 18:1; 20:22. Selected clauses and controls were checked in John Redaction Pass 01 (28 October 2026), against the Faithlife distribution. This is an edition-level comparison; a manuscript-by-manuscript apparatus remains open.

[45] Jean Zumstein, "Der Prozess der Relecture in der johanneischen Literatur," New Testament Studies 42.3 (1996): 394–411, doi:10.1017/S0028688500020853. Pass 01 consulted the publisher extract and displayed notes. Urban C. von Wahlde, The Gospel and Letters of John (2010), remains a bibliographic lead pending passage-specific reading; no clause allocation is attributed to him here.

[46] Tobias Hägerland, "John's Gospel: A Two-Level Drama?," JSNT 25.3 (2003): 309–322, doi:10.1177/0142064X0302500304, abstracts consulted in Pass 01. Hugo Méndez, "Did the Johannine Community Exist?," JSNT 42.3 (2020): 350–374, doi:10.1177/0142064X19890490, relevant full-text sections consulted in that pass. These are distinct methodological arguments; their conclusions remain subject to scholarly dispute.

its chronology requires successive unsupported deletions. Independent attestation of a shorter form would be especially valuable, alongside the literary argument already developed in chapter 3.

The core argument and the historical grade

The later-John-14 reconstruction now supplies the book's affirmative account of how the promise was reframed. Its scholarly precedent and principal objection are recorded beside the argument. The historical attribution of John 16:7–15 as exact speech remains a different claim: FI-003 retains T3 for literary attestation, H-D for that attribution, and Q+ for functional consonance. The commitment under Qur'an 61:6 remains in place. A complete Old Syriac and CPA apparatus, together with direct audits of the outstanding commentaries, remains necessary for the historical reconstruction.[47]

The next source test concerns the sequence itself: does a dated witness or a constrained literary dependence favor the later John 14? Recovery of a named human successor would take the inquiry further. The Pass 03 record separates those claims from the observation that John 14 governs the reader's first encounter with the promise. This makes the book's chosen argument explicit while retaining the evidence needed to challenge its direction.

4A. The Antichrists of John: Who Authorized the Test?

My father puts an angel on trial

My father and I were arguing about John when he sent me a familiar charge. The creature who appeared to Muḥammad in the cave was an evil spirit. It had come to mislead him, and the evidence was right there in the Muslim sources: the visitor seized him, squeezed him, terrified him, and sent him home shaken. Paul had already warned that Satan could dress himself as an angel of light. John had instructed the faithful to test the spirits. Case closed, by a canon written centuries before the defendant was born.

I had been worrying at a more embarrassing problem. John's First Epistle declares that there are already *many antichrists*. Every person denying Christ is against Christ, my father said, which is a useful ordinary meaning of the word. The letter itself is more specific. Its writer describes people who went out from his circle, and he identifies their error through a contested confession concerning Jesus. I wanted to know what those people had taught, and who had authorized this letter to speak for Jesus.

The cave story makes the encounter worth asking about. Gabriel in Daniel 8 finds a man overcome by terror and touches him to raise him. Gabriel in Luke 1 frightens Mary, then reassures her; Zechariah gets a temporary muteness after doubting the message. The first revelation narratives in Islam depict a much rougher initiation. The Arabic *ghaṭṭanī*

[47] Finding Injil, FI-003 and the QC register for Qur'an 61:6 and 7:157; John Redaction Pass 01, JR-01–JR-12, and Pass 02. This language-level pass does not change the existing historical or Qur'anic grades.

describes pressing or squeezing until endurance is exhausted. Calling it strangulation supplies a detail about the throat that the prominent al-Zuhrī wording does not establish. The ordeal is disturbing on its own terms.

Then comes the account of Muḥammad thinking of throwing himself from a mountain. I read it and raised an eyebrow myself. The Qurʾān's repeated assurances that its messenger is neither mad nor a possessed poet remind us that hostile accusations were made during his ministry (68:2; 81:22; 52:29). They supply context for the controversy. The particular suicide account has to be traced through the narrators who supplied it, because the early source marks it with *fīmā balaghanā*, "as it reached us," and leaves its route to the event unconnected.

The Biblical comparison deserves to be made without mercy toward either collection. The very same question that exposes an unsupported episode in Ibn Isḥāq's Sīra exposes the authority problem in the Christian accusation. When Paul judges an angel by "the gospel we preached" in Galatians 1:8, he is asserting the authority of his own proclamation. When the author of 1 John tests a spirit, he is asserting the authority of his own Christology. I have spent years looking for the *ṣaḥīḥ* sayings of Jesus, so I would be making a spectacular methodological exception if I exempted the people declaring another prophet an antichrist from the same historical inquiry.

My father's argument depends upon the Christian canon as an authoritative whole. The historian has to ask how its individual documents became that whole, what their authors believed, and whose words we can recover behind them. That challenge goes both ways. Khadīja in the cave story argues from Muḥammad's character: he feeds, shelters, helps his relatives, and cares for the needy. Waraqa, described as a Christian reader of scripture, identifies the visitor with the messenger who appeared to Moses. Those are claims within an early Muslim narrative. Their value rises or falls with the transmitted accounts of the people who supposedly witnessed them.

Many antichrists, one disputed Messiah

First John 2:18 is wonderfully inconvenient for people waiting for a single cinematic Antichrist. Its author says the antichrists have already arrived, in the plural. Verse 19 places them among people who had belonged to his community. Verse 22 calls the liar the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ; verse 23 ties confession of the Son to recognition of the Father. This is a dispute inside early Christianity over the identity of the Messiah and the religious authority attached to that identity.

In 1 John 4:2 the required confession concerns *Iēsoun Christon en sarki elēlythota*, Jesus Christ having come in flesh. Second John 7 uses comparable language. Perhaps the author was fighting people who denied Jesus had a real physical body. Perhaps he was fighting those who divided the heavenly Christ from the earthly Jesus. The first possibility has traditionally been called docetism, and the second a separationist Christology. I have the accuser's polemic; the defendants left us no answering brief in this case.

Islam calls Jesus *al-Masīḥ*, the Messiah, born of Maryam, speaking as a human servant of God. The Qurʾān treats his miraculous conception, divine commission, signs, and elevation

as realities. It also rejects divine begetting and worship of Jesus as God. That is a substantial dispute with Johannine theology. The form of the dispute deserves precision. A Muslim affirms Jesus in flesh. The disagreement concerns what *Christ* and *Son* entail. First John 4:15 and 5:1 show that its writer is asking for a richer confession than an acknowledgment that some man named Jesus once lived.

The author's language in 5:6, about water and blood, pushes us toward the cross. Polycarp's letter to the Philippians associates the flesh confession with the testimony of the passion. Irenaeus later attacks Christians who divided a heavenly Christ from the flesh-and-blood Jesus who suffered. Our reading of Qurʾān 4:153–158 in Chapter 36 has its own precise argument concerning the boast about killing Jesus and God's vindication of him. The crucifixion claims belong in that investigation. An assertion that Jesus was never a bodily human being belongs to a different dispute.

Even the Greek wording of the test has traveled. The critical text of 1 John 4:3 gives a shorter denial of Jesus than the repetition familiar from the King James Bible. Irenaeus witnesses a form concerning the separation or dissolution of Jesus Christ. Those textual witnesses show early readers struggling over the identity they were supposed to confess. They give us particular words, particular manuscripts, and a dispute we can date. They give no permission to imagine a complete lost Gospel simply because one clause varies.

An apostolic autograph, please

Now for the signature. The Gospel of John never introduces its author as John son of Zebedee. It gives us a beloved disciple and a witness whose testimony is represented as trustworthy. First John names no author at all. It opens with the authority of people who have heard, seen, and touched. Both works inhabit a shared world of light and darkness, beginning and life, truth and testimony. A reader hears a family resemblance immediately.

The earliest clear external attributions matter. Irenaeus said that John published the Gospel at Ephesus, and he recalled hearing Polycarp speak about John. By the late second century Irenaeus was explicitly weaving John 1:14 together with the antichrist passages in the epistles. This is early evidence that Christians interpreted the texts as one authoritative witness. Irenaeus was a theologian trying to establish whose teaching counted as Christianity, and his account of the chain deserves serious treatment.

Still, I want the last link. Did the same man write the Gospel prologue and the First Epistle? Did either writer hear Jesus teach this confessional test? A shared idiom could come from one author, a school, or a later writer borrowing an established voice. Raymond Brown examined the corpus through the history of a Johannine tradition. Hugo Méndez has proposed a more aggressive literary explanation, with distinct hands adopting the persona and language of earlier writings. His proposal remains open to challenge. The manuscript evidence gives us an ancient reception; the authorship argument has to earn its result.

Irenaeus tells us who he believed wrote the books. He does not hand us a signed first-century autograph. More importantly, even a genuine apostolic author would leave another question: whether Jesus had personally taught the words we are now using to condemn a religion that would emerge six centuries later.

John 1:14 is the Gospel narrator telling the reader that the Word became flesh. First John 4:2 is the epistle's writer telling readers which confession they must make. Their compatibility, and even their possible common author, would establish a history of Christian thought. For a book investigating the revelation *given to Jesus*, the chain toward Jesus's own speech needs its own evidence.

Why did God send us into John?

This puzzle leads back to the outrageous choice of scripture at the center of *Finding Injil*. Qurʾān 61:6 attributes to Jesus an announcement of Aḥmad. Qurʾān 7:157 speaks of the messenger found described in the Torah and Injīl. When I look for a surviving Christian text that could preserve that announcement, I arrive at John 15–16 and the promised speaker who hears, speaks, and guides after Jesus has departed. Ibn Isḥāq, of all people, made this connection in the eighth century.

Why would the search lead here? The Fourth Gospel contains the New Testament's most exuberant language about Jesus's heavenly origin. If the goal were simply to assemble verses about his humanity, Luke or Mark would have provided a shorter afternoon. John makes us work. John 14 supplies an interpretive identification of the Paraclete before the reader reaches the promise of John 16. In Chapters 3 and 4 I have argued that chapter 14's present placement gives a competing farewell control over an older tradition in chapters 15–17. That is my reconstruction, to be tested against other accounts of the text's composition.

John 17:5 has Jesus ask for the glory he possessed with the Father before the world existed. This does not frighten an Arian. A preexistent Son whose existence and glory came from the Father can pray precisely that prayer. The Arians and the Nicenes fought over the ontology of the preexistent Son, and the line itself does not mechanically settle the dispute. John 17:22 goes on to speak of Jesus giving his followers the glory that the Father gave him. Glory circulates within a system of divine gift and agency.

The Islamic tradition contains a provocative analogy in the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammadī*, the primordial Muhammadan Light. Some of its mystical versions describe a created prophetic reality prior to Muhammad's earthly life. Its hadith foundations are disputed, and I am borrowing its conceptual possibility rather than declaring it an ancient fact. A prophet can possess a primordial appointment or created reality without becoming the Creator. The analogy gives the reader a way to hear extraordinary Johannine language while still asking whether Jesus is speaking of derivation, participation, or uncreated identity.

What a strange errand for the Qurʾān to send us on. It compels the Muslim who accepts my Aḥmad identification to confront the most difficult Christian text and work through the very arguments used against Islam. It compels the Christian interlocutor to distinguish an apostolic creed from a saying that can be traced to Jesus. We have been handed a puzzle whose solution may require taking the other person's scripture more seriously than our respective polemicists do.

The brother who goes hungry

One more sentence from the First Epistle deserves to stand beside its antichrist formula. In 1 John 3:17, the writer asks how God's love dwells in a person who sees a brother in need and closes his compassion. A man can wield the correct Christological formula while leaving a hungry person at his door. The epistle's author himself regards the latter behavior as a religious scandal.

I am searching for the Sunnah of Jesus because the Messiah's call to mercy matters more to me than winning the right to put a theological opponent on a blacklist. I want the confession investigated, the text collated, and the authority traced. I want the widows fed. My father and I can disagree about the angel at Ḥirāʾ and the ontology of the Logos, and still keep a promise we owe each other. We will love each other.

4B. Ibn Isḥāq: Antichrist Superstar

A dajjāl among the dajjāls

Mālik ibn Anas reportedly called Ibn Isḥāq *dajjāl min al-dajājjilah*, a dajjāl among the dajjāls. I could hardly have invented a better title for the man who handed later generations so many of the stories used to make Muhammad look like a monster, and who also handed us one of the earliest Muslim readings of John's promise of a later messenger.

The words reached us in biographical criticism, including Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Dhahabī. The immediate quarrel concerns Ibn Isḥāq's claim that he could scrutinize Mālik's knowledge. Mālik's insult belongs to a fight between scholars and tells us what a contemporary critic thought of him. It supplies neither a universal grade for his reports nor a warrant to convict him of every subsequent atrocity against historical truth. The word *dajjāl* here means something like fraud or master deceiver. It is magnificent as a literary title, especially given what this book has just said about John's many antichrists.

Ibn Isḥāq earned a much more serious investigation than a nickname. His *Maghāzī* assembled the life of Muḥammad as an extended story, and its surviving forms shaped the way Muslims, missionaries, skeptics, and modern polemicists imagine the Prophet. Some of the worst claims attributed to him are morally appalling. A few have no acceptable chain to the alleged incident. Others attach ghastly details to an event independently reported elsewhere. Several have early cousins in the transmission literature, and a few familiar scandals came down through completely different narrators.

When somebody tells me that a lurid anecdote comes from a canonical Islamic source, I want to know which sentence is the canonical one. If a report says a man was captured, does the source also say he was tortured? If a battle occurred, does the earliest recoverable version provide the execution total? If a compiler invents the dialogue, has he also invented the event? This is how the book should be read. A different answer to each question can emerge inside a single paragraph of the Sīra.

I also want to see when the story reached the page. Ibn Isḥāq lived in the second Islamic century and died in 150 AH, 767 CE. The major collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī were assembled by men who died approximately a century or more after him. Their later classification of a report as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, or *ḍaʿīf* cannot appear in Ibn Isḥāq's notebook by an act of scholarly time travel. A later collection can preserve an earlier chain. We have to reconstruct that chain before deciding what Ibn Isḥāq inherited and what he supplied.

Freeze the clock at 150 AH

Imagine stopping the Islamic book trade in the year Ibn Isḥāq died. Our bibliography would be sparse. The people from whom he could have gathered material were far less mysterious. ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr died around 94 AH; al-Zuhrī in 124; Mūsā ibn ʿUqba in 141. Maʿmar ibn Rāshid, another student of al-Zuhrī, died in 153, only three years after Ibn

Isḥāq. Their words survive largely because later collectors preserved them. Their importance lies in the earlier transmission nodes identifiable inside those collections.

The dossier needs a claim-level census. Give every assertion its earliest reachable transmitter. Mark the place where a chain stops. Record a later variant only after determining whether its transmission diverged before the claimed event or merely duplicates an existing story. I would give the betrayal, number of dead, alleged prophetic approval, and lurid method of execution separate rows. A dependable early memory of a raid should never authenticate an imaginary conversation between a captive and her murderer by mere proximity on the page.

The same applies to a book written in Greek. I am asking Christian historians to distinguish an evangelist's editorial sentence from the words attributed to Jesus. Ibn Isḥāq gets the same treatment. It is a demanding standard, and the published history of these texts is rich enough to make it practical. The source ledger following these chapters records twenty selected claims and reports. It is a targeted audit of the controversies examined here; a percentage of the entire Sīra would require a complete claim inventory of the Ibn Hishām recension and the additional Ibn Isḥāq material in al-Ṭabarī.

The book we have, and the book we lost

There is a basic bibliographical trap. The widely read *Sīra* is Ibn Hishām's edited recension of Ibn Isḥāq, transmitted through al-Bakkāʾī. Ibn Hishām acknowledges that he omitted some material. Al-Ṭabarī and other authors preserve further Ibn Isḥāq reports through different routes. Thus a claim about “what Ibn Isḥāq wrote” may rest on one edited witness, a separately preserved account, or an attempt to reconstruct an original text from both.

This matters intensely in the first revelation story. An editor can omit a detail and leave the rest of a narrative standing. A later historian may preserve it through another channel. One recension can make a prophet appear composed, another can describe panic or even despair. The event and the editorial transmission have to be separated before we decide whose image we are reading.

His career also acquired Abbasid patronage. The tradition associates Ibn Isḥāq with a history prepared under al-Manṣūr. Money and court politics are relevant to the incentives of a historian whose work circulated in an imperial environment. Reports accusing him of inventing material for reward deserve their place in the account of his reputation. Evidence of payment for a book establishes patronage; the claim that a specific ugly story was fabricated for payment requires evidence about that story. A caliph could pay for a history that contained old reports, new inventions, and everything in between.

The cave before Ibn Isḥāq

The cave account was my first temptation to make Ibn Isḥāq the villain of the whole affair. A man retreats to meditate, encounters a visitor who orders him to recite, and gets squeezed until he can barely endure it. In Ibn Isḥāq's fuller narrative the ordeal acquires an inscribed brocade, dream framing, fear of being a poet or possessed, and an immediate impulse toward self-destruction. These are almost too perfect for somebody trying to write

a Christian anti-Islamic tract. The story itself inspired an argument with my father about a demonic angel.

Yet Maʿmar's transmission from al-Zuhrī, preserved in ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* 9719, already gives the forceful encounter. The same broad family of material reached later collections through ʿUqayl. The wording moves back into the early second-century AH source environment. Ibn Isḥāq was a participant in its circulation, and he cannot be credited with inventing the physical pressure from scratch.

The suicidal thoughts deserve their own provenance. Al-Zuhrī's account marks the passage *fīmā balaghanā*, "as it reached us," an admission that this portion is not carried by the same explicitly connected chain as the core report. That formula survives in the Maʿmar material and in the later Bukhārī version. Ibn Isḥāq's recension contains related despair in a different narrative placement. The historian should ask when the two forms came together and whether an early preaching story furnished their common ancestor.

Gregor Schoeler has explored an origin in the orbit of ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr, an early preacher who died around 68 AH. A story could pass through the Zubayrid milieu to ʿUrwa and then al-Zuhrī, while another branch ran through Wahb ibn Kaysān toward Ibn Isḥāq. This is a reconstruction of how an early narrative could develop. We have named transmitters and related versions. We also have the inconvenient gap between a transmission tree and the actual experience of a man in a cave in the early seventh century.

Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ* gives a useful control through Hishām ibn ʿUrwa, from ʿUrwa, from ʿĀʾisha. It describes revelation arriving with a sound like a bell, Muhammad suffering strain and sweating, and the angel sometimes assuming human form. That report concerns revelation generally. It provides a remarkably different picture of the encounter and has no cave squeezing scene. Its transmission comes from the same extended household whose reports make the first revelation story such a knotty problem.

Khadīja puts the angel behind a veil

The famous veil test is an especially cinematic addition. Khadīja places Muhammad in different positions relative to her, exposes herself, and asks whether the figure remains visible. When the visitor withdraws, she identifies him as an angel rather than a devil. It is a domestic experiment in angelology, narrated with the confidence of someone who knows exactly what an incorporeal visitor would find embarrassing.

The chain preserved through Ibn Isḥāq runs by way of Ismāʿīl ibn Abī Ḥakīm and then loses its named route to Khadīja. The experiment has literary and historical interest as a claim about how early Muslims recognized an angel. Its disconnected provenance makes it a poor instrument for authenticating the visitor at Ḥirāʾ. In the main al-Zuhrī account, Khadīja's defense is much more intelligible: she cites Muhammad's kindness to the poor and vulnerable and takes him to Waraqa, who interprets the experience through a biblical tradition.

The Christian objection returns at this point. Waraqa is called to authenticate the visitor precisely because he knows the scriptural world in which Gabriel and Moses appear. His testimony, preserved in a later Muslim chain, is then placed against a Christian reading of

Paul and John that condemns the visitor. We have dueling appeals to Christianity inside the same historical argument. I am interested in what Waraqa could have known, who transmitted his words, and how much the later story requires the reader to accept before the verdict becomes persuasive.

A household that authenticated its own ancestors

There is another reason to investigate the Zubayrids with some persistence. These are the family channels that transmit influential material about the Prophet and ʿĀʾisha, while also preserving examples of marriage practices within the family itself.

A report through Hishām ibn ʿUrwa describes al-Zubayr arranging a marriage contract for a newborn daughter. Another report through al-Zuhrī attributes to ʿUrwa a marriage contract between minors. The versions are preserved in Ibn Abī Shayba's and ʿAbd al-Razzāq's later *Muṣannafs*. They concern contracts, and the newborn report supplies no account of consummation. Their importance is the family's legal culture and transmission environment.

The ʿĀʾisha age reports likewise traveled through routes that include Hishām and ʿUrwa. Some later hadith scholars declared the familiar six-and-nine formula authentic, while historical arguments about her birth and chronology challenge that reconstruction. This is a moral problem of enormous consequence, which the book treats elsewhere. Its source history should be examined without sending the reader back to Ibn Isḥāq whenever a distressing detail appears in a later canonical collection.

The Zubayrid family had its own political and legal history. Al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām was a combatant against ʿAlī's forces at the Camel before withdrawing from the battle. A family capable of transmitting accounts of its famous relatives also had reasons to remember its own place in the formation of Islam. That observation supplies a question for source criticism. It cannot function as a universal verdict on every report the family transmitted. A historian needs competing routes, chronology, and signs of editing, just as with the Johannine circle.

The monk who knows the child's future

Baḥīrā the monk recognizes Muhammad's future prophethood during a childhood journey to Syria. The story supplies the sort of advance credential that later religious biography loves: a learned Christian discerns signs in a boy that his own people have failed to understand. Ibn Isḥāq preserves a version, and al-Tirmidhī's later collection contains a related report with its own unusual details. Al-Tirmidhī called his report *ḥasan gharīb*; other critics objected to elements of it.

Here the chronology ought to do more work than the label. Some versions bring characters into the scene whose ages or participation produce difficulties. That is a reason to grade the accessories separately. A story about a monk recognizing a future prophet can circulate in several early forms and still acquire a theatrical escort or prophetic announcement that entered later. The debate concerns the chain of each wording and the event it claims to remember.

Satan supplies a verse

The *gharānīq* narrative, often called the Satanic Verses, has a wider early transmission history than a single invention by Ibn Isḥāq. Ibn Isḥāq's line is one strand among others. Al-Ṭabarī preserves material through early exegetical channels, including disconnected reports from Successors. Shahab Ahmed devoted a book to the diversity and early circulation of these transmissions.

The theological claim is explosive: an intruding voice briefly contaminates the recitation before the error is corrected. The details belong to the history of tafsīr and the religious struggle to explain Qurʾānic references to satanic interference. An early mursal report can be a valuable witness to the existence of a story in the first generations. It does not become a firsthand record of a revelation event through the passage of time or through repetition in later books.

The dead poets

The accounts of Abū ʿAfak and ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān are among the passages that most urgently need this discipline. Their dramatic logic is straightforward: a poet criticizes the new community, a follower kills the critic, and the deed receives religious approval. The reports are useful to anyone wishing to portray Muhammad as the commander of assassins, and they have found a vigorous afterlife in anti-Islamic writing.

The Abū ʿAfak account in the Ibn Isḥāq tradition lacks a secure named route to the killing. The ʿAṣmāʾ narrative is associated with an incomplete or disputed chain. For both, the assertion of Muhammad's approval needs its own independent witness. A compiler's seamless storytelling should not make that approval appear better attested than the event itself.

The murder of Kaʿb ibn al-Ashraf presents a different evidentiary case. Its core is transmitted by routes outside Ibn Isḥāq and appears in canonical hadith. This makes it a separate historical problem with a stronger transmission basis for the reported event. I can criticize the moral implications of that account and still refuse to let its existence lend authenticity to the stories of Abū ʿAfak and ʿAṣmāʾ by mere association.

Six hundred, nine hundred, and the invention of a number

Banū Qurayẓa has become another battleground between Muslim hagiography and polemical atrocity literature. The Qurʾān describes the defeat of a group from the People of the Book and the taking of captives (33:26–27). Separate hadith strands speak of Saʿd ibn Muʿādh's judgment. Ibn Isḥāq adds a sweeping narrative in which the defeated men are executed, with numbers commonly given as six hundred to nine hundred.

These are several claims. They belong in different rows of the evidence table. A verse about captives does not supply Ibn Isḥāq's execution count. A report of Saʿd's judgment does not settle the precise number or every individual fate. W. N. Arafat challenged the scale of the traditional massacre narrative in 1976, and later scholarship has subjected the early routes to further scrutiny. The case deserves historical and moral investigation without allowing a vivid numeral to acquire a chain by sitting near another report.

The manuscript's Chapter 36 already insists on reading Qurʾān 4:153–158 as a continuous discourse. We should give 33:26–27 the same courtesy. Let the Qurʾān tell us what its words actually say. Let the narrators supply whatever else they claimed to have learned. The gap between those two records is part of the history of the event as it reached later Muslims.

The woman and the camels

The story that Umm Qirfa was tied between two camels and torn apart may be the most grotesque scene in this portion of the biographical tradition. Al-Ṭabarī preserves it through an Ibn Isḥāq route. The report is capable of producing immediate moral revulsion. It also comes to us through a transmission chain that deserves much more attention than the usual quotation gives it.

Muslim 1755 contains an independently transmitted account involving a raid against Fazāra and the capture of a woman and her daughter. Its details differ. It contains no two-camel mutilation. The historical relationship between the episodes needs chronological work, yet the later canonical account cannot corroborate an atrocity it never describes.

A claim that a woman was captured is one thing. The hideous image of her body pulled apart is a separate assertion and should be tested as such. This is precisely the sort of feature that gives the Sīra its reputation for blood-soaked drama, while allowing a modern polemicist to cite an early Islamic text as though every clause had the evidentiary standing of the Qurʾān.

The one place Ibn Isḥāq saw straight through the fog

After all this, the man earns an unexpected place of honor in *Finding Injil*.

Ibn Isḥāq preserved an Arabic adaptation of John 15–16 presenting the Paraclete as Muhammad's promised successor. Sean W. Anthony traces important features of the rendering to the Christian Palestinian Aramaic tradition. There is a real textual object here: a Muslim historian using a Christian Gospel passage, in an identifiable linguistic setting, to interpret Qurʾān 61:6. It is among our earliest identifiable Islamic engagements with the Johannine promise.

And the passage he chose is the one that keeps pulling me back into the Fourth Gospel. I can reconstruct the source problem, check the Old Syriac and Palestinian Aramaic forms, and compare John's Greek without having to make Ibn Isḥāq personally trustworthy on every other subject. The one man who transmitted some of Islam's worst biographical allegations also recognized the textual commitment that makes the Gospel of John so difficult to throw away.

His contribution establishes an eighth-century Muslim interpretation. An earlier Aramaic Gospel source, if Anthony's derivation is correct, helps explain the transmission of the wording. Whether Jesus announced Muhammad through this saying is the larger historical and Qurʾānic question. My thesis locates the strongest surviving comparison in John 15–17 and treats the received John 14 as a competing interpretation whose redactional direction must be tested.

What a character. Mālik calls him a dajjāl. He builds a biographical monument, possibly under Abbasid patronage, whose ugliest scenes arm Islam's enemies for centuries. Then he walks into the most Christologically exuberant Gospel in the New Testament and points straight at the promised messenger. I have to read him with one hand on the source register and the other on the Qurʾān, because his books are capable of misleading me and teaching me on adjacent pages.

The charge of fabrication is best made claim by claim, with the witness named and the source fixed in time. The title can do its theatrical work. The argument needs the discipline of the archive.

4C. The White Minaret: When Damascus Entered the Apocalypse

Jesus comes back to a city the Gospels never put him in

In the First Epistle of John there are already many antichrists. They were people in the writer's own world who held the wrong confession of Jesus. By the time we arrive at the mature Islamic literature on the *Masīḥ al-Dajjāl*, the deceiver has become a monstrous future figure with an itinerary, spectacular powers, and an appointment to die at the hands of the returning Messiah. The story has traveled from a doctrinal argument into the geography of an apocalypse.

The long report attributed to al-Nawwās ibn Samʿān, preserved in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2937, has Jesus descend beside the white *manārah* east of Damascus. He rests his hands upon the wings of two angels, then pursues the Dajjāl and kills him at the gate of Ludd. Gog and Magog follow in the greater apocalyptic sequence. The Qurʾān names the Messiah, describes his vindication and elevation, and supplies passages later interpreters connected to his return. The whole Syrian itinerary, including the white tower and the killing at Ludd, belongs to transmitted hadith literature.

A white minaret. East of Damascus. This is a spectacularly specific address for the end of the world. It also sends us into a city whose religious architecture had a long life after the seventh century. A careful historian needs to ask how such a place acquired its prophetic authority, and the early Muslim critics have left an unusually sharp tool for the job.

The tower before the mosque

The word *manārah* can mean an elevated light, beacon, or tower. The vocabulary existed before the architecture of the typical Islamic mosque minaret developed. Jonathan Bloom places the emergence of recognizable freestanding mosque towers in the late second Islamic century, though the Syrian landscape had older towers and the architectural chronology is debated. Damascus had Roman and Christian structures long before Islam. A future prophecy could also name a building that would exist centuries later. We have to determine which historical explanation the source evidence can sustain.

The Great Umayyad Mosque was constructed under al-Walīd I in 705–715 CE on an older sacred precinct. The structures associated with its towers have been rebuilt and reinterpreted across the centuries. The eastern minaret associated with Jesus now belongs to that long architectural history. Its medieval identity is evidence for the way Damascus came to understand the report. It cannot date the original wording in a tradition transmitted long before the medieval rebuilding.

The chronological question survives every architectural objection. If the Prophet said these words in Arabia before 632 CE, whose description of the Syrian landmark did he use? If an early Syrian transmitter attached a familiar tower to an older apocalypse, which transmitter was first to do it? And if the report originated in Jewish-Christian apocalyptic

expectation, at what point did it acquire attribution to Muhammad? The chains offer us places to ask those questions.

Five books, one Syrian road

The long al-Nawwās report travels through a Syrian family of transmitters: al-Nawwās ibn Samʿān, Jubayr ibn Nufayr, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Jubayr, Yaḥyā ibn Jābir al-Ṭāʾī, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ibn Jābir. Later branches include al-Walīd ibn Muslim. Versions appear in Muslim, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Tirmidhī.

A reader can place five books on a table and feel the weight of five witnesses. Here the transmission tree is the thing that matters. A wording repeated downstream of the same common transmitter gives us evidence that the wording circulated through his route. The number of printed collections tells us how widely later scholars copied or received it. To move the claim earlier, we need a securely traced earlier branch, an identifiable independent source, or some other witness that reaches beyond the common route.

The Syrian setting is a feature of the evidence. The geographical imagination, the names of the transmitters, and the particular landmark fit a culture of religious storytelling in Syria and Palestine. That compatibility asks for investigation. It does not, by itself, date the addition of a word in the chain.

The critic who caught a promotion

The separate, shorter report through Aws ibn Aws is the scene that makes this chapter necessary. Al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr* 590 presents the white-minaret descent as a Prophetic report through Muḥammad ibn Shuʿayb, Yazīd ibn ʿUbaydah, Abū al-Ashʿath al-Ṣanʿānī, and Aws.

In *ʿIlal Ibn Abī Ḥātim* 2771, the younger Ibn Abī Ḥātim asks his father about precisely this wording. Abū Ḥātim says the reliable transmitters have it as Aws reporting **Kaʿb's own statement**. The attribution has traveled upward from an earlier authority to the Prophet. The father is willing to describe Yazīd ibn ʿUbaydah as acceptable while correcting the report's attribution. This is a beautifully technical early criticism of a very consequential religious claim.

The identity of Kaʿb in this dossier is usually taken to be Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, associated with Jewish scriptural learning. Each chain needs its own name check. The important finding is the early critic's distinction between the words of Kaʿb and words attributed to Muḥammad in this particular route. We have a documented case of promotion into Prophetic authority. The long al-Nawwās report belongs to a different route, whose wording still requires its own chronological investigation.

This is how a religious tradition should audit itself. A critic reads a chain, compares the available versions, and identifies where the authority attached to a sentence has changed. His intervention survives because early Muslim scholarship had a living practice of challenging inherited attributions. My quarrel is with allowing a version that failed such a test to reenter the argument merely because its scene is emotionally powerful.

The white bridge moves to the white minaret

Ibn ʿAsākir's Damascus material provides further variants. A report associated with Kaʿb places the Messiah at a **white bridge** near the eastern gate. Other versions mention a tower near the gate or a descent attended by angels and a cloud. This is an apocalyptic landscape in motion. The same city can be reached through a bridge, a gate, or a tower while its inhabitants preserve the expectation that Jesus will return to them.

I can imagine the story becoming more precise as it circulates among people who know the streets. A bridge becomes the eastern gate; the tower appears; later readers identify a minaret. That is a possible development to test through the dated witnesses, and the direction may be different. The variation already demonstrates that the Syrians told related versions of the Messiah's descent with differing topographical details.

Ludd, the place where Jesus kills the deceiver in the long report, adds a Palestinian destination to the Syrian descent. The apocalypse has acquired an almost theatrical map. Its geography carries the memory of Christian and Muslim expectations, military imagination, and the urge to locate the world's final judgment in a city one can visit.

A prophecy that became architecture

Ibn Kathīr reports the rebuilding of a white minaret in Damascus in 741 AH, about 1340–1341 CE. He associated the structure with the descent of Jesus and recorded a hostile allegation about Christians in connection with a fire. That allegation is part of Ibn Kathīr's account and requires evidence of its own.

A city hears a prophecy naming a white tower. Centuries pass, and the city rebuilds its tower. The rebuilt site takes on the aura of the prophecy, while the prophecy gives the structure a sacred biography. Later readers can walk to the place and feel that the end of history has already acquired an address. It is an extraordinary example of scripture, urban memory, and architecture shaping one another.

The dates keep us honest. The medieval tower cannot have originated the phrase in Muslim's earlier collection. The earlier hadith cannot establish by itself that Muḥammad spoke its every detail. The surviving history tells us how people attached extraordinary expectations to a place, and the isnād tells us where to look for the history of the sentence.

Whose antichrist?

My father can read 1 John and identify Muhammad as an enemy of Christ. A Muslim can read the Dajjāl literature and imagine a deceiver who will impersonate the Messiah and be slain at Ludd. In both traditions a terrifying classification awaits the person who claims authority while teaching something the community rejects. The labels bear different histories, and each has been made to carry more weight by subsequent interpreters.

I am interested in the authority underneath the judgment. The First Epistle asks us to trust a Christian writer's confession concerning Jesus. The Dajjāl report asks us to trust a Syrian transmission whose extraordinary content has accumulated a sacred geography. The Aws report even supplies a contemporary-style warning from an early Muslim critic about changing Kaʿb's words into Muhammad's. The historical work consists of following those

words through the people who transmitted them, before placing them on the lips of Jesus or the Prophet.

And there is the quiet Qurʾānic fact that gives this inquiry its direction: the book names Jesus *al-Masīḥ* and gives him a mission of signs, guidance, and divine vindication. When I read about the white minaret, I want to know whether I have learned something about Jesus's teaching, about Muhammad's prophecy, or about the religious hopes of Damascus. The building remains standing in history. The claim about whose voice first placed it there still awaits its chain.

Source ledger and transmission audit

Transmission chronology: event, early narrator, later container

Date	Source or transmitter	Evidentiary function
c. 610 CE	Traditional date of the first revelation	Event asserted by later reports; no contemporary written cave record identified
d. c. 68 AH	ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr	Early preacher ascribed a separate cave narrative
d. c. 94 AH	ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr	Early common source claimed by major revelation and maghāzī routes
d. 124 AH	al-Zuhrī	Reconstructible node for the cave account and related biographies
d. 141 AH	Mūsā ibn ʿUqba	Pre-Ibn Isḥāq maghāzī stratum, largely preserved through later quotation
d. 150 AH	Ibn Isḥāq	Historical cutoff for auditing his access and contributions
d. 153 AH	Maʿmar ibn Rāshid	Near-contemporary transmitter of al-Zuhrī material, surviving in later books
d. 179 AH	Mālik ibn Anas	Contemporary critic; *Muwaṭṭaʾ* has later recensions
d. 211 AH	ʿAbd al-Razzāq	*Muṣannaf* contains Maʿmar's earlier traditions
d. 218 AH	Ibn Hishām	Redacted Ibn Isḥāq recension
d. 235 AH	Ibn Abī Shayba	Preserves family and legal reports from earlier named narrators
d. 241 AH	Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal	Later container for earlier chains
d. 256/261/279 AH	al-Bukhārī / Muslim / al-Tirmidhī	Later reception and traditional grading, not a time machine to 150 AH
d. 310 AH	al-Ṭabarī	Additional, route-specific Ibn Isḥāq material

Incident register: early-source control before later grading

Claim-unit	Earliest identified source stratum	Later textual container	Status at 150 AH / audit task
Cave: three commands and pressing	ʿUrwa–al-Zuhrī → Maʿmar / ʿUqayl; Ibn Isḥāq's separate story	ʿAbd al-Razzāq 9719; Bukhārī 3; sīra recensions	Early identifiable motif; al-Zuhrī branch cannot by itself certify 610 CE

Claim-unit	Earliest identified source stratum	Later textual container	Status at 150 AH / audit task
Cave: inscribed brocade and dream framing	ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr → Wahb ibn Kaysān → Ibn Isḥāq	Ibn Hishām; al-Ṭabarī	Narrative feature of a distinguishable Ibn Isḥāq route
First-revelation suicide thought	Detached al-Zuhrī *balāgh* and Ibn Isḥāq recension variants	ʿAbd al-Razzāq 9719; Bukhārī 6982; al-Ṭabarī	Early transmitted addition, lacking eyewitness connection; examine version dependence
Khadīja's veil / lap test	Ismāʿīl b. Abī Ḥakīm → [gap] → Khadīja	Ibn Hishām	Disconnected authentication story
General revelation: bell, sweating, angel as man	ʿĀʾisha → ʿUrwa → Hishām	Mālik, *Muwaṭṭaʾ* 15:8; Bukhārī 2	Different topic from initial cave compression; no cave corroboration
Baḥīrā identifies child	Ibn Isḥāq and other early report families need comparison	Ibn Hishām; Tirmidhī 3620	Monk motif present; chronologically incongruous accessories need separate grades
Gharānīq verse interpolation	Early mursal and other variants, including Ibn Isḥāq line via Muḥammad b. Kaʿb	al-Ṭabarī; other tafsīr sources	Early disputed story, no proven eyewitness link in noted chains
Abū ʿAfak killed for verse	Ibn Isḥāq narrative, first-person source not established	Ibn Hishām	Unsupported assassination allegation in presently audited route
ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān killed and approved	Ibn Isḥāq → ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith → his father; missing event link	Ibn Hishām	Disconnected and unverified approval attribution
Kaʿb b. al-Ashraf killed	Early Medinan strands, some separate from Ibn Isḥāq	Ibn Hishām; Bukhārī 3031/4037	Recoverable core distinct from Ibn Isḥāq's dramatic additions
Banū Qurayẓa defeat and captives	Qurʾān 33:26–27, plus ʿUrwa and later chains	Ibn Hishām; Bukhārī 3043/4028	Core not dependent on Ibn Isḥāq's numerical estimate
Banū Qurayẓa 600–900 killed	Ibn Isḥāq's expanded narrative	Ibn Hishām	Number lacks comparably independent early count established by this audit
Umm Qirfa torn between camels	Ibn Isḥāq–ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bakr branch via later transmission	al-Ṭabarī	Mutilation unestablished; compare distinct Fazāra raid in Muslim 1755
ʿĀʾisha marriage at 6/9	ʿUrwa/Hishām family plus other age-report lines requiring separate evaluation	Later Bukhārī/Muslim and legal works	Chronological and route audit; cannot import later *ṣaḥīḥ* status into 150 AH

Claim-unit	Earliest identified source stratum	Later textual container	Status at 150 AH / audit task
al-Zubayr contracts newborn daughter's marriage	ʿUrwa → Hishām; claimed early family memory	Ibn Abī Shayba 18234	Contract story attributed to family; later physical witness, no consummation reported
ʿUrwa contracts marriage for two minors	al-Zuhrī reporting ʿUrwa	ʿAbd al-Razzāq 10426	Early named legal-practice report with later textual preservation
Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic Paraclete	Ibn Isḥāq's adaptation of John 15–16	Ibn Hishām and other later Ibn Isḥāq witnesses	Historical eighth-century Muslim interpretation, not a Gospel manuscript
White minaret, long Dajjāl scene	Syrian al-Nawwās family through Ibn Yazīd ibn Jābir	Muslim 2937, Tirmidhī 2240, Abū Dāwūd 4321	Distinct Syrian route; date clause through common nodes
White minaret, short Aws report	Aws → Kaʿb is Abū Ḥātim's preferred form	al-Ṭabarānī 590; *ʿIlal* 2771	Documented disagreement over elevation to Prophetic report
White bridge at Damascus gate	Kaʿb-associated Syrian traditions	Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*	Variant topography; direction of literary development requires collation

Interpretation of the register. The rows are selected claim-units from controversial clusters, not a representative sample of the Sīra. Later collections identify where a textual witness survives and how subsequent critics graded it. Independence must be established at the earliest shared narrator. A report unsupported at the chosen cutoff is unverified, while calling it deliberate invention requires positive evidence. A complete percentage census needs the full Ibn Hishām text and the distinguishable Ibn Isḥāq passages preserved elsewhere, separately coded by claim-unit.

Sources for Chapters 4A–4C

1. **The working manuscript:** *Finding Injil* v0.17n-D4 (29 October 2026), Chapters 1–6, 36, 37A, and source register. These inserts preserve its source-first methodology and leave the FI/QC grades open.

2. **Ibn Abī Ḥātim**, *al-Jarḥ wa-l-Taʿdīl*, report of Mālik's words about Ibn Isḥāq. Arabic searchable edition: https://books.islam-db.com/book/48/الجرح_والتعديل_لابن_ابي_حاتم ; **al-Dhahabī**, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 7, life of Ibn Isḥāq: https://islamweb.net/ar/library/content/60/1117/ابن-إسحاق . The same notice preserves opinions favorable to Ibn Isḥāq.

3. **Ibn Hishām**, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, transmission of Ibn Isḥāq and editorial preface; compare the source discussions in the translator's foreword to *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, volume 6, SUNY translation (1988).

4. **S. W. Anthony**, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete," *Bulletin of SOAS* 79.2 (2016):255–278, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X16000458 . Source study for Ibn Isḥāq's John 15:23–16:1 adaptation and Christian Palestinian Aramaic.

5. **Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler**, *The Earliest Writings on the Life of Muḥammad: The ʿUrwa Corpus and the Non-Muslim Sources* (Gerlach Press, 2024), chapters 2 and 7, https://doi.org/10.1017/9783959941273 .

6. **Primary hadith:** Bukhārī 3, 3043, 4028, 5133–5134, 6982 (https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3 ; https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3043 ; https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4028 ; https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5133 ; https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6982); Muslim 1755 and 2937a (https://sunnah.com/muslim:1755 ; https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a).

7. **The Ḥirāʾ veil test:** Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, account headed *Imtiḥān Khadīja Burhān al-Waḥy*, https://islamweb.net/ar/library/content/58/268/امتحان-خديجة-برهان-الوحي . Chain status discussed by Malaysian Federal Territories Mufti Office, *Irsyad al-Hadith* 448, https://muftiwp.gov.my/en/artikel/irsyad-al-hadith/3939-irsyad-al-hadith-series-448-did-saidatina-khadijah-ever-narrate-a-hadith .

8. **The monk report:** Tirmidhī 3620, https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:3620 . Tirmidhī's *ḥasan gharīb* designation and the site's later weak grading differ. The version's chronological oddities require collation.

9. **Poet stories:** Ibn Hishām's Ibn Isḥāq recension, account of Abū ʿAfak and ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān; inspect the short or absent chains before grading; compare the searchable Ibn Hishām primary edition.

10. **Gharānīq study:** Shahab Ahmed, *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2017); Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, on the Ibn Isḥāq line via Yazīd b. Ziyād and Muḥammad b. Kaʾb. The earliest source history is more complicated than a one-man invention.

11. **Banū Qurayẓa:** Qurʾān 33:26–27; Bukhārī 3043 and 4028; Ibn Hishām's Ibn Isḥāq recension; W. N. Arafat, "New Light on the Story of Banū Qurayẓa and the Jews of Medina," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 108.2 (1976):100–107. Compare Görke and Schoeler (2024).

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18. **Mālik's general revelation report:** *Muwaṭṭaʾ* 15:8, Hishām → ʿUrwa → ʿĀʾisha, https://sunnah.com/malik/15/8 .

19. **Zubayrid marriage reports:** Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* 18234 (other editions 17339/17627), https://islamicurdubooks.com/hadith/hadith-.php?bookid=33&hadith_number=18234 ; ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 10426, https://hdith.com/encyclopedia/atraf/tg-67052 . The report of al-Zubayr's newborn daughter's marriage concerns contract, with no evidence of consummation.

20. **Historical transmission criticism:** Stephen J. Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's Sīra," *Der Islam* 85 (2010), pp. 257–344, https://almuslih.org/wp-content/uploads/Library/Shoemaker%2C%20S%20-%20In%20search%20of%20%E2%80%98Urwa%E2%80%99s%20S%C4%ABra.pdf ; Görke and Schoeler, Chapter 2, as above.

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23. **Historical minaret interpretation:** Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Minaret* (1989; updated 2013), https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748637256.001.0001 ; Wolfram Kleiss, "Minaret," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/minaret-1/ . Bloom argues for a late second-century AH development of the recognizable mosque tower; *manārah* itself is older and more general.

24. **Abū Ḥātim's correction:** Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-ʿIlal*, 2771, https://dorar.net/h/xBZHPkgE?osoul=1 . The text says the trusted reporters narrated the wording as Aws → Kaʾb's own statement. It concerns the shorter Aws report, not the full al-Nawwās text.

25. **Syrian long-form apocalyptic text:** Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 2937, https://sunnah.com/muslim:2937a ; chain text at https://sanaad.org/collections/muslim/2937 .

26. **Medieval tower identification:** Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, commentary on Qurʾān 4:159, https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura4-aya159.html . He names the white stone tower rebuilt in 741 AH and interprets its possible fulfillment; his allegations about Christians require independent evidence.

27. **Critical boundary:** Each selected incident is a research target. The status claims above identify the documented transmission available in this pass. Manuscript-level verification of the original Arabic recensions, chain branching, and date of individual clauses is still required before changing the full manuscript's FI or QC grades.

Outstanding source checks

Outstanding editorial tests: verify each sīra passage against the Arabic Ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī recensions; perform narrator-by-narrator assessment rather than transferring a general judgment about Ibn Isḥāq; check manuscripts behind the Old Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic Paraclete discussions; distinguish Kaʾb al-Aḥbār from other individuals named Kaʾb; collate the exact historical claims about the Damascus tower; and register all FI/QC changes explicitly if a later source audit warrants them.

4D. When Translation Becomes Revelation: ExeJesus in the Hebrew Bible

Taḥrīf al-tarjama, Abraham's visitors, Job's redeemer, and Isaiah's prophecies

A bow in Brunei and a bow at Mamre

In Brunei I have encountered Muslims who greet a visitor with a little bow. Nobody in the room imagines that the visitor has suddenly become a god. The movement takes its meaning from an ordinary practice of courtesy. When Abraham runs toward three strangers and bows in Genesis 18:2, the same elementary point becomes a question of theology.

The Hebrew verb, *hishtaḥavah*, describes prostration before God and deference before human beings. Abraham bows before the Hittites in Genesis 23:7. Jacob bows before Esau in Genesis 33:3. Every movement of the body arrives within a social world. Reading divinity from a gesture requires an account of the person receiving it.

Genesis 18 begins with YHWH appearing to Abraham. The patriarch then sees three men. One receives a singular address, the company receives food, one announces a son, and two messengers turn toward Sodom. By Genesis 19:1 the travelers who enter the city are explicitly called angels. Christian tradition has seen a Trinity here; Jewish interpretation has often found three angels commissioned for different tasks. Justin Martyr, remarkably, recognized one divine visitor and two angels. These readings belong to the history of the passage's reception, and their distance from each other is itself evidence about what the passage leaves open. [1]

The dispute I want to examine is larger than Genesis. When a Hebrew expression enters Greek, Latin, Syriac, and English, the range of possible meanings shifts. An evangelist can apply an old prophetic text to Jesus; a later theologian can then treat that application as the conscious belief of Moses or Isaiah. The process may be faithful figural reading. It may also create the impression of an ancient doctrine for which the ancient evidence offers considerably less support.

I have taken to calling the retrospective procedure **ExeJesus**. The joke describes a serious methodological hazard: an interpreter begins with the Christology he wishes to establish and finds its completed form in a much older text. I will distinguish that procedure from

demonstrable mistranslation, since the New Testament authors often make strong theological claims precisely by rereading earlier scripture. Their claims deserve to be analyzed as claims.

What we mean by taḥrīf al-tarjama

Classical Muslim discussions commonly distinguish alteration of scriptural wording (*taḥrīf al-lafẓ*) from distortion of meaning (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*). Translation deserves its own working label, *taḥrīf al-tarjama* (تحريف الترجمة), because the act of choosing equivalents can alter what subsequent readers perceive as the source's plain meaning.

A more explicit expression is *al-taḥrīf al-maʿnawī bi-wāsiṭat al-tarjama* (التحريف المعنوي بواسطة الترجمة): distortion of meaning through translation. I use this as an analytical description, without claiming that it was a universally codified classical category.

Four different events need separate records. A manuscript copyist may change a word; a translator may select one of several defensible equivalents; an author may deliberately reapply an earlier scripture; and an interpreter may project that application back into the original prophet's conscious belief. The evidence for each event differs. Translation cannot, by itself, establish the copyist's motive or the prophet's intention.

The Qurʾān speaks of people twisting their tongues in connection with the Book (3:78), moving words from their proper settings (4:46), and writing compositions which they attribute to God (2:79). These descriptions concern distinct forms of misrepresentation, and none supplies a ready-made verdict on every biblical variant. The philological record has to be read first.

The following dossiers use a simple test. What does the source language permit? How does the immediate story work? What changed in translation or transmission? When do we first observe the later theological interpretation? And how far can we infer the ancient author's beliefs from that record?

Genesis 1:26: God's company, and an arithmetic of persons

God says, *naʿaseh ʾadam be-ṣalmenu*, “Let us make humanity in our image.” A Trinitarian reader has an intelligible reason to notice the first-person plural. What a great deal of Christian apologetics neglects is that the text continues in Genesis 1:27 with God creating humanity **in his image**, using the singular.

The Hebrew Bible knows a heavenly council. Job 1:6 depicts the sons of God presenting themselves before YHWH; 1 Kings 22:19 describes the heavenly host standing beside the divine throne. Genesis 3:22 and 11:7 also employ divine first-person plurals, and Isaiah 6:8 puts the singular “Whom shall I send?” alongside the plural “Who will go for us?” Consultation with a heavenly court is one established reading of this idiom. Alternatives include divine self-deliberation and, within Christianity, a retrospective Trinitarian reading. The translation handbook on Genesis 1:26 explicitly records these interpretive possibilities. [2]

The plural supplies genuine material for the Christian theological imagination. It supplies no count of three and names none of the Nicene hypostases. A claim that Moses consciously professed consubstantial Father, Son, and Spirit needs additional evidence. Modern Pentateuchal scholarship also treats Genesis as a composite literary work, so Mosaic authorship itself cannot function as an uncontested historical premise.

Genesis 3:15: when the serpent's enemy changed sex

The curse upon the serpent introduces enmity between its offspring and the woman's offspring. The Masoretic Hebrew continues *huʾ yeshūfekha roʾsh*, conventionally “he/it shall strike your head.” The pronoun is grammatically masculine because *zeraʿ*, “offspring” or “seed,” is masculine. A collective interpretation remains possible. The rare verb *shuf* is also lexically difficult.

The Greek Septuagint uses *autos*, a masculine singular pronoun, and a verb commonly rendered “watch” or “guard.” Its wording differs from later English accounts of a straightforward crushing of the serpent's skull. An influential Latin Vulgate textual tradition, however, reads *ipsa conteret*, “she shall crush,” which enabled a Marian interpretation of the woman herself crushing Satan. [3]

The textual history is more interesting than the familiar accusation that Jerome simply translated “he” as “she.” Jerome's own commentary on Hebrew Genesis favors *ipse*, the masculine, and the Latin manuscript tradition varies. A study of ancient and modern versions argues that *ipsa* is unlikely to represent Jerome's original wording. [4]

Here we can observe both a real versional difference and the subsequent theological uses of that difference. Christian readers have also treated the woman's seed as Christ, the *protoevangelium* or “first Gospel.” That is a figural reading of Genesis; it cannot be used as independent evidence that the narrator was explicitly predicting Mary's later doctrinal role.

Genesis 18–19: three visitors, one principal voice

The crucial consonants at Genesis 18:3 are אדני. The Masoretic pointing favors *Adonai*, the divine title “Lord,” while *adoni*, “my lord” or “sir,” is possible at the level of the consonants. The sentence addresses one person in the singular. In verses 4–5 Abraham addresses the visitors collectively in the plural.

Rashi preserves both an address to the leading visitor and an address to God. The Samaritan Pentateuch has plural forms in verse 3; whether that reading is early or a harmonization with the neighboring verses remains contested. The Greek Septuagint gives the singular *Kyrie*, which can mean “Lord” or “sir.” The Greek retains the central ambiguity. [1]

The narrative advances through an extraordinary announcement, an argument about divine justice, and the two travelers entering Sodom. Rabbinic interpretation in *Bava Metzia* 86b identifies Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael and assigns them missions associated with Isaac's birth, Abraham's healing, and Sodom's judgment. That scheme elaborates the biblical story; the names are not in Genesis 18.

The earliest Christian evidence complicates any claim that the three figures simply were understood as a depiction of three coequal divine persons. In *Dialogue with Trypho* 56, Justin Martyr identifies a preexistent divine agent accompanying **two angels**. Justin reads the agent as distinct from the Father, who remains transcendent. He reads Genesis 19:24, where YHWH rains sulfur and fire "from YHWH out of heaven," as evidence for that distinction. [5]

The Hebrew of Genesis 19:24 does indeed repeat the divine name. Repeating a named subject in biblical narrative can also maintain reference and emphasize the origin of an action. The phrase supports Justin's Christological argument in its historical setting; it does not independently enumerate three coeternal persons.

A reader may still see a triune theophany. The scene offers three visitors, divine speech, differentiated missions, and an apparent leader. It also offers two visitors subsequently called angels. The inference to the Trinity is a later theological construction with a documented reception history. Bogdan Bucur traces the gradual prominence of explicitly Trinitarian symbolism in Christian readings of the scene. [6]

The further apologetic claim that *Moses was a Trinitarian* changes the subject from what a later reader can find in the text to what its ancient author knew. That claim requires a historical argument about the author's knowledge. Accepting Mosaic authorship and inspiration does not settle the degree of conceptual detail available to Moses.

Genesis 22:8: did God promise to provide himself as the lamb?

Abraham answers Isaac's question about the missing sacrifice with *ʾElohim yirʾeh-lo ha-seh le-ʿolah*: God will see or provide **for himself** the sheep or lamb for the burnt offering. The reflexive sense of *lo*, "for him," depends on the grammatical subject. The King James rendering "God will provide himself a lamb" can sound in modern English as though God himself will become the sacrificial animal.

That is a possibility generated by modern reception of the English phrase. The Hebrew idiom concerns God's provision. Genesis then narrates the ram caught in the thicket. Christian interpreters can make a meaningful typological comparison between Isaac, the substitute animal, and Jesus. The passage itself presents an Abrahamic trial and a provision at the mountain. [7]

A later sacrificial Christology may use this narrative as its type. Treating the grammatical construction as a prediction of divine incarnation confuses a retrospective analogy with the claim made by the ancient sentence.

Job's heavenly courtroom: arbiter, witness, redeemer

Job deserves its own dossier because Christian language about a mediator and redeemer has grown around several passages that originally belong to a legal dispute between a suffering man and the God who seems to have permitted his ruin.

In Job 9:33, Job wishes for a *mokhiaḥ*, an arbiter or mediator who might place a hand upon both disputants. The word derives from a verb associated with adjudication, rebuke, and

the resolution of disputes. Job's problem is that God is the other party. The verse expresses the absence of such an intermediary in Job's predicament. [8]

In Job 16:19–21, he appeals to a witness in heaven, a heavenly advocate who might plead for him. The identity of that witness has generated centuries of argument. Within Job's poetry, the appeal arises from the strain of calling upon God against what appears to be God's own hostility. That tension is part of the book's drama.

Job 19:25 supplies the celebrated confession, *ʾani yadaʿti goʾali ḥai*, "I know that my *goʾel* lives." A *goʾel* is a vindicator or kinsman-redeemer, someone with standing to defend the dispossessed, avenge blood, or restore rights. The person whom Job anticipates, the manner of his appearance, and the force of seeing God "from my flesh" or "apart from my flesh" in the succeeding verses remain debated. [9]

The Latin tradition associated with the Vulgate transmits formulations that invite a more explicit resurrection reading than the Hebrew necessarily supplies. Andrea Ravasco's study of the Latin manuscripts, Hebrew, and Septuagint finds an unstable Latin textual record beneath the later liturgical certainty. [10]

Calling Job's *goʾel* Christ is an understandable Christian interpretation of a suffering innocent person's hope for vindication. It should be introduced as a Christian identification, because the Hebrew narrative nowhere names Jesus, and interpretations of the *goʾel* include God, a heavenly advocate, and a human or imagined defender.

Job 33:23 brings another example. Elihu speaks of a messenger, one among a thousand, interpreting to a human being what is right. Later Christian readers can compare the figure to mediation through Christ. Within the dialogue, Elihu is speaking about the means by which a sick person might receive correction and be spared death. The same passage does not require a singular eternal mediator. [11]

A subtler New Testament reuse arises from Job 9:8, where God alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the heights or waves of the sea. Richard Hays has emphasized how Mark's story of Jesus walking upon the water and intending to "pass by" his disciples can evoke theophanic language. [12] If Mark intentionally invokes Job or Exodus, that is evidence of **Mark's** Christological literary craft. It remains to be argued whether the author of Job was consciously describing the future Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14: a virgin in Greek, a young woman in Hebrew

The Hebrew expression *ha-ʿalmah* refers to a young woman. It does not specify virginity as a lexical requirement, although the person described could be a virgin. The Greek Septuagint used *parthenos*, a term strongly associated with virginity whose ancient semantic range is broader than one English equivalent.

Matthew 1:23 quotes the Greek text in connection with Jesus's conception. The Hebrew prophecy in Isaiah 7 addresses Ahaz during a crisis involving Aram, Israel, and Judah. Before the named child's early maturity, the fortunes of the threatening kings are to change. That near-term political setting must remain in the analysis.

Justin Martyr and his Jewish interlocutor disputed the translation and interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 in the second century (*Dialogue with Trypho* 67). In 1952 the Revised Standard Version rendered Isaiah's Hebrew *ʿalmah* “young woman,” while retaining “virgin” at Matthew 1:23 because Matthew's Greek says *parthenos*. A modern translation therefore made the linguistic distinction visible; it did not erase a Hebrew word that had previously read “virgin.” [13]

Matthew's narrative independently affirms an extraordinary conception. The virgin-birth tradition cannot be explained by this single lexical choice. The narrower claim is enough for our purposes: Greek phrasing played an important role in the scriptural form in which Matthew told the story.

Isaiah 9:6: a royal child bearing God's titles

Isaiah's child is given astonishing names, including *peleʾ yoʿeṣ, ʾel gibbor, ʾavi-ʿad, sar-shalom*. The familiar English sequence is “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Some Christian readers find the child's divinity here directly stated. The Hebrew permits substantial debate over the segmentation of the titles, whether the divine epithets belong to the child or praise the God who names him, and how ancient royal throne names function. The translation handbook on Isaiah describes the problem without dismissing the unusually exalted language. [14]

The title *ʾel gibbor* also appears in Isaiah 10:21 in reference to God. A serious critical reading should acknowledge this strength in the Christian case. The chapter belongs to a horizon of royal expectation associated with David's throne and the political condition of Judah. Explaining those names requires attention to ancient royal ideology and the text's own context. A direct inference to the Nicene relation of the Son to the Father needs premises beyond the title alone.

The Greek Septuagint's rendering in the tradition of “messenger of great counsel” also demonstrates how strikingly different an ancient reader's access to this royal oracle could be.

Isaiah 6 and 40: John and Mark take possession of YHWH's language

The strongest Christian argument does not always depend upon a questionable translation. Sometimes the New Testament author **deliberately applies to Jesus a text that concerns YHWH**.

Isaiah 6 narrates the prophet's vision of the Lord enthroned, surrounded by seraphim. After quoting Isaiah's account of Israel's hardness, John 12:41 says Isaiah spoke these things because he saw “his glory.” The Greek pronoun is contextual; several English translations helpfully specify “Jesus” or “Christ.” Johannine scholarship examines whether the glory is the preexistent Logos, the crucified Messiah, or the connection John draws between them. [15]

That is an authentic, important claim about the Fourth Gospel's theology. It supplies evidence for how John's author rereads Isaiah. The additional assertion that Isaiah himself confessed a fourth-century doctrine does not follow from the pronoun.

Isaiah 40:3 is equally consequential. A voice calls for the way of **YHWH** to be prepared in the wilderness. Mark 1:2–3 combines Malachi and Isaiah and places John the Baptist in the role of herald for Jesus. Richard Hays argues that Mark uses the scriptural quotation to depict the presence of Israel's God in Jesus's ministry. [12]

Here an appeal to the Greek *Kyrios* cannot simply explain away the literary identification. The Hebrew divine name anchors the original oracle, and Mark's reuse is a genuine Christological move. Historical criticism asks what Mark did with Isaiah, and theological interpretation asks whether his move is divinely authorized. These questions are related and require different sorts of evidence.

Isaiah 52–53: who suffers, and who gets to name the servant?

The servant songs create a persistent identity problem. In Isaiah 49:3, the servant is addressed as Israel. In 49:5–6, the servant is also commissioned to restore Jacob and bring Israel back, which complicates a simple collective identification. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 speaks of a figure humiliated, afflicted, and eventually vindicated. The passage has sustained collective, individual, prophetic, messianic, and Christological readings.

Christians can point to substantial narrative correspondences with Jesus's passion, and the New Testament's use of the servant material is early and extensive. Jewish interpretation has developed other readings of the servant's identity and the nature of the suffering described. Marc Brettler and Amy-Jill Levine trace these successive receptions without reducing the text to a single postbiblical usage. [16]

The strongest method is to give the Christian reading its genuine explanatory power and to identify the historical step at which the servant was named Jesus. Isaiah's poetry and the evangelists' passion narratives belong to distinct literary situations. Their connection is an argument to make, not a datum that makes every alternative impossible.

For *Finding Injīl* this distinction matters because Luke 4:16–21 also depicts Jesus reading Isaiah 61 and claiming its fulfillment. The Lukan scene is textual evidence that **Luke presents Jesus as applying Isaiah to his mission**. Whether every phrase of the scene goes back to the historical Jesus has to be assessed by the book's ordinary source-critical protocol. We need not flatten the evangelist's powerful theological claim into either historical certainty or fabrication.

Psalm 110 and Proverbs 8: the dispute reaches the Greek church

Psalm 110:1 opens with YHWH speaking to *adoni*, “my lord.” The Masoretic vocalization distinguishes an address to a lord from the divine reading *Adonai*. Greek uses *Kyrios* for both in Christian quotation, increasing the need for contextual discrimination. The New Testament repeatedly applies Psalm 110 to Jesus's exaltation. Its first-century Christian reuse is beyond dispute; the historical identity of the original psalm's royal addressee remains a separate question.

Proverbs 8:22 takes us into an even clearer ancient doctrinal collision. Personified Wisdom says YHWH *qanani* at the beginning of his way. The verb can be understood through acquisition, possession, or creation. The Septuagint's *ektisen* favors “created.” Christians who identified Wisdom with the preexistent Christ could then disagree passionately about whether the Son was created. Arius and Athanasius disputed the text in the fourth-century controversy. [17]

This is the interpretive process in unusually sharp focus. The underlying Hebrew wisdom poem gave later theologians a vocabulary for Christ's relation to the Father. Greek lexical choices mattered. The doctrine being decided supplied the stakes of the argument. One can admire the intellectual seriousness of the resulting theology while maintaining a documentary distinction between Proverbs' literary Wisdom and the Son of the Nicene Creed.

What an honest defense of development concedes

A thoughtful Catholic or Orthodox defender can grant much of the foregoing history. Doctrine can be understood as a development of revelation whose implications become clearer over time. A Christian who argues this has an answer to the question of why earlier scripture lacks the technical language of later councils. The debate then moves to the authority and reliability of that development.

I find this defense considerably more serious than asserting without qualification that Moses already possessed the Nicene Creed. The latter makes a claim about an ancient mind for which the extant evidence is sparse. The former admits that the church's later reasoning is part of the history that needs to be defended.

That admission also opens an inquiry shared with Islamic jurisprudence. Schools of law differ over how prophetic material should be interpreted and how much authority inherited institutions may exercise. Appeals to the Imams' guidance, to juristic *qiyās*, or to ecclesiastical tradition each require an account of why later interpreters may speak authoritatively about an earlier revelation. The analogy has limits, because Christian metaphysical creeds and Islamic legal schools make different kinds of claims.

Our inquiry into the Injīl should apply the same test to Muslim interpretations. A threefold shia confession, for example, can sustain a philosophical reading of reality, prophecy, and *walāya*. The number of its affirmations alone will not explain the three visitors at Mamre. A later theological analogy remains a later analogy until transmission evidence establishes an earlier relationship.

The Qurʾān's affirmation of the Injīl as guidance and light (5:46) creates a reason to investigate the earliest recoverable teaching of Jesus. Its supervisory language in 5:48 supplies an Islamic criterion for the evaluation of inherited claims. The historical evidence must still receive its due. A theory of *taḥrīf* becomes useful when it can specify the passage, the language, the stage of reception, and the resulting difference in meaning.

Abraham's great achievement at Mamre may be more pertinent than any multiplication of persons. He welcomes the stranger and then asks whether the Judge of all the earth will do justice. The encounter presses the divine promise toward an ethical test. A recovered Injīl

likewise needs to ask what its messenger taught human beings to do with mercy, power, and judgment.

Source register and editorial controls

The bibliography distinguishes **primary witnesses**, **linguistic controls**, and **reception-history scholarship**. The provisional label *ExeJesus* names retrospective Christological interpretation; it is neither a technical textual-critical category nor a presumption of bad faith.

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2. Genesis 1:26–27; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8; Job 1:6; 1 Kings 22:19; Graham S. Ogden and Jan Sterk / translation handbook on Genesis 1:26, https://tips.translation.bible/story/translation-commentary-on-genesis-126/ ; Matthew Oseka, “History of the Jewish Interpretation of Genesis 1:26, 3:5, 3:22,” *Scriptura* 117 (2018), https://doi.org/10.7833/117-1-1355 .

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4. Christian Rüger, “On Some Versions of Genesis 3:15, Ancient and Modern,” *The Bible Translator* 27 (1976), https://translation.bible/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ruger-1976-on-some-versions-of-genesis-3-15-ancient-and-modern.pdf .

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8. Job 9:33, Hebrew *mokhiaḥ* and legal metaphor, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Job&chapter=9&tab=commentaries&theme=false&verse=33 .

9. Job 16:19–21; 19:25–27; Jun Kim, “Job's Go'el, a Heavenly Arbiter, and Imagination,” *Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 24.1 (2018): 46–75, https://journal.kci.go.kr/ksots/archive/articleView?artiId=ART002331286 ; NET Job 19:25 notes, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job.19.25&version=NET .

10. Andrea Ravasco, “The Latin Manuscripts Evidence in Job 19:25–26,” *Lumina* 5 (2021): 217–226, https://iris.unipa.it/handle/10447/624794 .

11. Job 33:23, NET translation and interpretation, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Job&chapter=33&theme=false&verse=23 .

12. Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Baylor University Press, 2014); review discussing Mark 1, Job 9, Isaiah 40, https://journal.rts.edu/review/reading-backwards-figural-christology-and-the-fourfold-gospel-witness/ .

13. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 67; Rodrigo de Sousa, “Is the Choice of Παρθένος in LXX Isa. 7:14 Theologically Motivated?” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 53 (2008): 211–232, https://academic.oup.com/jss/article-abstract/53/2/211/1711622 ; Revised Standard Version (1952).

14. Isaiah 9:6–7; 10:21, UBS Handbook on Isaiah 9:6, https://tips.translation.bible/story/translation-commentary-on-isaiah-96/ ; NET notes, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=isa&chapter=9&verse=6 .

15. Isaiah 6:1–10; John 12:37–41; NET note, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Joh&chapter=12&tab=commentaries&theme=false&verse=41 ; “Divine Visibility in the Gospel of John,” *Harvard Theological Review* (2024), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/harvard-theological-review/article/abs/divine-visibility-in-the-gospel-of-john/2A3B1AD55D6E3F261E23E458DDA62F2F .

16. Isaiah 49:3–6; 52:13–53:12; Marc Z. Brettler and Amy-Jill Levine, “Isaiah's Suffering Servant: Before and After Christianity,” *Interpretation* 73 (2019): 158–173, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964318820594 .

17. Psalm 110:1; Proverbs 8:22–31; NET Hebrew/Greek translation notes, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Pro&chapter=8&tab=commentaries&theme=false&verse=22 ; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 61–62.

5. What the Greek Lets Us Say

By the time we start arguing theology in English, the translator has already made decisions for us. English readers encounter God, a god, divine, one, and One as apparently settled expressions. The Greek sometimes leaves a different range of possibilities. For this project, the Unitarian readings of John belong at the beginning of the analysis of its most frequently cited Christological passages.[48]

That includes the correction made during this research to an earlier treatment of John 20:28. I no longer approach Thomas's confession as an automatic obstacle to tawḥīd. Its Greek, narrative setting, and history of interpretation allow arguments for divine representation and subordination that deserve a full hearing.

Thomas's confession

The phrase in John 20:28 is ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου: the Lord of me and the God of me. The article and the possessive recur. Some Biblical Unitarians propose that Thomas recognizes Jesus as his Lord and the Father as his God. Other Unitarian readings understand both titles in relation to Jesus as God's authorized representative, through whom the divine presence has become recognizable.

The preceding narration says Thomas spoke to him, with Jesus as the addressee. That feature belongs in the account of the two-referent proposal. Repetition of the article allows an argument about the titles' relation, yet it does not compel the existence of two addressees. The question is how the whole scene directs the reader to understand the confession.

John 20:17 supplies especially important context. Jesus speaks of ascending to his God as well as to the disciples' God. The purpose statement in 20:31 identifies the desired recognition in terms of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. A reading of 20:28 should account for those statements within the same chapter.

The divine-agency interpretation draws strength from the wider language of John. Jesus makes the Father known, speaks from the Father's authority, and attributes the works to the Father dwelling in him. Recognizing God through such a figure can be expressed with extraordinary intensity. Determining whether that recognition also assigns the figure uncreated existence requires a further theological judgment.

One, with a plural verb

John 10:30 reads ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἕν ἐσμεν. The form hen is neuter, and esmen means we are. The sentence presents Jesus and the Father as one in some respect while retaining a plural subject. Its immediate context concerns the security of Jesus's sheep and the power protecting them.

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[48] Research Dossier v7, final addendum, "Greek Philology Correction and Unitarian Readings," superseding the earlier treatment of John 20:28. Primary loci: John 1:1; 10:27–38; 17:11, 21–23; 20:17–31. The Greek quoted in chapter 5 follows the forms recorded in that addendum.

John 17 repeatedly applies the language of oneness to the disciples in relation to Jesus and the Father. That gives the unity-of-purpose or unity-of-agency reading an internal comparison. The connection deserves more weight than an English capitalization that turns one into a title.

The grammatical observation leaves room for disagreement about the nature of the unity. A Trinitarian interpreter can understand the neuter as compatible with shared nature. A Unitarian interpreter can point to the common work and the prayer for the disciples' unity. The verse has to be read through those contextual arguments.

Calvin's commentary, included in the research dossier, is a useful witness because he read this particular saying in terms of agreement with the Father while maintaining his broader Trinitarian theology. A full manuscript should quote the relevant edition directly. For now, the example belongs in the source notes as a historically important reading to retain.[49]

The Word and the God with whom it is

In John 1:1, the Word is described as being pros ton theon, with the God, while the final clause reads theos ēn ho logos. Theon is the accusative form required by its construction; theos is nominative in the predicate clause. The change of case is ordinary Greek grammar. The interpretive question concerns the article and the force of the predicate.

The clause permits a sustained discussion of quality, identity, and divine participation. Rendering it with the English adjective divine is one proposal for communicating quality. Rendering it a god introduces an indefinite classification. The conventional was God can be read through several theological frameworks. None of these choices should be treated as a mechanical result of comparing case endings.

Origen gives the discussion a pre-Nicene witness. In his Commentary on John 2.2, he interprets the article-bearing God as the source of divinity and explains the Logos's divinity through participation. He connects this account to the Father as the only true God in John 17:3. His scheme is hierarchical, with a much more exalted Logos than a simple account of an inspired human prophet would require.[50]

This passage is valuable because it shows an ancient reader attending to the same grammatical distinction raised by modern Unitarians. Origen's wider theology must still be read on its own terms. His opening discussion also places the Word with the Father before all time. I cannot borrow his account of participation and quietly leave that setting behind.

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[49] John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, on 10:30. The interpretation is documented in the supplied Greek-philology addendum. An edition-specific quotation and page reference remain to be supplied; Calvin's reading of this verse should be distinguished from his overall Trinitarian theology.

[50] Origen, Commentary on John 2.2, public English translation at New Advent: www.newadvent.org/fathers/101502.htm. The chapter expressly discusses the article, the Father as autotheos, and the Logos's divinity by participation. Its account is hierarchical and should be read with Origen's larger theology.

A change in the order of argument

The Greek readings let us begin with interpretations that preserve the Father's primacy and the Messiah's dependence. We can then ask how those interpretations fit John's language of prior glory, heavenly descent, and the divine Name. That sequence keeps the actual linguistic arguments in view before a later creed determines what every expression must mean.

It also preserves the distinction between Gospel interpretation and the recovery of Jesus's speech. The prologue remains the narrator's composition. Thomas's confession is a scene the narrator recounts. Their theological compatibility matters to this book, while the question of Jesus's own sayings follows the attribution method established in chapter 2.

6. The Spirit, the Name and the Face of God

John 14:9 connects seeing Jesus with seeing the Father. The next verses explain that the words and works come from the Father dwelling in him. This setting offers a point of entry for the theophanic interpretation developed in Finding Injil: divine guidance becomes perceptible through a servant whose authority and power depend entirely upon Allah.[51]

I use theophanic to describe that manifestation. I mean representation and presence. We still have to ask whether the bearer is a human prophet, a preexistent created agent, or a figure whom an author includes within divine identity. The label cannot answer that for us.

A name-bearing messenger

Exodus 23:20–21 describes a messenger bearing God's Name. The setting gives the messenger formidable authority while presenting his mission as a divine commission. Other biblical scenes move between an angel's appearance and speech attributed to God. These texts supply precedents for an encounter with an agent to be narrated as an encounter with divine authority.

Philo's Logos offers a first-century comparison. In On the Confusion of Tongues, sections 146–147, he connects the Logos with God's image, the divine Name, and an exalted angelic figure. In On Dreams 1.228–230, he confronts the language of a divine manifestation and distinguishes the supreme God from the way divine presence is apprehended through an image. These passages belong to the source base for the book's agency model.[52]

The significance is historical as well as theological. A Jewish intellectual could discuss the Word and the divine image before the Fourth Gospel reached its final form. That makes a comparison with John appropriate. Direct literary dependence would require additional evidence about the texts and their circulation.

[51] John 14:9–11; compare Qur'an 8:17; 4:80; 48:10. The theophanic reading is the author's comparative interpretation. Research Dossier v7, Case Study 02 and Divine Name addendum, supply the fuller argument and the distinction between analogy and historical transmission.

[52] Philo, On the Confusion of Tongues 146–147; On Dreams 1.228–230. These primary loci are identified in Dossier v7's Divine Name addendum. The comparison concerns the conceptual use of divine titles and manifestation; it does not make Philo's comments a universal rule of Greek grammar.

The Spirit in the Qur’an

The Rūḥ al-Qudus inquiry began early in this project. The Qur’an associates Jesus with support by the Holy Spirit, presents the Spirit in Maryam’s conception narrative, and places the angels and the Spirit together in other passages. Qur’an 42:51 distinguishes modes of divine communication. My preferred reading allows a difference between an angel who delivers words and a Spirit through whom God grants illumination or extraordinary power.[53]

The proposed distinction gives the miracles of Jesus a place within a theology of continuing dependence. Qur’an 3:49 repeatedly attributes their efficacy to Allah’s permission. John 14:10 attributes the works to the Father. These formulations provide a comparison of agency without requiring that every occurrence of Spirit in either corpus name the same entity.

The original essay asked why the Qur’an’s critique of Christian excess leaves such a substantial place for Spirit language. The question remains productive. Silence about a particular formula has limited evidentiary force on its own; the argument gains substance from the Qur’an’s positive descriptions of the Spirit’s activity and from the range of readings they permit.

Shiʿi vocabulary for a created bearer

The terms ḥujjah, nūr, walāyah and wajh Allāh provide a comparative vocabulary for authority and manifestation. A person can serve as a divine proof, carry light, or disclose God’s guidance while remaining a creature. This is the aspect of Shiʿi esotericism I want to bring into dialogue with John.

The research dossier identifies al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 as a report describing a created Spirit greater than Gabriel and Michael that supports the Prophet and subsequently the Imams. It also records reports about the Holy Spirit in chapter 55 and the Greatest Name in chapter 36. These reports have different chains and gradings, which need to remain attached to the individual texts.[54]

I am bringing these theological concepts to the reading of an ancient Christian text. Establishing an actual route of transmission from early Jewish or Christian traditions into a particular Imami report would require a separate historical study.

The boundary around dependence

Shaykh al-Mufīd’s treatment of ghulūw and tafwīḍ belongs beside the positive comparisons. His account rejects the divinization of the Imams and the transfer of creation

[53] Aleph Funk, Ruh Qudus, supplied essay, pp. 1–4; Qur’an 2:87; 2:253; 5:110; 17:85; 19:17; 42:51; 97:4. The Spirit/Gabriel distinction is the author’s working interpretation. The essay’s conjectures about etymology and the full range of later schools are not adopted as independently verified claims.

[54] Al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1; compare 1.4.55 and 1.4.36.1. The source identifiers and later gradings are preserved in Dossier v7. Arabic-text and grading verification remain open; this draft uses the reports as transmitted Imami comparanda without asserting a historical chain to John.

and sustenance to beings assigned those functions. Calling an intermediary created, then handing him creation and sustenance, will not satisfy that account of dependence.[55]

The working tawḥīd criterion in this book reserves uncreated existence and ultimate sovereignty to Allah. An authorized servant receives the power he exercises. Honor directed toward that servant has to be understood within this relation. The Qur'an's account of prostration before Adam or Joseph can help distinguish gestures of honor from a claim about independent divinity, while the specific rules of each text remain important.

John's language can now be tested against this criterion. Unity of work in chapter 10, divine works through a dependent agent in chapter 14, and the Father's primacy in chapter 17 support the investigation. John 8:58 and 17:5 introduce questions about preexistence. The Enochic books and Ascension of Isaiah supply a wider range of ancient possibilities for that discussion.

[55] Shaykh al-Mufīd, The Emendation of a Shiʿite Creed, ch. 33, "Excess and Delegation," public translation at Al-Islam.org. The text was checked for its rejection of ghulūw and the assignment of creation and sustenance to the Imams, even in a model that calls them created beings.

PART III · THE HEAVENS BEFORE THE GOSPELS

7. Isaiah, Daniel and the Messiah

The word Messiah carries a history of divine appointment. Why does the Qur'an give Jesus this title? What does it add to calling him a prophet? Those were the questions in my original manuscript. A reconstruction has to begin with the passages later communities used to understand the title, including the different literary settings within Isaiah and Daniel.[56]

The historical Isaiah ben Amoz and the later book associated with his name need distinct treatment. The research program separates the eighth-century prophetic core from the exilic material commonly grouped as Deutero-Isaiah and the later restoration material. Even the first thirty-nine chapters contain questions of composition. The distinction prevents a single date from being assigned to every Isaianic passage.

Cyrus and the servant

Isaiah 45:1 names Cyrus as God's anointed. This is a direct intersection between Persian political history and the language of divine commissioning. It also makes the breadth of the term visible. Anointed status can describe a role within God's purposes without implying that its bearer is divine.

The servant passages supply another vocabulary. Isaiah 49 presents a calling and a concealed commission. Isaiah 52–53 places exaltation beside suffering and rejection. The identity of the servant and the relation between collective and individual readings have to be examined within their settings before the Christian reuse of these texts is assessed.

The archive's studies of the Parables of Enoch propose that Isaianic servant language helped generate the account of an elect figure named or concealed before his public appearance. Michael Wade Martin and J. Andrew Cowan are listed for this debate. Their proposals are included here as directions for detailed reading, with the underlying textual comparison already central to the chapter.[57]

The theological question follows from the language of concealment. A person may exist in God's purpose before appearing in history. Another text may envisage an actual heavenly being who later descends. Both can use language of prior naming or hidden glory. We have to let the passage tell us which kind of prior existence it means.

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[56] Isaiah 6; 7; 9; 11; 40–55; Daniel 7. Original Finding Injil fragment, pp. 3–4 and 10–11; Dossier v7, "Enoch, Daniel, Mark and the Iranian background." The draft separates the historical prophet and the received literary corpus; a detailed redaction history of Isaiah remains to be written.

[57] Michael Wade Martin, "Whether and Whence Preexistence in 1 Enoch?" (2023), DOI 10.1177/09518207221116199; J. Andrew Cowan, "The Hidden Figure of Isaiah 51:16 and the Preexistence of the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch" (2025), DOI 10.1177/09518207251340011. Both are research leads in the supplied dossier; their full arguments were not re-examined for this draft.

Daniel's humanlike figure

Daniel 7 depicts one like a son of man approaching the Ancient of Days and receiving dominion. The vision places the figure in a heavenly court, and its interpretation also relates the kingdom to the holy people. A later reader can develop the image into an individual eschatological role, but that development should remain visible.

Mark 13:26 and 14:62 use cloud-coming Son of Man language that brings Daniel into the Gospel's account of Jesus. The Enochic Parables offer a fuller portrait of an elect heavenly judge. Reading these texts together allows us to ask how a phrase describing a humanlike figure became a title through which a community understood the Messiah.

An explicit quotation provides a different evidentiary standard from a shared image. Jude 14–15's use of 1 Enoch 1:9 is a useful control case for direct Christian engagement with Enochic literature. The relation between Mark and a particular passage of the Parables requires a more detailed argument concerning chronology and wording.

Isaiah's vision in John

John 12:37–41 joins an Isaianic servant citation to the vision of hardened hearts in Isaiah 6. The evangelist then connects Isaiah's seeing of glory to Jesus. This is a substantial act of theological interpretation within the Gospel. Its speaker is the narrator, which matters for the book's method of distinguishing reported sayings from explanatory prose.

The theophanic reading asks whether the glory of Allah can be encountered through the appointed Messiah. A stronger divine-identity reading takes the passage as placing Jesus within the identity of Israel's God. The English word glory cannot choose between those readings for us. We need the source comparison.

Darrell D. Hannah's work on Isaiah's vision and the early church and Mirosław Wróbel's study of Targum Isaiah and John belong at this point. Wróbel examines themes including Memra and Logos, divine glory, and the absolute egō eimi language. Their scholarship supplies specific exegetical relationships for further testing.[58]

Jeremiah: who gave the command?

Jeremiah belongs beside Isaiah because he asks the question an institution would rather avoid: does possessing the language of revelation establish that you are obeying God? His temple sermon answers with conduct. Protection of the stranger, the orphan and the widow, and refusal to shed innocent blood, stand against the security claimed from a sacred building. He then sets obedience ahead of sacrifice (Jeremiah 7:5–10, 22–23). A temple cannot turn murder into fidelity.

[58] Darrell D. Hannah, "Isaiah's Vision in the Ascension of Isaiah and the Early Church," Journal of Theological Studies 50.1 (1999): 80–101, DOI 10.1093/jts/50.1.80; Mirosław S. Wróbel, "Ideological and Intertextual Relations Between the Targum Isaiah and the Gospel of John," Collectanea Theologica 93.1 (2023): 85–102, DOI 10.21697/ct.2023.93.1.04. Wróbel's publisher abstract was checked; Hannah's detailed argument remains a dossier-derived research lead.

The accusation sharpens at 8:8–9. Those claiming wisdom because they possess divine instruction are confronted with the scribes' false handling of it. The passage does not identify a list of interpolated verses for us. Hendrik Bosman examines the dispute over written instruction, scribal authority and prophetic speech; he also notes that Jeremiah's portrayal of Baruch in chapter 36 does not condemn scribes as a class. The challenge is to a claim of authority that has become false in its use. I take that challenge into this book's reading of inherited scripture. (J4-1)

At 7:31 and 19:5, the burning of children is explicitly repudiated as something God did not command. These passages concern sacrifice at Tophet, not a direct historical judgment on every conquest narrative. Yet they establish something indispensable: a religious practice can be presented as sacred and still be rejected in God's name. Jeremiah's own terrible judgment imagery must also be faced. He cannot be recruited into a simple claim that the biblical prophets knew no violence. (J4-2)

My theological claim is straightforward. Allah's justice does not become injustice when an army needs a warrant. The Qur'an's insistence on the constancy of sunnat Allāh, read with its commands of justice and limits on transgression, gives me grounds to challenge an alleged divine command to annihilate children. The immediate contexts of 33:62, 35:43 and 48:23 concern God's dealings with communities; the moral conclusion I draw from them is an argument, not a dictionary definition. Different communities can receive different laws, as 5:48 expressly says, without making innocent blood morally worthless. (J4-3)

Nor does affirming Qur'anic accounts of earlier prophets oblige me to certify every episode or speech in the received Tanakh. Three questions remain distinct: what happened, how it was narrated, and whether God authorized it. I can investigate a historical conflict without endorsing the extermination order attributed to God in its literary telling. This is the distinction I carry into "To kill and be killed": an account of victory does not settle the victor's claim to revelation.

J4-1. Hendrik Bosman, "Jeremiah 8:8: Why are scribes accused of corrupting the Torah?", Acta Theologica, Supplement 26 (2018). Open article consulted: https://scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S1015-87582018000200009&script=sci_arttext. The article presents an interpretation, not a consensus assigning specific conquest passages to fabrication.

J4-2. Jeremiah 7:5–10, 22–23, 31; 8:8–9; 19:4–9; 36. English wording checked against the King James Version; prose here paraphrases. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+7&version=KJV and https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+19&version=KJV.

J4-3. Qur'an 2:190; 5:48; 33:62; 35:43; 48:23; 60:8. Arabic and translation controls: https://quran.com/35/43 and https://quran.com/5/48. The argument for a continuous moral criterion is the author's theological inference.

8. Enoch and the Son of Man

The books called 1, 2 and 3 Enoch preserve different literary worlds. The numbering can make them look like a continuous ancient sequence. We need a separate source history for each. For Finding Injil, each contributes a different way of imagining an exalted figure who stands in a relation to God.[59]

1 Enoch and the Parables

Much of 1 Enoch belongs to an ancient Jewish collection whose constituent books have their own histories. The Parables, chapters 37–71, receive special attention here because they develop the Elect One or Son of Man. Their absence from the surviving Qumran Enoch fragments matters to the dating debate. The date of another part of the collection cannot simply be assigned to them.

In chapter 46, the humanlike figure appears with the Head of Days. Chapter 48 places his name before the creation of the stars and describes his concealment in divine presence. Later scenes give him a role in judgment and the humiliation of rulers. The narrative gives us an exalted figure whose authority is situated within a heaven presided over by the Lord of Spirits.

This is central to the study of Mark's Son of Man. It also speaks to John's language of glory before the world. The comparison asks whether an author inherited a framework in which preexistence and supreme delegated authority were possible without a second independent creator. The answer depends on the kind of existence and the kind of authority attributed in each passage.

Enoch addressed as the Son of Man

Chapter 71:14 complicates the relation between the visionary and the figure he has seen. The Ethiopic second-person wording identified in the dossier addresses Enoch as the Son of Man. Older translations and modern discussions handle the passage differently, including questions about the literary relation of chapters 70–71 to the preceding Parables.

The reading matters to a theology of exaltation. A visionary may be disclosed as the bearer of a role previously seen in heaven. Such a narrative invites comparison with a human Messiah who becomes known through a heavenly identity. It provides a conceptual possibility; the case for its influence on a specific Gospel needs evidence of contact.

The honor shown to the Son of Man needs equal care. In 48:5 and 62:9, translations use language of falling down or worship. The object of the gesture and the surrounding praise of the Lord of Spirits must be read together. English worship can compress several ancient practices of homage, petition, and cultic devotion. A critical treatment will compare the Ethiopic wording and the ritual logic of the scene.

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[59] Primary loci: 1 Enoch 37–71; 2 Enoch 22; 3 Enoch 12 and 16. For the disputed date of the Parables, see M. A. Knibb, "The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review," New Testament Studies 25.3 (1979): 345–359, DOI 10.1017/S0028688500004963. The 2009 online date in earlier notes is corrected here to the print date.

2 Enoch and transferred glory

The Slavonic apocalypse called 2 Enoch provides a striking account of transformation before God's Face. In chapter 22, Michael clothes and anoints Enoch, who becomes radiant like the heavenly beings. The scene imagines a creature receiving glory through proximity and divine action. Its preservation and disputed date require a separate account from the older Enochic books.[60]

The chapter offers a comparison for John 14:9. Seeing the bearer of divine glory can mean encountering what God has made visible through him. The interpretive force comes from transferred radiance and dependence. It does not require identifying the transformed visionary with the source of that radiance.

This relation also helps articulate the Shiʿi-style reading pursued here. A human being can become a privileged locus of divine guidance. The language of face, light, or image can then describe the encounter without assigning that being uncreated existence. Historical transmission between these traditions remains a further inquiry.

3 Enoch and the divine Name

In 3 Enoch, Enoch becomes Metatron. The developed Name-bearing tradition gives him extraordinary rank and associates him with the title Lesser YHWH, invoking the scriptural precedent of God's Name dwelling in the messenger. The surviving developed work is later than John. Its use in this book is comparative, with earlier texts such as Exodus 23 and Philo carrying greater weight for the first-century environment.

[60] 2 Enoch 22:6–10; Andrei A. Orlov, The Enoch–Metatron Tradition (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). The author's related studies of the divine Face and Metatron are identified in Dossier v7. Dating and recension differences require a separate apparatus before claims about dependence on this text are made.

The account of Aḥer in chapter 16 reveals an internal boundary. Seeing Metatron seated, he infers two powers in heaven. The narrative responds by subjecting Metatron to punishment and showing his subordinate status. This same tradition gives the heavenly minister an extraordinary title and then shows what goes wrong when someone takes it as an additional divine sovereignty.

Andrei Orlov's study of Metatron provides the detailed source discussion for this comparison. The relevant question is how a bearer can be called by the sovereign's Name while remaining fully subject to the sovereign. The question resembles the problem of ghulūw around the Imams and the Christological problem facing a tawḥīd-centered reader of John.

What the comparison can establish

Together these texts supply several accounts of exaltation: an elect judge whose name precedes the stars, a visionary transformed by glory, and a heavenly minister bearing the divine Name. Their differences give the comparison its value. Each shows how an ancient or late-antique religious writer organized authority between God and an exceptional agent.

The next chapter turns to an explicitly Christian version of the problem, in which Isaiah sees the Beloved receive a command to descend through the heavens.

9. The Ascension of Isaiah

The Ascension of Isaiah joins a prophet's martyrdom to a vision of the heavens. Its longest form contains the martyrdom material in chapters 1–5 and the ascent in chapters 6–11. The surviving versions differ in scope and detail. This book's treatment centers on the vision while retaining the work's larger concern with persecution and evil.[61]

Its account of the heavenly Beloved offers a particularly useful comparison with John. The figure possesses extraordinary glory before appearing on earth, receives a mission from the Most High, and takes forms that conceal his identity as he descends. The narrative holds preexistence and subordination within the same account.

Isaiah's ascent

An interpreting angel guides Isaiah through the heavens. As the visionary ascends, the environment becomes more glorious and his own appearance changes. The heavens are ordered spaces of authority and worship. The vision's form requires the reader to distinguish the beings encountered, even when their radiance exceeds what an earthly observer can bear.

The upper vision presents the Beloved and the angel of the Holy Spirit in relation to the supreme Glory. The text gives these figures exceptional honor, and it also depicts their worship of God. The sequence matters. Its hierarchy is part of how the author imagines the heavenly world.

Jonathan Knight argues that the Beloved's subordination to the Most High structures the work's Christology. His account links the disguised descent to an angelological pattern and to Jewish apocalyptic traditions. That interpretation supplies one scholarly account of how exaltation and received commission operate together.[62]

The commissioned descent

Chapter 10 depicts the Beloved receiving a command to descend. The journey passes through different heavenly levels, with changes of appearance that prevent recognition. His mission involves the earthly world and the realm below it before his return. The form of the journey makes agency visible: the Beloved acts under a commission that originates above him.

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[61] Ascension of Isaiah 1–11; Emily J. Gathergood, "Ascension of Isaiah," NASSCAL e-Clavis; Dexter Brown and Aaron Michael Butts, "Ascension of Isaiah 6–11 (Ethiopic Version)," in The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings, vol. 3, ed. Mark DelCogliano (2022), 3–15, DOI 10.1017/9781107449640.001. Catalogue and publisher material checked; full versional collation remains open.

[62] Jonathan Knight, "The Origin and Significance of the Angelomorphic Christology in the Ascension of Isaiah," Journal of Theological Studies 63.1 (2012): 66–105, DOI 10.1093/jts/fls060. The publisher abstract expressly describes subordination, disguise and the Jewish apocalyptic setting. The full article should be read before expanding this summary.

The comparison with John concerns this structure. John's Jesus speaks of being sent, of receiving teaching, and of doing the sender's will. He also speaks of prior glory. The Ascension shows that early Christian heavenly narratives could combine these claims within a strongly ordered cosmos. It helps us investigate the conceptual setting of such language.

The relation between the works remains to be established. A shared problem, or a related scriptural vocabulary, can support comparison without proving that one author copied the other. Darrell Hannah's study of Isaiah's vision in early Christianity is especially relevant to that exegetical setting.[63]

The worship question

I cannot simply adopt this text as a creed. I still have to account for the honor offered to the Beloved and the Spirit. A full tawḥīd reading must account for what Isaiah is instructed to do and for what the author means by those acts. The fact that the Beloved receives a commission establishes hierarchy. The cultic meaning of the honor remains a separate question.

Qur'anic scenes of prostration before Adam and Joseph give a Muslim reader reasons to distinguish acts of honor according to their setting. Revelation 22:8–9 supplies an internal Christian control, since its angel rejects the visionary's prostration and directs worship to God. These texts show different authorial boundaries. They must be compared in their full narrative settings.

Earthly life and variant forms

Chapter 11 narrates the earthly mission, including material concerning Mary and Joseph. The textual forms differ, and the dossier identifies this portion as a priority for collation. The final draft needs to specify which recension supports each proposed claim about birth, suffering, or ascent.

The work therefore adds two things to Finding Injil. It supplies a developed account of the heavenly Messiah's dependence, and it gives the infancy inquiry another Christian witness whose textual history must be reconstructed. What it gives us most clearly at this stage is a Beloved whose mission remains under the Most High.

[63] Hannah, "Isaiah's Vision in the Ascension of Isaiah and the Early Church," 80–101. This is a bibliographic lead for the Isaiah 6 comparison, drawn from the supplied Divine Name addendum; the present manuscript does not claim a demonstrated direct literary dependence between John and the Ascension.

10. The Persian Horizon

Isaiah's naming of Cyrus as God's anointed gives the Iranian part of this project a firm textual starting point. From there, the research asks whether contacts between Iranian and Jewish religious worlds help explain the development of eschatological expectations. The questions concern resurrection, final judgment, and the renewal of creation.[64]

These themes carry different histories within each corpus. The early Avestan materials need to be distinguished from later Middle Persian compilations. A late text may preserve an old tradition. We still have to show why this particular teaching should be counted as old. The date of the manuscript and the proposed date of the tradition belong in separate columns.

Contact and direction

A resemblance between two religious ideas can arise through contact or through independent elaboration of an earlier shared problem. Establishing transmission requires more than placing parallel motifs beside one another. The proposed relationship needs a plausible setting, a chronological sequence, and details distinctive enough to favor one explanation.

Shaul Shaked's discussion of Zoroastrian eschatology and its influence provides the main reference in the archive. The dating difficulty he identifies is especially important for this book. Some elaborate Iranian descriptions survive in forms later than the Jewish texts they are invoked to explain. If we claim influence, we have to bridge that gap with evidence.[65]

The chapter's current source program begins with the Gathas and the Younger Avesta, then treats the Bundahišn, Dēnkard and Zand ī Wahman Yasn as separately dated witnesses. The concepts of Saoshyant and frashokereti belong in the comparison. Detailed passage analysis remains a task for the next stage of the manuscript.

The Magi in a Christian account

The infancy traditions provide a more specific contact point. Matthew records visitors from the east. The Arabic Infancy Gospel places the Magi within a narrative that explicitly invokes Zoroaster. This is evidence that a Christian text could use Iranian religious authority to explain recognition of the Messiah.

The surviving Christian narrative may represent a retrospective appropriation of Zoroaster. It may also preserve material that traveled through eastern religious communities. The book's Magi-as-isnād proposal asks whether witnesses to an

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[64] Isaiah 45:1; Research Dossier v7, "Iranian contact hypothesis." The broader religious comparison is a proposed research program. The historical reference to Cyrus and the use of anointing language are distinct from a claim that a particular Jewish doctrine was borrowed from Iranian religion.

[65] Shaul Shaked, "Eschatology i. In Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Influence," Encyclopaedia Iranica, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/eschatology-i/. The supplied dossier uses this specialist discussion as its principal guide. Named Avestan and Middle Persian passages and their dates remain to be collated.

extraordinary infancy event could have helped carry a tradition through that setting. Its status remains a proposed route of testimony.

We now have two things to investigate under this Persian horizon. The larger eschatological comparison examines the history of ideas. The infancy comparison examines particular narrators and story forms. They can inform each other while retaining their separate evidentiary demands.

PART IV · JESUS AND THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

11. John the Baptist: The Prophet Before the Messiah

Jesus enters Mark's story by coming to another prophet's baptism. John already has a message and a public following. The encounter makes the history of Jesus's authority inseparable from the work that preceded it. If we are seeking the teachings of the Messiah, we cannot start as though nothing happened before he began to speak. Mark 1:4–11 places repentance, the Jordan and the announcement of someone greater within that past.[66]

I want to recover the Baptist as a teacher whose work contributed to the setting of Jesus's mission. The project also has a Qur'anic reason for doing so. Yaḥyā receives his own prophetic commendation. His judgment and righteousness belong to the account of Allah's guidance, even where Christian writers organize his significance around Jesus. A reconstruction that treats him only as a signpost would leave part of the prophetic inheritance unexplored.

A baptism that already required righteousness

Josephus describes John as a good man who urged justice between people and devotion toward God. His washing presupposed moral cleansing and purified the body. Herod feared the influence John exercised over the crowds and ordered his imprisonment and execution at Machaerus. Josephus supplies a political explanation of the killing and preserves a Jewish interpretation of Herod's later military defeat as divine punishment.[67]

This account gives the baptism an ethical setting. Water makes a commitment visible within a community that already owes duties to God and to its neighbors. Reading the passage alongside Mark creates a question about how repentance, forgiveness and bodily washing were related. Josephus may have expressed John's teaching in terms intelligible to his own audience. Mark embeds the rite in a proclamation that looks toward the coming Messiah. We need to hear what each says before making them agree on our behalf.

Luke's Baptist answers people who ask what repentance requires. Someone with spare clothing should share; food is treated similarly. Revenue collectors are told to observe the limits of their assessment, while soldiers must refrain from extortion and false accusations. These instructions in Luke 3:10–14 give the movement a social program concerned with the conduct of people who already possess power over others.[68]

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[66] Mark 1:4–11. The narrative and its order are the evidence used here. Primary chapter: [online source]. Comparison concerns the literary presentation before any claim of verbatim historical wording.

[67] Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.116–119. Primary passage in translation: [online source]. Josephus's account was consulted directly; his characterization remains his own presentation of John.

[68] Luke 3:10–14, text consulted at [online source]. Luke's narrative attribution and the historical origin of the instructions are separate assessments.

For the Christian-sharia inquiry, that passage deserves a place beside the Sermon on the Mount and James. Its commands reach into work and property. A person can approach a prophet with a question about salvation and receive an answer about what he does to another person's livelihood. Whether Luke preserves John's wording or expresses the Baptist's teaching through his own literary arrangement remains a historical question. The passage's practical content is available in either case, and its attribution must receive a separate grade.

How the Gospels manage the encounter

The four Gospel presentations can be placed in sequence as literary treatments without deciding their full chronology in advance. Mark narrates Jesus's baptism by John directly. Matthew supplies a dialogue in which John objects to administering it and Jesus authorizes the act. Luke places the notice of John's imprisonment before a brief account of Jesus's baptism, where the baptizer is left unnamed. The Fourth Gospel presents John's testimony about seeing the Spirit descend upon Jesus and gives no direct narrative of John performing the baptism.[69]

Those differences identify an editorial problem: how should a writer describe the Messiah receiving a rite administered by someone else? Matthew makes the question explicit through John's protest. A common historical explanation is that the memory of the baptism remained strong enough to require interpretation as Jesus's status grew. That explanation has force because it accounts for both the retained event and the changing narrative treatment. Each writer may also have had immediate theological reasons for the arrangement, including the role of the Spirit or the completion of John's ministry.

The familiar criterion of embarrassment helps formulate this inquiry but cannot carry the whole argument. A baptism can be theologically productive for an author who understands it as an anointing or a public identification. Our embarrassment need not have been theirs. The more useful evidence lies in the specific explanatory work the evangelists perform: dialogue, placement, omission of an agent, and testimony replacing a narrated encounter.

John 1:19–37 makes the Baptist a witness who rejects exalted identities for himself and directs followers toward Jesus. John 3:22–30 then depicts overlapping activity and a dispute about the movement of followers. Together these scenes make room for a history of contact between communities, even while the finished Gospel assigns a clear hierarchy. An actual transfer of some disciples is a narrower historical proposal than the claim that the whole Baptist movement recognized Jesus as its sole successor.[70]

Tabor's priestly and royal proposal

James Tabor's *The Jesus Dynasty* puts family and restoration near the center of this history. His reconstruction treats Jesus's relation to John as part of a movement that existed before

[69] Mark 1:9–11; Matthew 3:13–17; Luke 3:19–22; John 1:29–34. The editorial comparison is this chapter's analysis of the canonical passages, using their respective sequences rather than a harmonized account.

[70] John 1:19–37 and 3:22–30. Chapter 1 consulted at [online source]. The proposals about intercommunity contact are historical inferences from the narrative, with its theological hierarchy kept visible.

Jesus's independent activity. The wider project, already discussed in this manuscript, pairs a priestly role for John with a royal role for Jesus and understands James's leadership through the continuing importance of Jesus's household. The complete book has not been newly collated for this chapter; the argument is identified through the publisher's account and the research framework retained in v0.6.[71]

Luke 1 supplies a priestly family for John through Zechariah and Elizabeth. Its language about Mary's relation to Elizabeth establishes kinship at an unspecified degree. Calling the two women cousins adds a precision the Greek relationship term leaves open. Luke's description of Jesus's Davidic kingship supplies another element of Tabor's construction. A priestly and a royal figure can therefore be compared using elements actually present in Luke, while the conclusion that they jointly claimed complementary messianic offices remains a reconstruction.[72]

The Community Rule gives that reconstruction a relevant earlier setting. At 1QS 9:11, the text anticipates a prophet and the anointed figures of Aaron and Israel. John J. Collins and James Nati discuss the passage within a study of a disciplined subgroup whose life prepares for divine intervention. The scroll establishes that differentiated eschatological offices were available within some Jewish expectations. Assigning those offices to John and Jesus requires evidence about their own claims.[73]

The distinction matters when the same restoration model is used to explain resistance. A priestly pedigree and a Davidic expectation can make a movement politically consequential. They leave its chosen means of action open. Josephus attributes fear of rebellion to Herod; that report describes a ruler's calculation. An organized plan by John to launch an uprising would require further testimony. The chapter on killing and being killed can use this political setting without converting the ruler's suspicion into the prophet's manifesto.

The desert and the limits of an Essene genealogy

The wilderness and the summons to prepare God's way are shared points of reference in the Gospel presentation and the Qumran material. Their shared use invites comparison of scriptural interpretation and practices of purification. It also presents a temptation to make Qumran a missing school at which every later prophet must have studied. No source

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[71] James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), publisher account: [online source]. Compare supplied *Finding Injil* v0.6, chapter 30, “A dynasty with an earthly constituency.” Publisher description and existing authorial research consulted; no fresh complete-book reading claimed.

[72] Luke 1:5, 27, 32–36. The relationship term in 1:36 supports kinship; an exact genealogical degree is left unspecified. The priestly–royal comparison is distinct from an established agreement between the historical John and Jesus.

[73] 1QS 9:11; John J. Collins and James Nati, *The Rule of the Association and Related Texts* (Oxford University Press, 2024), chapter 5, 105–120, doi:10.1093/oso/9780198845744.003.0005. The publisher's scholarly abstract was consulted; this batch does not claim a fresh Hebrew manuscript collation.

examined for this chapter places John under a named Qumran teacher or records his admission to the community.[74]

A direct affiliation would predict more than a common landscape. We would look for distinctive rules carried from one group to another, unusual interpretive agreements, or evidence of known intermediaries. Shared dependence on Isaiah can explain a good deal of similar wilderness language. A future comparison of the immersion rules could narrow the possibilities further, provided it distinguishes repeated communal purification from a prophetic summons administered to a public audience.

For now, Qumran supplies evidence about the range of Jewish restoration expectations. The Baptist's own association with a particular sect remains unresolved. We have learned something about the ideas available to his movement. Which people actually transmitted them remains unresolved.

Yaḥyā and the inheritance Zakariyyā requests

Qur'an 19:5–6 gives Zakariyyā a concern about what will follow his death. He asks for an heir who will inherit from him and from the house of Jacob and asks that the heir be pleasing to God. Yaḥyā is then instructed to hold the Book firmly and is described through judgment, tenderness and purity. Qur'an 3:39 associates him with confirmation of a Word from Allah. The resulting portrait gives him an intelligible vocation within a continuing prophetic household.[75]

Inheritance raises several possible objects: possessions, knowledge, office, or a combination understood within the story. The passage does not enumerate these separately. For the present comparison, its clear contribution is the conjunction of a household's future and a petition for a morally worthy heir. That is relevant to the James question before any attempt is made to read a complete succession constitution into the verses.

Qur'an 2:124 places an additional condition upon the language of descendants. Abraham's request is answered with a restriction concerning wrongdoers. My proposed reading of prophetic family authority gives both passages weight. A household may carry a special obligation; its members remain answerable to the character of that obligation. The comparison works most usefully when ancestry directs inquiry toward responsibility and transmitted guidance.[76]

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[74] Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:2–4; 1QS 8–9. Collins and Nati, chapter 5, as above. John’s membership in a Qumran community is unestablished by the witnesses examined here.

[75] Qur'an 19:1–15 and 3:39. Arabic and translated text: [online source]. The inheritance discussion states the passage's possible objects of interpretation without presenting a school-specific tafsīr as consensus.

[76] Qur'an 2:124; [online source]. The connection to a morally conditioned family responsibility is the book's constructive interpretation.

An Alid comparison with its own sources

The Aaron–Moses comparison in the report known as *ḥadīth al-manzilah* furnishes a concrete Islamic example. In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404a, Muhammad speaks to ʿAlī during the expedition to Tabuk using their relationship as a model and excludes prophethood after himself. Shiʿi arguments draw enduring authority from that comparison. The report's immediate setting concerns the responsibilities entrusted to ʿAlī while Muhammad is absent, which must remain part of the assessment.[77]

This furnishes a useful distinction for Tabor's framework. Different members of a sacred movement can hold related kinds of authority, and the continuing holder need not repeat the predecessor's prophetic office. John and Jesus are both prophets in the Qur'anic account. The Muhammad–ʿAlī comparison therefore has a different configuration. Its value lies in helping us ask who teaches, who governs, who bears a commission, and what survives a founder's departure.

Al-Ṣadūq's *Kamāl al-dīn*, chapter 40 of the second volume in the consulted translation, preserves Imami reports regulating succession between brothers and descendants. These reports explicitly invoke Moses and Aaron. They show that lineage rules themselves require interpretation within a theory of divine appointment. Their particular rule concerning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn belongs to an Imami account of the Imams; it cannot be transferred wholesale onto John, Jesus or James.[78]

The comparison nevertheless changes the questions we bring to Jesus's family. We should investigate the evidence for designated responsibilities and recognized learning alongside genealogy. A family might be important because it preserves teaching, provides leadership during persecution, or claims an appointment. Different witnesses may support different functions. Tabor's restoration proposal gives those functions historical prominence; Shiʿi sources supply a developed vocabulary for distinguishing them.

Mandaean memory and a movement that outlived its founder

The persistence of a Baptist memory also deserves attention. Acts 18:24–19:7 depicts people associated with John's baptism after the period of Jesus's ministry. Luke's narrative treats their reception of further Christian teaching as necessary. The episode preserves the idea that John's religious influence continued beyond the moment at which a Gospel narrator might have brought his role to a close.[79]

Mandaean literature provides a much larger later body of memory concerning John. Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley's scholarly account allows the possibility of an early relationship

[77] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404a, Arabic and translation: [online source]. The report is cited from a Sunni collection as a shared textual point used in Shiʿi succession argument; its scope is disputed in reception.

[78] Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-niʿmah*, translated vol. 2, ch. 40, especially reports 1–5: [online source]. The transmitted reports were consulted as primary evidence for an Imami account. This chapter assigns no fresh isnād grading to them.

[79] Acts 18:24–28; 19:1–7. These are Lukan literary witnesses to a continuing Baptist-associated religious identity, rather than an independently documented membership list.

with his movement. Charles Häberl and James McGrath's critical edition of the *Mandaean Book of John* provides the text needed to investigate the question. Only the scholarly descriptions and bibliographic record were consulted for this batch, so detailed claims about individual Mandaic passages remain reserved for a direct reading.[80]

A community's preservation of John can illuminate how his authority was received. Establishing uninterrupted descent from his immediate disciples would require an independently supported sequence of people and institutions. Similarly, identifying the Qur'an's Ṣābiʾūn with one specific surviving group requires evidence beyond the prominence of a prophet shared between the traditions. The comparison is worth pursuing without assigning either claim a result in advance.

The evidence assembled here gives the Baptist a place in the book's reconstruction of religious practice. He is associated with a demanding call to righteousness, a public rite and a following that drew a ruler's attention. The Gospels then organize his relation to Jesus in different ways. The question carried into the next chapter is how those acts of organization affect our access to the words each prophet is said to have spoken.

[80] Jorunn J. Buckley, “Mandaic Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Literatures of the Roman Empire* (2016), doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199699445.013.9, abstract consulted. Charles G. Häberl and James F. McGrath, eds., *The Mandaean Book of John: Critical Edition, Translation, and Commentary* (De Gruyter, 2020), doi:10.1515/9783110487862, publisher description consulted. Full edition listed for subsequent passage-level work.

12. The Kingdom of God and the Davidic Restoration

The disciples receive a promise of thrones. In Matthew 19:28 they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel; Luke places a related promise beside Jesus's instruction that leadership must take the form of service. These are consequential words for a movement expecting God to put the world right. They give the coming order a people and assign responsibilities within it. If I am reconstructing the Messiah's teaching, I have to explain these words about government too.[81]

James Tabor's *The Jesus Dynasty* supplies a family-centered interpretation of that expectation. His reconstruction connects John's priestly ancestry, Jesus's Davidic identity and James's subsequent leadership within a restoration movement. The present discussion takes that proposal from the publisher's account and from the existing research archive; it does not claim a fresh reading of every argument in Tabor's book. The Shiʿi comparison developed here is my own. It asks how a prophetic household can carry an obligation that survives its founder, and how that obligation should be recognized when the household lacks control of the state.[82]

The king who depends upon God

Psalms of Solomon 17 offers an unusually useful companion to the Gospel promises. It petitions God for a Davidic ruler who will restore Israel, establish justice and gather a holy people. The ruler's strength is described through dependence upon God and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. He places no trust in horses, military equipment or accumulated wealth. The same poem imagines severe judgment upon sinful rulers and hostile nations. Its combination of royal authority with extraordinary reliance upon God deserves attention before we equate every restoration hope with a conventional army.[83]

The combination enlarges the range of possibilities for Jesus. A claimant could expect a public transformation without imagining that the transformation would be achieved through his followers' present military capacity. Prophetic announcement could itself be understood as an effective act within God's approaching judgment. Conversely, a community's hope for divine intervention could coexist with preparation for danger. These possibilities have different consequences for reading the sword scenes. None follows automatically from the title Messiah.

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[81] Matthew 19:27–30; Luke 22:24–30. Primary translations consulted: ebible.org and ebible.org. The interpretation of office and service is the present chapter's analysis.

[82] James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), publisher's account: simonandschuster.com. Access: publisher synopsis, together with the supplied v0.7 chapter 12 and Batch 01. Full book not newly consulted. The Shiʿi comparison is the book author's construction.

[83] *Psalms of Solomon* 17, especially 21–37 in the numbering displayed at ebible.org. Consulted as a primary translation. Verse numbering varies across editions; the relevant sequence begins with the petition for David's son and ends with his Spirit-given strength. No direct dependence of Jesus on this poem is asserted.

A ruler empowered by the Spirit is also relevant to this book's account of tawḥīd. Dependence is built into the office. The authority of the appointed person comes from the one who appoints him, while the people affected by his decisions have claims upon the way he uses that authority. Qur'an 38:26 makes truthful judgment and resistance to personal desire part of David's commission. This gives a Qur'anic reader grounds for asking about the Messiah's political responsibilities without making political power a source of divinity.[84]

What ancestry establishes

Paul's description of Jesus as David's descendant according to the flesh supplies an early textual anchor for the Davidic claim. Romans 1 also associates Jesus's status with the Spirit of holiness and resurrection. Whatever earlier formulation Paul may be using, the letter presents ancestry and exaltation together. Its wording documents an early claim about Jesus; the letter does not preserve a family register against which we can check that claim.[85]

Matthew and Luke subsequently offer genealogies within accounts of an extraordinary conception. Their treatment of Joseph makes the relation between social fatherhood and biological ancestry an immediate problem. A proposed royal pedigree through Joseph requires an account of how each evangelist understands that relationship. Tabor's reconstruction can put the question back at the center of Christian origins, but the historical answer must pass through these particular texts. The Qur'an's repeated designation of Jesus through Maryam introduces a further naming practice whose significance deserves its own examination.[86]

Mark 12:35–37 adds a useful complication. Jesus asks how the Messiah can be David's son when David calls him lord. The question gives Davidic ancestry a problem to solve within Mark's narrative. It could elevate the Messiah beyond an ordinary hereditary claimant or challenge an inadequate account of his office. A dynastic reading should explain the question rather than omit it. The title's reception already involved argument over what kind of authority David's descendant would exercise.[87]

This is where the word *dynasty* needs precision. A family can preserve knowledge, command recognition, or claim a recurring divine election. Those possibilities differ from a rule under which any eldest child inherits public office. We cannot establish one arrangement and then quietly inherit the others. I use the family hypothesis to investigate

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[84] Qur'an 38:26, quran.com. Divine appointment, judgment and desire are explicit elements; application to the Messiah is comparative reasoning.

[85] Romans 1:1–4, ebible.org. Paul's use of a prior formulation is a separate source-critical hypothesis; the present argument requires only the letter's extant wording.

[86] Matthew 1:1–25; Luke 1:26–38 and 3:23–38; Qur'an 3:45. The textual problem is already established in the supplied conception chapters. No genealogical reconstruction is adopted as independently verified.

[87] Mark 12:35–37, ebible.org. The questions raised by the passage are distinguished from a claim that its meaning can be settled by one reconstruction of messianic expectation.

access to Jesus and continuity of obligation, while leaving the mechanism of appointment to the witnesses that actually discuss it.

James within the surviving account of authority

Galatians places James among the people whose recognition matters to Paul. The account also preserves disagreement over table fellowship involving visitors from James. We therefore encounter an authority whose practical reach extends into the terms of communal life. James's prominence belongs to the earliest surviving correspondence at issue here. Paul's descriptions leave room for different explanations of that prominence, including kinship, reputation and a commission understood within the movement.[88]

Later witnesses give those explanations more narrative form. Thomas 12 directs the disciples toward James after Jesus's departure. The *Recognitions* attributes James's ordination to the Lord. Eusebius records a tradition associating his episcopal position with the Savior and the apostles. These accounts deserve a place in a designation dossier, with their literary dates and routes of survival stated beside them. Their existence corrects the earlier impression that Thomas alone contains an appointment tradition.[89]

Eusebius also preserves Clement's account of Peter, James and John choosing James the Just for leadership at Jerusalem, followed by another report about knowledge entrusted by the risen Jesus. The latter names James the Just, John and Peter as recipients who transmit it further. Election and entrusted knowledge therefore appear within the same later archive. We should ask how these reports relate before forcing them into a single constitutional mechanism.[90]

The comparison with *naṣṣ* begins at this point. A designation report claims that an office derives from an authoritative instruction. Its historical assessment requires attention to wording and transmission, while its theological assessment asks what the designating figure was entitled to confer. James's family relationship supplies a setting in which such a claim could make sense. The relationship alone supplies no transcript of the appointment.

The household comparison in Muslim sources

The *manzilah* report gives an Islamic household comparison specific content. In the account preserved by Muslim, Muhammad compares ʿAlī's relation to him with Aaron's relation to Moses while excluding a prophet after himself. The report's immediate setting concerns ʿAlī remaining behind during the Tabuk expedition. A Shiʿi interpretation gives the relationship continuing implications for authority. Other interpretations emphasize the

[88] Galatians 1:18–20 and 2:1–14, ebible.org and ebible.org. These are Paul's representations of the relationships and conflict.

[89] Gospel of Thomas 12, gospels.net; Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.43, newadvent.org; Eusebius, *Church History* 7.19, newadvent.org. The latter two are later literary witnesses; their appointment claims were added to the project's earlier Thomas-only dossier.

[90] Eusebius, *Church History* 2.1.3–4, quoting Clement's *Hypotyposes*, newadvent.org. Election and the post-resurrection entrusting of knowledge are distinct reports transmitted by Eusebius.

immediate deputation. The historical comparison must retain the reported setting as well as the words that later readers interpret.[91]

Qur'an 20:29–36 depicts Moses asking for his brother's help, and 7:142 places Aaron over the people during Moses's absence. These passages make shared formation and delegated responsibility part of the scriptural picture. The biblical account of Aaron's death before Moses limits any attempt to derive an entire posthumous succession system from their biographies alone. The relation remains valuable for understanding why family can matter to a prophetic mission even when its future institutional form requires further testimony.[92]

The *thaqalayn* report in Muslim 2408a places the Book of Allah and the Prophet's household in a public farewell address at Khumm. This version urges adherence to the Book and repeatedly reminds the hearers of their responsibility toward the household. Its exact wording matters. A formulation commanding adherence to both belongs to the history of the wider tradition and should be cited from the witness that contains it. The Muslim report itself gives the household a serious claim on communal responsibility.[93]

Al-Tirmidhī 3713 adds the *mawlā* declaration concerning ʿAlī. A Shiʿi reading understands investiture within the relation expressed by that word. Assessing the reading requires the setting and the range of the term, together with comparison to other reports. The grading record also deserves precision: al-Tirmidhī's own comment and the modern grading displayed by a digital edition are separate assessments. This is exactly the care that the James material requires when an interpreter turns recognition into a specific office.[94]

These reports explain why the Tabor question interests a reader formed by Shiʿi debates. A community can possess a scripture while disagreeing about its authorized interpreter. Close association with a founder can carry expectations of knowledge and responsibility that outlive the founder's presence. The difficult historical question concerns the public evidence through which those expectations become binding. A family's subsequent suffering can make its claim morally compelling without supplying missing words of appointment.

James and Simon in different Shiʿi constructions

An honest comparison also has to admit that the received Islamic Jesus traditions do not simply reproduce the James-centered hypothesis. Reports presented in *Jesus through Shiite Narrations* identify Simon al-Ṣafā as Jesus's appointed successor. The modern anthology

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[91] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404b, sunnah.com. Primary report and Arabic consulted. The comparison's wider scope is disputed across Muslim interpretations.

[92] Qur'an 20:29–36 and 7:142; Numbers 20:22–29; Deuteronomy 34:1–8. These passages establish the narrative relations used in the comparison; no inference about ʿAlī's full succession case follows from the chronological point alone.

[93] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2408a, sunnah.com. The distinction between adherence to the Book and the reminder concerning the household follows this report's wording; other versions require separate citation.

[94] Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī 3713, sunnah.com. Al-Tirmidhī calls the report ḥasan gharīb; the online edition also displays a Darussalam ṣaḥīḥ grading. The narration records uncertainty over the Companion's identification. A full isnād comparison was not undertaken here.

cites earlier compilations, including *al-Iqbāl* and *Maʿānī al-akhbār*. Their complete chains have not been newly examined here. Simon stays in the evidence even where James would be more convenient for my reconstruction.[95]

A modern Ismaili Gnosis essay makes James the central imamic successor while assigning Peter a different role within its scheme. That essay is valuable as a present-day theological interpretation of Christian historical material. It supplies no additional first-century witness. Its allocation of offices should be described as the essay's argument, rather than as a universal historical doctrine held by every Ismaʿili community.[96]

Several kinds of authority can coexist within one movement. A witness can travel and teach while another person presides over decisions at the movement's center. A household member may carry inherited knowledge that a missionary colleague does not claim in the same way. Paul's reference to several pillars invites investigation of such possibilities. It gives no license to attach a fully developed later hierarchy to each name. The comparative question becomes more useful when we ask what a person does and who recognizes that function.

For James, the surviving material concerns Jerusalem leadership, family relationship and an appearance tradition, together with later reports of appointment. Peter has his own body of memory. A source-critical reconstruction should give each claim its evidentiary weight before deciding how the offices fit. The Shiʿi archive helps us formulate those distinctions, including the possibility of an entrusted guide whose authority exceeds the political reach of the community that acknowledges him.

Election and moral qualification

Qur'an 2:124 puts a moral restriction inside the discussion of Abraham's descendants: the covenant does not extend to wrongdoers. Read beside the chosen families of 3:33–34, it permits a theology in which lineage matters and remains answerable to righteousness. That is the working criterion I bring to the family theme. A descendant's conduct cannot disappear behind an ancestral title.[97]

Thomas 12's claim about James and the purpose of heaven and earth can be read in the same moral register. On that reading, the righteous servant realizes something for which creation exists. The language can express purpose without telling us that James is uncreated or personally older than the world. This is a theological reading of the praise, separate from the historical question of whether Jesus uttered the saying. Its value lies in

[95] Mahdi Muntazir Qa'im, *Jesus through Shiite Narrations*, "The Successor of Jesus," reports 2–3, al-islam.org. Access: anthology translations and source attributions; earlier cited compilations and complete chains not independently collated.

[96] Ismaili Gnosis, "The Imamat of James: Brother of Jesus, Successor of Christ & Leader of Early Christianity" (2019), ismailignosis.com. Read as a modern interpretive essay; its account of offices supplies no independent ancient testimony.

[97] Qur'an 2:124 and 3:33–34, quran.com and quran.com. The moral reading of election is the author's theological argument.

allowing extraordinary responsibility while preserving the distinction between God and the human bearer of a vocation.[98]

The household hypothesis then has consequences for teaching. Those who claim continuity with Jesus should be asked what they preserve from his conduct and whose interests their authority protects. The Epistle of James gives us a severe test in its treatment of partiality and withheld wages, although the authorship of that letter remains an independent issue. A succession argument that never reaches the treatment of the poor leaves the practical meaning of succession unexplained.

Restraint as an exercise of authority

Letter 62 in *Nahj al-Balāgha* attributes to ʿAlī a recollection of initially withholding support and later acting to protect a threatened religious community. As transmitted in al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's later collection, the passage presents political loss as something a claimant can weigh against a wider trust. Its documentary history needs independent study. The received model nevertheless makes restraint intelligible as a decision taken under responsibility.[99]

That model helps frame the Gospel arrest problem. A teacher can possess a claim to authority and refuse to validate an armed companion's action at a particular moment. The refusal could concern the justice of the act, its consequences for followers, or an understanding of the mission's appointed course. Each proposed motive still requires Gospel evidence. The Alid comparison helps us ask better questions about restraint. We still have to find Jesus's instructions in the Gospel evidence.

Letter 53's instructions concerning government add a more public test. The governor is charged with care for the people and warned against the corruptions of power. In a comparison with the promised thrones of Israel, that concern directs attention toward what the office-holder owes those he judges. Mercy acquires institutional consequences through access to justice and the treatment of people with little influence.[100]

The restored kingdom should therefore be examined through the law its claimants teach. Luke places service within the immediate setting of the disciples' future authority. The next chapter follows that connection into the Sermon's requirements concerning injury and property. The family thesis earns its religious significance where inherited responsibility becomes an intelligible obligation toward other people.

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[98] Gospel of Thomas 12, gospels.net. The teleological interpretation preserves the research project's stated premise and does not determine the saying's date.

[99] *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 62, al-islam.org. Translation consulted as a received attribution to ʿAlī; its independent documentary provenance has not been established in this batch.

[100] *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 53, al-islam.org. The comparison concerns the received letter's ethics of government. It is not evidence that Jesus's followers possessed this later text.

13. Mark, Matthew and Luke

The Synoptic Gospels provide the largest connected body of material for a sayings collection. Their shared scenes make comparison possible, while differences in wording expose the work of transmission and interpretation. My original preference for Mark remains part of the project's intellectual history. I now have to judge each passage separately.[101]

Mark's Messiah

Mark presents Jesus within a world of urgent divine action and approaching judgment. The baptism is central to the inquiry into sonship and Spirit. It can be read in relation to divine commissioning, while the precise claim an author makes about Jesus's status has to be established from the whole narrative.

Two sayings are immediate priorities. In Mark 10:18, Jesus directs the discussion of goodness toward God. In Mark 12:29, he begins the greatest commandment with Israel's confession of the one Lord. These passages provide strong material for a tawḥīd-centered account of his teaching. Their historical assessment also needs the parallel traditions and the source relations among them.

The Son of Man sayings bring the apocalyptic chapters of this book directly into the Gospel. Mark 13:26 and 14:62 invoke heavenly coming and authority. Daniel is an explicit point of comparison; the Enochic Parables may illuminate the figure's wider interpretation. The strength of the Daniel connection and the proposed relation to Enoch should receive their own judgments.

Mark's ending deserves particular care. The discussion of the longer ending concerns the material after 16:8. The preceding narrative already includes the announcement that Jesus has been raised in 16:6. We would misstate the surviving text if we said the short ending lacked an explicit resurrection announcement. An earlier research formulation blurred that distinction; the appendix records the correction.[102]

Matthew's law and lineage

Matthew gives the inquiry into Christian law especially substantial material. The discourse in chapters 5–7 sets moral conduct within an account of the law and its fulfillment. The Gospel also preserves a genealogy through Joseph and a conception narrative that attributes the pregnancy to the Holy Spirit. Their combination supplies the question developed in the Maryam chapter.

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[101] Mark, Matthew and Luke; original Finding Injil fragment, pp. 7–10; Dossier v7, "Gospel genealogy" and sayings-grade pilot. This chapter carries forward the comparative questions in those sources. A full appraisal of Markan priority, Q, Farrer-type models and Marcion/Luke remains open.

[102] Mark 16:1–8, especially 16:6. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' published text and accompanying note on Mark 16 were checked. The distinction corrects the earlier suggestion that the short ending contained no explicit resurrection announcement.

The genealogy's historical purpose requires examination. It can function as a claim about belonging, royal legitimacy, or familial recognition. A modern assumption that only biological paternity can carry every form of descent would narrow the ancient possibilities before the evidence is read. My proposed comparison with Jewish-Christian birth traditions therefore begins with the textual tension and asks how ancient communities handled it.

Matthew 19:17 provides a concentrated example of possible theological editing. Its wording differs from Mark's question about calling Jesus good. The variants within Matthew must be examined before treating one printed form as the entire textual record. The point of the comparison is to identify the history of the sentence and the effect of its changing formulation.

The baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 has occupied an important place in the project's discussions with Christians. The present archive does not provide a manuscript witness establishing its absence from an earlier Matthew. The proposed addition remains a textual or literary hypothesis that needs positive evidence. Its Trinitarian use in later doctrine belongs to another part of the inquiry.[103]

Luke's connected history

Luke gives the infancy inquiry a different narrative setting and connects the Gospel with the account of the early movement in Acts. The announcement to Mary, the role of the Spirit, and the birth of John the Baptist require comparison with the Qur'anic narratives as well as with Matthew. The differences create distinct historical questions about sources and literary aims.

Luke also preserves sayings whose social emphasis matters to this book. The blessing of the poor in Luke 6:20 should be compared with Matthew 5:3. The saying about serving God and wealth appears in Luke 16:13 and Matthew 6:24. These comparisons ask whether a common saying has been applied differently, and whether the textual relationship gives independent support for an earlier form.

[103] Matthew 28:19; Ruh Qudus, p. 1; Dossier v7, "Immediate source-critical errata." The author's interpolation proposal is preserved as a research question. The source set contains no manuscript demonstration of an earlier Matthew lacking the formula.

Acts adds an account of the movement after Jesus. Its presentation of James and the decision concerning Gentile converts becomes central to the reconstruction of Christian law. Paul's own letters provide another witness to his relationship with Jerusalem. Each account should be read before a harmonized narrative is constructed.

Q and the alternatives

The source usually called Q is a reconstruction used to explain material shared by Matthew and Luke within a particular model of their relationship. The archive also includes Farrer-type alternatives and the disputed relation between Luke and Marcion's Gospel. These models can change the apparent independence and age of a saying.

The first manuscript therefore keeps the source assumptions beside the individual passage records. If my grade for a saying depends on Q, the reader needs to know that. Material shared by Matthew and Luke continues to be evidence even where scholars dispute the document or literary relationship that best explains it.

13A. The Gospel of Teshuvah: Luke and the Messiah Who Called the World to Repentance

Which Gospel does the Qurʾān send us to read?

The alleged Islamic dilemma usually begins by identifying the Injīl with the New Testament and then identifying the New Testament with the faith of the councils. The Muslim is told that the Qurʾān confirms the Gospel, that the Gospel teaches the divinity of Christ, and that the Qurʾān therefore confirms the very doctrine it rejects. The argument arrives at Nicaea before anybody has opened Luke.

I have spent much of this book explaining why the Fourth Gospel deserves serious attention. The promised figure in John 16 has made that investigation unavoidable, and John 1 raises a real question about the Word whom God sends into the world. Yet the instruction in Qurʾān 5:46–48 concerns revelation given to Jesus and the obligation of its people to judge by what God revealed. The text names the Injīl. It does not announce a fourth-century creed as the criterion for recovering the Messiah's religion.

The question turns instead on the content of the message. What did Jesus call people to do? What did he say God would forgive? What sort of person becomes fit to receive the Kingdom? The Gospel of Luke gives those questions a force that our earlier Synoptic comparison treated far too briefly.

Luke contains a Gospel of return. Its tax collectors restore what they have taken. The wealthy are ordered to open their hands. A father receives the son who has wasted his inheritance. A condemned man is promised a place with Jesus, and an unjust execution becomes a summons to repent. The Acts of the Apostles continues this account of forgiveness in the proclamation of a risen Messiah.

The Jewish word *teshuvah*, return, gives this movement its proper background. Hebrew Scripture calls wrongdoers to turn from violence, repair injustice, and seek the mercy of God. Luke's Greek vocabulary of *metanoia*, repentance, and *epistrophē*, turning, develops the same practical concern within its own story. The correspondence is conceptual and scriptural; it is not evidence that Jesus or Luke pronounced the later technical rabbinic formulas word for word.

I want to recover that Gospel before assigning its author the theology of Paul or the metaphysics of Nicaea. Luke makes the problem more interesting because his companion volume, Acts, spends much of its time vindicating Paul. The writer who defended Paul's mission nevertheless gave us a salvation narrative with a different center of gravity from the account of the cross in Paul's surviving letters.

The Baptist: repentance you can measure

Luke announces his moral program before Jesus begins his public ministry. John the Baptist calls for a baptism of repentance connected with the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).

When the crowd asks what repentance requires, he answers with instructions capable of being obeyed that afternoon.

Whoever has two tunics must share with someone who has none. Whoever has food must do likewise. Tax collectors must take only what is authorized. Soldiers must abandon extortion, false accusation, and exploitation of their position (Luke 3:10–14).

These commands describe the return of ordinary economic and civic relationships to justice. A person's changed relation to God becomes visible in how he treats someone vulnerable to his power. The question of forgiveness immediately acquires a material dimension.

The comparison with Jewish scripture is direct. Isaiah 1:16–18 orders its audience to cease evil, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow; the promise of cleansing follows the summons. Ezekiel 18:21–32 describes a wrongdoer turning from his sins and doing what is just and right. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and summons them to live. The later Jewish language of *teshuvah* develops precisely this nexus of return, repentance, and restored conduct.

Leviticus 5:20–26 in Hebrew numbering, commonly 6:1–7 in English, and Numbers 5:6–7 add restitution and confession to the treatment of dishonest gain. The texts belong to a cultic world that still knows sacrifice. Their moral structure prevents sacrifice from substituting for the repair of an identifiable injury.

This matters for the contrast with Mark. Mark also opens with John's baptism and his proclamation of repentance (Mark 1:4). The tradition of return therefore precedes Luke's literary intervention. Luke expands the Baptist's message into a direct social instruction and gives us a particularly concrete account of its fruit. The difference is in the space the evangelist devotes to making repentance visible.

The Baptist's hearers are already members of a religious society. They ask what to do, and the answer addresses food, clothing, wages, and force. There is no passage through a doctrine of a second divine person before they are allowed to begin obeying God.

Good news for the poor

In Luke 4:16–21 Jesus reads Isaiah at Nazareth. The Spirit of the Lord has anointed him to announce good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed. He declares the scripture fulfilled in their hearing. The passage draws especially on Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6. Its imagery belongs to liberation, restoration, and a divine appointment expressed in acts among human beings.

The word translated release, *aphesis*, can denote release from captivity or debt as well as forgiveness of sins in other contexts. The resonance matters to a Gospel in which poverty and exclusion repeatedly become questions of salvation. We should avoid flattening every use of the word into one technical theory of atonement.

Luke's Beatitudes address the poor directly (6:20) and attach corresponding woes to the wealthy (6:24–26). Matthew's familiar formulation blesses the poor in spirit. The differing wording reflects a change in the represented audience and its moral urgency. Luke's

hungry receive a promise of satisfaction; the satiated are warned. The text concerns the distribution of comfort and the coming reversal of fortunes.

The pattern continues in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). The gulf between them in the afterlife exposes a social gulf that the rich man left untouched in life. The parable's closing appeal to Moses and the prophets gives the ethical accusation a scriptural foundation. The wealthy man's brothers already possess the instruction they need.

Another rich man receives an even more direct warning. In Luke 18:18–30, Jesus instructs a ruler to sell what he has and distribute it to the poor. The command is embedded within a discussion of entering life and the Kingdom. The attachment to possessions obstructs the response Jesus demands.

Luke knows forms of wealth used in support of the community. His concern is moral responsibility rather than a mathematical prohibition on possessing anything. The repeated warnings nevertheless make the rich person's relation to the poor a central part of the narrative's theology.

The Qurʾānic comparison is immediate. Sūrat al-Māʾida links right belief with righteous action in 5:69. Sūrat al-Balad describes the difficult path through freeing the enslaved and feeding people in hunger (90:11–16). Sūrat al-Māʿūn condemns those who deny judgment while neglecting or repulsing the vulnerable (107:1–7). Luke's account of good news to the poor belongs in conversation with these passages because each gives material content to religious fidelity.

Zacchaeus and the arithmetic of forgiveness

The clearest example is the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10). He is a chief tax collector and wealthy. His work places him inside a revenue system in which opportunities for exploitation are obvious. Jesus chooses to stay at his house, and the crowd protests that he has gone to a sinner.

Zacchaeus responds by giving half his possessions to the poor and promising fourfold repayment to anyone he has defrauded. Jesus declares that salvation has come to the house and describes his mission as seeking and saving what was lost.

The order is theologically revealing. The narrative gives Jesus's recognition of the man, Zacchaeus's declaration about property, and the announcement of salvation. The sinner becomes visible through what happens to his wealth.

The Greek verbs in 19:8 are present forms: *didōmi*, I give, and *apodidōmi*, I repay. Scholars debate whether the words describe an existing habit or constitute a public pledge beginning now. The future-directed reading fits the narrative of a man receiving Jesus amid the crowd's accusation. Ladislav Tichý's grammatical study argues for this understanding, while other interpreters defend a customary sense that would vindicate Zacchaeus against the crowd. Under either reading, the economic conduct is central evidence in Luke's account of this man.

The fourfold repayment carries biblical legal associations. Exodus 22 distinguishes restitution according to the offense, while Leviticus and Numbers require acknowledgment and repair for dishonest gain. Zacchaeus's response exceeds the simplest available repayment requirement. It is repentance with an account ledger.

This is the Jewish language of return made practical. One who has taken from another cannot complete his return simply by announcing a new conviction while keeping the proceeds. The injured person has a claim.

Here a theological system that treats salvation solely as the cancellation of a penalty by an innocent third party leaves out much of Luke's narrative. Jesus recognizes transformation in the relationship between a wrongdoer, his neighbors, and God. The text gives the reader specific grounds on which to recognize it.

The ethical analogy with Islamic repentance follows naturally. *Tawbah* requires turning away from wrongdoing. Where the wrong concerns another person's property, restitution becomes part of the moral question. This common structure is more illuminating than an argument about whether one scripture has already certified the entirety of another religion's later creed.

The father who runs to meet his son

Luke 15 gives the argument a domestic image. A younger son demands his share of his father's property, leaves home, wastes his inheritance, and is reduced to hunger. He prepares a confession and returns. His father sees him from a distance, runs to embrace him, and restores him to the household. The elder son's resentment brings the question of justice and mercy into the family itself.

The father initiates the welcome before the younger son can complete his prepared speech. The son's decision to return still belongs to the narrative. The story stages divine mercy as the restoration of a relationship broken by waste, estrangement, and self-ruin.

A transactional theory of forgiveness has difficulty becoming the plot of this parable. The father gives no account of an innocent substitute against whom the younger son's penalty is charged. The cost of the son's waste was real. The father chooses the restoration of his child, and the elder son is invited to rejoice at the recovery of someone lost.

There are Jewish antecedents for the language and imagination. Hosea 14 begins with a call to Israel to return to the Lord; the prophet speaks of healing their apostasy and loving them freely. Ezekiel 33:10–20 returns to the problem of guilt, repentance, and life. Psalm 51 brings confession, contrition, and sacrifice into a difficult relationship, insisting upon a broken spirit while later speaking of acceptable sacrifices. The Hebrew scriptures contain more than one model of how purification and mercy work.

Luke's parable is therefore evidence for a recognizable Jewish theology of return. It cannot be made into a recorded transcript of Jesus's exact words without a further historical inquiry. Its moral argument is present in the surviving Gospel and deserves evaluation on its own terms.

The same chapter contains the lost sheep and lost coin. Heaven's joy over the one who repents provides the interpretive frame. The return of the lost is the event the narrative wants the hearer to understand.

The tax collector in the Temple

Luke 18:9–14 gives us a shorter treatment. A Pharisee describes his fasting and tithing. A tax collector stands at a distance and asks God for mercy, acknowledging that he is a sinner. Jesus says the latter goes down to his house justified.

The scene places the appeal for forgiveness inside the Temple and in direct address to God. The man asks for mercy. Jesus announces the outcome. The contrast concerns the moral posture of the worshipper, particularly the danger of self-exaltation and contempt for others.

The tax collector's confession and Zacchaeus's restitution supply complementary descriptions of return. One places the sinner's need before God; the other shows how the sinner's wealth can be returned to the community he has injured. Together, they offer a fuller account than an abstract declaration that one has been justified.

Luke does not abolish the Temple by setting these scenes there. His Gospel opens with priestly service, concludes with disciples worshipping in the Temple, and continues through Acts with followers of Jesus attending its precincts. A reconstruction of Luke as a simple opponent of all sacrificial Judaism would miss that literary setting. His account nevertheless allows forgiveness to appear through repentance, prayer, and restored conduct before any explanation of penal substitution.

Mark's ransom and Luke's serving Messiah

Bart Ehrman has made the central literary comparison with useful force. In his 2017 discussion of Luke's theology and in a February 2026 episode of *Misquoting Jesus*, he argues that Luke deliberately reshapes Mark's account of Jesus's death. For Ehrman, Mark presents the death as a ransom, whereas Luke understands the unjust execution as an event that exposes the people's wrongdoing and prompts repentance.[1]

The comparison begins in Mark 10:42–45. Jesus instructs his disciples to abandon the ambition of rulers who dominate others. He says the Son of Man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. The Greek term *lytron* supplies an explicit redemptive image.

Luke 22:24–27 preserves the dispute about greatness and the call to service in its own setting. Jesus presents himself as the one who serves. The ransom declaration does not appear. This is an observable difference in the extant narratives, consistent with Luke's use of Mark and with the editorial choices that the historian must explain.

The omission is important. It cannot carry the entire case for Luke's theology. An author may omit a saying for reasons of narrative selection while retaining its substance elsewhere. We must therefore inspect the Passion, the resurrection speeches, and the passages that do speak of Jesus's blood.

It also matters what Mark means by ransom. A ransom saying by itself does not set out the later account of God transferring the judicial punishment owed by sinners onto an

innocent substitute. John Van Maaren's 2025 study reads Mark's ransom in the setting of Israel's restoration and the Gospel's first-century Judaism. That proposal makes a Jewish redemptive interpretation available within Mark itself. We can distinguish ransom, sacrificial participation, moral example, and penal substitution before claiming that one author adopted or rejected them all together.[2]

The relation between Mark and Paul must be submitted to the same restraint. Paul writes explicitly of Christ dying for sins in 1 Corinthians 15:3 and develops an argument about redemption in Romans 3. Mark's ransom and covenant-blood language resemble important Pauline claims, but the Gospel does not identify its author as Paul's scribe. John Van Maaren's 2024 evaluation disputes the inference that Mark was distinctly Pauline on the available evidence.[2]

My own earlier preference for Mark as the most promising Gospel was based partly on its relative chronological priority. That criterion helps reconstruct transmission. It supplies no blanket warrant that every Markan theological elaboration must be more original than every expression preserved in Luke. A later author can retain an early saying while giving it a new literary setting. Passage-level attribution remains the discipline this book has undertaken.

An execution that turns the crowd toward repentance

Luke's crucifixion scene gives Ehrman's comparison its force. Mark 15:34 presents the dying Jesus crying out in apparent abandonment. Luke 23:46 gives him words of trust as he entrusts his spirit to the Father.

Mark narrates the Temple curtain tearing after Jesus dies. In Luke, the tearing is mentioned before the final cry. Mark's centurion calls Jesus Son of God. Luke's centurion calls him *dikaios*, righteous or innocent. Then the crowds who have seen the events return beating their breasts (Luke 23:47–48).

The breast-beating is not an empty detail. Luke has already described the tax collector beating his breast while calling on God for mercy (18:13). The Passion supplies another image of people who have witnessed wrongdoing and are moved toward grief. Luke's narrator has arranged the execution so that Jesus's righteousness and the onlookers' response occupy the foreground.

The prayer in Luke 23:34, asking the Father to forgive those responsible because they do not know what they are doing, fits this account closely. Its textual history is contested. Some early witnesses, including P75, lack the prayer. Ehrman has argued that it belonged to Luke and was omitted under later anti-Jewish pressure; Whitlark and Parsons have argued that it was inserted as Gospel traditions were harmonized around seven sayings from the cross.[3] The manuscript does not get to settle this dispute by choosing the reading that best suits our theology.

Even if the prayer is omitted from the earliest recoverable Luke, Acts 7:60 gives Stephen a similar plea on behalf of his killers. Luke has made the suffering of the righteous and their mercy toward persecutors part of the continuing history of the movement.

The criminal beside Jesus presents another difficulty for a mechanical theory of penance. He acknowledges the justice of his own sentence and Jesus's innocence, asks to be remembered, and is promised Paradise (Luke 23:39–43). The narrative does not describe an opportunity to make economic restitution. Forgiveness remains a gift. Its human response is confession, recognition, and trust.

This gives us an account of martyrdom. Jesus suffers unjust execution, retains his fidelity to God, and becomes a model of trust and mercy for those who will suffer after him. Acts repeats the narrative pattern in Stephen's death. Calling the crucifixion exemplary captures a real Lukan emphasis, while the full theological explanation of the event still has to face Luke's sacrificial passages.

The difficult cup: Luke 22:19–20

The strongest textual challenge to Ehrman's reading comes at the Last Supper.

In the familiar longer form of Luke 22:19–20, Jesus identifies the bread with his body given for his followers and the cup with a new covenant in his blood, poured out for them. The wording carries an obvious sacrificial or covenantal resonance. Luke's theology cannot be reconstructed as though the passage were absent from every witness.

Codex Bezae and certain Western witnesses preserve a shorter form omitting the latter part of verse 19 and verse 20. Many early and important manuscripts, including P75, support the longer wording. The problem involves more than two uniform textual families, because early versional witnesses preserve several arrangements and expansions.

Ehrman defends the shorter form as original, regarding the longer wording as a scribal introduction of a more sacrificial theology. This is a text-critical argument with a history, not an established discovery of Luke's lost autograph. Rob James's 2024 study of the Greek and Syriac variants reaches the opposite conclusion. His analysis argues that the longer version is closer to the original and that the shorter versions share a more complex transmission relationship than the conventional labels suggest.[4]

The chapter must be readable whichever text-critical conclusion is eventually established.

If the shorter form is original, Luke's editing of Mark supplies additional evidence for an account of the cross built around repentance, vindication, and the resurrection. If the longer form is original, Luke combines his extensive repentance theology with a covenantal declaration concerning the death of Jesus.

Neither result, by itself, establishes the full later doctrine of penal substitution. A covenant ratified in blood and a theory of transferred criminal punishment are distinguishable ideas. The historian needs to determine what work the blood performs in the passage and how the author develops that claim elsewhere.

One more verse complicates the picture: Luke 22:37 cites Isaiah 53:12, concerning the servant numbered with transgressors. That gives Luke an identifiable relationship with Isaiah's suffering-servant tradition. The broader passage in Isaiah 53 has been read sacrificially, and Acts 8:32–35 later applies a passage about the suffering servant to Jesus.

Holly Beers documents how Luke's use of Isaiah also makes the servant a model for disciples.[5]

A reading of Luke's cross that erases these scriptural associations would lose evidence. The aim is to determine whether Luke locates the saving action principally in a penal transaction, in the vindication and exaltation of the righteous servant, or in a broader history of liberation and restored relationship with God.

Acts: what Peter and Paul actually preach

The answer begins to emerge in the speeches of Acts.

At Pentecost, Peter announces Jesus's death, God's raising of him, and his exaltation. The hearers ask what they should do. Peter instructs them to repent and be baptized for forgiveness (Acts 2:22–38).

In Acts 3:13–19, Peter accuses his hearers of rejecting the holy and righteous servant, acknowledges their ignorance, announces that God has fulfilled what was foretold, and calls them to repent and turn back so that their sins may be wiped away. The words express a recognizable connection between the unjust suffering of Jesus and the hearers' conversion. They do not describe a payment of divine punishment transferred to him.

Acts 5:30–31 again associates the killing of Jesus, God's resurrection and exaltation of him, and the granting of repentance and forgiveness to Israel. The saving gift comes through the Messiah whom God has vindicated.

Acts 10:43 announces forgiveness in his name to everyone who believes. Acts 13:38–39 places the proclamation of forgiveness on the lips of Paul himself. Acts 26:20 attributes to Paul's mission the demand for repentance, turning to God, and deeds appropriate to repentance.

This is an exceptionally important fact for the book's argument. The writer of Acts makes Paul preach a message recognizably close to the program of the Baptist and of Luke's Jesus. Its announced response is an altered life under the authority of the risen Messiah.

We should not treat a speech attributed to Paul in Acts as an independent transcript of the historical Paul's words. It is Luke's representation of Paul, and it tells us how this author wished his audience to understand the apostle's mission.

Paul's own letters provide another witness. Romans 3:21–26, Galatians 2, and 1 Corinthians 15 place substantial weight upon the death of Christ and its saving significance. Paul also teaches divine judgment according to conduct (Romans 2:6–11) and speaks of God's kindness leading people to repentance (Romans 2:4). The difference is therefore a matter of emphasis and mechanism, rather than a universe in which Paul has no interest in moral repair.

Acts gives us the evangelist's theology in the mouths of the movement's great missionaries. That gives his distinct message a history without requiring us to identify him as Paul's personal stenographer.

The blood in Acts 20:28

Acts 20:28 makes a stronger challenge. In Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders, he tells them to shepherd the community that God or the Lord acquired through blood. The exact form is textually debated, including whether the phrase means God's own blood or the blood of his own, understood as his Son. Both textual and translation decisions affect the Christological force of the sentence.[6]

Its language places the community's acquisition in relation to blood. That is a redemptive claim inside Luke–Acts and it deserves to stand in the account.

David M. Moffitt's 2016 article offers a substantial interpretation of the larger pattern. Moffitt argues that Luke treats Jesus's exaltation as part of a sacrificial movement into God's presence. On his account, Jewish sacrifice comprises a ritual process whose significance extends beyond the killing of a victim. Acts associates forgiveness and purification with Jesus's exaltation because the risen Messiah completes his priestly work before God.[7]

Moffitt therefore explains much of the material Ehrman emphasizes while retaining sacrificial atonement. His proposal is an important test of any argument that Luke dispenses with every sacrificial category.

I am most concerned with the narrower conclusion. The surviving text gives us a Gospel in which the Messiah repeatedly teaches return, repair, and mercy; Acts proclaims forgiveness through repentance and the risen Messiah. Whether its author also understood Jesus's death and exaltation as a sacrificial event, these themes remain constitutive of his religious message.

The historical question of penal substitution is more specific still. Luke's story never supplies a systematic explanation that the Father imposed the sinner's deserved judicial penalty upon Jesus and thereby enabled forgiveness. Later theologians may construct such an account from the wider canon. The construction must be identified as theological synthesis rather than an unmediated quotation of Luke's own explanatory language.

The author who defended Paul

Luke's relationship to Paul has sometimes been settled through a familiar story: the author was Luke the physician, Paul's traveling companion, and therefore a reliable interpreter of Paul's doctrine. The texts themselves give a less direct route to that conclusion.

The Gospel and Acts are anonymous. Their shared addressee and the opening of Acts identify a literary relationship, and they are usually attributed to one author. The name Luke comes from early Christian attribution. Colossians 4:14 mentions a physician named Luke, while Philemon 24 mentions Luke among Paul's fellow workers; the disputed authorship of Colossians and the absence of a demonstrated authorial link to the Gospel matter to the historical argument.

The first-person plural passages in Acts describe some journeys as 'we' travel. They have been used to defend eyewitness authorship. Other explanations appeal to incorporated travel sources or narrative convention. Sean A. Adams has reviewed the hypotheses and

their limitations; modern scholarship includes defenders and critics of the companion identification.[8]

Bart Ehrman argues that the narrative of Paul's journeys and disputes in Acts differs too substantially from Paul's autobiographical account to assume the author was his intimate associate. Galatians 1–2 and Acts 9, 15 and 21 provide the major comparison points. Ehrman's inference about authorship follows from his assessment of those discrepancies.[9]

Our manuscript already examines Acts 15 and Galatians 2 in Chapter 25. Acts gives James a public judgment concerning Gentile obligations and subsequently vindicates Paul before accusations that he has rejected Moses. The narrative does literary and apologetic work: it joins Paul to the apostolic movement and presents a shared story of divine guidance.

An author can defend Paul's legitimacy without sharing every element of the theological framework in Paul's letters. That is precisely what the Gospel of Luke and Acts invite us to investigate. The purpose of Acts makes the representation of Paul especially consequential.

The question about Mark demands similar care. His Gospel offers ransom and covenant blood; Paul gives the death of Christ a central saving role. That overlap warrants comparison. It supplies no signed document showing Mark working as Paul's secretary. Van Maaren's alternative reading places Mark's ransom within Israel's restoration. If we are reconstructing the first century, we should begin with what each narrative actually says and trace proposed dependencies from there.

The historical conclusion is a limited one with substantial consequences. Luke–Acts belongs to a tradition of Jesus interpretation that engages Paul's mission while possessing an independent literary and theological profile. The author cannot be reduced to an amanuensis whose every sentence is a paraphrase of Paul's own thought.

Israel's restoration and the Gospel's law

Luke situates repentance inside the story of Israel. The infancy hymns invoke the promises to Abraham and David. Simeon expects consolation, and Anna speaks to those waiting for Jerusalem's redemption. The risen Jesus explains Israel's scriptures to his followers, and Acts presents the announcement as a fulfillment of promises rather than a new deity replacing the God of Israel.

Jason A. Staples has argued that Luke–Acts retains an expectation of Israel's eventual national restoration, a program larger than the salvation of isolated individuals. The prophetic orientation of the Gospel matters because a theology of forgiveness can serve the restoration of a people, their justice, and their worship.[10]

Luke 10:25–37 places the question of inheriting eternal life beside the commandments to love God and neighbor. The parable of the Samaritan makes neighborliness recognizable in acts of rescue. At Luke 11:42 Jesus criticizes religious precision that neglects justice and the love of God. The Gospel's controversy over religious law frequently concerns the moral purpose of an obligation.

This is where the argument reconnects with James and the Christian-sharia chapters. The Messiah's religion cannot be reconstructed solely as a list of metaphysical beliefs. His followers receive obligations concerning money, strangers, prayer, justice, mercy, and the misuse of authority. The early church's disagreements about circumcision and fellowship require source criticism, while Luke's Gospel has already given a substantive program of righteous life.

The Qurʾān calls the People of the Injīl to judge by what God revealed within it (5:47) and associates the distinct communities with law and a way (5:48). If the Injīl is the guidance given to Jesus, Luke's preserved teachings about return and mercy belong among the candidate materials for our reconstruction. Their exact historical attribution remains the object of the FI saying dossiers. Their content has a direct bearing on the life of anyone claiming to follow the Messiah.

There is an unavoidable test in the language of Luke's wealthy people. Does a confession about salvation alter what the believer does with the food he possesses while a hungry neighbor waits? Luke treats that question as religiously decisive. The Qurʾān's injunctions concerning feeding the poor and honest conduct make the comparison more than a shared moral slogan.

The Gospel that becomes a life

The earlier chapter on Ibn Masʿūd proposed that Jesus can be understood as the Injīl made flesh: a life through which God's revelation becomes visible. The analogy with ʿĀʾisha's report that Muḥammad's character was the Qurʾān, and the report joining ʿAlī with the Qurʾān, turns our attention toward lived fidelity and the guardianship of revelation.

Luke gives that proposal an ethical content. The word carried by Jesus reaches the poor through food, the defrauded through restitution, the estranged through reconciliation, and the guilty through the possibility of return. It reaches the powerful as a demand that their authority cease to crush those entrusted to them.

This is a Gospel for people who have done harm. The prodigal returns home. The tax collector seeks mercy. Zacchaeus opens his ledger. At the execution of the innocent Messiah, witnesses confront their own complicity. After the resurrection, the instruction goes out that repentance and forgiveness are to be proclaimed to the nations in his name (Luke 24:46–47).

That final commission makes the relationship between the Messiah's suffering and the repentance of the world explicit. Christians can legitimately disagree about the sacrificial implications of Luke's narrative. Our source audit has identified the verses that bear on that disagreement, especially 22:19–20 and Acts 20:28. Whatever resolution emerges from the textual history, the Gospel's command to turn and repair remains intact.

The alleged Islamic dilemma is therefore badly posed when it treats the confirmation of the Injīl as confirmation of every later Christian proposition about the Messiah. It gives the text of the councils the position of revelation and then asks the Qurʾān to ratify it. Our inquiry begins with the revelation and teaching attributed to Jesus, grades the witnesses, and follows what they ask of human beings.

Luke's Gospel has given us a demanding candidate for that work. God calls people back. Forgiveness is announced, injustice is named, and the sinner is expected to change his life. Atonement theories can be examined against that proclamation; they cannot take its place.

The Messiah's good news is recognizable when the wrongdoer turns toward God and the person he has harmed finds justice.

Source notes and cross-references

1. Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, episode 174, “The Surprising Reason Luke Removed Atonement from His Gospel,” 17 February 2026: https://learn.bartehrman.com/episode/JdtRG4QTLNs ; and “Did Luke Have a Doctrine of the Atonement?,” 24 September 2017: https://ehrmanblog.org/did-luke-have-a-doctrine-of-the-atonement-mailbag-september-24-2017/ . The argument that Luke has removed atonement is Ehrman's interpretation and is tested against competing readings below.

2. John Van Maaren, “Is the Gospel of Mark Distinctly Pauline? A Critical Evaluation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 143.1 (2024): 125–142, https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1431.2024.7 ; *The Gospel of Mark's Judaism and the Death of Christ as Ransom for Many* (Mohr Siebeck, 2025), https://www.mohrsiebeck.com/en/book/the-gospel-of-marks-judaism-and-the-death-of-christ-as-ransom-for-many-9783161644122/ . These challenge a direct equation of Mark's ransom theology with a Pauline or later penal theory.

3. Luke 23:34a textual variant: Bart D. Ehrman, “Did Jesus Pray ‘Father Forgive Them’ from the Cross?,” 24 March 2019, https://ehrmanblog.org/did-jesus-pray-father-forgive-them-from-the-cross/ ; Jason A. Whitlark and Mikeal C. Parsons, “The ‘Seven’ Last Words: A Numerical Motivation for the Insertion of Luke 23.34a,” *New Testament Studies* 52.2 (2006): 188–204, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688506000117 . The witnesses and motives for omission/insertion remain disputed.

4. Rob James, “Variant Readings of Luke 22:15–20 and the Relationship of Codex Bezae to Curetonian Syriac,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 75.2 (2024): 336–355, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flae045 . James favors the longer form after accounting for the complexities of the shorter witnesses. Compare Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, second edition, note on Luke 22:17–20.

5. Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the ‘Servant’: Luke's Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke–Acts* (T&T Clark, 2015), https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/followers-of-jesus-as-the-servant-9780567656520/ ; Luke 4:18–21, 22:37; Acts 8:32–35. Beers emphasizes the servant pattern's extension to the disciples.

6. Acts 20:28, text and interpretive notes: https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Act&chapter=20&verse=28 . The variant “God/Lord” and the rendering of *dia tou haimatos tou idiou* must be assessed separately; possible readings include “his own blood” and “the blood of his own [Son].”

7. David M. Moffitt, “Atonement at the Right Hand: The Sacrificial Significance of Jesus' Exaltation in Acts,” *New Testament Studies* 62.4 (2016): 549–568, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688516000217 . Moffitt develops the sacrificial-exaltation model as an alternative to removing atoning significance from Luke–Acts.

8. Christopher R. Matthews, “Acts of the Apostles,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Biblical Studies* (2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780195393361-0001 ; Sean A. Adams, “The Relationships of Paul and Luke: Luke, Paul's Letters, and the ‘We’ Passages of Acts,” in *Paul and His Social Relations* (2013): 125–142, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004244221_007 . Both describe the limits of the traditional companion attribution.

9. Bart D. Ehrman, “Did Any Companion of Paul Write Luke and Acts?,” 17 January 2020, https://ehrmanblog.org/did-any-companion-of-paul-write-luke-and-acts/ ; compare Acts 9, 15, 21 with Galatians 1–2. The authorship inference is Ehrman's view, while the textual comparisons stand independently.

10. Jason A. Staples, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology: The National Restoration of Israel in Luke–Acts* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), https://academic.oup.com/book/39383 . Jeffrey Siker, “Sin in Luke–Acts,” in *Sin in the New Testament* (2020): 68–86, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190465735.003.0005 . Their studies anchor the discussion in Israel's restoration and Luke's particular emphasis on mercy.

11. Zacchaeus and restitution: Ladislav Tichý, “Was hat Zachäus geantwortet? (Lk 19,8),” *Biblica* 92.1 (2011): 21–38, https://doi.org/10.2143/BIB.92.1.3188793 ; Reiling and Swellengrebel, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, on 19:8, https://tips.translation.bible/story/translation-comment-on-luke-198/ . The future pledge and customary-present readings have different accounts of Zacchaeus's social standing.

12. Primary biblical and Qurʾānic controls: Luke 3:3–14; 4:16–21; 6:20–26; 10:25–37; 15:1–32; 16:19–31; 18:9–14; 19:1–10; 22:19–20, 24–27, 37; 23:34, 39–48; 24:46–47; Acts 2:22–38; 3:13–19; 5:30–31; 7:59–60; 8:32–35; 10:43; 13:38–39; 20:28; 26:20; Mark 10:42–45; 14:24; 15:34–39; Ezekiel 18:21–32; 33:10–20; Isaiah 1:16–18; 58:6; 61:1–2; Hosea 14; Exodus 22; Leviticus 5:20–26 (Hebrew numbering); Numbers 5:6–7; Qurʾān 5:46–48, 5:69, 90:11–16, 107:1–7.

13. Manuscript cross-references: *Finding Injil* Chapters 2, 11, 13, 14, 24–27A, 36, 37–37B, 41, 43–44. This insertion changes no existing FI dossier grade or QC identifier. New candidate sayings from Luke should be added through the companion Critical Sayings Collection's ordinary protocol rather than assigned grades on the strength of thematic compatibility.

14. The Lost Sayings Gospel: Q, Thomas and the Synoptic Problem

The title of this book promises an assessment of sayings. Fulfilling that promise requires a way to count witnesses. Matthew and Luke both transmit the warning about serving God and wealth; Thomas has a related saying. Three Gospel titles look impressive on a list. We still need to know how the words reached those books. A writer copying an earlier text preserves evidence, while providing a different kind of support from an independent report.[104]

This is the practical reason for entering the Synoptic Problem. A Christian-sharia reconstruction needs to know whether a command has several early lines of transmission, a single line repeated by later writers, or a literary setting whose author has made its meaning more specific. The answer can change our assessment of an instruction about property, marriage or enemies even where its ethical appeal remains stable.

What a source hypothesis explains

Matthew, Mark and Luke repeatedly share stories in similar sequences and often with close verbal agreement. They also diverge in wording, order and selection. Literary dependence offers an explanation of that pattern. It leaves the preceding oral history open: a writer can copy a book that itself draws upon remembered teaching, and a later writer can supplement the copied material from another source.

The Two-Source hypothesis takes Mark as a source for Matthew and Luke and proposes an additional collection, conventionally called Q, for material the latter two share beyond Mark. John Kloppenborg describes Q as a hypothetical document, composed mainly of sayings but also containing some narrative material. Its reconstruction depends upon judgments about Matthew's and Luke's handling of their sources. The label identifies the result of an argument about extant texts.[105]

The Farrer hypothesis also places Mark first but explains the double tradition through Luke's use of Matthew. A phrase shared by Matthew and Luke consequently has a different evidential status under the two models. Under the first, their agreement can help recover an earlier common source. Under the second, it can show how Luke preserved or revised Matthew. Mark Goodacre's case makes this difference central.[106]

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[104] Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; Gospel of Thomas 47. Thomas consulted in Mark M. Mattison's public-domain translation at [online source]. The dependence discussion is an analytical principle applied to these witnesses.

[105] John S. Kloppenborg, “Q,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Biblical Studies*, published 13 September 2010, doi:10.1093/obo/9780195393361-0101. The publicly available introduction was consulted; no entire reconstructed Q edition is claimed as examined in this batch.

[106] Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q* (2002), author's companion site and FAQ: [online source] and [online source]. These describe the argument for Luke's use of Matthew under Markan priority.

An authenticity register should therefore identify which judgments depend upon a model. A saying that remains early under either reconstruction deserves a stronger chronological assessment than one whose proposed early date requires a particular version of Q. The project can make progress while the larger dispute remains open by recording the consequences of each plausible relationship.

A small continuity error with large consequences

The account of John's death offers a concrete example. Matthew begins by calling Herod a tetrarch but later calls him king. Mark consistently uses the royal title. Goodacre treats Matthew's shift as editorial fatigue: an author revises a source initially, then resumes its wording as the story proceeds. The example can be inspected without first accepting the complete theory it supports.[107]

Its force comes from an explanation of direction. Shared words alone establish a relationship more easily than they establish which writer used the other. A change that creates a local inconsistency supplies an additional clue. The proposed explanation becomes stronger when similar behavior recurs in places where the writer's source use can be tested independently. The critic must still consider whether ordinary variation, knowledge of informal titles, or another textual history can explain the passage.

Goodacre also extends fatigue to material shared by Matthew and Luke beyond Mark. Tobias Hägerland challenges that extension, questioning the assumptions about how the writers would handle different sources and whether Matthew really lacks comparable signs of fatigue. Hägerland's article was available at abstract level for this batch. Its stated objection suffices to establish that the inference from fatigue to the improbability of Q remains contested; detailed adjudication requires the complete examples.[108]

For *Finding Injil*, an argument for Markan priority and an argument against Q should be assessed separately. A good explanation of Matthew's treatment of Mark need not settle Luke's relationship to Matthew in every other passage. A source hypothesis earns its strength from the particular observations it explains, including the observations its competitors explain well.

Reconstructing a book we do not possess

Q is often attractive to a reader seeking a pre-Pauline collection of Jesus's teaching. A collection centered on conduct and divine judgment seems to promise access to a stage before the Passion became the organizing story. I understand the attraction. Now we have to ask what we can actually reconstruct. Which passages can be recovered with

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[107] Mark Goodacre, “Fatigue in the Synoptics,” *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998): 45–58, authorized full text: [online source]. Compare Mark 6:14–29 with Matthew 14:1–12. The tetrarch/king example is discussed directly in the article.

[108] Tobias Hägerland, “Editorial Fatigue and the Existence of Q,” *New Testament Studies* 65.2 (2019): 190–206, doi:10.1017/S0028688518000371. Abstract consulted. The objections stated here are limited to the author's published summary.

confidence? What evidence supports their sequence? How much of the supposed theology depends on material omitted from the reconstruction by its own rules?

The absence of a continuous Passion story from a reconstruction cannot, by itself, establish that the people behind the material rejected a saving interpretation of Jesus's death. We would need evidence for that rejection. A sayings collection might omit events known to its readers because its purpose was to preserve instructions. The same caution applies to authorship: a collection used by Matthew and Luke could preserve Jesus traditions without having been personally compiled by James or another named disciple.

Papias's report about Matthew's *logia*, preserved by Eusebius, creates another attractive identification. Papias describes a collection arranged in a Hebrew manner or language and says that people interpreted it as they could. Identifying this with Q, canonical Matthew, or a lost Jewish-Christian Gospel requires an argument beyond the existence of a similar genre or a familiar apostolic name. The original report is already mediated through a later historian.[109]

The honest place for such identifications is a comparison of predictions. An Aramaic or Hebrew precursor should help explain specific features of the Greek. A proposed James-centered source should supply identifiable concerns and a plausible transmission setting. It is easier to name the lost book than to demonstrate its contents.

The Thomas complication

Thomas is an actual surviving collection, represented fully in a Coptic manuscript and partially in earlier Greek fragments. Its existence shows that Jesus traditions could be organized as sayings with a sparse narrative frame. That observation establishes a literary possibility relevant to Q. It leaves the direct relationship between Thomas and the Synoptics to be determined passage by passage.[110]

Goodacre argues that Thomas shows knowledge of the Synoptics, including signs of Matthew's and Luke's editorial work. His university publication record states the argument; the entire book was not reread for this batch. Kloppenborg's published response challenges the breadth of the dependence claim and argues that some Thomas material remains substantially autonomous. He proposes treating the work as an anthology or school text drawing upon more than one stream.[111]

The latter model fits the kind of register this book needs. A collection may depend on Matthew in one saying, preserve another tradition elsewhere, and give both an

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[109] Papias as quoted in Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.16; [online source]. The wording about Matthew's logia and its language is distinct from modern identifications of the work.

[110] Gospel of Thomas, Nag Hammadi Codex II.2; Greek fragments P.Oxy. 1, 654 and 655. The manuscript distinction is carried forward from the supplied v0.6 Thomas chapter; translation consulted at [online source]. No new Coptic/Greek facsimile collation was undertaken.

[111] Mark Goodacre, *Thomas and the Gospels* (2012), author's institutional publication description: [online source]. John S. Kloppenborg, "A New Synoptic Problem: Mark Goodacre and Simon Gathercole on Thomas," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36.3 (2014), doi:10.1177/0142064X14520653. Institutional description and article abstract consulted respectively; detailed book-length conclusions are left open.

interpretation shaped by its own concerns. Independence should attach to a proposed line of transmission at a particular passage. Assigning an entire Gospel one permanent grade would conceal the evidence the assessment is meant to recover.

Thomas 12 makes the consequence tangible. The report directing disciples toward James deserves investigation even when another Thomas saying shows Synoptic dependence. Conversely, the presence of that succession report cannot establish the independence of every parallel proverb. A collection's value comes from the surviving details of its transmission and composition.[112]

A trial run with the sayings

The prohibition on serving God and wealth appears at Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13, with an analogous image of divided allegiance in Thomas 47. The first task is to set the texts beside one another, including the surrounding material. The next is to identify the changes each source theory predicts. Thomas's larger cluster of images may represent expansion, a different collection history, or contact with a parallel teaching. The moral coherence of the saying with Qur'anic criticism of misplaced allegiance is a further judgment.[113]

The blessing upon the poor makes the problem sharper. Luke 6:20 addresses the poor directly. Matthew 5:3 qualifies poverty in terms of spirit; Thomas 54 offers a brief poverty beatitude. Material circumstance and spiritual disposition can overlap, but the wording changes the class of people explicitly addressed. A source-critical account has to explain the change before a Christian-law chapter determines how broadly the teaching should govern the use of wealth.

Love of enemies provides another test through Matthew 5:43–48 and Luke 6:27–36. Their shared instruction occurs in different arrangements with different examples. A later interpreter may expand its scope toward an absolute rule about public force, while another may confine it to personal retaliation. The original-language comparison and the narrative setting matter before either extension is treated as Jesus's own legal formulation.[114]

This method also reaches the texts that sound closest to the Qur'an. Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19 preserve the question about calling Jesus good; Matthew 19:17 has a different form of the exchange. We can test a theological explanation of Matthew's change, alongside other accounts of his editorial style. The resemblance of the Markan wording to uncompromising tawḥīd is relevant to this book's religious assessment. It cannot supply the missing historical evidence about who changed which sentence.

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[112] Thomas 12, with its witnesses and later James-appointment comparanda discussed in current manuscript chapters 14 and 16. The passage-level independence argument is methodological, rather than a fresh determination of the logion's date.

[113] Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; Thomas 47. Compare Qur'an 9:24 and 63:9 for the separate normative issue of wealth and allegiance. The proposed relationships among Gospel texts remain hypotheses.

[114] Luke 6:20, 27–36; Matthew 5:3, 43–48; Thomas 54; Mark 10:17–22; Matthew 19:16–22; Luke 18:18–23. These examples identify the passages for a future original-language apparatus and give a first literary analysis.

What Shiʿi hadith criticism contributes

Al-Kāfī contains a sustained discussion of disagreements in transmitted reports. In 1.2.21.1, a report attributed to ʿAlī distinguishes deliberate invention, mistaken recollection, incomplete knowledge of changing instructions, and accurate transmission. It also associates some false reporting with proximity to rulers. The chain includes Abān ibn Abī ʿAyyāsh and Sulaym ibn Qays; this chapter makes no fresh claim about the report's final authenticity grade.[115]

The classification supplies an analytical vocabulary that can be used without treating it as a verdict on the Gospel writers. A difference between two sayings may arise through a remembered occasion, a copied source, or a narrator's explanation. Deliberate falsification is one possibility requiring its own evidence. If every variation is bad faith, we have stopped distinguishing what happened.

The same report associates ʿAlī's distinctive knowledge with access to the Prophet and detailed teaching. That claim is relevant to the proposed James comparison. A household can provide repeated access to a teacher and preserve contextual knowledge about his statements. To establish that it did so in a particular case, we need testimony about the teaching and its transmission. Kinship gives a reason to look for that evidence; an authenticated chain would still be a separate achievement.

Al-Kāfī 1.2.22.2 offers a further comparison. In a report attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, conflicting reports are tested against support in the Qur'an or the Prophet's teaching. The consulted edition records different later assessments: al-Majlisī calls the chain *majhūl*, while al-Behbūdī lists the report as *ṣaḥīḥ*. The disagreement is useful evidence that a normative principle and a particular report's chain can receive separate scrutiny within the tradition.[116]

My Qur'an-centered use of Gospel criticism follows a similar separation. A saying may be acceptable as guidance under the Qur'an while its exact historical attribution remains uncertain. A well-attested early Christian statement may preserve a belief that this book rejects. Each assessment should be visible to the reader, including the point at which a theological commitment enters the conclusion.

A register that preserves the route to a judgment

Every saying in the expanded appendix should begin with its actual witnesses and their language. The record should then state what kind of contact between those witnesses is proposed. Dates of composition, surviving copies and external citations belong in separate fields. The entry should record each plausible reconstruction and explain what changes when a different source relationship is adopted.

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[115] Al-Kāfī 1.2.21.1, “Differences in al-Hadith,” Arabic and English chapter text consulted: [online source]. The chain and the report's attribution are stated without assigning an independently verified authenticity grade.

[116] Al-Kāfī 1.2.22.2, Arabic, English and displayed later assessments: [online source]. The page records al-Majlisī's *majhūl* and al-Behbūdī's *ṣaḥīḥ*. They are named scholarly assessments, rather than direct evidence of Jaʿfar's historical utterance.

Historical grading can then proceed at an appropriate scale. A command may preserve an early theme with uncertain exact wording. A memorable aphorism may have moved between settings. A narrative explanation may belong to an evangelist while the brief saying it explains is older. One grade for the whole paragraph hides those differences. That becomes especially serious when later religious law turns on an incidental word.

The same method should be applied to the Shiʿi comparanda. A statement attributed to an Imam, a later theologian's account of appointment, and a modern parallel between James and ʿAlī have different historical positions. Their value can be substantial at each position. Giving them their proper place enables the comparison to become more exact as the archive grows.

Keeping John and Marcion in the wider inquiry

The Synoptic relationships do not exhaust the source problem. The manuscript's work on Marcion asks about the relationship between a reconstructed Gospel and canonical Luke. Its reconstruction through opponents' quotations creates an additional layer of mediation. Claims about a Marcionite precursor must explain both the quoted wording and the witnesses who preserved it. The current Paul and Deutero-Paul chapters provide the starting dossier; this batch adds no claim of a complete new Marcion collation.[117]

John also needs to remain within the literary comparison. Goodacre's 2025 book argues for John's knowledge of all the Synoptics. The author's published description was consulted here as a research position, with its detailed case left for a full reading. Its relevance is immediate: an Aramaic source proposal for John and a proposal that John used Greek Gospels can concern different components of the same work. Each requires evidence about the particular material under discussion.[118]

The search for Injil therefore proceeds through recoverable units. A teaching about generosity, a succession saying and a promise of a later guide may have quite different transmission histories even when they occupy the same canonical volume. The book's eventual verdicts will be useful to readers only when those histories remain available beside them.

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[117] Supplied *Finding Injil* v0.6, chapters 18 and 20, on disputed Pauline writings and Marcion. Further textual work requires Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4, Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42, and critical reconstructions such as Jason BeDuhn's; those have not been freshly collated for this chapter.

[118] Mark Goodacre, *The Fourth Synoptic Gospel: John's Knowledge of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Eerdmans, 2025), author's description: [online source]. The book's existence and stated thesis were verified; its full argument was not newly read.

15. The Sermon on the Mount: The Law of the Messiah

Matthew closes the Sermon with two houses exposed to the same storm. Their different foundations concern the hearers' response to Jesus's teaching. A reader searching for Christian law begins here with an obligation to act. The discourse places prayer within a life whose treatment of other people remains open to judgment. Its demands are concrete enough to trouble any theology that makes a profession of allegiance the end of the inquiry.[119]

This chapter asks what kind of law those demands support. The word *sharia* names the question I bring to the text: what conduct does a valid divine mission require from the community that accepts it? We have to distinguish what the prophet instructed from what a later community did to administer it. Historical authenticity remains another judgment. A saying can shape a religious life while the exact circumstances of its original delivery remain unknown.

A collected discourse with a Jewish argument

Matthew 5–7 presents an extended discourse on a mountain. Luke's teaching on level ground arranges related material within a shorter sequence that includes both blessings and woes. The differences matter to the source inquiry introduced in Batch 01. We possess literary compositions whose individual units have their own possible histories. Shared sayings give us comparisons to examine; their presence does not independently prove two eyewitness accounts of a single occasion.[120]

The blessing of the poor also changes its phrasing between the two presentations. Luke addresses poverty and hunger directly, while Matthew speaks of poverty in spirit and hunger for righteousness. These differences should remain visible when we ask how later interpretation relates material deprivation to inward character. A spiritual account of poverty still has to answer the person who lacks food. The Epistle of James makes that demand especially difficult to evade.[121]

Matthew 5:17–20 locates the teacher's mission within the Law and Prophets. His subsequent authority is expressed through interpretations that reach the hearer's conduct before injury becomes irreversible. This literary arrangement makes the relation to Moses

[119] Matthew 7:24–27, ebible.org. The application to obedience and Christian law is the author's analysis of the closing image.

[120] Matthew 5–7 and Luke 6:17–49, ebible.org and ebible.org. The source models are treated in Batch 01, chapter B01-B; this chapter does not assume the speeches are eyewitness transcripts.

[121] Matthew 5:3–6; Luke 6:20–26; James 2:14–17. The parallel establishes different literary formulations, leaving their exact compositional relationship for the Synoptic inquiry.

part of the argument. It should be read as a dispute within a scriptural world whose concern for justice already supplies the terms of the dispute.[122]

For the Christian-law inquiry, the first question is whose obligations are under discussion. A command addressed within Israel does not by itself settle the rules governing Gentile admission. Acts 15 and the Didache concern communities with their own decisions about the burden borne by converts. Matthew's account of Jesus can contribute to those decisions without making every later community an identical legal body. A reconstructed covenant needs an account of its recipients as well as its commands.[123]

Repair before religious performance

The instruction to seek reconciliation before completing an offering puts a grievance inside the believer's worship. A relationship damaged outside the sacred setting remains relevant when a person enters it. The scene asks the worshiper to interrupt an apparently proper religious act because something owed to another person has been left unresolved.[124]

That is a powerful principle for interpreting ritual sincerity. A ceremony can remain outwardly correct while its participant evades a claim that should have changed his conduct. The question reaches beyond emotional hostility. A teacher who encourages worship while protecting an abusive employer or suppressing a valid complaint must explain what has happened to the connection between devotion and repair.

The Sermon does not provide a full procedure for adjudicating every grievance. Its instruction changes the moral priority with which a procedure must operate. We can admit that limit and still take the demand seriously. The missing procedural detail belongs to the later work of a community responsible for applying the teaching.

A report from Jaʿfar that preserves the comparison with Moses

A direct Imami witness makes the Sermon comparison more substantial. In al-Kāfī 5.3.184.7, a report attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq presents Jesus teaching his disciples about Moses. Jesus extends the prohibition of false swearing to truthful swearing as well. He then extends the prohibition of sexual wrongdoing into deliberately cultivating it in the mind. The report adds an image of smoke damaging a decorated house even when the house has not burned down.[125]

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[122] Matthew 5:17–20. "Fulfillment" and the subsequent interpretations require assessment within the chapter's Jewish scriptural setting. No claim of universal abolition is read into the introductory wording.

[123] Acts 15:19–29; Didache 6. The differences in recipients and legislative setting are developed in the existing Acts and Didache chapters of the manuscript.

[124] Matthew 5:23–24. Primary text: ebible.org. The discussion of grievance procedures is the author's ethical extension of the scene, rather than an ancient procedure stated by Matthew.

[125] Al-Kāfī 5.3.184.7, thaqalayn.net. Arabic and English available in the indexed primary entry; direct page retrieval also returned a dynamic site shell. Compare Matthew 5:27–28 and 33–37. This is an attribution to Abū ʿAbd Allāh, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, through ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sinān.

The correspondence with Matthew 5 concerns both the topics and the form of the argument: an instruction associated with Moses is followed by a more searching command attributed to Jesus. The smoke image supplies a distinctive illustration. The Arabic wording describes lighting a fire in an adorned interior; the displayed English translation obscures that sequence. A comparison based solely on the English would lose part of the report's account of gradual damage.[126]

The transmission gives us a named Imami attribution through ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sinān. The digital edition records al-Majlisī's assessment as *ḥasan ka-l-muwaththaq*. This assessment belongs to the reception of the report's chain within the Imami tradition. It is not a recovered series of named first-century transmitters from Jesus. The gap between Jaʿfar and the scene he reports has to receive its own historical assessment, even if an Imami theological account understands his access to earlier prophetic knowledge differently.[127]

Several histories could explain the resemblance. Gospel teaching may have circulated through Christian conversation or written translation before entering an Islamic collection. An inherited oral tradition could have shared material with the Gospel. A later narrator might have organized familiar ethics in the voice of Jesus. The current evidence establishes a received Imami Jesus tradition with a close Matthean parallel. It leaves the route by which that teaching reached the narrator unresolved.

For *Finding Injil*, the report already does important work. It shows an Islamic tradition preserving Jesus as a demanding interpreter of an earlier law. Calling him Rūḥ Allāh within the scene coexists with ordinary disciples seeking practical instruction. The Messiah's exalted title carries an obligation to learn how to speak and how to govern desire. The report's theology and its moral instruction belong to the same narrated encounter.

Oaths and the ordinary reliability of speech

James 5:12 offers a close counterpart to the Sermon's restriction of oaths. The convergence gives the sayings catalogue a compact unit whose wording and source relations can be studied. A reader should ask whether James and Matthew depend on a shared instruction, whether one literary form shaped the other, or whether a broader teaching circulated independently. Its appearance in the Imami report adds a later reception witness rather than automatically adding another first-century source.[128]

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[126] Arabic cross-check in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 14, report 71 in the chapter on Jesus's counsels, quoting al-Kāfī 5:542: najafdesertlibrary.com. The fire-and-smoke sequence follows the Arabic; the supplied English on Thaqalayn is not reproduced verbatim.

[127] Al-Majlisī, *Mirʾāt al-ʿuqūl* 20:387, grade ḥasan ka-l-muwaththaq, as recorded in the indexed Thaqalayn entry for al-Kāfī 5.3.184.7. This reports a later Imami chain assessment. Al-Behbūdī's non-inclusion notation is not converted into a fabrication verdict. Complete manuscript and narrator-by-narrator reassessment remains outstanding.

[128] James 5:12, ebible.org; Matthew 5:33–37. The Imami parallel is a later reception witness whose independence must be assessed separately.

The ethical reasoning is intelligible. A speaker who needs repeated sacred guarantees may be trying to overcome the unreliability of ordinary speech. An oath can also become a way of exposing the divine name to the speaker's recklessness. A community governed by the teaching would need to decide how that warning applies to courts, contracts and public testimony. Those decisions are applications of the saying, and should be identified as such.

The Qur'an treats oaths through a different legal arrangement. It distinguishes careless expressions from deliberate commitments, provides expiation and warns against using an oath to obstruct righteousness or reconciliation. These provisions permit a comparison of ethical purpose while leaving the legal forms distinct. The continuity of divine concern does not require us to make the two textual systems issue an identical rule.[129]

Desire and the authority to deepen a command

The smoke image helps separate deliberate inward rehearsal from a completed act. Their moral relation does not make them the same event. An interpreter has to ask what responsibility attaches to cultivating a disposition, what remains an involuntary mental occurrence, and what can legitimately be judged by other people. A teaching about the heart supplies no general warrant for a community to claim unrestricted knowledge of its members' thoughts.

That distinction matters for a Shiʿi account of authoritative interpretation. The Imam may be understood as disclosing the implications of a received teaching. Such an account still requires evidence that a particular instruction belongs to the authorized transmission. The similarity between a Gospel saying and a report attributed to Jaʿfar can strengthen the case for studying the report, while its authenticity and legal reach remain separate questions.

Qur'an 3:50 gives the discussion a further dimension by presenting Jesus as confirming the Torah and permitting some previously prohibited things. The text allows a mission to contain both continuity and alteration. The direction of a particular change must therefore be established from its evidence. One cannot assume that every legitimate prophetic reform always increases restrictions, or that a declaration of mercy removes the need for obligations.[130]

Marriage, separation and the person who bears the cost

The divorce sayings require their own comparison before they become a universal prohibition. Matthew includes exception language. Mark's account frames the dispute through creation and adds a formulation concerning a woman's divorce; Luke preserves a shorter saying. Paul distinguishes a command attributed to the Lord from his own

[129] Qur'an 2:224–225 and 5:89. These verses address the use of God's name, careless and deliberate oaths, and expiation. The ethical comparison does not erase the legal differences.

[130] Qur'an 3:50, quran.com. Its combination of confirmation and permission belongs to the book's account of prophetic authority; it does not identify the original wording of any particular Gospel saying.

discussion of a further marital situation. These are different presentations of the problem, and their wording should remain visible in a legal reconstruction.[131]

The central questions concern the protection of a spouse, the meaning of marital fidelity, and the circumstances in which separation has already occurred. A rule can be used to shield someone from arbitrary abandonment. The same formula can be administered in ways that trap a person within an unsafe or irreparably broken relationship. If we are reasoning morally about the law, we have to examine those effects. Which words Jesus originally spoke remains a historical question.

Qur'anic divorce provisions make separation a legally regulated event with continuing duties. Their concern with terms, material support and the treatment of the departing spouse supplies a comparison for the Christian covenant. A Muslim reader's preferred law should be stated openly; it cannot silently rewrite Matthew. The book's task is to identify the difference and ask how the history of each command bears on its proper application.[132]

Prayer that carries daily obligations

Matthew 6 treats prayer, fasting and giving as practices already expected of its audience. It scrutinizes the search for reputation through those acts. The Lord's Prayer places ordinary sustenance beside forgiveness and the coming kingdom. Reading it as a rule for life raises a practical question: how is someone who asks God for bread and forgiveness to respond when another person needs them?[133]

The Didache provides a communal answer to part of that question by prescribing a rhythm for prayer and fasting. Its schedule is evidence of an early Christian community organizing the teaching. The schedule's authority must be distinguished from the wording attributed to Jesus. Otherwise an inquiry intended to recover prophetic guidance will quietly promote every subsequent administrative decision to the same grade.[134]

The warning about serving wealth gives that daily practice an economic demand. A person can perform the visible acts of religion while allowing money to determine the limits of obedience. Luke's corresponding saying provides a useful parallel, and James's account of the rich man and the neglected poor person makes the conflict concrete. A Christian sharia developed from these texts would have to explain what owners owe beyond the act of making an occasional gift.[135]

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[131] Matthew 5:31–32 and 19:3–12; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16. Texts: ebible.org, ebible.org and ebible.org. This is a textual and theological comparison, not individualized legal advice.

[132] Qur'an 2:229–232 and 65:1–7. The treatment of legal separation and continuing duties supplies a distinct normative comparison.

[133] Matthew 6:1–18, ebible.org. The questions about the social implications of prayer are the author's analysis rather than additional clauses attributed to Jesus.

[134] Didache 8, primary translation at newadvent.org. The communal schedule and the prayer it uses have different source-critical roles.

[135] Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13, ebible.org; James 2:1–17 and 5:1–6. An account of property duties requires further interpretation beyond the saying about two masters.

From hypokritēs to munāfiq: the prayer that seeks an audience

The close comparison begins in Matthew 6:5. Its Greek text names hoi hypokritai, people who love to pray publicly hopōs phanōsin tois anthrōpois, so that they may appear before other people. Qur'an 4:142 describes the munāfiqūn rising reluctantly to prayer while yurāʾūna al-nās, making themselves visible to people. The recurring moral feature is an act of worship redirected toward an audience. In Matthew the same critique governs almsgiving and fasting (6:1–4, 16–18), so that the apparent object of devotion and the reward the worshiper seeks become central to the teaching.[136]

Matthew 6:5 calls its subjects "the hypocrites" without identifying them as Pharisees. The address is directed at the hearers of the Sermon, who are warned against becoming like them. Qur'an 4:142 makes the communal designation explicit and adds reluctance in prayer and scant remembrance of God. The convergence is unusually precise at the level of observable religious performance. Its literary settings still differ: Matthew issues an instruction to would-be disciples, while the Medinan Qur'anic passage diagnoses unstable allegiance within a community that already professes belief.

Sūrat al-Māʿūn provides a second Qur'anic witness to the moral pattern. Qur'an 107:1–7 connects denial of the judgment or religion with harsh treatment of orphans, neglect of feeding the poor, negligence in prayer, display before others, and refusal of ordinary assistance. The noun munāfiq does not appear there, and the passage should be read on its own terms. Yet it places conspicuous worship beside failed duties to people who have little power. Qur'an 2:177 similarly defines birr through belief, provision for those in need, fidelity, prayer and almsgiving. It supplies a positive statement of the obligations implicated in the criticism.[137]

This comparison provides an important qualification to any merely inward account of hypocrisy. A person can perform a prayer before spectators from sincere devotion; the allegation in Matthew and the Qur'an concerns the motive and the conduct surrounding the act. The remedy cannot be a rule forbidding visible worship, since both traditions retain communal religious practices. Matthew locates the decisive witness in God, who sees what happens in secret. The Qur'an repeatedly situates the same accountability under divine knowledge of what people conceal.

How far can the verbal correspondence travel?

The Greek hypokritēs could designate an actor and came to describe a dissembler. The Septuagint also employed the word for the impious, including in Job 34:30 and 36:13, so its Jewish scriptural usage was already broader than a theatrical metaphor. Its appearance in canonical Matthew is evidence of Greek composition and transmission; the precise Greek

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[136] Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18, Greek text in SBLGNT (biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6&version=SBLGNT); Qur'an 4:142, in The Quranic Arabic Corpus, University of Leeds (corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=4&verse=142). The Greek and Arabic express visibility before other people through separate linguistic resources.

[137] Qur'an 107:1–7 and 2:177. The former contains the charge of ostentation without the term munāfiq. Compare Qur'an 9:67–71 on withholding resources and sustaining the community.

syllables cannot be retrojected into the Aramaic speech of the historical Jesus. The historical inquiry must ask what earlier admonition, if any, Matthew has rendered in this Greek vocabulary.[138]

An Ethiopian connection may reach from that vocabulary into the Qur'anic world. Nicolai Sinai notes the longstanding derivation of Arabic munāfiq from Classical Ethiopic manāfq and the associated verb nāfāqa, whose semantic range includes heresy, doubt and divided allegiance. He regards borrowing as a reasonable account of why that semantic cluster is present in Ethiopic but restricted in Arabic. The proposed pre-Qur'anic Ethiopic attestation, however, requires verification. Juan Cole develops the possibility that Ethiopic Christian translators used the cognate language for the Greek concept and that Aksumite religious contact carried it toward the Hijaz. This is a historical route for investigation, rather than a demonstrated line of textual transmission.[139]

Cole also argues that Qur'an 4:142 may paraphrase Matthew 6:5. The convergence of public prayer, an audience of people and the accusation of hypocrisy makes that a serious hypothesis. The evidence currently permits Christian preaching or scriptural mediation, a shared late-antique moral vocabulary, or independent use of a widespread prophetic critique. A verbal parallel establishes a relationship for comparative interpretation more securely than it establishes direction, language or carrier. We should keep the proposal in the source ledger while checking Ethiopic and Syriac witnesses, earliest attestation, and the phrasing of any available Arabic Gospel tradition.[140]

The prophetic law against a polished exterior

The deeper continuity starts before Matthew. Isaiah 1:11–17 rejects sacrifices offered by hands implicated in wrongdoing and commands the community to seek justice and defend those exposed to oppression. Amos 5:21–24 directs criticism at solemn worship divorced from justice. Hosea 6:6 assigns priority to steadfast love and knowledge of God, while Micah 6:8 summarizes a life under God through justice, fidelity and humility. These are disputes conducted inside Israel's revealed moral world. Matthew's warnings inherit that world and cannot be explained by imagining an intrinsically corrupt Jewish religion superseded by an ethical one.[141]

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[138] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus Speak Greek?" Biblical Archaeology Review 18, no. 5 (1992), discussion of hypokritēs and the Septuagint uses in Job 34:30 and 36:13 (cojs.org/joseph-a-fitzmyer-did-jesus-speak-greek-biblical-archaeology-review-18-5-1992/).

[139] Nicolai Sinai, Key Terms of the Qur'an: A Critical Dictionary (Princeton University Press, 2023), 692–694, s.v. al-munāfiqūn; Juan Cole, "A Sickness in the Heart: Were the Qur'ān's Hypocrites a Late Antique Sect?" The Muslim World 111 (2021): 358–375, DOI 10.1111/muwo.12397, esp. 358–359. Sinai notes uncertainty about a pre-Qur'anic Ethiopic textual occurrence.

[140] Cole, "A Sickness in the Heart," 366–367, explicitly proposes that Qur'an 4:142 may paraphrase Matthew 6:5. The present manuscript treats this as a hypothesis about literary contact, not a confirmed line of dependence.

[141] Isaiah 1:11–17; Amos 5:21–24; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8; compare Matthew 9:13 and 12:7 for Matthew's explicit appropriation of Hosea 6:6.

The formulation in Matthew 23:23 matters closely. Jesus condemns the neglect of ta barytera tou nomou, the weightier demands of the Law: krisis, eleos and pistis, reasonably rendered justice, mercy and faithfulness. His concluding instruction also retains the less weighty obligations. Luke 11:42 transmits a related rebuke involving justice and the love of God, with differences in herbs and formulation. These parallel literary forms strengthen the dossier for an earlier critique of misplaced religious priorities while leaving the exact original wording and the evangelists' editorial work open to comparison.[142]

The Qur'an directs related criticism toward its own audiences. Qur'an 2:44 asks those who command righteousness why they forget themselves; its initial address to the Children of Israel belongs to the verse's context. Qur'an 61:2–3 speaks directly to believers who say what they do not practice. Here the continuity concerns the accountability of any community that teaches revealed obligations. The claim of privilege increases the burden of fidelity. These passages criticize a mismatch whose presence can be established through conduct rather than through a theory of another community's inherent character.

The Qur'anic account then develops the critique into social organization. In 9:67 the hypocritical men and women urge wrong, obstruct right, and withhold their hands; in 9:71 believing men and women sustain one another, urge right, restrain wrong, maintain prayer and give alms. The Qur'an places charity and public responsibility within the differentiation. Matthew 23:23 similarly measures teachers by justice and mercy; its final contrast between outward beauty and inward lawlessness in 23:27–28 dramatizes the danger of religious standing severed from its duties.[143]

When hypocrisy becomes a form of government

Matthew 23:13 describes teachers obstructing access to the kingdom. Qur'an 63:2 accuses the munāfiqūn of turning others from God's path while using professions and oaths as protection; 63:7 recalls their attempt to withhold resources from those gathered around the Messenger. These texts address different opponents under different political conditions. Together they allow an ethical comparison of leaders who convert recognized religious status into the power to inhibit the obedience or livelihood of others. The transition from private dissimulation to public harm is the more consequential part of the continuity.

Matthew 7:15–23 gives the reader a practical test of rival claimants to divine authority. A claimant may speak prophetically, invoke a sacred name or display extraordinary works while failing the demand of obedience. The warning about fruits locates evaluation in the effects of a life. The Didache 11:8–12, as a later community witness, makes the connection operational: conduct distinguishes a genuine prophet, one who teaches correctly but fails to practice is rejected, and monetary demands made in prophetic language trigger scrutiny.

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[142] Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42; Matthew 23:23 Greek text, SBLGNT (biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+23:23&version=SBLGNT). The wording varies: Matthew names justice, mercy and faithfulness; Luke names justice and God's love. Both preserve lesser obligations in their closing formulation.

[143] Qur'an 2:44; 61:2–3; 9:67, 9:71. Compare Matthew 23:23, 23:27–28. The equivalent ethical themes do not imply that the two sources originally addressed the same opponents.

James 2:14–17 likewise refuses to let professions of faith stand in place of feeding and clothing a person in need. These writings show how the criticism of hypocrisy could become an institutional practice of accountability, although each source has its own date and history.[144]

The application reaches the Muslim teacher and the claimant to Imamic authority as readily as it reaches a Christian cleric. One may cite a prophet or an Imam in order to escape duties that the cited teacher imposes. A religious office can shield property, silence the injured and authorize a coercive hierarchy through the language of piety. In the ethical reconstruction attempted here, the test is concrete: what happens to the widow, the debtor, the dependent, the hungry person or the complainant when authority is exercised? The rights of such people remain answerable through evidence and procedure, even where the leader's inner intention is unknown.

An accusation with a history of harm

The historical location of Matthew 23 is essential. Its invective against scribes and Pharisees belongs to conflicts involving Jewish followers of Jesus and other Jewish teachers, whose disputes were subsequently read across an increasingly hardened Christian–Jewish boundary. The Gospel's accusations are evidence for Matthew's polemical presentation; they are not an independent social survey of Pharisaic Judaism. Alicia Myers, Philip Esler and Ann Conway-Jones each emphasize in different ways the need to interpret this material in its ancient conflict setting and attend to its later anti-Jewish use. A Muslim appropriation of the indictment would reproduce an older injustice if it used the text to make Jews a timeless foil for Muslim integrity.[145]

Nifāq likewise carries a particular social history. Sinai describes the Qur'anic munāfiqūn as a fluid category of people whose nominal belonging to the believing community is judged inadequate; the charges include misrepresenting allegiance, withholding contributions and withdrawing from collective obligations. Cole emphasizes the possibility that some accusations addressed recognizable factions, not simply a universal psychological flaw. The Qur'anic indictment therefore has religious, social and political dimensions. Calling every failure of devotion nifāq would flatten the category and make ordinary weakness indistinguishable from calculated betrayal.[146]

Neither scripture gives a religious official unrestricted access to another person's inward state. Matthew 7:1–5 asks the judge to confront his own failing. Qur'an 49:12 warns against

[144] Matthew 7:15–23; Didache 11:8–12 (newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm), esp. 11:10 on the teacher failing to practice his teaching and 11:12 on requests for money; James 2:14–17. The Didache is an early Christian reception witness whose transmission and composite dating should be considered separately.

[145] Alicia D. Myers, "Matthew's Story: The Gospel in Jewish Contexts," in An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts (Oxford University Press, 2022), 41–65, DOI 10.1093/oso/9780190926809.003.0003; Philip F. Esler, "Intergroup Conflict and Matthew 23," Biblical Theology Bulletin 45 (2015): 38–59; Ann Conway-Jones, "Matthew's Gospel and Jewish–Christian Relations," The Expository Times 134 (2023), DOI 10.1177/00145246231156834.

[146] Sinai, Key Terms of the Qur'an, 692–694; Cole, "A Sickness in the Heart," 373–375. These authors offer differing reconstructions of the sociological boundaries and historical settings of Qur'anic nifāq.

suspicion, and 4:94 restrains the rejection of another person's profession of faith. Public wrongdoing can be established, judged and repaired under appropriate evidentiary standards; a private verdict on the heart belongs to a different order of knowledge. This safeguard matters when the language of hypocrisy is available to a ruler who wishes to stigmatize critics, minorities or those who disagree about a policy.

The possibility of repentance, and the unresolved Christology

Qur'an 4:145–146 places the hypocrites under severe eschatological warning and then explicitly preserves a path through repentance, amendment, attachment to God and sincerity of religion. The imperative to amend conduct is important: the divine judgment does not require a community to treat every person once suspected of nifāq as permanently outside the possibility of reform. Qur'an 9:75–77 further connects the growth of hypocrisy to a promise broken after prosperity and to the refusal to give. The spiritual condition is represented as having a history shaped by choices.[147]

Matthew 7:21–23 also places a gap between confession and obedience at the threshold of judgment; 24:51 associates the hypocrite with eschatological punishment. The christological difference deserves explicit treatment. Matthew's narrative gives Jesus the first-person declaration of recognition or rejection, whereas the Qur'an assigns ultimate judgment to God. The agreement about moral dissimulation cannot serve as a license to erase that difference, nor can a shared ethical assessment prove the historical authenticity of every sentence attributed to Jesus in Matthew.[148]

For the sayings catalogue, the primary unit is Matthew 6:1–6 and 16–18, with Qur'an 4:142 and 107:1–7 as distinct comparative witnesses. Matthew 23:23 belongs in a second unit alongside Luke 11:42, Hosea 6:6 and Micah 6:8. The institutional extension belongs with Matthew 7:15–23, James 2:14–17 and Didache 11. This arrangement preserves the difference between a saying's synoptic attestation, its later Christian reception, and its Qur'anic consonance. My present judgment is that the ethical continuity is strong, the wording of the prayer parallel is unusually close, and the proposed path through Ethiopic Christian vocabulary remains a hypothesis to test.

Injury, resistance and an Alid moral comparison

The command to love enemies confronts the hearer's response to people who inflict harm. Luke's version joins generosity to a refusal to make reciprocal benefit the measure of conduct. The difficulty is precisely that the other person has done wrong. An interpretation that quietly removes the difficult cases would deprive the saying of its object.[149]

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[147] Qur'an 4:145–146 and 9:75–77. On 4:146 compare The Quranic Arabic Corpus (corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=4&verse=146).

[148] Matthew 7:21–23 and 24:51; Qur'an 4:145–146. Matthew 7:23 uses the Greek anomia (lawlessness); its narrative speaker and authority differ from the Qur'an's account of divine judgment.

[149] Luke 6:27–36. The relation of generosity, reciprocity and enemies is assessed from Luke's formulation, alongside Matthew 5:38–48.

At the same time, a community has to ask who is entitled to surrender a claim. I can forgive an injury done to me; a ruler who overlooks an injury done to a dependent has made a decision about someone else's rights. The Sermon's relation to public judgment therefore needs an argument. The text should not be made to absolve those charged with protecting other people simply because forgiveness is praised.

Prayer 20 of the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya* supplies a valuable Alid comparator. The received prayer asks for strength in relation to an oppressor while also asking for the capacity to answer estrangement with renewed connection and deprivation with generosity. Its moral horizon includes a plea to be spared both suffering injustice and committing it. The prayer is attributed to ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn; its reception and attribution are the evidence used here, without claiming a new documentary authentication of every phrase.[150]

This combination makes the comparison more exact than an appeal to a vaguely peaceful temperament. One can ask for protection against harm while resisting the temptation to reproduce the wrongdoer's character. A teaching addressed to the injured person then meets the separate duties of the person responsible for judgment. Letter 53 of *Nahj al-Balāgha* offers the corresponding governmental question: how should authority treat the people placed within its reach?[151]

The resistance chapter examines the Gospel arrest scenes on their own evidence. Here the Sermon establishes a moral discipline that any reconstruction of a politically significant Messiah must accommodate. Calling the kingdom a restoration movement should increase our attention to that discipline, because an expected ruler's treatment of enemies will affect more people than his private resentments.

The teacher's name and the test of conduct

Matthew 7 places claims to prophecy and extraordinary works under judgment. The people invoking Jesus's name still have to answer for their conduct. This scene is central to the book's criticism of faith understood as a guarantee detached from obedience. It also raises a question for anyone who invokes an Imam or a prophetic household: what happens when loyalty becomes a reason to excuse what the teacher condemns?[152]

We can now ask what this law would require a community to do. A community must provide a truthful account of the authority behind its commands, decide how obligations affect vulnerable members, and apply religious language without making it a refuge from accountability. Those judgments remain open to evidence from James and the Didache. The fragments gathered under the Gospel of the Hebrews add another voice, particularly where a wealthy man claims to have kept the law while his neighbors remain hungry.

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[150] *Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya,* supplication 20, especially sections 8–10 and 14 in William Chittick's translation: al-islam.org. Read as a received devotional text attributed to ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn. No direct dependence on Matthew is claimed.

[151] *Nahj al-Balāgha,* Letter 53, al-islam.org. The governmental comparison is ethical reasoning based on the received letter, with its attribution distinct from independent provenance.

[152] Matthew 7:15–23, ebible.org. The extension to devotion toward the household is the author's comparison, not a claim that Matthew refers to an Islamic institution.

16. Maryam and the Dispute over Conception

Surah Maryam gives unusually close attention to the encounter before Jesus's conception. The Spirit appears in the form of a well-proportioned man. Maryam seeks protection, receives an announcement, and asks how she can have a child when no man has touched her. The narrative makes chastity, bodily encounter, and divine agency central to the scene.[153]

My proposed explanation connects this emphasis to disputes over Jesus's birth within Jewish Christianity. A community committed to Joseph's ancestry could understand Davidic descent differently from a community committed to virgin conception. The Qur'anic account may have been addressed to an audience for whom these possibilities were religiously consequential.

The historical disagreement

Origen's Against Celsus 5.61 describes two varieties of Ebionite belief, including disagreement about virgin birth. His account is a useful control on a simple division in which every Ebionite accepts ordinary parentage and every Nazarene accepts virgin conception. The ancient labels carry a more complicated record.[154]

Epiphanius's later reports in Panarion 29–30 add material about Nazoraeans and Ebionites. They also bring the problems of polemical description. A writer may group together people because they offend the same doctrinal boundary, even where their accounts of Jesus differ. We need each claim beside its witness and date before we decide what any of these groups believed.

The original manuscript discussed modern neo-Ebionite and Nazarene advocates, including Douglas Del Tondo and James Scott Trimm. Their work helped frame the research questions. Their reconstructions should be identified as modern positions whose ancient evidence must be checked separately.

Davidic ancestry and divine action

The particular tension I want to investigate concerns Matthew's genealogy through Joseph. A biological conception account can preserve that lineage in an obvious way. A virgin-birth account requires another understanding of how the genealogy functions. Early Christian readers could have addressed the issue through legal belonging or other forms of kinship, which deserve direct study.

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[153] Qur'an 19:16–22; compare 3:47; 21:91; 66:12. The proposed relation to the Jewish-Christian conception dispute is recorded in the version-2 addendum of Dossier v7, drawing on the author's November 2025 formulation.

[154] Origen, Against Celsus 5.61 and 5.65, public English translation at www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm. The account of two Ebionite birth positions is attributed to Origen as an ancient witness; it is not treated as a complete description of every community using the name.

The question in Finding Injil is whether Qur'an 19 leaves room for different audiences to hear its announcement through their existing accounts of descent. My preferred plain reading remains virgin conception. The additional esoteric proposal asks whether divine action through the Spirit could be understood in a way that preserves a Joseph-related genealogy.

That is my hypothesis about how far the narrative may reach. The dossier contains no early tafsīr establishing that Joseph-mediated reading. It also contains no evidence that Qur'an 19 identifies the manlike Spirit as Joseph. Those gaps remain explicit in the working chapter.

Who grants the child?

The reading variation at 19:19 is relevant to agency. The forms li-ahaba and li-yahaba differ between an announcement expressed as I may grant and He may grant. This gives the inquiry a specific linguistic object. The variant addresses how the gift is attributed within the messenger's speech.[155]

The surrounding verses remain necessary. Maryam's statement about being untouched and the response concerning the ease of divine action constrain the reading. Qur'an 3:47, 21:91 and 66:12 add further descriptions of conception and the Spirit. My esoteric proposal has to account for all of this scripture, including the wording that makes it difficult.

The hypothesis has a useful historical test even before its theological interpretation is resolved. We can ask whether the kinds of dispute documented in Origen and Epiphanius explain the prominence of chastity and divine agency in the Qur'anic narrative. That question can be examined without assuming in advance which account of conception every ancient hearer would have adopted.

[155] Qur'an 19:19, li-ahaba / li-yahaba. The dossier identifies al-Ṭabarī's discussion of this verse and the Qur'an.com qirāʾāt display. This draft carries the reported variant forward without a new collation of its transmitted reading chains.

17. A Child's Testimony and the Magi

The infant speaks in Qur'an 19:30 and identifies himself as Allah's servant. The declaration gives his identity a theological form at the moment when Maryam faces accusation. I want to ask two questions together: what is the infant said to proclaim, and how could a memory of such a proclamation have traveled?

My proposal treats the narrative as a report whose transmission can be investigated. The Magi offer one possible route. Visitors who recognized an extraordinary child could have returned to their own communities with an account of what they encountered. This is a proposed human relay for the tradition, analogous to the question an isnād inquiry asks about the movement of testimony.[156]

What the infancy text preserves

The Arabic Infancy Gospel contains a cradle-speech tradition. In the form associated with Sike's edition, the account attributes its knowledge to a book of Joseph Caiaphas. The infant's speech presents him in terms of Sonship and Logos. Later in the narrative, Magi arrive through a prediction associated with Zoroaster and return home with a swaddling cloth.[157]

Tony Burke's NASSCAL entry describes two principal published forms. Their openings differ, and the form associated with Provera begins with the Zoroaster prophecy. This gives the comparison a concrete textual history to reconstruct. The East Syriac History of the Virgin is identified as a proposed antecedent within the scholarly discussion.

The extant account's source attribution for the cradle speech goes through Caiaphas. The Magi belong to the same narrative complex, with their own journey and return. A historical Magi-to-Christian chain for the infant's words remains uncollected. The Magi's presence in the story gives us a route to investigate. It does not fill in that missing chain.

The theological reply

The Qur'anic child's identification as a servant makes the difference in speech decisive. A shared miracle setting carries different statements about who Jesus is. The Qur'an's version places prophecy and obligation within the infant's account of himself. The comparison therefore concerns the religious meaning assigned to the miracle as well as its presence in both traditions.

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[156] Author's Magi-as-isnād proposal, Dossier v7, version-2 addendum B and version-3 section 3. The conjecture is distinct from the surviving infancy narrative's explicit source attribution and has no established first-century chain in the current archive.

[157] Arabic Infancy Gospel, chapters 1 and 7–8 in the S recension; Tony Burke, "Arabic Infancy Gospel," NASSCAL e-Clavis, www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/arabic-infancy-gospel/. The catalogue and the older public translation at New Advent were checked for Caiaphas, Zoroaster and the Magi; critical Arabic/Syriac collation remains open.

This is the sense in which I use the idea of a reply to the Iranian-Christian infancy tradition. A story that has recruited the Magi and Zoroaster into recognition of a divine Son encounters a Qur'anic formulation centered on servanthood. Whether the reply addresses a particular text, an orally circulating narrative, or a broader Christian repertoire is a question for the transmission study.

The Magi proposal also changes the historical imagination brought to the scene. An extraordinary event could have multiple witnesses, including people whose communities preserve testimony outside the eventual canonical Gospels. The proposal needs named or dated links before it can become a reconstructed history. For now, it tells us where to look for those links.

Keeping the infancy sources distinct

The Arabic Infancy Gospel, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and the Protoevangelium of James have related interests and distinct textual histories. Material can move between such works. The childhood wonders associated with the Infancy Gospel of Thomas should therefore be separated from the particular cradle declaration cited here.

A fuller chapter will place the recensions beside the Qur'anic passages in 3:46, 5:110 and 19:29–33. The immediate tasks are to establish the earliest datable form of each element and determine whether the cradle speech and Zoroaster prophecy traveled together. That comparison is the route by which a proposed isnād can be tested against the surviving evidence.

PART V · FAMILY, MEMORY AND SUCCESSION

18. James and the Jewish-Christian Gospels

James's prominence gives the earliest movement a center that a history organized around Paul alone can miss. Paul himself identifies James as the Lord's brother and includes him among the recognized pillars in Galatians. Acts presents James as a leading figure in Jerusalem. We have substantial evidence with which to begin asking who exercised authority after Jesus.[158]

The more specific claim of designation appears in Gospel of Thomas 12. The disciples ask about leadership after Jesus's departure, and the answer directs them to James the Just. This is the text behind the project's comparison with nass. Its wording needs to be assessed through its own surviving attestation and proposed date.

Leadership and designation

A person can become a community's leader through several kinds of authority. Kinship may matter, as may a remembered instruction, recognized piety, or the response to a visionary experience. Showing that James led the community establishes his leadership. If we say Jesus expressly appointed him, we need evidence for that act.

Thomas 12 provides an explicit report, while the earlier witnesses give a broader picture of standing and relationships. The complete Coptic Thomas preserves the saying. The dossier records that the known earlier Greek fragments do not independently preserve this particular logion. A reconstruction has to keep the gap between surviving wording and proposed early tradition visible.

The epithet concerning James and the existence of heaven and earth raises a related question. The project compares it with Jewish conceptions of the righteous person and with Shi'i language about an Imam's cosmic significance. This can be understood as praise of a servant whose faithfulness gives creation a purpose. A claim of the servant's uncreated divinity is a further proposition, with its own evidentiary and theological demands.

The fuller Thomas chapter below adds two explicit later appointment witnesses: Recognitions 1.43 and Eusebius, Church History 7.19. Their evidence broadens the designation dossier while leaving the origin and date of the instruction in Thomas 12 unresolved. The Epistle of James receives its own chapter, with its attribution assessed independently of James's historical prominence.

Josephus and Christian memory

Josephus's Antiquities 20.200 supplies an external reference to James's execution and identifies him in relation to Jesus called Christ. The epithet the Just belongs to other witnesses. Hegesippus, as transmitted by Eusebius, supplies a different body of memory

[158] Galatians 1:19; 2:9–14; Acts 12:17; 15; 21:18. The distinction between James's attested standing and a specific designation by Jesus is developed in Dossier v7, "The Jerusalem movement and James the Just."

concerning James's piety and death. Each account needs its own treatment before details are combined.[159]

The Gospel of the Hebrews fragments and the Pseudo-Clementine literature also belong to the source program. They preserve interests in Jerusalem authority and Jewish-Christian tradition. Their literary dates and modes of survival differ, and a later account can preserve an older memory without giving direct access to an apostolic transcript.

What the gospel titles tell us

The titles Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of the Nazarenes, and Gospel of the Ebionites are used in scholarship to organize fragmentary evidence. The sources behind those categories require individual examination. A notice from Jerome and a quotation from Epiphanius should not automatically be treated as descriptions of one recoverable book.

Papias's account of Matthew's logia adds another problem of identification. The surviving report needs to be compared with what we know of canonical Matthew and with the Jewish-Christian fragments. A conclusion that one of these is the exact work Papias intended requires an argument concerning the wording and the transmission.

This chapter therefore keeps the Jerusalem movement, later group labels, and the fragments of lost Gospels in relation without collapsing them into a single continuous institution. My hypothesis is that a James-centered tradition survived and that later accounts of Christian origins reduced its significance. The evidence for each stage remains open to inspection.

[159] Josephus, Antiquities 20.200; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.23, transmitting Hegesippus; compare Gospel of Thomas 12. The correction concerning the epithet "the Just" follows Dossier v7. A publication version should attach the Greek and exact edition references for each witness.

19. The Jerusalem Church After James

James's death leaves a question that a Gospel-centered history can easily pass over. Who continued to teach in the city where he had exercised authority? The answer affects the search for Injil because teachings survive through people who recognize teachers and decide which instructions remain binding. A history of Jesus's family becomes consequential when that family is also remembered as a source of religious knowledge.

Paul identifies James through his relationship to Jesus and places him among the acknowledged leaders in Jerusalem. Acts later presents James giving judgment on the admission of Gentiles. Those sources give the succession inquiry an early point of departure. The later literature adds accounts of how the office began and who inherited it. The evidence for those developments has to be assessed at the date of each witness.[160]

James Tabor's family-centered reconstruction asks us to give this material a larger place in Christian origins. My Shiʿi comparison adds a question about the relation between a prophet's family and his surviving teaching. I can take that question seriously and still find some proposed family lines or acts of appointment historically uncertain. The comparison becomes useful when it identifies the evidence needed for each particular claim.

Remembering how James received authority

The designation dossier contains several forms of memory. Thomas 12 directs the disciples to James. Recognitions 1.43 attributes his appointment to the Lord. Eusebius 7.19 associates James's episcopate with the Savior and the apostles. These are explicit witnesses to traditions of authorized succession, although their survival does not independently establish the date at which each tradition arose.[161]

A further account appears in Eusebius 2.1.3, quoting Clement of Alexandria. Peter, James and John choose James the Just for the Jerusalem office. The following passage assigns the transmission of special knowledge from the risen Jesus to James the Just, John and Peter, who pass it onward. The reported election and the report of received knowledge belong in the dossier alongside the more direct appointment language.[162]

A community could understand apostolic selection as the recognition of a prior divine choice. That offers one theological reconciliation of the accounts. Historically, the reconciliation would itself need evidence. Another possibility is that writers gave different

[160] Galatians 1:18–19; 2:1–14; Acts 15:13–29; compare the existing Finding Injil v0.6, chapter 14. The distinction between early evidence of standing and later accounts of appointment follows the supplied manuscript's framework.

[161] Gospel of Thomas 12, Mark M. Mattison's public-domain translation at [online source]; Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43, [online source]; Eusebius, Church History 7.19, [online source]. The translated passages were consulted. The three witnesses require separate dating and dependence assessments.

[162] Eusebius, Church History 2.1.3–4, quoting Clement's Hypotyposes, [online source]. English text consulted. Clement's work survives here through Eusebius's quotation; the transmission of knowledge is described as post-resurrection.

explanations of an authority they all regarded as legitimate. The existence of several accounts therefore enlarges the evidence for James's remembered standing while leaving the mechanism of appointment open to investigation.

This is where the comparison with *naṣṣ*, a designation of the successor, acquires precision. A claim that Jesus chose James concerns an act and its remembered wording. Evidence that James eventually led Jerusalem concerns his actual standing. The possibility of a divinely authorized appointment links them within a religious interpretation. Our historical apparatus should preserve the evidence for each proposition, including the possibility that a later community explained established leadership through a founding command.

Thomas's description of James as the righteous person for whose sake the world exists also belongs here. I read that language as inviting an account of creation's moral purpose. God creates a world in which faithful service can occur, and the righteous person gives that purpose a visible human form. This is the book's proposed interpretation of the saying. It avoids turning James's significance into an assertion that he independently created anything, while leaving the historical origin of the logion to its own inquiry.

A family continuing in public memory

Eusebius reports that Symeon, son of Clopas, succeeded James through the agreement of surviving apostles, disciples and members of Jesus's family. He identifies Symeon as Jesus's cousin and attributes the relationship between Clopas and Joseph to Hegesippus. The account combines family standing with communal assent.[163]

That combination is important for the Taborian inquiry. A family relationship can help explain why someone would be trusted with inherited teaching. Agreement among other witnesses can explain how the claim became publicly recognized. Neither feature alone settles whether the office followed a fixed hereditary rule. The report does give us a reason to investigate the family as a continuing religious institution, rather than limiting its relevance to the birth narratives.

Hegesippus, again through Eusebius, also supplies the story of Jude's descendants being questioned under Domitian about their Davidic ancestry. The narrative presents them as working people whose understanding of the kingdom reassures the emperor; their testimony and kinship subsequently support their leadership. The dramatic interview and its apologetic portrayal of the kingdom require scrutiny as a later report.[164]

The story's religious work is nevertheless visible. It permits family authority to coexist with a denial of immediate imperial rivalry. That is relevant to the resistance chapter. An account of Davidic inheritance may preserve political possibilities while a later narrator emphasizes the harmlessness of those who bear it. Establishing what those descendants

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[163] Eusebius, Church History 3.11, [online source]. The account attributes the family relationship to Hegesippus and represents agreement among surviving associates and relatives. Its form of consensus is evidence to be compared with claims of individual designation.

[164] Eusebius, Church History 3.19–20, transmitting Hegesippus, same URL. The interview with Domitian is treated as a later narrative witness. Its depiction of the kingdom should be distinguished from independently established speech by Jude's descendants.

themselves believed would require a source closer to them than the explanation supplied by the surviving narrative.

The same caution applies to Symeon's reported martyrdom under Trajan and the extraordinary age assigned to him. Such details tell us how a later source connected suffering, memory and enduring authority. They should enter the historical record with their attribution intact.[165] A comparison with the memory of the Alids can ask how persecution shapes the transmission of a family's claims. Resemblance alone will not tell us that Jerusalem and Medina shared an institutional constitution.

Pella and the problem of survival

Eusebius describes a warning that prompted the Jerusalem church to move to Pella before the war. His account is a later witness to the migration tradition. It supplies no contemporary register of the people who departed or of the texts they carried.[166]

For this book, the story raises a productive archival question: what would count as evidence that a displaced community preserved the teaching associated with James? A destination and a later group label leave much unresolved. We would need identifiable teachers, a succession of local attestations, or demonstrable features of a transmitted text. The geographic possibility of movement into Transjordan is only the beginning of that inquiry.

Eusebius also places the escape within a theology of Jerusalem's destruction. His polemical treatment of Jewish responsibility belongs to his interpretation of the war. It should be examined as evidence about the historian's framework, with responsibility for particular acts kept distinct from ethnic identity. The migration claim can be investigated without reproducing his account of collective divine punishment as this book's own judgment.

Fifteen bishops and a broken chronology

Eusebius lists fifteen Jerusalem bishops of Hebrew origin before the transformation of the city under Hadrian. He explicitly acknowledges that he lacks a chronology for their periods of service. His subsequent account places a Gentile congregation under Marcus in Aelia. These statements make the list valuable and define its limits.[167]

A list can preserve institutional memory even when the chronology has become uncertain. It can also arrange earlier names to create a continuous succession useful to a later church. The surviving list alone cannot decide how many of its transitions were contested, whether several leaders served concurrently, or how the office changed during displacement.

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[165] Eusebius, Church History 3.32, same URL. The account's age and circumstances are reported as features of the transmitted story; they are not independently verified here.

[166] Eusebius, Church History 3.5.3, same URL. The Pella report and its polemical interpretation of Jerusalem's fate require separate evaluation. No contemporary migration list or local manuscript collection was examined for this draft.

[167] Eusebius, Church History 4.5–6, [online source]. English text consulted. Eusebius explicitly acknowledges the missing chronology of the Hebrew bishops, then describes the changed city and the first Gentile episcopate under Marcus.

Dividing the years neatly among the names would give us a tidy timetable and a certainty the source never supplied.

Nor does a change in the ethnic composition of the Jerusalem leadership demonstrate that every Torah-observant Jesus community disappeared. The city's restrictions and its ecclesiastical reorganization concern a particular place. Related communities may have continued elsewhere. That possibility needs local witnesses rather than a genealogy extended across the map by assumption. The later history of Jewish Christianity is therefore essential to assessing what the list's ending means.

Torah-observant believers after Jerusalem's catastrophe

Justin's Dialogue 47 describes disagreement among Christians over fellowship with people who acknowledge Jesus while maintaining Mosaic practices. Justin is willing to receive them under stated conditions concerning Gentile believers, while acknowledging that others refuse such fellowship. This gives us a second-century witness to a disputed boundary within Christian life.[168]

Irenaeus's account of people he calls Ebionites associates their devotion with Jerusalem, adherence to circumcision and rejection of Paul. Origen later distinguishes two Ebionite positions concerning Jesus's birth. These descriptions come from writers who classify other believers, and their categories need to be tested against the individual practices they report.[169]

The evidence supports studying a continuing variety of Torah-observant Jesus movements. A direct institutional line from every such group back to James is a further claim. The distinction matters for Christian sharia: a later community may preserve a stringent law that resembles our reconstruction of Jerusalem practice, while its explanation of that law has undergone substantial change. Legal resemblance alone cannot authenticate its entire Gospel or its account of succession.

Jonathan Bourgel proposes that Recognitions 1.27–71 contains a response by a Judean Jewish-Christian group to the disaster of the Bar Kokhba revolt. The proposal offers a setting in which attachment to the land and arguments about sacrifice could shape inherited traditions. This draft uses the published abstract to identify the argument; the complete study remains to be assessed.[170]

That kind of reconstruction helps formulate the next historical task. A text may carry older Jesus traditions inside a later community's response to catastrophe. We should ask which language belongs to the remembered teacher, which belongs to the community defending

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[168] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 47, [online source]. English text consulted. The passage is a witness to Justin's distinction among practices and communities, rather than an independently documented membership list.

[169] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.26.2, [online source]; Origen, Against Celsus 5.61, [online source]. English texts consulted. The heresiological labels and reported birth doctrines must be assigned to their individual witnesses.

[170] Jonathan Bourgel, “Reconnaissances 1.27–71, ou la réponse d'un groupe judéo-chrétien de Judée au désastre du soulèvement de Bar-Kokhba,” New Testament Studies, first published online 3 December 2014. Publisher abstract consulted: [online source] . Full-article evaluation remains open.

its practice, and what evidence distinguishes them. The same questions apply when a Muslim collection preserves an Imam's instruction within disputes that continued after his death.

What a Shiʿi comparison adds

The family analogy becomes stronger when its terms are specified. *Naṣṣ* concerns designation. *Waṣāyah* concerns entrusted succession, while the transmission of knowledge concerns what the successor receives and teaches. Biological descent can support those claims within a community, but it does not by itself document the appointing act or establish the content of the transmitted knowledge.

Imami literature gives designation a role that cannot be reduced to the succession of the eldest available male. Al-Ṣadūq's Kamāl al-dīn preserves reports about succession through the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, including restrictions on brother-to-brother succession after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. These are particular doctrinal claims about a particular lineage. They clarify the sort of argument involved when believers distinguish divine appointment from ordinary inheritance.[171]

For the James comparison, the relevance is methodological. An argument for his authority should examine a remembered instruction and his recognized conduct alongside kinship. The family relationship gives us a historical reason to seek testimony close to Jesus. A designation tradition gives us a specific claim to evaluate. The Book of Acts, Paul's letters and the later succession accounts each contribute evidence of different kinds.

The Moses–Aaron comparison supplies another source. In the report preserved in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404a, Muhammad addresses ʿAlī through that relationship, with an explicit exception concerning further prophecy. Its narrative setting concerns the expedition to Tabuk. The implications for permanent succession form part of the subsequent interpretive debate.[172]

A reader approaching James through this analogy will notice how religious authority can be described through kinship and delegated responsibility. The analogy can guide a question about what Jesus entrusted to those close to him. For the missing first-century appointment narrative, we still have to go to the Christian and Jewish witnesses concerning the actual people involved.

James as Imam and Peter as a supporting authority

A modern Ismaili reading makes the comparison explicit. The 2019 Ismaili Gnosis essay, “The Imamat of James,” identifies James as Jesus's legatee and Imam, while assigning Peter the office of a supporting *bāb* or *ḥujjah*. It interprets Peter's keys through a ministerial

[171] Al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-niʿmah, vol. 2, chapter 40, English translation at [online source] . The translated reports were consulted as witnesses to an Imami doctrine of succession. No independent isnād grading is supplied here, and the rules described cannot be transferred to Jesus's family as historical facts.

[172] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404a, [online source]. Arabic and English witness to the manzilah report. The Tabuk setting and exception of subsequent prophecy are explicit; the extent of the succession implication is interpretive.

analogy drawn from Isaiah 22. This is a documented contemporary Shiʿi argument about the Christian evidence.[173]

The proposal is valuable because it asks whether distinct forms of authority have been collapsed into a contest over a single title. A traveling apostolic teacher and a leader who gives judgment from Jerusalem could exercise related responsibilities. The sources would then have to establish their respective jurisdictions. Neither Acts's portrayal of James nor Matthew's language about Peter independently supplies the whole constitutional scheme.

The Ismaili essay also quotes Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī on the general relation between a prophet and his legatee. That quotation establishes the theological framework as presented by the essay. Its application to James must be distinguished from a claim that al-Ṭūsī himself named James in the quoted passage. This draft has not independently examined the cited pages of The Paradise of Submission.[174]

Other Shiʿi presentations identify Simon as Jesus's successor. Abolfazl Sabouri's modern account is one example. Its existence prevents us from treating the James identification as a uniform Shiʿi position.[175] A comparison among these readings should examine the evidence offered for each name and the offices assigned to other disciples. The disagreement may reveal different received histories as well as different ways of arranging authority.

My proposal for Finding Injil is to use this debate to sharpen the historical inquiry. The apparent importance of James has early support in Paul, and later writers preserve explicit appointment traditions. Peter's prominence is also visible in the early material. A reconstruction of their relationship should be able to explain both bodies of evidence, including the possibility that later communities elaborated the rank of the figure most useful to their own institutional claims.

A family can carry a teaching through defeat

The Alid comparison also changes the question we ask about historical success. Loss of political power cannot by itself decide whether a family retained religious knowledge. Survival as an imperial institution would likewise fail to establish that every inherited teaching was authentic. A historian has to investigate actual transmitters and communities across the period in which visibility changes.

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[173] Ismaili Gnosis, “The Imamat of James: Brother of Jesus, Successor of Christ & Leader of Early Christianity,” 25 January 2019, [online source] . Full online essay consulted as primary evidence of its authors' modern Ismaili interpretation. Its James–Peter distribution of offices is not presented as the position of every Ismaili author or every Shiʿi school.

[174] The same Ismaili Gnosis essay quotes Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, The Paradise of Submission, translated by S. J. Badakhchani (2005), pp. 136–137. Those book pages were not independently consulted. The quoted general doctrine of a legatee and the essay's identification of James are distinct evidentiary claims.

[175] Abolfazl Sabouri, A Brief History of Muhammad, The Last Prophet, “The Successor of the Prophet,” [online source] . Online chapter consulted. Its explicit naming of Simon is evidence for this modern Shiʿi presentation, without establishing the age or universality of that particular identification.

This makes the Jerusalem succession relevant to the book's governing question. A Christian account centered on the later canon can lose sight of people whose books survived chiefly in quotations by opponents. Centering James can recover neglected testimony. It can also tempt me to invent continuity where the evidence has failed. The remedy is a record of attested people, places and texts, with the uncertain intervals kept visible.

The route from Jerusalem to the Christians encountered by the Qur'an is still to be traced. The sources examined here establish a family-centered memory of authority and a later diversity of Torah-observant Christian life. They also preserve disagreements about how leadership began. A claim that one continuous community carried the authentic Injil across the intervening centuries requires witnesses for those intervening centuries. The next stage of the inquiry belongs to the history of the communities that actually transmitted scripture and worship in late-antique Arabia.

20. The Epistle of James and the Practice of the Injil

The hungry person in James has already received a religious answer. Someone has wished them warmth and food. Their material situation remains unchanged. The letter then asks what the answer has accomplished. That scene, in James 2:15–16, gives the search for Injil one of its clearest tests: a teaching about salvation must explain the fate of the person standing in front of us. The writer makes the need of that person part of his argument about faith.[176]

This is the letter I would place beside the Gospels when asking what a Christian community was expected to do. It takes responsibility for conduct into the assembly and follows it into the employer's field. Its concern with the use of speech reaches teachers as well as ordinary believers. The title of a religious authority provides little shelter from its questions.

The letter also changes the historical shape of this book. The chapter on Jerusalem established James's importance through sources that describe him. Here a text speaks in his name. Whether that voice belongs to Jesus's brother, a collaborator, or a subsequent writer is a separate investigation. We can examine the religious life it prescribes while keeping that attribution open.

Which James is speaking?

The opening identifies the writer as James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, addressing the twelve tribes in dispersion. It supplies no account of his family relationship with Jesus. The authority of the name is taken for granted. Identifying this figure with the Jerusalem leader is understandable, although the first sentence alone cannot establish the identification.[177]

A date before James's death would place the letter close to the earliest Jerusalem movement. A later composition under his authority would tell us about the continued force of his name and the sort of Christianity that claimed him. Those possibilities produce different historical conclusions. A theory about the letter's date should therefore precede any attempt to use every sentence as a transcript of the first Jerusalem community.

The dispute is ancient. Eusebius records uncertainty surrounding the epistle while acknowledging its public use in many churches. Jerome subsequently reports that some

[176] James 2:14–17. Primary text consulted in the World English Bible (WEB), chapter 2, https://ebible.org/eng-web/JAS02.htm. Scriptural wording in this chapter is generally paraphrased; verse references identify the passages being interpreted.

[177] James 1:1; compare Galatians 1:19 and 2:9. The epistle supplies its speaker's name and religious designation without explicitly calling him Jesus's brother. Historical identification and direct authorship remain separate questions.

attributed its publication to another writer using James's name. These notices establish a history of disputed reception. They do not reveal how the letter was originally composed.[178]

Its accomplished Greek is relevant evidence. Any proposal of direct authorship must explain the writer's literary resources, but the mere existence of those resources cannot settle the case. Jewish authors could write sophisticated Greek. Assistance in composition is also historically conceivable. If we invoke a secretary, we need evidence beyond our desire to keep a preferred name on the letter.

For this chapter I will call the literary speaker James, following the text's self-presentation. That convention leaves the authorship question open. The historical brother of Jesus and the voice of this epistle must remain distinguishable in the research register.

A Jewish address with Christian commitments

The twelve-tribe address places the reader inside Israel's inherited story. At 2:2, the gathering is called a synagōgē. Abraham is the exemplary ancestor in the central discussion of faithful conduct. The letter's use of Israelite language is extensive enough to require explanation on its own terms.[179]

Dale Allison has proposed that the letter addresses a broader Jewish audience, including people who do not confess Jesus. In this reading, the limited explicit Christological language serves an effort to remain within a shared Jewish religious conversation. That is a significant alternative to treating the epistle's brevity about Jesus as proof that its author lacked an interest in him. Allison presents a reconstruction of audience and purpose; it should be tested against the whole letter.[180]

The two explicit references to Jesus occur at 1:1 and 2:1. The second joins allegiance to the glorious Lord Jesus Christ to a prohibition on favoritism. The writer is capable of an exalted designation, and he makes it bear upon how a poor visitor is received. The religious force of Christology is being tested through social behavior.

This observation matters for our larger method. An ethical letter can presuppose doctrines it does not explain. Its silence about a virgin birth, for example, cannot decide whether its author accepted one. At the same time, the form of Christian instruction that survives here deserves independent weight. Readers can participate in the letter's extensive moral reasoning without first being led through a theory of divine persons or the metaphysical mechanics of atonement.

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[178] Eusebius, Church History 2.23.25, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm; Jerome, On Illustrious Men 2, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2708.htm. Both reception notices were consulted in translation. Jerome's report of another writer using James's name is an ancient attribution dispute, not independent verification of a particular modern date.

[179] James 1:1; 2:2, 8, 21–23. Synagōgē identifies the gathering at 2:2. The social and ethnic composition of the intended readership remains an interpretive question.

[180] Dale C. Allison Jr., 'The Jewish Setting of the Epistle of James,' In die Skriflig 49.1 (2015), art. 1897, https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i1.1897. The open article's argument, rather than Allison's full commentary, is used here. Its proposal of an intentionally broad Jewish address is identified as his reconstruction.

The Messiah's teachings without a Gospel narrative

James offers a useful model for the transmission of teaching outside biography. The letter does not tell the story of Jesus's ministry, yet it repeatedly approaches language familiar from the Gospel traditions. The prohibition of oaths in 5:12 is especially close to Matthew 5:34–37. James's treatment of wealth, judgment and the danger of divided loyalty also invites comparison with the Sermon on the Mount.[181]

The oath passage deserves a high place in the pilot sayings apparatus. Its compact structure and practical point can be compared across witnesses. We need to ask whether James knew a written Gospel, inherited a spoken Jesus tradition, or drew upon an overlapping collection of ethical instruction. The similarity gives us something to investigate. We still have to establish whether these witnesses are independent.

The same applies to the blessings associated with endurance. James 1:12 and the beatitudes share a religious world in which present hardship is measured against divine reward. The letter's warning about judging another person can be studied alongside Matthew 7. These are clusters of ethical resemblance, with different levels of verbal precision. They should receive separate entries rather than one broad claim that James reproduces the Sermon.

For Finding Injil, such a collection is important even when literary dependence remains unresolved. It demonstrates that teachings resembling those attributed to Jesus could organize a community's ordinary life. The question of Christian law has concrete material to work with before we arrive at later ecclesiastical legislation.

Hearing, doing and the word placed within

James 1 begins with trials and the need for wisdom. God is described as generous in giving it. The person seeking guidance is asked to approach with an undivided commitment. Later in the chapter, the received word becomes something implanted, capable of saving the soul. The image has a place in our inquiry into spiritual transformation: guidance takes root in a human life.[182]

The mirror comparison makes the consequence plain. A person who hears and immediately forgets resembles someone who looks at a face and walks away without retaining what was seen. Continued attention belongs to obedience. The law of liberty supplies the object of that attention, and the blessed person acts upon it.

A Qur'an-centered reading can take this language seriously as a description of divine instruction becoming inwardly effective. The text gives no grounds for turning the implanted word into an independent divine person. It also gives little support to an

[181] James 5:12 and Matthew 5:34–37; compare James 1:12 with Matthew 5:10–12, and James 4:11–12 with Matthew 7:1–5. Allison, 'Jewish Setting,' explicitly discusses the oath parallel. Different degrees of verbal overlap should receive different entries in the sayings apparatus.

[182] James 1:2–8, 17–25, https://ebible.org/eng-web/JAS01.htm. The interpretation of implanted guidance developed here is the book's comparative reading; James does not identify this word with a separate divine person.

account of religion exhausted by external conformity. The inward and outward dimensions meet in the individual who receives instruction and carries it out.

James 1:27 locates acceptable religious practice in the care of orphans and widows and in remaining uncorrupted by the world. Qur'an 107 likewise joins religious failure to rejection of the orphan and indifference toward feeding the poor. The comparison rests upon a shared moral concern. It does not establish that one passage was copied from the other.[183]

Favoritism inside the assembly

The wealthy visitor in James 2 receives a favorable place while the poor one is directed to stand or sit in a degrading position. The scene is small enough to be recognizable in an ordinary gathering. Its consequences extend to the community's claim to be faithful. The assembly has imported the hierarchy of wealth into the place where it professes loyalty to God.[184]

James asks his audience to consider who is oppressing them. Rich people drag them into court, yet the assembly rehearses deference toward wealth. The writer's criticism reaches beyond an individual lapse in politeness. It exposes a community learning to admire the power that injures it.

The royal law, drawn from the command to love one's neighbor, makes the poor visitor a legal and religious concern. Favoritism is then classed as a violation. This is a particularly important point for Christian sharia: neighbor-love is capable of generating obligations in a recognizable situation. Its application requires judgment about the effect of conduct upon another person.

The discussion of keeping the whole law at 2:10–11 has often been made to carry more than this passage establishes. James invokes the same lawgiver behind prohibitions on adultery and murder. The argument concerns the integrity of obedience. A person cannot claim fidelity while exempting a favored area of conduct from divine judgment. The passage does not supply a complete ruling on Gentile circumcision or every Mosaic food regulation.

Faith and the person who still needs food

The argument at 2:14 begins with someone claiming to possess faith. Its examples concern failure to act. A brother or sister lacks clothing and daily food. Religious speech leaves that need unanswered. James's question about whether such faith can save is attached to this concrete failure of responsibility.[185]

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[183] James 1:27; Qur'an 107:1–7. The comparison concerns duties toward the vulnerable and the connection between worship and conduct. It is not a demonstrated literary dependency.

[184] James 2:1–13; Leviticus 19:18. The discussion of the royal law and favoritism is read within the assembly scene rather than used as a complete statement of all Gentile obligations.

[185] James 2:14–20. The immediate object of criticism is a claimed faith that fails to assist a person in material need. Verse 19's confession of one God is part of that argument.

This setting is essential when comparing James with Paul. It keeps us from replacing the letter's actual dispute with a later theological examination. A person claiming that faith excuses indifference toward a hungry neighbor has entered James's argument directly. A person discussing the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles has raised a different question, even where some vocabulary overlaps.

The author reinforces the point through belief in one God. The demons acknowledge that fact and tremble. Their acknowledgment gives them knowledge of a reality without making their conduct righteous. For a Muslim reader, this is a serious internal criticism of religious self-satisfaction. A correct formula of tawḥīd carries obligations for the person who professes it.

That observation also helps preserve the distinction between doctrinal error and moral judgment in the wider book. James evaluates the kind of life a professed belief produces. He does not provide a formula for measuring every person's final account, nor does he authorize us to substitute a sectarian label for the investigation of conduct.

Abraham's sequence and the dispute with Paul

Paul and James both use Genesis 15:6, where Abraham's faith is reckoned as righteousness. James then brings the offering of Isaac into the discussion. Faith acts together with Abraham's works and reaches completion through them. The Genesis sequence matters: the act recalled from chapter 22 occurs after the declaration in chapter 15. James interprets the earlier scriptural recognition through the later demonstration of fidelity.[186]

Romans 4 uses Abraham to explain righteousness apart from works and to place the reckoning before circumcision. James 2 opposes the saving adequacy of a faith that remains alone. There is a genuine verbal collision, particularly when justification and works are compared. Explaining the different situations addressed helps clarify the collision; it should not erase it in advance.

One hypothesis is that James confronts Paul himself. Another is that he responds to a slogan circulating under Pauline authority. A further possibility places both arguments within broader Jewish disputes over the relationship between belief and obedience. Nicholas List has argued that shared soteriological vocabulary does not establish James's dependence upon Paul. Each proposal has to explain both the verbal resemblance and the sharply different examples.[187]

A reconstruction centered on direct hostility has an obvious attraction for a book investigating the Jerusalem movement. It would supply a response from the authority Paul himself recognized. That is an attractive picture for this inquiry. It still depends on

[186] James 2:21–24; Genesis 15:6 and 22:1–19; Romans 4:1–12. James's use of completion and fulfillment should be examined against the sequence of the Genesis narratives. The Greek of justification and works remains a priority for the final apparatus.

[187] Nicholas List, 'Problematising Dependency: Soteriology and Vocabulary in James and Paul,' Expository Times 131.9 (2020): 383–391, https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524620903678. The abstract was consulted. It challenges the assumption that shared vocabulary establishes James's dependency upon Paul; a detailed adjudication of its examples awaits the full article.

authorship, date and literary relationship. The text can challenge an irresponsible reception of Pauline language even when those questions remain unanswered.

Paul's own insistence upon faith working through love in Galatians 5:6 belongs in this comparison. Romans 2 also speaks about judgment according to conduct. Those passages make a blanket equation of Paul with moral indifference untenable. They leave room for serious disagreement about the role of Torah, the scope of his preaching and the behavior permitted by his followers. The expanded Pauline chapter has treated those disputes individually.

Abraham's friendship and Rahab's protection

James calls Abraham God's friend. Qur'an 4:125 uses an equivalent relational description of Abraham within its account of surrender and good conduct. The comparison gives us a shared language for the nearness of a righteous servant to God. Friendship is expressed through faithful action. Neither passage requires the servant to acquire God's essence.[188]

The Qur'anic account of the sacrifice belongs in the comparison with care. James names Isaac. Qur'an 37:99–113 does not name the son in the sacrifice scene itself, and the interpretation of the sequence has its own history. The common concern is Abraham's submission under an extraordinary trial. The differences should remain visible in any proposed account of transmitted tradition.

Rahab adds a different example. She receives the messengers and sends them out by another route. In the story invoked by James, fidelity involves protection offered under dangerous political circumstances. James thereby locates moral recognition beyond a socially respectable male patriarch. The two examples do different work within his argument.

We should also keep their scale in view. James invokes the episodes to explain faithful conduct. He does not give readers a general authorization to reproduce every action found in the associated biblical narratives. A chapter on Christian law must distinguish an exemplary feature of a story from an unlimited transfer of its circumstances.

Teachers, speech and the work of wisdom

James 3 opens by increasing the responsibility of teachers. Their speech shapes other lives, and their judgment will be stricter. The chapter then follows language into blessing and cursing. Cursing a human being is treated as a contradiction within worship because human beings bear God's likeness. That gives the control of religious speech a theological foundation.[189]

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[188] James 2:23–25; Qur'an 4:125 and 37:99–113. James names Isaac in the offering example. The Qur'anic sacrifice passage does not name the son within that scene; the surrounding sequence and its reception need independent treatment.

[189] James 3:1–18, https://ebible.org/eng-web/JAS03.htm. The application to restorationist teachers is the present book's ethical inference from the letter's criteria.

Those of us making restorationist arguments have to hear this too. A person can identify a real doctrinal error and still become corrupt through the manner of opposing it. The difficulty intensifies when denunciation earns attention or establishes a teacher's authority. James asks about the source and effect of the wisdom being displayed.

The description of wisdom from above emphasizes peaceability, gentleness and mercy, with sincerity running through the account. This is a practical criterion for claims to spiritual insight. A teacher who invokes hidden knowledge cannot exempt the use of that knowledge from moral examination. The comparison will become important when we turn to Thomas and its secret sayings.

At 4:1–3, James places conflict within the life of desire. Prayer itself can become an instrument for obtaining what feeds that desire. The writer therefore interrogates the petitioner alongside the petition. This gives a Qur'an-centered reader grounds to ask what a religious practice is serving, including when its outward vocabulary is thoroughly devout.

God's sovereignty and the limits of blame

James 1:13 refuses to make God the tempter responsible for human wrongdoing. The development of sin is traced through desire and consent. This has a natural place beside the book's concern with moral responsibility. Divine sovereignty cannot be used within this letter to make the agent's response disappear.[190]

James 4:12 identifies one lawgiver and judge, able to save and destroy. At 4:15, planning for the future is placed under the Lord's will. Qur'an 18:23–24 likewise disciplines confident speech about tomorrow through reference to Allah's will. These are comparable expressions of human dependence. They leave room for deliberation and obligation within that dependence.[191]

A nearby sentence, James 4:5, is difficult to translate and interpret. The identity of the spirit and the force of the jealousy language are debated. It would be a poor foundation for establishing the detailed pneumatology developed in the earlier chapters. The clearer material on divine generosity, moral agency and prayer should carry more weight in this preliminary reconstruction.

The closing statement of chapter 4 makes omission culpable. A person who knows the good to be done can sin through failing to do it. Avoiding a list of prohibited acts is therefore too small an account of moral responsibility. The earlier hungry neighbor has already supplied the reader with an example.

The wages that cry out

James 5 addresses rich people who have accumulated wealth while withholding payment from agricultural workers. The unpaid wages themselves become witnesses, and the

[190] James 1:13–18. The comparison concerns the letter's location of temptation and the development of sin in human desire; it does not establish a full later theological school's account of divine causation.

[191] James 4:1–17, https://ebible.org/eng-web/JAS04.htm; Qur'an 18:23–24. The difficult wording of James 4:5 is deliberately left outside the book's positive argument about the identity of the Spirit.

workers' cries reach the Lord of armies. The language places an employment relationship inside divine judgment. Its severity comes from the injury imposed upon people whose labor has produced the wealth.[192]

This passage should occupy a central place in any reconstruction of Christian law. It identifies a material obligation, the payment owed for work, and treats its violation as religiously consequential. An employer's pious identity cannot substitute for that payment. The scene also shows why it is inadequate to describe the epistle as a collection of harmless moral advice.

There is a fruitful comparison with the prophetic indictments of economic oppression in Israel's scriptures. James writes in that inheritance. Within the present book, Qur'an 83:1–6 provides a corresponding connection between economic dishonesty and the expectation of standing before God. The specific commercial practices differ, while the logic of accountability can be compared.[193]

The final accusation in James 5:6 concerns condemnation and killing of the righteous one who offers no resistance. Whether the expression evokes Jesus specifically or the exploited righteous person more generally requires interpretation. Its presence should not be used to invent a detailed event behind the letter. It does give the following appeal to patience a setting in real coercion.

Endurance, righteous prayer and the Elijah comparison

James asks the community to remain patient until the Lord's coming. The farmer waiting for rain becomes an example. The nearness of judgment places a limit on the authority of the oppressor and also warns the community against turning its frustration upon its own members. This expectation belongs to the letter's historical world and should remain audible in a modern reading.[194]

The closing instructions concern prayer in distress, praise in well-being and care for the sick through the elders. Confession and intercession take place within a community. The religious claims about healing express trust in God's response; they should be studied in that devotional setting. The text does not offer a basis for blaming an ill person whenever recovery fails to occur.

Elijah is particularly useful for our investigation of holy persons. James explicitly presents him as a human being like the audience, yet attributes extraordinary efficacy to his prayer. A striking miracle can therefore coexist with shared humanity and dependence upon God.

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[192] James 5:1–6, https://ebible.org/eng-web/JAS05.htm. The connection between wages and divine judgment is explicit. The designation of the righteous one at 5:6 should be distinguished from a proven identification of a specific historical victim.

[193] Compare Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14–15, Amos 8:4–6, and Qur'an 83:1–6. The comparison groups distinct legal and prophetic indictments of economic injury; it does not equate all their commercial settings.

[194] James 5:7–12. The expectation of the Lord's coming belongs to the text's moral and temporal setting. Modern applications of patience must not erase the original urgency.

The comparison helps us understand how an exalted servant might mediate divine help within a tawḥīdi account.[195]

This model does not require every claim made for an Imam or saint to be accepted. It provides a conceptual possibility with an identifiable textual witness. The chain and content of any subsequent report still require examination. The efficacy remains a matter of God's response, and the human being retains obligations of conduct.

The final appeal concerns recovering someone who has wandered from truth. Restoration is imagined as saving a soul from death and covering sins. The letter ends with an obligation toward another person. Its reader has been placed in a community where someone else's condition requires a response.[196]

What enters the recovered Injil?

The epistle contributes several different kinds of evidence. Its oath instruction belongs in the apparatus of possible Jesus traditions. Its treatment of money and the neighbor can inform a reconstruction of early Christian practice. Its voice under James's name supplies evidence about remembered authority, with the strength of that evidence depending upon the unresolved question of authorship.

For Qur'anic evaluation, the letter's account of the one God, righteous conduct and care for the vulnerable offers sustained points of contact. That gives me ample reason to read the letter closely. It gives me no warrant to certify every line as something Jesus said. Much of the letter speaks as instruction from its own author.

The James who emerges from the earlier historical sources remains crucial to the Jerusalem movement. The epistle allows us to ask a further question about what fidelity to such a movement could have required. When it is read alongside the surviving sayings, Christian law acquires obligations that can be tested in ordinary life. The poor visitor must receive dignity, and the worker's wages remain due.

[195] James 5:13–18, especially 5:17; compare 1 Kings 17–18. The explicitly human Elijah supplies the basis for the proposed analogy of dependent miraculous agency. This is a theological comparison, not a historical transmission claim connecting James to later Imami reports.

[196] James 5:19–20. The letter's restoration language is retained as a religious claim within the text; its precise account of the relation between repentance, forgiveness and final judgment remains to be compared with the other corpora.

21. The Gospel of Thomas and the Living Messiah

Thomas opens with a promise that interpretation can change the reader's relation to death. The sayings belong to the living Jesus, and the work of understanding them is presented as a path to life. That claim requires more attention than a label such as Gnostic usually gives it. A reader is being invited to participate in an encounter with divine instruction through the Messiah. The historical question concerns who preserved that invitation and how it acquired its surviving form.[197]

For Finding Injil, Thomas is important at several levels. It gives James a remarkably explicit place in the succession. Some of its ethical sayings overlap with material in the canonical Gospels. Its teachings about light and transformed perception also allow us to test the tawḥīdi account of divine manifestation developed earlier in this book.

The text can be inviting. It can also be disconcerting. Its treatment of religious practice sometimes appears to resist precisely the obligations a Qur'an-centered reader wants to recover. I owe those passages the same care as the ones I immediately like.

The book we possess

The essentially complete surviving Gospel of Thomas is Coptic, preserved as the second tractate of Nag Hammadi Codex II. Earlier Greek fragments from Oxyrhynchus preserve portions of a related sayings collection. These witnesses establish a textual history before the surviving Coptic copy. They also show that parts of the collection circulated in forms that differ from its final Coptic arrangement.[198]

The title identifies Thomas, and the opening names Didymos Judas Thomas as the writer of the sayings. That is a claim made by the document. A historical demonstration that a disciple personally recorded the collection would require evidence beyond the attribution. A sayings Gospel can preserve early traditions even when its identifying frame belongs to a later stage of transmission.

The familiar count of 114 sayings is a modern way of dividing the text for reference. The individual units vary in length and form. Some consist of a brief maxim. Others contain an exchange with disciples or a parable. That variation gives the researcher reason to examine units separately before assigning a single origin to the entire collection.

A crucial limit concerns saying 12. The directive to James survives in the Coptic text. It is absent from the portions preserved in the known early Greek Thomas fragments. That

[197] Gospel of Thomas, prologue and sayings 1–2. Working text: Mark M. Mattison, public-domain translation, https://www.gospels.net/thomas. The following discussion paraphrases individual sayings and distinguishes the text's claim from a judgment about historical authorship.

[198] Nag Hammadi Codex II,2, pp. 32–51; P.Oxy. 1, 654 and 655. Gospels.net manuscript inventory, https://www.gospels.net/manuscript, records the Greek coverage and the Coptic witness. Exact paleographic ranges and original-language transcriptions require a critical-edition check. Thomas 12 is not preserved in the surviving coverage of these Greek fragments.

absence is a matter of surviving coverage; the fragments do not supply an earlier complete text in which the saying has been deliberately omitted.

The newly published sayings fragment

P.Oxy. 5575, published in 2023, adds an important comparison. Its surviving Greek combines material resembling Gospel sayings about anxiety, clothing and the rich man with language about fasting from the world. The associated sayings are known in Matthew, Luke and Thomas. The fragment provides material evidence of a sayings text whose combination differs from the canonical arrangements.[199]

This is valuable for reconstructing circulation. It shows why the history of an individual saying can be more complicated than a sequence of complete books copying one another. A small collection, an excerpt or another written arrangement can intervene. We should nevertheless avoid assigning this fragment to the complete Gospel of Thomas merely because some phrases resemble it.

The papyrus supplies no text of Thomas 12. It cannot date the James directive or verify a first-century Thomas autograph. Its value is more specific: it gives another physical witness to the rearrangement and combination of Jesus material. The initial publication and the detailed papyrological discussion should accompany any future claim about its date or literary identity.

Two different questions about independence

The first question is whether a particular Thomas saying is independent of the Synoptic Gospels. The second asks whether that saying preserves something Jesus taught. We cannot answer one by answering the other. Independence can improve the case for multiple testimony; it does not guarantee that the independently transmitted report is historically authentic.

Mark Goodacre argues that Thomas knows the Synoptics and preserves signs of Matthew's and Luke's editorial work. That proposal challenges the practice of automatically counting every Thomas parallel as an additional early witness. April DeConick's work provides a contrasting approach to the collection's development, with earlier traditions elaborated through later interpretive growth. A complete evaluation requires their individual textual arguments. The present chapter uses the verified outlines of their models and keeps that fuller comparison on the editorial worklist.[200]

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[199] Jeffrey Fish, Daniel B. Wallace and Michael W. Holmes, '5575. Sayings of Jesus,' The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 87 (2023): 6–14. The Oxford institutional catalog record and Mattison's translated excerpt were located; the latter is at https://www.gospels.net/sayings-of-jesus-poxy-5575. The published edition has not been collated directly here. The fragment is treated as a separate sayings witness, not automatically as a manuscript of the complete Gospel of Thomas.

[200] Mark Goodacre, Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics (Eerdmans, 2012), author publication record at https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/965887; April D. DeConick, 'The Original Gospel of Thomas,' Vigiliae Christianae 56.2 (2002): 167–199, Rice repository record. Only the accessible descriptions and metadata of these works were used for the contrasting models; no claim is made to have reviewed their full arguments in this revision.

A shorter saying is not necessarily earlier. An editor can abbreviate a narrative or remove its setting to make it sound timeless. Conversely, a longer saying can elaborate a genuinely earlier maxim. The direction of change must be argued from features particular to the passage.

The practical consequence is that Thomas cannot enter the recovered Injil as one undifferentiated block. Its sayings need the same attention to wording, setting and transmission as those in Mark or John. A saying can be interesting because it resists later orthodoxy. That does not make it old; we need evidence for its age.

James and the question of succession

In saying 12 the disciples anticipate Jesus's departure and ask who will lead them. Jesus directs them to James the Just. The saying associates James with the purpose for which heaven and earth came into being. This is explicit succession language within a scene attributed to Jesus. Its importance to the project should be stated without hesitation.[201]

The cosmic description invites comparison with Jewish accounts of the righteous person whose existence gives creation its continuing purpose. Such language can exalt a servant through the value of his fidelity. It need not mean that the servant is the uncreated source of the world. The comparison with a non-ghulāt understanding of the Imam concerns this relationship between divine purpose and a chosen human bearer of guidance.

There is also a literary question about the relationship of saying 12 to the rest of Thomas. James receives authority over the disciples, yet Thomas receives exceptional disclosure in the next saying. A compiler could have preserved both institutional leadership and privileged understanding. They might also represent traditions joined from different settings. The juxtaposition supports an inquiry into composition; it does not itself tell us which unit came first.

An ironic reading of James's cosmic importance would have to show how the irony works in the actual passage. Later sayings sometimes describe the world with hostility, which can motivate such a proposal. Saying 12 itself supplies no explicit indication that the direction to James is being mocked. The possibility of irony should be tested against the collection's varied uses of creation, rather than assumed from a single description of Thomas as anti-material.

The appointment tradition extends beyond Thomas

The earlier research record overstated the uniqueness of Thomas 12. Other surviving Christian texts explicitly connect James's appointment with Jesus. The Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43 says that James was ordained bishop of Jerusalem by the Lord. Eusebius, Church History 7.19, speaks of his receiving the episcopate from the Saviour and the

[201] Gospel of Thomas 12–13. The comparison with a righteous person's cosmic importance is an interpretive proposal developed in the earlier research archive. Historical authentication of the designation requires a separate transmission study.

apostles. These are direct witnesses to an appointment tradition, although their surviving literary settings are substantially later than Jesus.[202]

Their existence changes the question. We now have several forms of remembered authorization, including versions that give the apostles a role. Clement of Alexandria, quoted by Eusebius, describes an election of James by leading apostles. These accounts need to be placed alongside one another before deciding whether they preserve different memories or later explanations of an already established authority.[203]

The comparison strengthens the case that James's leadership acquired a developed account of legitimacy. It does not provide a dated first-century chain establishing the precise words of Thomas 12. A later writer could attribute a known leader's authority to Jesus. Earlier memory could also survive through that writer. We have enough to pursue the question, and we have to keep that uncertainty visible as we do.

This is useful for the Shiʿi analogy. A tradition of designation and a historical demonstration of designation are different objects. The former shapes communities and can carry earlier memory. The latter requires a reconstruction of how the report reached the witnesses we possess. Treating both seriously gives the analogy more historical precision.

The hidden disclosure to Thomas

Saying 13 presents the disciples offering descriptions of Jesus. Thomas declines the offered comparison and receives a private disclosure. His subsequent exchange with the others implies that repeating it would provoke a dangerous response. The story establishes a form of authority grounded in privileged understanding.[204]

The reader can compare this with the role of entrusted knowledge in Shiʿi and other esoteric traditions. The comparison concerns a pattern: a teacher communicates something whose reception requires preparation, and an authorized recipient carries it. It does not establish a line of descent from Thomas to an Islamic institution.

And then there is the question of what this authority lets a person do. Privileged knowledge can serve the spiritual growth of a community, but its claim also places unusual power in the hands of the person who says he possesses it. The Epistle of James provides a useful neighboring test through its insistence that teachers answer for their speech and that

[202] Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/080401.htm; Eusebius, Church History 7.19, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm. The former explicitly says James was ordained by the Lord; the latter joins the Saviour and apostles in the attribution of his episcopate. Their later literary transmission prevents treating either as an eyewitness transcript. These passages correct the earlier archive's overstatement that Thomas 12 was the sole ancient appointment witness.

[203] Eusebius, Church History 2.1.3, reporting Clement of Alexandria's Hypotyposes: Peter, James and John chose James the Just for the Jerusalem episcopate. Compare the different forms of the appointment claim before harmonizing them.

[204] Gospel of Thomas 13 and 33; compare Epistle of James 3:1, 13–18. The relation between succession, privileged disclosure and public instruction is a literary question raised by the juxtaposition, rather than a demonstrated chronology of redaction.

wisdom be recognized in conduct. The two texts can interrogate one another without first being assigned to one reconstructed sect.

Thomas itself complicates a purely secret model. Saying 33 turns toward public proclamation and the image of a lamp giving light. A collection that contains both secrecy and disclosure may envisage different stages of teaching. It may also preserve material whose original contexts differed. The relation deserves explanation in either case.

Light in the human being

Saying 24 locates light within a person of light and describes its illumination of the world. Sayings 49–50 develop language of origin, election and return, with an answer about coming from the light. The terms can sustain a strong account of spiritual transformation. They ask the reader to understand human life through its relation to a divine source.[205]

A tawḥīdi reading can approach that transformation through God's creation and gift. The servant becomes luminous through received guidance, while remaining dependent upon the giver. That account resembles the framework developed around divine agency in the Johannine chapters. Its use here is a proposed interpretation, and the text's own language must determine how far it can be carried.

The theological danger arises when participation becomes a claim to possess a fragment of God's uncreated essence. The language of origin alone does not settle that question. A creature can be described as coming from God through an act of creation or commission. A theory of emanation can mean something more demanding. The reader needs to know which account is being proposed at each point.

DeConick's study of ascent and vision places Thomas in conversation with Jewish mystical and Hermetic traditions. Her reconstruction takes spiritual practice and transformed perception seriously. That is a helpful scholarly avenue for this book, especially where a loose use of Gnostic would end the investigation before the relevant religious concepts have been examined. Her full argument remains to be evaluated against the individual sayings.[206]

Seeing the kingdom

Sayings 3 and 113 resist a search for the kingdom as though it could simply be located elsewhere by an external announcement. The reader is directed toward recognition,

[205] Gospel of Thomas 24, 49–50. The proposed tawḥīdi interpretation of received light is the book's comparative theological argument. It is not an assertion that the ancient compiler used later Islamic ontological categories.

[206] April D. DeConick, Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas, Baylor University Press edition (2017), https://www.baylorpress.com/9781481307925/seek-to-see-him/. The publisher's description was consulted. It identifies Jewish mystical and Hermetic comparanda, purification and vision; the full monograph remains a research priority.

including self-knowledge and perception of what is already present. These teachings invite a spiritual account of the kingdom that reaches into present experience.[207]

It would be premature to turn that account into a denial of every future divine act. Thomas also contains fire, judgment and the rolling up of heaven and earth. A collection can join realized participation to future expectation. Its tensions may also preserve changes in interpretation over time. The relation has to be worked out within the text.

For a Qur'an-centered reader, self-knowledge has value when it reveals dependence and responsibility. A person who recognizes the signs of God within created life may become more attentive to the world. The claim that awareness itself exhausts salvation raises a different problem, particularly when obligations toward others disappear from view.

Now put James beside Thomas. James asks what the person does with the word received. Thomas asks whether the person has understood and become capable of seeing. An account of prophetic guidance can explore both demands. It cannot assume that the two authors intended the same complete system of salvation.

Becoming like the Messiah

Saying 108 describes drinking from Jesus's mouth and becoming like him, with a reciprocal movement in which Jesus becomes like the recipient. The disclosed mysteries belong to that transformation. The image makes the Messiah's teaching participatory: reception changes the person who receives it.[208]

This gives us a parallel for the unity language examined in John. Becoming like the teacher can concern knowledge, character and the capacity to disclose divine guidance. It need not identify two human persons as numerically one, or make either person an independent God. A theological interpretation can begin with that distinction while remaining attentive to the strength of Thomas's language.

The possibility of genuine spiritual experience should remain open within the project. The text's promise need not be reduced to an exercise in literary symbolism. Historical study can establish what a community claimed and how it described the experience. The truth of the experience requires another judgment, including the religious criteria through which the reader evaluates it.

The analogy to the Imam or perfected servant is strongest where divine agency remains received and accountable. The purpose of the comparison is to identify a way of understanding the Messiah that preserves tawḥīd. It cannot be used to certify a theory of infallibility or a particular succession merely because similar spiritual vocabulary appears.

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[207] Gospel of Thomas 3, 10–11, 16, 111 and 113. Their juxtaposition is the basis for retaining both present recognition and future or cosmic expectation within the inquiry, rather than assigning the entire collection a single unqualified eschatological label.

[208] Gospel of Thomas 108; compare John 17:20–23. Similar participation language does not establish literary dependence or an identical account of the relation between God, Jesus and disciples.

The harder claim in saying 77

Saying 77 presents Jesus as the light over all and joins this to language in which the whole proceeds from him and reaches him. The wood-and-stone images extend his discoverability through the world. This is among the collection's strongest claims about the speaker's cosmic significance.[209]

The obvious comparison is with John's Logos. A reading through divine manifestation could locate the efficacy in God's Word working through the Messiah. A preexistent heavenly mediator model would take a different route. A reading that grants the human Jesus independent creative sovereignty would cross the tawḥīd boundary established earlier in the book.

None of those possibilities is decided by finding the saying outside the canon. Thomas can use highly exalted language even when a reader approaches it hoping for an uncomplicated human-prophet Christology. I have to record the available interpretations and the evidence for each, however inconvenient they may be for an uncomplicated human-prophet reading.

The Greek witness P.Oxy. 1 preserves material corresponding to the wood-and-stone portion in a different position relative to the Coptic collection. That is a useful example of actual textual fluidity. It justifies examining the history of the unit. It does not license us to invent a manuscript in which every difficult cosmic claim has been removed.[210]

Fasting, prayer and almsgiving

Saying 14 is a serious test for a Muslim retrieval of Thomas. Its opening associates fasting with sin, prayer with condemnation and almsgiving with harm. The unit subsequently contains instructions concerning travel, hospitality and healing. The force of the opening cannot be settled by extracting only the familiar ethical material at its end.[211]

Elsewhere the collection complicates the apparent prohibition. Saying 27 speaks of fasting from the world. Saying 104 associates fasting and prayer with the bridegroom's departure. These passages permit contextual interpretations of the provocative language in saying 14. They also make it possible that the final collection combines voices with different attitudes toward ritual.

An esoteric interpreter could understand the target as self-serving or mechanically performed religious acts. Such an interpretation would cohere with a broader prophetic criticism of ostentation. We have to argue for that reading. The opening words do not give

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[209] Gospel of Thomas 77. The text's cosmic predicates are preserved as a difficulty for the reconstruction. The alternatives of divine manifestation, heavenly mediation and independent sovereignty are analytical distinctions used in this book, not variants in a Thomas manuscript.

[210] P.Oxy. 1 preserves material conventionally correlated with Thomas 26–33 and the wood-and-stone clause of 77. See the manuscript inventory cited earlier in this chapter. This is a reported difference of arrangement, not an independent verification here of every Greek letter or a license to reconstruct an entire earlier Gospel.

[211] Gospel of Thomas 14, 27 and 104. An interpretation restricting the criticism to ostentation or misplaced ritual is a proposal; the opening of 14 does not explicitly include that restriction.

us the qualification. The reconstruction must explain how the limitation is supplied by the surrounding text.

At this stage, saying 14 cannot enter the recovered Injil as a straightforward cancellation of prayer or charitable giving. Its historical wording and its Qur'anic acceptability require separate decisions. The passage should remain in the apparatus with its difficulty intact, alongside the textual units that provide possible context.

Circumcision and a mixed inheritance

Saying 53 rejects the usefulness of bodily circumcision through an appeal to how people are born, then commends circumcision in spirit. That treatment makes it difficult to classify the entire collection as an unchanged manual of strict Torah observance. A saying honoring James does not automatically make every other saying a statement of James's own law.[212]

This also sharpens the comparison with Paul. A spiritualized understanding of circumcision could emerge in more than one setting. Its appearance in Thomas does not demonstrate Pauline authorship or a direct debt to Paul. It does, however, complicate a simple map in which every James-related text belongs to one side of a universal law controversy.

The more plausible object of research is a collection with overlapping inheritances. Its compiler could value James's authority while receiving material that came through other Christian circles. Alternatively, later readers could have revised an earlier core. Each model requires examples of wording and organization that explain the mixture.

Wealth, lending and the force of parables

Thomas contains material with direct ethical relevance. Saying 95 discourages interest-taking and directs assistance toward someone who will be unable to repay. Sayings about divided service and attachment to riches can be compared with Synoptic traditions already central to this project. Such passages deserve evaluation alongside the more enigmatic teachings.[213]

Before we turn a narrative detail into law, look at what happens in another saying. In saying 109, a person who discovers hidden treasure begins lending at interest. That conclusion sits awkwardly beside saying 95. The parable may concentrate on discovery and the resulting capacity, or the collection may contain a sharper tension. Either way, the mere appearance of an activity in a kingdom comparison does not make it a universal command.

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[212] Gospel of Thomas 53. Compare the arguments concerning physical and spiritual circumcision in the Pauline chapter without assuming dependence upon Paul. A James designation tradition cannot by itself define the legal position of every unit in the collection.

[213] Gospel of Thomas 47, 63–65, 95, 97 and 109. The interest-taking conclusion of 109 is retained beside 95's contrary practical instruction. Parabolic detail and direct prescription require different interpretive treatment.

Saying 97 describes a woman whose jar gradually loses its contents without her noticing. The image is unsettling, and its exact point is open to interpretation. Its value for source criticism lies partly in the absence of a ready canonical explanation. An unfamiliar parable may preserve an independent tradition, but novelty alone cannot establish its origin with Jesus.

These examples show how the recovered sayings apparatus should work. The preserved narrative, its proposed meaning and its normative application require distinct entries. A compact maxim can sometimes support a clearer practical judgment than an intentionally puzzling parable.

The sword inside Thomas

Saying 16 brings fire, sword and household division into the collection. Saying 98 compares the kingdom with a man preparing to kill a powerful person and then carrying out the act. The latter is especially important for the inquiry in “To kill and be killed.” Thomas cannot be made uniformly quietist by concentrating on its interior language.[214]

The assassination image is a genuine part of the transmitted collection. A literary interpretation must account for why this kind of preparation serves as a kingdom comparison. The image could concern resolve, testing one’s capacity or readiness for a decisive act. Turning it into an authorization for contemporary killing would require a normative claim the parable itself does not supply.

The relationship to a historical resistant Jesus remains a further question. A remembered saying, a later community’s political imagination and an editor’s use of a provocative example could each account for the passage in different ways. The line belongs in the evidence dossier without being promoted directly into a biography.

Saying 99 also matters for the Jerusalem reconstruction. It makes those who do the Father’s will Jesus’s family. Placed beside the direction to James, it raises the relation between familial leadership and faithful conduct. A theological defense of succession through the family must explain how such language defines the qualifications of the people who inherit authority.

Mary and the final saying

The last saying presents Peter excluding Mary from the company on the ground that women are unworthy of life. Jesus’s response uses male language for the transformation through which she can enter. Translations differ over the precise force of his response, including whether part of it should be rendered as a question. The gendered valuation in the scene still requires explanation.[215]

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[214] Gospel of Thomas 16, 98–99. Saying 98 is a transmitted parable using the killing of a powerful person as its image. Its historical origin and normative application remain separate from the attestation of that image. It provides no general authorization for a reader to carry out violence.

[215] Gospel of Thomas 22 and 114. Mattison’s translation and note to 114 explicitly identify a debated interrogative/manly rendering. The underlying male-coded formulation is retained in the analysis. A claim that

Saying 22 provides a possible interpretive comparison through its account of making two one and overcoming the male-female distinction. A reader might understand the conclusion as restoration beyond ordinary sexual division. That reading does not remove the hierarchy implicit in using masculinity as the favorable term. We have to examine the proposed spiritual meaning and face the troubling formulation it is meant to explain.

It is possible to propose that saying 114 entered the collection at a late stage. Such a proposal is a literary hypothesis unless it can be supported by a witness preserving the relevant ending without it. Modern brackets or editorial comments in a translation do not constitute a newly discovered ancient omission.

For the Qur'anic assessment, the independent moral agency of women and men provides a direct criterion. The response to Peter cannot be accepted as a rule that women must become male to receive salvation. Any attempt to retain a transformed sense must make that interpretation explicit, with its linguistic costs exposed to review.

What Thomas contributes to Finding Injil

Thomas gives us a succession saying that deserves a full historical dossier. It also preserves ethical material that can be compared at the level of individual units with the canonical Gospels. Its account of spiritual transformation provides a substantive counterpart to the theophanic reading of John. These contributions remain valuable while the origin and development of the collection are debated.

The provisional assessments should therefore be specific. Saying 12 is securely present in the surviving Coptic collection, with the date and origin of the appointment report unresolved. Sayings such as the lending instruction belong among the candidates for practical guidance. The cosmic speech of 77 requires a more demanding theological interpretation, while the ritual language of 14 remains a substantial obstacle to direct normative use.[216]

The collection also reveals how authority can be distributed among different kinds of witness. James is the figure to whom the disciples are directed. Thomas receives a private disclosure, and the reader is invited to undertake the work of interpretation. A historical account of early Christianity has to make room for those different claims before deciding how they competed or coexisted.

The task for the next stage of the apparatus is concrete. Each selected saying needs its Coptic wording, its Greek witness where one exists, and the proposed relationships with other texts. The reader should be able to see exactly where a preserved teaching ends and a reconstruction begins.

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114 is a later accretion must be labeled literary reconstruction rather than an attested omission from a complete early manuscript.

[216] The evaluations here concern separate dimensions: surviving wording, proposed transmission, historical attribution and Qur'anic interpretation. They supplement Appendix A without manufacturing a final ṣaḥīḥ designation for any entire Gospel.

22. The Gospel According to the Hebrews

A hungry James receives bread from the risen Jesus. Elsewhere Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as his mother, and a wealthy man discovers that his neighbors' hunger contradicts his claim to have kept the law. These fragments enter this book through named readers who quoted or discussed writings called Hebrew or Jewish Gospels. The surviving evidence is scattered across their works. Its religious possibilities are considerable, while the condition of its transmission requires us to keep each witness in view.[217]

For someone searching for Injil, this title is tempting. We can start supplying a whole history before we have examined the pieces. A Gospel associated with Hebrews seems close to the language and community of Jesus. Proximity suggested by a title still needs to be tested against the date of the quotation, the language in which it survives and the purpose for which it was cited. The most useful object we can construct at present is a dossier whose entries remain traceable to their witnesses.

One title and the problem of several books

The catalogue prepared by David Sloan and Michael Kok records a continuing disagreement over the scope of this evidence. Some reconstructions bring the fragments under one Gospel; others distinguish writings associated with Hebrews, Nazoraeans and Ebionites. The ancient authors' labels and the modern editors' titles do different kinds of work. A list arranged under one convenient heading should not quietly decide how many original documents existed.[218]

Kok's 2024 article on the Gospel of the Ebionites makes the issue concrete. Its abstract argues that the baptism account quoted by Epiphanius contains Matthean and Lucan redactional features, supporting a Greek harmonizing text. It challenges reconstructions that make this same material a source behind the Synoptics. The complete article has not been newly examined here. Its stated test is nevertheless useful: compare the actual sequence and wording of a fragment with identifiable editorial features before assigning the fragment an earlier date.[219]

A title associated with Jewish readers can belong to a late harmonization. An account preserved late can also contain older material. Those possibilities require different arguments and can apply to different entries in the dossier. We therefore begin with the

[217] The opening summarizes the fragment dossier examined below. Supplied basis: *Finding Injil* v0.7, chapter 22; the present chapter expands its named-witness method and adds new source checks. Individual attributions and transmission qualifications appear in notes C05, C07 and C14.

[218] David B. Sloan and Michael J. Kok, "Gospel of the Hebrews," NASSCAL e-Clavis, nasscal.com. Access: indexed catalogue description and the supplied dossier; direct page retrieval returned HTTP 403 during this pass. The catalogue is a research index, not an ancient witness.

[219] Michael J. Kok, "The Gospel of the Ebionites and the Synoptic Problem," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 86.2 (2024): 300–325, doi.org. Access: author's abstract reproduced at jesusmemoirs.wordpress.com and the publication abstract. Full article not newly read. Sloan's Q and Edwards's L reconstructions are reported there as the positions Kok addresses.

quotation rather than an invented continuous Gospel whose connecting prose would be our own.

Jerome's *On Illustrious Men* adds claims of access that deserve attention. He associates a Hebrew Gospel with a volume at Caesarea and with Nazarenes in Beroea; he also claims translation activity. Those statements are part of the evidence about Jerome's work. We still do not have the volume he describes. His relationship between that text and Matthew must be tested through his different descriptions and the fragments he actually supplies.[220]

The appearance to James

In *On Illustrious Men* 2, Jerome quotes a Gospel according to the Hebrews in which James has undertaken to abstain from bread until he sees Jesus risen. Jesus appears, provides bread and addresses him as brother. The passage also mentions the transfer of a burial cloth to a priest's servant. These details make a distinctive scene whose earliest surviving carrier must remain Jerome, even if its content derives from an older text.[221]

Paul's notice of an appearance to James supplies an earlier point of comparison. It supports investigation of an appearance tradition associated with James; it does not independently authenticate the bread, the oath or the priest's servant. A later author could expand Paul's brief notice, while a separate narrative could have reached Jerome through another route. The fragment's relationship to the Pauline passage needs literary evidence before either possibility becomes a verdict.[222]

For the Tabor–Shiʿi inquiry, the scene shows how personal recognition can confer authority. The teacher's return to a relative can be narrated as a renewal of trust, especially when the encounter restores the relative's participation in ordinary life. Yet this fragment contains no explicit direction that the other disciples must obey James. Thomas 12 and the later appointment accounts make different claims. A dossier that places them side by side can distinguish a confirming encounter from a formal designation.

That distinction is also useful for a discussion of *naṣṣ*. A community may possess an instruction about succession, a memory of privileged teaching, and a narrative of its leader's recognition. These can support one another without being interchangeable. The appearance fragment belongs in the James file because of the particular relationship it narrates. The later analyst must show any additional constitutional conclusions.

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[220] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 2–3, newadvent.org. Jerome's claims of possession, copying and translation are treated as claims made by this witness, not as surviving access to the alleged autograph.

[221] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 2, same primary translation. The oath's reference to drinking the Lord's cup requires attention to its wording; no independent conclusion that James attended the narrated Last Supper is drawn here.

[222] 1 Corinthians 15:7, ebible.org. The earlier appearance notice does not authenticate every element of Jerome's later quoted scene.

The Spirit who carries Jesus

Origen cites Jesus speaking of "my mother the Holy Spirit" and being carried by a hair to the great mountain Tabor. In the *Commentary on John*, he introduces the saying conditionally and then works to interpret it within his own account of spiritual kinship. The framing matters: Origen is a reader responding to a text whose authority he does not simply assume. His quotation preserves language that demands explanation even within early Christian theology.[223]

Ezekiel 8:3 supplies a scriptural comparison for transport by the hair, while Matthew's temptation narrative associates the Spirit and a mountain with different stages of its story. These parallels identify a vocabulary of prophetic movement. They do not establish that the lost Gospel copied a particular verse, or that its Tabor scene occupied the same place in a narrative as Matthew's temptation. The fragment itself supplies too little surrounding sequence to settle that question.[224]

The maternal designation should also remain distinct from Maryam. Calling the Spirit mother may express the source of spiritual life or a relation of care and empowerment. An identification with Jesus's biological mother would require another argument. The distinction matters for the Qur'anic comparison, which separately describes Maryam's conception, Jesus's designation as a spirit from God and his support by Rūḥ al-Qudus.

Sebastian Brock's study of early Syriac provides a linguistic control. Syriac *rūḥā* is grammatically feminine, and feminine agreement was widespread in early Christian usage. Brock traces later shifts toward masculine treatment in particular translations and writers. He also notes feminine treatment of the Syriac word for Logos in the Old Syriac tradition. These are observable features of translation and reception, with changes that can be studied at the level of actual witnesses.[225]

The finding bears directly on this project's interest in Aramaic John. A change in grammatical agreement can be investigated without claiming that we have recovered a lost first-century autograph. It gives an actual example of language being adjusted as theological habits change. The further claim that an earlier Paraclete prophecy originally named a human successor remains a separate argument. Grammatical gender alone identifies neither a prophet's personal identity nor the ontology of the Spirit.

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[223] Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.12.87 in modern reference systems; chapter 6 in the Ante-Nicene Fathers division, newadvent.org. Primary translation consulted in this batch's source pass; subsequent retrieval was intermittent. The passage can be located by the maternal Spirit and Mount Tabor quotation. Origen's conditional framing and his explanation belong to the evidence.

[224] Ezekiel 8:3; Matthew 4:1–11. The comparison identifies shared prophetic-transport and mountain motifs without establishing a specific literary genealogy.

[225] Sebastian P. Brock, "The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature," in Janet Martin Soskice, ed., *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition* (1990), 73–88. Full essay in an authorized online reproduction: womenpriests.org. The linguistic observations do not prove an original Aramaic Gospel of John or an ontological sex for the Spirit.

The Spirit's rest in the Messiah

In his commentary on Isaiah 11:2, Jerome quotes a baptism scene in which the fullness of the Spirit rests upon Jesus. The Spirit addresses him as the awaited one in whom rest is found and uses firstborn and royal language. The fragment connects earlier prophets with a special concentration of spiritual presence in the Messiah.[226]

This is an important check on the temptation to call every noncanonical Jewish-Christian text straightforwardly low in Christology. The quoted scene attributes an exceptional place to Jesus. A unitarian reader can investigate whether this place concerns a created servant's investiture, while another reader may understand the language through a stronger account of divine identity. We have to read the fragment before recruiting it to our side.

The Imami Spirit reports supply a comparison with unusual precision. Al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 describes a created supporting Spirit greater than Gabriel and Michael, associated with Muhammad and the Imams. Its explicit createdness matters to a tawḥīdi model of exceptional knowledge. The fourth report in that chapter restricts the described Spirit's earlier accompaniment, creating the difficulty already recorded in this book's fuller Rūḥ chapter.[227]

Jerome's baptism fragment, by contrast, explicitly places the Spirit's expectation within the earlier prophets. The traditions consequently cannot be collapsed into a single uninterrupted account of one entity. Their comparison reveals a common theological question about how guidance comes to rest in a chosen bearer, together with different answers about identity and continuity. Those differences are evidence that the comparison must preserve.

For the dynasty theme, spiritual investiture offers a further reason why biological ancestry alone would be inadequate. A member of a household can claim knowledge or appointment, but the presence of the Spirit introduces a claim about divine action. The historian can document how communities expressed that claim. Establishing the unseen agency itself belongs to a theological judgment that exceeds the surviving quotation's documentary force.

The baptism Jesus questions

Jerome's *Against the Pelagians* 3.2 preserves another episode under a Hebrew-Gospel label. Jesus's mother and brothers propose receiving John's baptism. Jesus asks what sin would require it, with an additional qualification about ignorance. Jerome uses the quotation

[226] Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, book 4 on Isaiah 11:2, quoted in M. R. James's fragment collection: earlychristianwritings.com. Access: published translation of the extracted passage; complete Latin commentary and manuscript apparatus not newly collated.

[227] Al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 and 1.4.56.4, thaqalayn.net and thaqalayn.net. These reports and the restrictive Arabic negation in the latter were audited in the supplied v0.6 Spirit chapter. Their chain assessments and differing scope are carried forward; no additional first-century connection is claimed.

within a controversy about sin and grace. The setting of its survival gives us a reason to examine exactly how the final qualification is understood and where the quotation ends.[228]

The fragment strengthens the baptismal comparison developed in Batch 01. A Christian writer can preserve a memory of Jesus's relation to John while supplying dialogue that explains the Messiah's status. The fact that the dialogue differs from Matthew's objection by the Baptist gives us another literary solution to that problem. It cannot be used as independent proof that Jesus never submitted to baptism, since the fragment's immediate concern is how the proposal should be understood.

Jerome's description of language also deserves care. He distinguishes speech identified as Chaldean or Syrian from Hebrew letters. Script and language are therefore separate parts of his testimony. A modern phrase such as "Hebrew original" can obscure that distinction. Our dossier should retain what a witness says about both before deciding which linguistic reconstruction follows.

Forgiveness and the claims of inspired teachers

The same work quotes instructions about repeatedly receiving a brother who makes amends, followed by Simon's question about the number of times. Jerome's surrounding argument concerns human fault, including the faults of religious authorities. Editors have to determine the boundary between the Gospel quotation and the commentator's continuation. A sentence about the prophets may carry different evidentiary weight depending on where that boundary is placed.[229]

This matters for the comparison with *ʿiṣmah*, the protection from error attributed to prophets or Imams in different theological accounts. A recovered fragment should not be made to settle the doctrine by extending a quotation beyond its demonstrated limits. My preferred account of infallibility cannot tell an editor where to close the quotation marks either. The wording and its transmission have to be examined first.

The ethical instruction can be studied independently of that editorial problem. Forgiveness here accompanies a response by the offending person. It raises questions about acknowledgment and restored relations that belong beside Matthew 18 and Luke 17. A community using the saying would need to determine how repeated forgiveness relates to protection against repeated harm. The fragment preserves a demanding instruction; it leaves the full procedure unwritten.

The rich man and the hungry neighbor

A particularly useful economic fragment survives in the Latin form of the commentary on Matthew associated with Origen. The rich man claims obedience, but Jesus confronts him

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[228] Jerome, *Against the Pelagians* 3.2, newadvent.org. Primary translation consulted. The chapter describes its source as a Gospel in Chaldean/Syrian speech written in Hebrew characters; Jerome's identification with Matthew is part of his testimony to be investigated.

[229] Jerome, *Against the Pelagians* 3.2, same passage. The quotation boundary before the statement about prophets must be checked against a critical Latin edition. Compare Matthew 18:21–22 and Luke 17:3–4. This batch does not settle that editorial boundary.

with the hunger of fellow descendants of Abraham and the resources remaining in his house. M. R. James's presentation warns that this extract may belong to the later Latin transmission rather than to Origen's own commentary. That qualification belongs beside every use of the scene.[230]

Its argument makes the law's social implications explicit. A claim to love one's neighbor becomes doubtful when the claimant has the means to relieve immediate need and keeps those means entirely to himself. The scene can therefore be placed beside James's hungry visitor and his employer withholding wages. The convergence is ethical; the independence and age of each literary witness remain questions for the sayings apparatus.[231]

The Imami report discussed in the Sermon chapter gives this comparison another dimension. There, Jesus extends a Mosaic command into the formation of intention. Here, the action required by a command is tested against the circumstances of the person whom the command concerns. Both ask whether our conduct lives up to the favorable account we give of our obedience. A historical line from one text to the other has not been established, and the comparison does not require us to invent one.

Another fragment attributed by Jerome to a Gospel used by Nazarenes and Ebionites describes the man with a withered hand as a worker seeking the restoration of his livelihood. That detail gives healing an economic consequence. It also illustrates why an apparently small narrative expansion deserves a separate record: the miracle restores the person's capacity to sustain himself.[232]

Seeking, wondering and rest

Clement supplies a short saying about wonder leading to rule and rest, explicitly citing a Gospel to the Hebrews in *Stromata* 2.9.45.5. In 5.14.96.3 he gives a longer sequence beginning with seeking and finding, without repeating the same explicit title at that point. The two citations should retain their different forms of attribution. The earlier manuscript's reference to book 3 for the first passage is corrected here to book 2.[233]

Thomas 2 provides a related saying with its own textual history. The comparison permits several explanations, including a shared wisdom tradition or literary dependence. The sequence can have meaning for a reader engaged in spiritual inquiry without yielding a

[230] Latin commentary on Matthew, commonly cited as the Latin transmission of Origen, corresponding to the rich-man discussion; M. R. James, fragment translation and attribution warning at earlychristianwritings.com. The witness is labeled Latin transmission/Pseudo-Origen in that presentation. Independent authentication in Origen's Greek commentary is not asserted.

[231] James 2:14–17 and 5:1–6, ebible.org and ebible.org. The comparison concerns the relation between an obedience claim and another person's material need.

[232] Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, on 12:13, fragment in the M. R. James collection. The identification of the man as a worker is attributed to Jerome's cited Gospel; it is not treated as independently verified biography.

[233] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.9.45.5, newadvent.org; 5.14.96.3, newadvent.org. Both relevant passages checked in translation. Editorial correction: v0.7's first reference read 3.9.45.5; the named-Hebrews quotation is in book 2. The longer book 5 sequence is not separately introduced with the Gospel's title in the displayed passage.

secure transcript of Jesus's speech. Its attribution and its spiritual value are different judgments, both of which the book can record.[234]

The connection with rest becomes especially interesting beside the baptism fragment, where the Spirit finds rest in Jesus. The recurrence gives an editor a reason to ask about the intellectual setting of the collected fragments. It supplies no guarantee that the two passages came from the same book. A motif can circulate across works, and a modern collection can accidentally make that circulation appear to be a continuous author's design.

The accused woman and the limits of identification

Eusebius reports that Papias knew a story about a woman accused of many sins before the Lord, a story he associates with the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The notice is brief. It can be compared with the later textual history of the woman accused in John 7:53–8:11, but it does not identify all the circumstances of that scene or preserve its dialogue.[235]

This is a useful final control on reconstruction. A historian can legitimately open a file on the relation between the two stories. Calling them the same pericope before examining their transmission would substitute resemblance for proof. The shorter notice remains important as evidence that an additional story about accusation and Jesus circulated under the Hebrew-Gospel designation.

The dossier can now hold several precisely framed questions. James's appearance concerns recognition within the household. The Spirit fragments widen the vocabulary of divine support. The economic and forgiveness material puts conduct under scrutiny. Each entry needs its own witness history, and a future reconstruction of the lost Gospel will have to explain how the entries fit rather than relying on the appeal of the title. There is more teaching here to examine. We can do that work without manufacturing the complete book none of our surviving witnesses supplies.

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[234] Gospel of Thomas 2, gospels.net. Greek-fragment and Coptic readings require a separate apparatus; the present claim is limited to related sequence and wording.

[235] Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.17, newadvent.org. The notice of an accused woman is brief and does not reproduce the complete Johannine adultery pericope. The number 17 follows standard sectioning; the online paragraph groups it with the preceding notice concerning Matthew.

22A. To Cast the First Stone: The Woman, the Witnesses and the Law

The woman has no name. Her accusers bring her into a public scene and demand the death that they say Moses requires. Jesus asks which of them will throw the first stone. The question succeeds: the men leave, the woman remains alive, and the surviving form of the story ends with an instruction to avoid further sin. It has become one of the most recognizable expressions of Christian mercy. It also occupies some of the most unstable ground in the transmitted Gospels.

The story appears in many Bibles at John 7:53–8:11. The earliest surviving substantial Greek witnesses to this portion of John move directly from 7:52 to 8:12. That difference gives us a precise task. We must date the attachment to John, trace the earlier story in the forms that witnesses actually preserve, and then examine how Christians made a legal and moral teaching out of it. I am interested in the saying attributed to Jesus. A reader seeking Injīl needs to know the difference between receiving a teaching and discovering the history of its placement in a Gospel book.

A Gospel with a movable paragraph

Papyrus 66 and Papyrus 75, commonly assigned to around the third century, lack the scene. The fourth-century Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus likewise omit it. In Greek, the earliest surviving continuous-text manuscript that carries the familiar episode at this location is the fifth-century Codex Bezae. The surviving tradition also puts the material after John 7:36, after John 21:25, and after Luke 21:38; a corrector of another manuscript inserts it after Luke 24:53. Some copyists marked the passage with critical signs. Its ability to migrate is a direct observation about transmission, rather than proof that it began as a free-standing composition.

The scene also sounds more like Synoptic narration than the surrounding discourse in John. Jesus teaches in the temple. Legal specialists introduce a public controversy. A question presents a trap; the reply turns the accusers back upon their own behavior. These features have often been compared with Luke. Stylistic arguments by themselves can mislead, especially when John has several proposed layers, but they converge here with an unusually strong external manuscript record. A textual critic can identify the secondary Johannine location without deciding whether Jesus ever faced an accusation of this kind.

Jennifer Knust and Tommy Wasserman give the indispensable transmission study in To Cast the First Stone (2018). They conclude that a Greek copy of John in the West probably received the story in the first half of the third century. In their account this was a careful intervention in a circulating book, later adopted at different rates across Latin and Greek communities. The conclusion is more informative than calling the episode a late fabrication: an insertion date tells us when a story entered a textual setting, while the age, authorship and historical content of the story itself require separate inquiry.

A story before its Johannine address

Chapter 22 already opens the relevant file. Eusebius reports that Papias narrated a woman accused before Jesus of many sins, and he associates a similar account with the Gospel according to the Hebrews (Ecclesiastical History 3.39.17). Papias belonged to an earlier Christian generation; the surviving statement about his work comes through Eusebius in the fourth century. It gives us neither the words about the first stone nor a Johannine setting. The many sins in this report differ from the single alleged offense in the later standardized scene. A claim of common ancestry is possible. A claim of identity would outrun the evidence.

The third-century Didascalia Apostolorum gives the story a more recognizable shape. In an exhortation to bishops on restoring repentant sinners, it describes a sinful woman brought before the Lord by elders, who then withdraw. Jesus asks whether they condemned her; after she answers no, he declines to condemn her as well. The source carries the exchange without the famous challenge about the first stone. It demonstrates that a non-condemnation story could serve pastoral instruction before we can securely place the familiar complete passage in a surviving copy of John. Its literary purpose is practical: bishops should receive the repentant rather than turn penitence into despair.

Didymus the Blind, writing in the fourth century, supplies a different early form. He says that “certain gospels” contained an account of a woman being taken for stoning and of Jesus challenging those who were about to cast stones. His preserved description includes the accusers’ withdrawal but lacks important features of the full canonicalized version. The phrase “certain gospels” leaves their identity open. It can indicate copies of John or other Gospel writings. The evidence establishes circulation of a stone-saying tradition, while leaving the name of the original book unsettled.

Bart Ehrman treated these divergent forms as a problem in the preliterary development of the episode. His 1988 study asks whether the story known from the Didascalia and the challenge reported by Didymus once circulated as related traditions that later converged. That reconstruction deserves a place in our apparatus as a hypothesis. The preserved witnesses carry overlapping motifs rather than a complete family tree. The direction of dependence among them needs to remain open.

What Moses actually prescribed

The accusers in the received Johannine text invoke Moses as commanding that a woman of this kind be stoned. Deuteronomy 22:22 and Leviticus 20:10 demand the death of both parties when the specified adultery offense is established. Deuteronomy 22:23–24 explicitly prescribes stoning for the betrothed woman and the man in the circumstances it describes. The same chapter treats sexual coercion differently in its discussion of a field assault and identifies the victim as innocent. A reader should therefore resist presenting the Torah as a single undifferentiated instruction to stone women accused of sexual misconduct.

The absent man in John 8 is an immediate difficulty. The scene presents an offense allegedly witnessed in the act, yet only one of the two participants is before Jesus. That absence makes the accusers’ claim vulnerable to scrutiny, although the text does not

explain where the man went. Deuteronomy 17:6–7 places the first responsibility for execution on the witnesses in a capital case. The saying about the first stone can be read against that rule: the people seeking to initiate a killing must answer for their testimony and conduct. Whether the author meant personal sinlessness as a literal new qualification for every witness or as a challenge to these particular men is an interpretive question. The narrative supplies no settled judicial code.

The climax has frequently been read as an unconditional repeal of punishment for adultery. In the scene, Jesus responds to an incomplete and adversarial presentation of an accusation. He neither conducts the evidentiary inquiry that a legal conviction would require nor describes the fate of the absent participant. The closing instruction about future conduct also preserves the claim that sexual wrongdoing matters. These features invite a reading about authority, accusation and the danger of placing judicial power in hypocritical hands. They do not establish a general repeal of the Torah by themselves.

How mercy acquired a polemical use

A story about spared punishment could circulate in a church whose bishops debated how to receive sexual offenders after baptism. The Didascalia offers that setting directly. Later readers gave the same scene other work. Augustine accused some Christians of removing it out of concern that women might infer permission to sin. Knust and Wasserman examine that explanation against the behavior of ancient scribes and the surviving codices. Their study makes large-scale early deletion a poor fit for the evidence, even though some later scribes openly registered doubts about the passage.

There is a second reception problem. In her 2006 study, Knust traces how later commentators turned the accusers into representatives of Jewish guilt and Christian moral superiority. The final scene’s emotional force made it suitable for sermons on mercy, while its casting of the accusers made it available for anti-Jewish teaching. The history of interpretation belongs in this chapter because readers encounter a narrative that has already passed through these competing uses. A rule of mercy does not become more historical when it is employed to shame another community.

The liturgical story developed a life beyond textual criticism. Latin traditions increasingly incorporated it into Gospel manuscripts and lessons. Greek traditions were more uneven. Knust and Wasserman document how lectionaries, chapter headings and visual representations helped the episode become a familiar Christian possession. Liturgical repetition can confer practical authority on a passage whose original textual location remains doubtful. The distinction is essential when this book asks which sayings attributed to Jesus can be graded as candidates for Injīl.

Enslaved readers, scribes and the problem of authorship

There is a tempting social reconstruction here: perhaps an enslaved Christian, or someone sympathetic to those subject to sexual discipline, introduced the story to give mercy a stronger voice. It would explain an attractive motive, and it would still leave the identity of the interpolator unknown. Neither the extant manuscript witnesses nor the early citations identify the person who attached the passage to John. An account of social motivation

needs evidence from a particular text, community, hand or copying practice before we can treat it as the origin of this episode.

The question about enslaved labor remains serious. Candida Moss has shown how ancient Christian literary production depended on secretaries and other workers, including enslaved and formerly enslaved people whose contributions often went uncredited. Jeremiah Coogan's 2025 edited collection places such literary labor within the wider Roman Mediterranean. This scholarship expands the plausible range of agents involved in copying and editing sacred writings. It does not assign John 7:53–8:11 to any named enslaved worker.

Jennifer Glancy describes the sexual vulnerability of enslaved people in early Christian settings. Her work changes the questions we should ask of a story about a woman exposed before religious authorities. Who could accuse whom? Whose sexual conduct counted as an offense against the household? What could consent mean under an institution that made a person available to an owner? The text leaves the woman's legal status unstated. We should analyze the social conditions in which a story of public accusation was heard, while declining to invent a biography for its protagonist.

From the first stone to the Qurʾānic lash

A Muslim inquiry needs a different kind of comparison. Qurʾān 24:2 instructs that the female and male zānī each receive one hundred lashes and calls for a group of believers to witness the punishment. I accept this scriptural prescription for zinā within its lawful evidentiary conditions. Its wording addresses both sexes. The familiar Gospel episode can raise questions about evidentiary abuse and about the moral responsibilities of accusers; it cannot displace an explicit Qurʾānic command by force of an uncertain attribution to Jesus.

The rest of Sūrat al-Nūr belongs to the rule. Verse 24:4 assigns an eighty-lash penalty and loss of witness standing to those who accuse chaste women without producing four witnesses, subject to the subsequent repentance qualification. Verses 24:6–9 provide a distinct oath procedure for an accusation between spouses and give the accused wife a means of averting punishment through her own reciprocal testimony. These provisions make public accusation costly. Their procedural details matter to any account that claims to uphold the penalty in 24:2.

Qurʾān 4:25 requires another distinction: in the specified case of an enslaved woman who marries and subsequently commits sexual wrongdoing, it speaks of half the punishment assigned to free women. A numerical penalty can be halved; execution cannot. The verse is therefore important evidence for the presence of a divisible corporal penalty in the Qurʾānic treatment of this category. Later jurists developed different rules for free and enslaved persons, for unmarried and married offenders, and for persons classified as muḥṣan. The inference from 4:25 to every category of convicted zinā is disputed and needs to be argued rather than presumed.

The traditional Islamic law of rajm rested on hadith and juristic interpretation, including reported stonings, reports about a stoning verse and accounts associated with ʿUmar. These reports became authoritative in major legal schools despite the absence of a Qurʾānic

instruction prescribing stoning for zinā. Juan Cole situates the Qurʾānic penalty alongside late Roman legislation and argues that later Muslim jurisprudence incorporated substantial Jewish legal influence. Syed Atif Rizwan's 2026 monograph reconstructs the development of the stoning narratives and argues that the Muslim capital penalty emerged after the Prophet's lifetime. Both are historical arguments with identifiable methods and potential critics; the book should compare their evidence against the primary legal reports before adopting all their conclusions.

This comparison is especially useful because the Jesus episode and the Islamic stoning narratives present women before religious authority in very different textual settings. The Johannine woman is accused by others; some Islamic reports concern women who confess. The accused woman, the self-confessing woman and the woman described by the Qurʾān cannot be merged into a single reconstructed event or interchangeable legal precedent. The parallels belong at the level of transmission, procedural discipline and the religious work a story performs.

What survives as a saying of the Messiah?

The first-stone challenge deserves a provisional sayings entry as a widely transmitted Jesus tradition with a secondary location in the Gospel of John. The independent early forms support the age of the narrative cluster. They leave the historical authenticity of the precise wording open. The non-condemnation exchange has an attested third-century pastoral use; the challenge to the stone-throwers appears in a fourth-century witness whose manuscript sources are unspecified. The received combination appears in a Greek Gospel manuscript by the fifth century and may have entered John earlier.

For Finding Injīl, the methodological discipline is to keep five questions apart: whether the words were original to John, whether a related story circulated before that interpolation, whether Jesus historically spoke the first-stone challenge, what early Christian communities did with the story, and what normative authority the Qurʾān gives to its legal teachings. Each question has its own witnesses. The first has a strong textual-critical answer; the third remains historically underdetermined. The fifth is answered by the Qurʾānic texts and requires its own jurisprudential reasoning.

The final picture is a Gospel book that absorbed a memorable mercy story and a Qurʾānic legal framework that protects the seriousness of both offense and accusation. The text of John has an identifiable addition. The historical Jesus remains harder to recover. What matters to the reader is the exact point where evidence stops and later devotion begins.

Source-control notes and insertion record

PA-01 | Greek transmission. P66 and P75; Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Bezae; textual locations at John 7:36, 21:25 and Luke 21:38. See NET Bible textual note to John 7:53–8:11 (https://classic.net.bible.org/passage.php?passage=Joh+7%3A53) and Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd ed., 187–89. A and C are defective at the locus; their likely omission rests on reconstruction of available space, not a continuous surviving line of text.

PA-02 | Principal monograph. Jennifer W. Knust and Tommy Wasserman, To Cast the First Stone: The Transmission of a Gospel Story (Princeton University Press, 2018), particularly chapters 2–6 and concluding reflections, 343–44. Publication date verified from Princeton and Oxford metadata (https://academic.oup.com/princeton-scholarship-online/book/30755).

Detailed chapter contents inaccessible without full text; claims here are limited to published abstracts and review evidence.

PA-03 | Early witness. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.39.17, reporting Papias and a Gospel according to the Hebrews; chapter 22 of this manuscript retains the distinct source limitations. Source English: https://www.uecf.net/books/nicene-and-post-nicene-fathers-series-2/chapter7.html.

PA-04 | Early witness. Didascalia Apostolorum, 2.24, English translation R. H. Connolly (1929), with Syriac source and Greek original lost (https://sophiascriptura.com/fathers/didascalia-apostolorum/read/). Passage describes a woman judged by elders and Jesus's refusal to condemn her; does not transmit the first-stone saying.

PA-05 | Early witness. Didymus the Blind, Commentary on Ecclesiastes 223.6b–13a. The mention of "certain gospels" and the first-stone challenge are preserved; identification with copies of John is disputed. See the NASSCAL e-Clavis entry, "Jesus and the Adulterous Woman," https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/jesus-and-the-adulterous-woman-pericopae-adulterae/ (verify site address before print); also Bart D. Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," New Testament Studies 34 (1988): 24–44, DOI: 10.1017/S0028688500022189.

PA-06 | Reception. Jennifer W. Knust, "Early Christian Re-Writing and the History of the Pericope Adulterae," Journal of Early Christian Studies 14 (2006): 485–536, https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2007.0009. Published abstract supports the account of later anti-Jewish reinterpretation.

PA-07 | Deletion hypothesis. Knust and Wasserman, To Cast the First Stone, chapters 3–4, published Oxford chapter abstracts, https://academic.oup.com/princeton-scholarship-online/book/30755/chapter-abstract/262269152 and https://academic.oup.com/princeton-scholarship-online/book/30755/chapter-abstract/262269515. Augustine's suppression conjecture is a reception datum; large-scale original deletion is not the best explanation of the surviving evidence.

PA-08 | Torah. Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 17:6–7 and 22:22–27, https://bible.usccb.org/bible/deuteronomy/22 and https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Deu&chapter=17&verse=7. The source distinguishes consent and coercion in its own ancient legal categories.

PA-09 | Social setting. Jennifer A. Glancy, Slavery in Early Christianity (Oxford University Press, 2002), https://academic.oup.com/book/7076; and "Slavery and Sexual Availability" (2019), https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/34457/chapter-abstract/292372926. These establish wider social vulnerability, not the status of the Johannine woman.

PA-10 | Scribes. Candida R. Moss, "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and the Production of Early Christian Literature," Journal of Theological Studies 74 (2023): 20–56, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flad001; Jeremiah Coogan, ed., Writing, Enslavement, and Power in the Roman Mediterranean, 100 BCE–300 CE (Oxford University Press, 2025), https://academic.oup.com/book/60683. Enslaved involvement in literary production is evidenced. Attribution of this pericope to an enslaved author or editor remains speculative.

PA-11 | Qurʾānic loci. Qurʾān 24:2, 24:4–9 and 4:25. Arabic and parallel translations at https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=24&verse=2, https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=24&verse=4, https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=24&verse=6, and https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=4&verse=25. Bracketed "[unmarried]" in some translations of 24:2 is interpretive, not an Arabic word in the verse.

PA-12 | Islamic legal history. Juan Cole, "Late Roman Law and the Quranic Punishments for Adultery," The Muslim World 112 (2022): 207–224, https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12436. The article's reconstruction of Roman influence and later Jewish influence is an argument by Cole, with primary material and nuance available in the open-access article.

PA-13 | New monograph. Syed Atif Rizwan, Stoning as Punishment in Early Islam (Oxford University Press, 2026), https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197823774.001.0001. Particularly chapters 1, 3 and 4, on hadith lists, the self-confessing woman and the politics of ʿUmar. Full chapters not consulted; assessment limited to publisher abstracts. Critically compare traditional hadith evidence and legal responses before claiming historical consensus.

PA-14 | Manuscript protocol. Insert after chapter 22 and before chapter 23 as chapter 22A, retaining the existing 44 numbered and four earlier intercalated chapters. Keep pilot FI dossier numbering and QC identifiers frozen pending a separate controlled update. A candidate PA saying is discussed here without allocating a new FI number. Existing chapter 22 Papias section remains unchanged.

23. The Didache and a Law for the Nations

A Christian law becomes easier to imagine when we ask what a believer should do on an ordinary morning. There is food to obtain, a prayer to say, a neighbor who needs help, and someone at the door claiming to speak for God. The Didache answers questions of this kind. Its instructions give the inquiry into Christian sharia a practical setting. A community can have a recognizable religious discipline even while its members disagree about how much of Israel's law applies to them.

The title presents the work as the teaching of the Lord through the twelve apostles to the nations. That attribution belongs to the document's claim to authority. Its composite character and disputed date require a separate historical assessment. Scholars commonly place its formation within the early Christian centuries, often around the end of the first or beginning of the second century, while distinguishing older materials from the form that survives. The complete Greek manuscript is much later. We have several dates to keep straight. An apostolic title cannot turn them into one.[236]

For this book, the Didache offers an unusually concentrated answer to a question left open by a collection of sayings: what would a community do with the teaching after it had heard it? I use "Christian sharia" for that wider problem of authorized practice. The phrase is my comparative vocabulary. The text itself speaks of a way, a teaching, and the commandments of the Lord.

Entering the way of life

The opening joins love of the God who made the reader to love of the neighbor. A negative form of the reciprocal rule follows. The ensuing instructions move into conduct toward enemies, bodily desires, anger, and possessions. Several passages recall the teaching attributed to Jesus in Matthew and Luke. Those resemblances establish a shared ethical repertoire; the precise relationships among written Gospels, catechetical tradition, and the Didache require investigation passage by passage.[237]

Its treatment of anger is particularly useful. The instruction follows the development of a disposition into an act. The disciple has to examine the resentment through which violence becomes thinkable. Religious observance consequently includes work on habits that precede the obvious offense. A similar logic connects lust with sexual wrongdoing and acquisitiveness with taking what belongs to another person.

Giving receives sustained attention. The reader is told to share with the needy and to recognize the common character of goods received from God. Yet the text also preserves an instruction to exercise discernment about the recipient of alms. A reader trying to recover

[236] Didache, title and chapters 1–16. English text: M. B. Riddle, in Ante-Nicene Fathers 7 (1886), reproduced at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm. Jonathan A. Draper, "Didache," The Encyclopedia of Ancient History, online revision published 25 June 2020, doi:10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah05061.pub2; abstract and bibliographic record consulted. Composition estimates are distinct from the date of the surviving complete Greek codex.

[237] Didache 1–5; compare Matthew 5–7; Luke 6:27–38; James 1:19–27; 2:14–17. The claim here concerns overlapping ethical traditions. Their exact literary relationships remain open.

a complete law has to keep both features in view. Generosity carries an obligation to give; discernment concerns how that obligation reaches an actual person. Either half can become an excuse when detached from the other.

The connection with James is immediate. James asks what faith accomplishes when a hungry person receives good wishes and leaves hungry. The Didache describes the habits through which a community could prevent that failure. It makes the disposition toward possessions part of religious formation. The comparison supports a Christian legal inquiry centered on duties toward vulnerable people, while leaving the literary dependence of the two documents open.

The yoke and the food

Chapter 6 introduces one of the most important qualifications in the work. A person capable of bearing the whole yoke of the Lord is described as complete or perfect; someone unable to do so is instructed to do what is possible. The following discussion of food also recognizes capacity, before imposing a firm warning concerning food offered to idols.[238]

The meaning of the whole yoke needs to be established. It can be read in relation to the moral teaching just delivered. Some reconstructions understand a fuller Torah discipline behind the expression. The wording alone does not identify a complete list of commandments, and the food instruction does not name every animal that may be eaten. A theory that turns these lines into a settled Christian kosher code has supplied information beyond the surviving sentences.

The passage nevertheless makes an important contribution. It combines an ideal of fuller observance with accommodation to capacity, while treating participation in idolatry as a boundary that cannot be relaxed in the same way. Acts 15 offers a related problem: what must Gentiles undertake when entering the messianic community? The resemblance warrants comparison. It does not establish that the Didache copied the council's letter or that both texts represent precisely the same legal settlement.

The Qur'anic food prohibitions supply another comparison, especially the rejection of food consecrated to another object of worship. Here a Christian rule can be intelligible within a Qur'an-centered account without requiring the historian to identify every stage of transmission. Historical contact and normative agreement remain separate assessments. That separation is useful when the record is fragmentary.

A week of worship

Chapter 8 gives fasting a place in the week and directs its community to distinguish its fasts from those of another group. It specifies Wednesday and Friday. The same chapter transmits a version of the Lord's Prayer and instructs believers to pray it three times each day. The rule is concrete enough to show that this community organized time through repeated worship.[239]

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[238] Didache 6.2–3; Acts 15:19–29; Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17–18. Qur'anic comparisons: 2:173; 5:3; 6:145. "Whole yoke" is not accompanied by an enumerated code in the Didache.

[239] Didache 8.1–3. The specified fasts are the fourth day and the Preparation, conventionally Wednesday and Friday; the prayer is to be said three times daily. These instructions do not specify a full schedule of hours and postures.

The passage gives no complete account of posture or of the exact hours at which those prayers must occur. A comparison with Muslim prayer can therefore identify regularity, prescribed words, and communal discipline, while leaving those further details unfilled. The Christian practice deserves to be reconstructed on its own terms before a comparison assigns it a place within a later legal system.

The Sabbath question belongs here, although the Didache provides less than a seventh-day argument would need. Chapter 14 speaks elliptically of gathering on the Lord's own, commonly understood as the Lord's day. The Greek expression does not spell out the noun "day," and its interpretation has a history of debate. The usual Sunday reading is important reception evidence. The passage does not explicitly command seventh-day rest.[240]

A Christian law that includes Sabbath observance needs an argument from other sources. The Didache can contribute a calendar of communal worship and fasting. Its text cannot silently supply a seventh-day obligation merely because an early Jewish environment makes such an obligation conceivable. Conversely, the existence of a first-day gathering would not, by itself, tell us everything about what those believers did on the preceding day. Rest, assembly, and the marking of a festival require their own evidence.

Baptism and the limits of reconstruction

The baptismal instructions are flexible about the material circumstances of the rite. Flowing water is preferred, alternatives are allowed, and pouring is permitted when sufficient water is unavailable. The candidate and the person administering the rite are to fast, with others joining as they can. This is a law that retains a recognizable form while accommodating the circumstances in which people must carry it out.

The invocation names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A Qur'an-centered reader has to retain that fact in the record. Disliking the formula gives us no manuscript evidence that someone added it to an otherwise acceptable text. Its relationship to Matthew 28:19 and the history of baptismal practice deserves a textual study, with each proposed layer supported independently.[241]

A triadic invocation also leaves questions of ontology unanswered. The formula alone does not state the later doctrine of coequal, consubstantial persons. A historian can investigate its emergence without treating every threefold arrangement as a complete Nicene creed. For the normative inquiry, the question is more exacting: what is being promised, whose authority is invoked, and what does the participant understand about the relation of each named figure to God?

This is a useful discipline for the whole project. The recovery of earlier Christianity will bring us texts that contain both familiar monotheistic language and practices requiring further judgment. We have to let the source keep the features that make our evaluation difficult.

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[240] Didache 14.1. The Greek begins kata kyriakēn de kyriou, an elliptical expression usually understood as a reference to the Lord's day. Greek and English text consulted at https://sophiascriptura.com/fathers/didache/0/. A seventh-day obligation is not expressly stated in this clause.

[241] Didache 7.1–4; compare Matthew 28:19. The invocation and practical alternatives are part of the transmitted text used here. An interpolation proposal needs evidence independent of the formula's acceptability to a modern theological position.

The table and the servant

The prayers in chapters 9 and 10 address the Father and give thanks for knowledge and life disclosed through Jesus. They also associate David and Jesus with the term pais, whose range includes servant and child. The appearance of David in the same prayer helps to keep the reader alert to that range. A translation that chooses “Son” has already made an interpretive decision about the second occurrence.[242]

The prayers do not reproduce the words about the body and blood found in Paul’s account of the meal in 1 Corinthians 11. This difference is worth preserving. It does not prove that the community rejected every interpretation of Jesus’s death as sacrificial. The text supplies a particular liturgical form; a complete theology cannot be reconstructed from what a short prayer leaves unmentioned.

The prayer about God’s Name dwelling in hearts belongs beside the earlier chapters on divine agency. Divine presence can be described through the inhabiting Name, with Jesus functioning as the appointed revealer of knowledge. The comparison with Jewish Name traditions is more exact than assuming that any language of indwelling has already crossed into incarnation. It also gives the Rūḥ inquiry an account of transformation that reaches the community.

Participation in the meal is regulated. Baptism marks a boundary, and reconciliation matters to the purity of the gathering. The appeal to prophetic language about a pure offering gives ethical conduct a liturgical consequence. An unreconciled quarrel cannot simply be left outside while the participants proceed with sacred actions. That connection between worship and relations among people is part of what a Christian sharia would have to preserve.

A prophet at the door

The rules for traveling teachers expose a recurrent problem in inspired communities. A person can claim a spiritual authority that makes ordinary scrutiny appear impious. The Didache responds with practical limits on hospitality and with tests of conduct. Requests for money, the length of a visitor’s stay, and willingness to work all enter the assessment.[243]

The protection afforded to a prophet speaking in the Spirit creates a tension inside the text. Some utterances receive protection from judgment, while conduct and patterns of exploitation remain subject to scrutiny. We cannot reconstruct the teaching honestly while smoothing that tension away. It raises the question of how a community can recognize inspiration without creating a privileged class whose material demands are beyond challenge.

The distinction between a request made for the speaker’s own benefit and one made for the needy is especially valuable. It turns attention toward who receives the goods. Claims to divine commission do not erase the financial trail. The same problem recurs in discussions

[242] Didache 9.2–3; 10.2–5; 14.1–3; compare 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 and Malachi 1:11, 14. Pais occurs with both David and Jesus; its translation requires attention to context. The absence of institution words from these prayers does not prove rejection of every sacrificial interpretation of Jesus’s death.

[243] Didache 11–12. The rules distinguish speech in the Spirit, conduct, material demands, and the work expected of a visitor who remains. Their internal tensions are retained in the chapter.

of religious authority throughout this book, including the Qur'anic warning about religious leaders consuming people's wealth.

Local arrangements also matter. The community is instructed to appoint suitable overseers and ministers, while firstfruits support prophets and, where there is no prophet, the poor. The result is a social structure in which teaching, worship, and material support are connected. The document gives no simple warrant for concentrating all those functions in a permanently immune ruler.[244]

The moral liabilities of an early source

The Didache contains instructions for masters and enslaved people. Its moral exhortation operates within a society that accepts slavery, and its language can intensify the obligation of obedience. Those passages must accompany the more attractive teachings about charity. Historical antiquity cannot become a general certificate of moral adequacy.[245]

This is where the Qur'anic criterion and the historical inquiry do different work. A historian may establish that a practice belonged to an early community. I still have to explain whether that practice belongs in the law I propose, under what circumstances, and with what limits. The same demand applies to later Muslim precedents. An inherited rule cannot escape evaluation by changing the language in which it was transmitted.

Perseverance and the shape of a law

The final chapter calls the community to watchfulness. Its warning about the insufficiency of an earlier period of faith without being brought to completion at the end deserves a place in the debate about assurance. The work assumes that a believer's continuing conduct matters. Its apocalyptic expectation gives urgency to that discipline.[246]

The Didache therefore supports a substantial initial reconstruction. Moral formation leads into regular prayer, a calendar of fasting, admission by baptism, a regulated common meal, care for the poor, and scrutiny of religious claimants. Some of these instructions can be compared with teachings attributed directly to Jesus. Others represent a community's organization of those teachings. Their authority needs to be assessed at the appropriate level.

The Sabbath remains an open question in this construction. The strongest next step is to return to James's decree in Acts, where Moses's weekly reading appears in the explanation for Gentile admission. That passage places the question within a dispute over the limits of a community's jurisdiction and the obligations it can impose.

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[244] Didache 13.1–4; 15.1–2. Firstfruits go to prophets or, in their absence, to the poor; overseers and ministers are appointed by the community.

[245] Didache 4.10–11; compare Colossians 3:22–4:1 and Ephesians 6:5–9. Historical attestation of a social rule and its adoption as a present norm are treated as separate judgments.

[246] Didache 16.1–5, especially 16.2; compare Matthew 24:10–13. The account of perseverance should be read with the work's ethical and communal instructions.

PART VI · COMPETING LEGACIES

24. Paul and Those Writing in His Name

Paul enters this investigation as a writer who says that God has commissioned him to bring the nations into the Messiah's community. His letters give us arguments about that commission while people who knew Jesus, including James and Cephas, are still part of the story. How much authority should we give him in our search for the Injil? Paul sometimes distinguishes a command attributed to Jesus from advice he offers on his own responsibility. We should take that distinction as seriously as he does.

My earliest notes placed considerable weight on Paul's role in changing Christianity. The later research brought James's agreement with the Gentile mission into focus and required a more discriminating account of the letters. I remain concerned about Paul's power to define the conditions of salvation and to revise religious obligations. His willingness to defend Gentiles against compulsory circumcision also deserves a hearing. I want to know where each judgment came from, and whose voice I am being asked to accept.[247]

This chapter works through that problem using the seven letters widely accepted as Pauline, with separate treatment of writings whose authorship is disputed. Its historical reconstruction follows the usual first-century dating of the core letters. Alternative accounts of the collection's formation receive their own place below. The Qur'an supplies the book's stated theological criterion; assessments of what Paul wrote or what James agreed require their own evidence.

The collection and the author

Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon form the working core. Their general acceptance as Pauline is a scholarly judgment about authorship. It leaves room for arguments about editorial assembly, including whether a present letter combines several earlier communications. Identifying the writer still leaves us to ask what happened to the paragraphs.[248]

The other letters require individual files. Ephesians shares material with Colossians while presenting a particularly developed vision of the church. Both carry Paul's name, although the strength and character of the objections to their authorship differ. Second Thessalonians stands close to First Thessalonians in language while giving the coming end a more elaborate sequence. The Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, address the supervision of communities through Paul's named associates. Their vocabulary and social

[247] Author archive: Finding Injil original fragment, pp. 10–12; Research Dossier v7, "The Pauline problem," recording the revised November 2025 position; Book Draft v0.1, chapter 15, pp. 40–41. The present expansion develops that position through the primary texts cited below.

[248] The seven-letter corpus is the working authorship classification used in the author's dossier. For the collection and a challenge to this classification, see Livesey, Letters of Paul (2024), introduction and publisher's synopsis. Questions of composite composition remain distinct from the attribution of a letter's underlying material.

setting have produced substantial arguments for later composition. A study of these writings should preserve the variation among them; Second Timothy's personal reminiscences present a different problem from First Timothy's instructions for officeholders.[249]

Hebrews belongs alongside this history of reception because Christian collections sometimes placed it with Paul's letters. Its opening supplies no Pauline name. Hebrews 2:3 describes salvation as something announced by the Lord and confirmed to the writer's community by those who heard him. That self-positioning is worth comparing with Galatians 1:11–12, where Paul insists that his gospel came through revelation. Their claims to authority have different shapes, whatever relationship one proposes between their authors.[250]

A more radical challenge comes from Nina E. Livesey's *The Letters of Paul in their Roman Literary Context* (2024). She proposes that the letters usually called authentic arose as literary compositions in a second-century Roman setting associated with Marcion. The publisher's account establishes the scope of that proposal; a full adjudication requires the book's detailed arguments. This draft keeps the seven-letter model as its working reconstruction and identifies conclusions that depend on it. Under a later-composition model, the letters would chiefly attest how later communities represented an apostle and his disputes.[251]

The external reception has to be considered in that debate. First Clement 47 recalls a letter Paul wrote to Corinth and its discussion of factions attached to Paul, Cephas and Apollos. Polycarp's *Philippians* 3 remembers Paul's teaching and letters. These are witnesses to the circulation of a Pauline reputation and writings; their own dates and literary histories remain part of the argument. Calling a source ecclesiastical tells us where it sits in the transmission. We still have to read it: what does it say, when was it written, and which earlier text did it know?[252]

Revelation, received teaching and personal judgment

Galatians opens with a claim about authorization. Paul says his apostleship comes through Jesus Christ and God the Father. His account of the gospel's origin is equally emphatic: he received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. He then recalls persecuting the movement,

[249] Compare the NABRE introductions to Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, available through the USCCB. They outline competing authorship explanations. The chapter treats those introductions as modern editorial judgments and the letters' self-attributions as primary evidence.

[250] Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:1–4; Galatians 1:11–12. The contrast concerns the texts' stated relation to earlier proclamation; it does not by itself identify the anonymous author of Hebrews. See also the NABRE introduction to Hebrews.

[251] Nina E. Livesey, The Letters of Paul in their Roman Literary Context: Reassessing Apostolic Authorship (Cambridge University Press, 2024), DOI: 10.1017/9781009487061. The publisher's description and epilogue summary were consulted for this draft. Her full reconstruction has not been independently evaluated here.

[252] 1 Clement 47.1–4; Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians 3.1–3. Consulted in the Ante-Nicene Fathers translations reproduced by New Advent. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:10–17. The argument requires independent dating of the receiving texts as well as identification of the writing received.

being called to preach among the Gentiles, going to Arabia and returning to Damascus. After three years he visited Cephas for fifteen days and saw James, whom he identifies as the Lord's brother. Arabia's role in this sequence is left unexplained by the letter. A conjecture about what Paul studied there would need an additional witness.[253]

Here is the difficulty: Paul reports the experience that he then uses to defend his independence. A historian can establish that the letter makes the claim without gaining independent access to its supernatural cause. My Qur'anic framework permits divine inspiration. I therefore need to examine what this claimed authority teaches, what it permits, and how others are reported to have received it.

Paul also transmits material that he says he received. In 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 he rehearses a message about the Messiah's death and resurrection, followed by appearances to Cephas, the Twelve, James and others. Verse 11 presents this proclamation as shared with other apostles. The named figures belong to a list of recipients of appearances; the passage supplies no complete line of informants carrying each sentence to Paul. Its strongest immediate value is as early testimony, within the working chronology, to a message Paul says preceded and accompanied his own preaching.[254]

First Corinthians 11:23–26 introduces the supper tradition through language of receiving from the Lord and handing on. Whether Paul intends a personal revelation or a tradition whose ultimate authority is Jesus has to be investigated. The wording alone gives us no named intermediary. This is precisely the kind of distinction that the book's hadith comparison should preserve: a report can claim a sacred source while leaving the human route of transmission unspecified.[255]

First Corinthians 7 gives an unusually useful internal scale. At 7:10 Paul attributes the marriage instruction to the Lord. At 7:12 he explicitly speaks on his own responsibility about a further situation. At 7:25 he offers judgment in the absence of a command from the Lord, and at 7:40 he associates that judgment with his possession of God's Spirit. The letter preserves these distinctions even after later readers came to treat it as scripture. Our collection of sayings attributed to Jesus should preserve them too.[256]

Paul's account of ascent in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 belongs beside the visions considered in the Enoch and Isaiah chapters. He describes being caught up to the third heaven and

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[253] Galatians 1:1, 11–24. The sequence and named meetings are Paul's own account. The passage gives no description of instruction received in Arabia. Compare the World English Bible text with NABRE notes on Galatians 1.

[254] 1 Corinthians 15:3–11, especially the distinction between receiving a proclamation in 15:3 and naming recipients of appearances in 15:5–8. An inherited formula is a source-critical inference; the passage supplies no complete human chain of transmission.

[255] 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. The phrase concerning receipt "from the Lord" admits a question about immediate revelation and ultimate authority. Neither a named human intermediary nor the precise occasion of Paul's receipt is supplied in these verses.

[256] 1 Corinthians 7:10–12, 25 and 40. Compare the NABRE annotations to 7:10–11, 7:12–16 and 7:25–28. Each attribution must be retained in a sayings dossier even if a later canonical reading attributes inspiration to the whole letter.

paradise, with uncertainty about the bodily mode of the experience. He also describes a thorn and a messenger of Satan in relation to the danger of pride. The identity of that affliction is unspecified. The passage gives us an account of visionary authority disciplined by weakness; it supplies no basis for diagnosing possession or treating every Pauline decision as the content of an ascent revelation.[257]

There is an internal opening for criticism. First Thessalonians 5:19–22 calls for the examination of prophetic claims, while 1 Corinthians 14:29 assigns others a role in weighing prophetic speech. Galatians 1:8–9 places a curse on proclamation that departs from the gospel already delivered, even when the claimant is an angel. What standard tests a new revelation, and who gets to fix it? Paul's certainty about his commission is itself something we have to assess.[258]

Jerusalem's agreement and the Antioch dispute

In Galatians 2:1–10, Paul reports a later visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. He presents his Gentile gospel privately to the recognized leaders, explaining that the success of his work is at stake. Titus remains an important case because Paul says that this Greek associate was not compelled to be circumcised. James, Cephas and John recognize the mission, extend fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, and ask them to remember the poor. This is Paul's description of an agreement; the letter provides no separately signed account from James.[259]

The scene makes a wholly disconnected apostolate difficult to sustain within Paul's own narrative. He regards acknowledgment from Jerusalem as consequential, even while asserting that Jerusalem added nothing to his gospel. The agreement also places limits on an easy reconstruction of James as the enemy of every Gentile accommodation. Paul depicts the leaders as recognizing a mission to uncircumcised people. How those people would share daily life with Torah-observant Jews remained capable of generating conflict.

The dispute at Antioch follows immediately. Cephas had been eating with Gentiles, then withdrew after people arrived from James. Barnabas joined the withdrawal. Paul publicly accused Cephas of inconsistency and described the conduct as compelling Gentiles to Judaize. The account records his accusation and the behavior he is attacking. James's instructions to the visitors are absent, as is Cephas's reply. Their presence can be treated as evidence of pressure associated with Jerusalem without assigning an unrecorded speech to James.

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[257] 2 Corinthians 12:1–10. The description of a man in Christ is generally read in connection with Paul's own visionary claim in the surrounding argument. The comparison with Enoch and the Ascension of Isaiah concerns literary and religious categories, not a demonstrated borrowing.

[258] 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 Corinthians 14:29–33; Galatians 1:6–9. The tension between communal testing and Paul's claim to define the received gospel is the author's analysis of these passages.

[259] Galatians 2:1–14. Verses 9–10 give Paul's account of fellowship and the request concerning the poor; verse 12 identifies the visitors as coming from James without reproducing their mandate. The subsequent discussion preserves that limit.

The precise reason for the separation matters. Food preparation, rules for shared meals, concern about the standing of uncircumcised believers, and wider pressures on Jewish identity produce different reconstructions. Paul supplies a forceful interpretation of the event. His opponent's explanation survives only through what can be inferred from that account. We do not have the minutes of a vote between Pauline Christianity and Jamesian Christianity. Turning the dispute into one would give us a tidier story than the testimony supports.

Acts 15 presents a public deliberation over circumcision, followed by James's judgment and a letter to Gentile communities. The restrictions concern food associated with idols, blood and strangled meat, together with *porneia*, whose precise scope requires discussion. Galatians records the poverty commitment and leaves these restrictions unmentioned. Scholars have therefore debated how the visits and decisions correspond. This chapter keeps the two accounts separately labeled, allowing for differences in occasion, literary purpose and chronology.[260]

The collection for Jerusalem supplies another line of evidence. Romans 15:25–31 describes contributions from Gentile believers and asks for prayer that the service will be accepted by the saints in Jerusalem. The appeal shows Paul investing in that relationship while expressing anxiety about its reception. Second Corinthians 8:13–15 frames the transfer in terms of meeting need and achieving a fair balance. Such passages complicate a history in which every connection with Jerusalem is reduced to rivalry.[261]

For the Christian-law inquiry, an important possibility follows. A Gentile mission can receive recognition while the scope of its exemptions remains contested. I find that possibility compatible with the differentiated laws described in Qur'an 5:48. The Qur'anic comparison is my theological judgment. The historical evidence at this stage consists of Paul's reported agreement and the decisions represented by Acts.

Gentiles, Torah and the coming age

Paul's refusal to circumcise Gentiles has often become a general claim that divine law had lost its value. Before accepting that conclusion, we need to ask whom he is addressing. Galatians 5:2–4 addresses people considering circumcision and warns them about the obligations they would assume. First Corinthians 7:18–19 asks people to remain in their circumcised or uncircumcised condition, then attaches importance to keeping God's commandments. The latter formulation demands an explanation of which commandments apply to whom.[262]

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[260] Acts 15:1–29; compare Galatians 2:1–14. The NABRE notes to Acts 15 discuss problems in aligning the visit with Galatians. The chapter leaves the identification and relative sequence open. The scope of porneia in the decree also requires separate interpretation.

[261] Romans 15:25–31; 2 Corinthians 8:13–15. The collection establishes Paul's concern for material support and relations with Jerusalem. His request for prayer that the service be accepted in Romans 15:31 also makes continued uncertainty visible.

[262] Galatians 5:2–6; 1 Corinthians 7:18–19. These passages distinguish the condition of circumcised and uncircumcised participants. Their force for Paul's own Torah practice remains an interpretive question.

Mark Nanos's work challenges the picture of an indiscriminately law-free Paul. His study of Galatians 2, 1 Corinthians 8–10 and Romans 14–15 argues that Paul's dealings with Gentiles can be read within Jewish commitments. Paula Fredriksen similarly understands the Gentile mission through Jewish expectations of the nations turning to Israel's God. In her 2022 response to Denys McDonald, she distinguishes participation in Abraham's promise from acquisition of all the covenants defining Israel. McDonald contests aspects of how the Gentiles' identity should then be described. These are argued historical readings, with consequences for the book's own covenant comparison.[263]

The apocalyptic setting helps explain the urgency. First Thessalonians 4:13–18 addresses the fate of believers who have died before the Messiah's return. First Corinthians 7:29–31 describes the available time as shortened and the present world as passing away. Paul is giving instructions to communities he locates near a decisive transformation. Reconstructing his intended legal program therefore requires attention to the horizon he expected his readers to inhabit.[264]

This approach also sharpens the critique. A temporary crisis can explain why a writer favors a course of action while leaving the action open to moral examination. Advice developed for a community expecting the end soon can acquire a different force when a later institution applies it indefinitely. We have to trace that extension. Otherwise we end up assigning Paul a settled program for centuries of Christian life while he is telling his readers that time is short.

The labels New Perspective and Paul within Judaism also require care. The latter directs particular attention to Paul's continuing Jewish identity and the Gentile identity of his audience. The case developed here uses that question without adopting every proposed reconstruction. My interest is whether the letters preserve a defensible differentiated covenant, and where Paul's arguments push further than such differentiation would require.

Hagar, the law and the authority to reinterpret scripture

Galatians 4:21–31 gives the Qur'an-centered reader a difficult case. Paul makes Hagar and Sarah figures for two covenants. Hagar becomes associated with Sinai, slavery and the present Jerusalem; the free woman is associated with the Jerusalem above. He then uses the expulsion of the enslaved woman and her son in his argument about inheritance. The

[263] Mark D. Nanos, "The Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul Standing between Christians and Jews," Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations 4.1 (2009; online publication 2011), DOI: 10.6017/scjr.v4i1.1511. Compare Paula Fredriksen, "Paul, Pagans and Eschatological Ethnicities" (2022), DOI: 10.1177/0142064X221110686, with Denys N. McDonald, "'Ex-Pagan Pagans'?" (2022), DOI: 10.1177/0142064X221082363. Their published summaries establish a dispute over Gentile identity, not a single agreed reconstruction.

[264] 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Corinthians 7:26–31. These texts locate advice about the dead and present life within expectation of the coming end. The historical reconstruction should distinguish the letters' language from later attempts to extend its timetable.

historical identities invoked by the allegory and the social force of its language both deserve examination.[265]

The comparison with the Qur'an is especially pointed because Ishmael belongs among its honored prophetic figures. Hagar is unnamed in the Qur'an, which should be kept distinct from later Islamic accounts of her. Qur'an 2:125–129 places Abraham and Ishmael in the service of the House, while 19:54–55 presents Ishmael as a messenger and prophet. My objection concerns Paul's authority to make the Hagar line carry the negative side of a salvation argument. Calling the passage allegorical does not answer that objection.[266]

The particular allegory is also more intricate than a simple attack on Arabs. Paul maps Hagar onto the present Jerusalem, using an unexpected scriptural genealogy to reposition his opponents. Its immediate targets are involved in the Galatian dispute. A later anti-Arab or anti-Jewish use has to be traced through reception; it should not be silently substituted for the original argumentative setting.

Galatians 3 raises a related question when Paul interprets the law's curse through Christ and the promise to Abraham through a singular seed. His argument gives the Messiah a decisive role in determining how earlier scripture applies. Romans 3:31 and 7:12 preserve affirmative statements about the law, while Romans 11 rejects the idea that God has simply discarded Israel. The corpus contains resources for several later histories of interpretation. Each should be measured against the full set of passages it claims to explain.[267]

My questio*n* is who authorized this transformation. An interpretation can be ingenious and still leave us asking why its legal consequences should bind anyone. A claimed revelation, agreement on a mission, and a particular exegesis of Genesis provide different forms of support. Keeping them distinct lets us identify the point at which a missionary's argument becomes a proposed rule for the people of the Injil.

The idol-food case

The strongest version of the food critique begins with Paul's own prohibition. First Corinthians 10:14–22 warns against idolatry and treats participation in sacrificial meals as communion with the powers served there. The Lord's table and the demonic table are presented as incompatible. This is a substantial religious boundary inside the same discussion that later permits ordinary purchases.[268]

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[265] Galatians 4:21–31, particularly the explicit allegorical treatment in 4:24–26 and the scriptural command repeated in 4:30. The object of the immediate argument is the identity and obligation of Paul's addressees.

[266] Qur'an 2:125–129 and 19:54–55. Hagar is unnamed in the Qur'anic text. The comparison concerns the Qur'an's positive presentation of Ishmael and Abraham's household alongside Paul's allegory; claims about later Islamic Hagar traditions require a separate source history.

[267] Galatians 3:10–18; Romans 3:31; 7:12; 11:1–2. The chapter compares different uses of law, promise and Israel within the letters and does not assume that a single English sense of "law" fits every occurrence.

[268] 1 Corinthians 10:14–22. The prohibition concerns participation in cultic fellowship, explained through sacrificial meals and the rival tables. Compare 8:10, where a meal in an idol's temple forms part of Paul's earlier scenario.

Chapter 8 begins from knowledge about the one God and the lack of divine standing possessed by idols. Paul is concerned that knowledgeable believers can use their freedom in ways that damage another person's conscience. His example of reclining in an idol's temple is followed by a warning about the effect on the vulnerable observer. The willingness to surrender even meat itself for another person's welfare gives the passage a demanding ethical dimension.[269]

At 10:25–27, the setting shifts to the market and to a meal offered by an unbeliever. Paul permits eating without an investigation of the food's history. At 10:28–29, an explicit announcement that the food has been sacrificed changes the instruction: the believer should abstain for the informant's sake and because of the other person's conscience. The distinction is between participation in a cult and consumption outside that setting, with information and social meaning affecting the response.

That distinction identifies where the Qur'anic question belongs. Qur'an 5:3 prohibits food dedicated to a being other than Allah, alongside its other restrictions, and makes provision for necessity. The legal comparison concerns whether a prior act of dedication remains relevant when the meat has moved into ordinary commerce. It also concerns what a person can be expected to know. The Qur'anic passage supplies no warrant for treating every meal offered by a non-Muslim as known idol-sacrifice; the neighboring permission concerning the People of the Book's food in 5:5 belongs in the same investigation.[270]

Acts 15:29 gives an abstention rule without spelling out Paul's market distinction. The Didache 6:2–3 allows a measure of accommodation concerning the burden a believer can bear, then gives a particularly firm warning about idol-food. Revelation 2:14 and 2:20 also condemn teaching that leads believers to consume sacrificial food. These witnesses establish a serious range of early Christian concern. Their dates and social settings prevent us from treating them as minutes from a single legal assembly.[271]

Several models remain possible. Paul may be applying the same cultic prohibition to different settings, or he may be narrowing a stricter inherited rule. The surviving texts may address different local problems. A source-critical verdict would depend on the chronology and wording of the restrictions as well as their interpretation. The existence of the dispute is clearer than a complete reconstruction of who first changed the rule.

I can now say more exactly what I object to: the permission to consume meat without asking about its sacrificial history, and the treatment of disclosed origin chiefly through the other person's conscience. That criticism must account for Paul's express rejection of

[269] 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 10:25–29. The market and private-meal permissions have a disclosure qualification at 10:28. Verse 29 specifies the other person's conscience. The chapter's comparison retains the distinction among cultic participation, provenance and social communication.

[270] Qur'an 5:3–5 and 6:145. The Qur'anic discussion includes dedication, specified prohibitions, the food of the People of the Book and necessity. The author's comparison concerns the basis of the rules and supplies no contemporary ruling on a particular product or meal.

[271] Acts 15:20, 29; Didache 6.2–3; Revelation 2:14, 20. The Didache text was consulted in the Ante-Nicene Fathers translation at New Advent. These are distinct literary witnesses; their relationship to a single historical council or legal tradition requires further argument.

sacrificial participation and for his willingness to curb freedom for another's welfare. The relevant comparison is a legal argument about dedication and obligation, with the public condemnation of idolatry already present on both sides.

A completed apparatus should retain the Greek terms for idol-sacrificed food and for sacrificial food, examine the identities of the people speaking in 10:28, and compare the textual forms of the apostolic decree. For this draft, the chapter-level reading establishes where the disagreement needs to be tested. It supports a narrower accusation than the claim that Paul encouraged his followers to worship idols.

Salvation, conduct and the boundary of belonging

The question that most concerns me is how Paul's proclamation changes the conditions under which a person can hope for salvation. Romans 10:9–13 associates salvation with confession of Jesus as Lord, belief in his resurrection, and invocation of the Lord. Galatians 1:6–9 fiercely polices the proclamation accepted by the communities. These passages give Christian belonging and confession a weight that requires comparison with the formulation in Qur'an 5:69 concerning belief in God, the Last Day and righteous action.[272]

Yet the moral economy within Paul's letters resists a simple description as exemption from judgment. Romans 2:6–16 speaks of repayment according to conduct, condemns partiality, and discusses Gentiles whose conscience bears witness concerning their actions. Second Corinthians 5:10 places people before judgment for what they have done. The relation of Romans 2 to the argument that follows has produced different interpretations, including debate about the people Paul has in view. A statement about conduct is nevertheless part of the text that the interpretation must explain.[273]

Galatians 5:6 characterizes effective faith through love. The same chapter warns that a series of destructive practices prevents inheritance of God's kingdom, then describes the qualities associated with the Spirit. First Corinthians 13:2 treats extraordinary faith as worthless when love is absent. If we accuse Paul of making correct confession an excuse to disregard other people, these are passages we will have to answer.[274]

The sharper question concerns the relation between those moral demands and the confessional boundary. Does participation in the Messiah provide the power to live faithfully, establish a necessary condition for salvation, or describe the path offered to the communities being addressed? The letters do not answer every later question about people beyond those communities in the same form. Applying an instruction to a convert directly to every human being who has lived requires an additional interpretive step.

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[272] Romans 10:9–13; Galatians 1:6–9; Qur'an 5:69. The account of the Qur'anic criterion is the author's declared reading. A full comparison must also address the wider contexts of Romans 9–11 and Qur'an 5.

[273] Romans 2:6–16; 2 Corinthians 5:10. Romans 2's reference to Gentiles and conscience is read differently by interpreters; the text establishes the importance of conduct and judgment, while the identity and final position of every person described remain debated.

[274] Galatians 5:6, 19–23; 1 Corinthians 13:1–3. The chapter's claim concerns the stated necessity of love and its consequences within Paul's own argument. It does not settle later Christian disputes over justification by itself.

Romans 11:25–32 deserves particular weight. Paul anticipates Israel's salvation, describes God's calling as irrevocable, and ends with a broad statement about mercy. His olive-tree image also warns Gentile believers against arrogance toward the branches. This has to enter any account of his exclusionary language. The passage creates room for debate about the scope and timing of salvation while retaining the Messiah within Paul's vision of it.[275]

A universalist reading can appeal to the expansive language of Romans 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:22. Whether the parallel terms there cover every person in the same final condition depends on their contexts and on the relation to Paul's judgment warnings. This draft records the opening without turning it into a settled Pauline doctrine. The same discipline applies to a strictly exclusivist reconstruction: it must explain the passages whose hopes extend beyond the immediate circle of confessing believers.[276]

The ethical comparison follows this book's earlier premise about judgment. Deeds require assessment even when a teacher's claims about God are disputed. Paul's concern for the poor and his instruction in love belong in that account, alongside the liabilities of any false restriction he may have placed on access to divine mercy. The historical evidence does not let me settle Paul's final balance. I can be much more precise about particular teachings and the authority claimed for them.

The one God and the exalted Messiah

First Corinthians 8:6 should be near the beginning of a tawḥīdi reading of Paul. It identifies the one God as the Father and places Jesus in the role of the one Lord through whom the community's life and all things are described. The distinction between the source expressed through "from" and the agency expressed through "through" is meaningful. A reading that preserves the Father's unique divine sourcehood has direct material to work with here.[277]

The wider context matters because the statement answers a problem about other gods and lords. Some Christian interpreters understand it as incorporating Jesus into a reformulated confession of Israel's one God. A subordinating reading emphasizes the differentiation of God and the commissioned Lord. The grammar supplies the distribution of titles and relations. A claim about shared uncreated essence requires further argument, as does a complete account of how Paul understood the Messiah's role in creation.

First Corinthians 15:24–28 makes the final relation more explicit. The Messiah hands the kingdom to God the Father. Paul excludes God from the things subjected to the Messiah, then places the Son himself in subjection to the one who granted that authority. This can be

[275] Romans 11:17–32, especially 11:18–22, 26–29 and 32. The scope of "all Israel" and "all" remains a separate exegetical question. Paul's warning against Gentile boasting is explicit.

[276] Romans 5:18; 1 Corinthians 15:22–28. Universal-restoration readings draw on these formulations, while other interpretations limit their scope through context. This draft records the opening for the book's later judgment inquiry without assigning a final universalist doctrine to Paul.

[277] 1 Corinthians 8:4–6. Distinctions between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are explicit; the significance of "through" Christ and the relationship to Israel's confession of God require interpretation. The chapter tests delegated-agency and divine-identity readings separately.

read alongside Daniel's figure who receives dominion and the heavenly Beloved commissioned in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Those comparisons illuminate a structure of bestowed authority. They do not establish that Paul borrowed either later composition.[278]

Philippians 2:6–11 gives us a more demanding scene. The passage describes Christ's form, his refusal to use equality with God for advantage, his abasement, and the exaltation bestowed on him by God. The exact force of *harpagmos* and the relationship between heavenly preexistence and Adamic interpretation remain disputed. Its final movement brings universal acknowledgment of Jesus' lordship to the glory of God the Father. The pattern can support a created-mediator inquiry while also explaining why readers have understood the passage as making a stronger claim.[279]

For this book, the decisive question is which predicates belong to a servant by divine gift and which would identify him with the uncreated source. Magnificent heavenly language will not answer that question for us. The scene's reuse of the universal homage associated with Isaiah 45:23 has to be examined as closely as its language of bestowal. A defense of tawḥīd should identify the means by which honor reaches Allah through His appointed Messiah, and the point at which an interpretation begins to direct worship toward an independent object.

Paul's participatory language adds another dimension. Second Corinthians 3:18 speaks of believers being transformed into an image through the Lord's Spirit. Romans 8:29 concerns their conformity to the image of the Son. These texts locate glory within a transformation shared by created people. That is a valuable comparison with the book's Shiʿi-style account of divine light and guidance manifested through a dependent bearer. The comparison concerns an interpretive possibility; it establishes no chain from a Pauline congregation to a later Imami doctrine.[280]

This inquiry therefore has a positive task as well as a critical one. It can recover the extent to which Paul's Messiah remains accountable to the one God, while identifying passages that press beyond an ordinary prophetic role. Each passage needs its own ruling. The later creed should be examined as a reader of Paul, with its conclusions distinguished from the wording it inherited.

Death, sacrifice and the resurrection claim

Separating Paul from later writers will not let us move every difficult doctrine out of his letters. Romans 3:24–26 gives the Messiah's death a role in dealing with sin. Galatians 3:13

[278] 1 Corinthians 15:24–28; compare Daniel 7:13–14 and Ascension of Isaiah 10:7–14. The latter comparisons concern received dominion and commissioned heavenly agency. They do not establish literary dependence or a common doctrine of preexistence.

[279] Philippians 2:5–11; Isaiah 45:23. The translations of morphē and harpagmos are contested. The NABRE annotation to Philippians 2:6 discusses grasping or using a status for advantage; alternative readings must remain in the apparatus. Identification of the passage as a pre-Pauline hymn is a reconstruction.

[280] 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29. The comparison with the book's earlier chapters on manifestation and the Spirit is a contemporary theological exercise. No historical transfer from later Shiʿi teachings to Paul is proposed.

relates Christ's death to the law's curse. First Corinthians 15:3 presents death for sins as something Paul received and transmitted. The seven-letter corpus already contains soteriological interpretations of Jesus's death that this project must confront.[281]

Those statements still leave a range of mechanisms to investigate. Romans 3 uses *hilastērion*, a term discussed in relation to atoning sacrifice and the mercy seat. Romans 6 presents participation in death and renewed life through baptism. Second Corinthians 5:18–21 describes reconciliation initiated by God. A later theory of penal substitution selects and combines these materials in a particular way. Assigning that complete theory to Paul requires a demonstration of the steps involved.[282]

The resurrection proclamation also requires separate historical and theological assessments. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul treats it as indispensable to the gospel and presents named apostles as recipients of appearances. The text attests an early claim under the working chronology. The historian's assessment of the reported experiences, and a Qur'anic interpretation of Jesus's fate, involve further questions. Qur'an 4:157–158 must receive its own close reading in that investigation; a convenient theory about Paul's motives cannot substitute for one.[283]

Paul's language of the spiritual body belongs with the apocalyptic comparisons. First Corinthians 15:35–49 describes a transformed embodiment and connects the risen Messiah with a life-giving role. The description is a proposal about the form of renewed life. Treating "spiritual" as a synonym for imaginary would miss the way the argument insists on resurrection and transformation. The relation to the bodies and garments of glory in Jewish visionary literature remains a worthwhile comparative study.

There is only so much a cosmetic rehabilitation of Paul can do with the crucifixion traditions. Even a subordinating reading of his Christology leaves the saving role he assigns to Jesus's death available for criticism. My theological reconstruction must state which part of that role it accepts and why. The source record also requires acknowledgment that Paul presents some of it as inherited proclamation shared with others.

Marriage and the urgency of the end

First Corinthians 7 allows the study of legal authority to become unusually concrete. Its opening responds to matters the Corinthians had written about. The statement favoring a man's avoidance of sexual contact may preserve their formulation. Paul's response makes room for marital relations, assigns reciprocal claims to spouses, and restricts abstinence to

[281] Romans 3:24–26; Galatians 3:13; 1 Corinthians 15:3. These primary passages establish sacrificial, redemptive and curse-bearing language in the accepted Pauline corpus. The later doctrinal systems built from them need their own historical treatment.

[282] Romans 3:25; 6:1–11; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21. Compare the NET translation and translator's note on hilastērion at Romans 3:25, which discusses the mercy-seat interpretation, with the NABRE annotation favoring "expiation." These editions make different semantic and theological choices.

[283] 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 and 35–49; Qur'an 4:157–158. The distinction between the historical evidence for proclamation and a theological acceptance of the narrated event is methodological. The chapter leaves the Qur'anic crucifixion question for its own critical dossier.

agreement for a period. He explicitly says that marriage is compatible with faithful life, while expressing a preference for celibacy associated with his own gift and the community's circumstances.[284]

The divorce instruction at 7:10–11 is attributed to the Lord. Paul directs the separated wife toward remaining unmarried or reconciliation and instructs the husband against divorce. Under the usual dating, this is an earlier written attestation than the canonical Gospels. It still provides no named informant carrying the command from Jesus to Paul. Historical proximity and a complete transmission chain should have separate entries in the sayings register.

At 7:12–16 Paul then addresses a marriage with an unbelieving spouse. Continued peaceful cohabitation is permitted, and the departure of the unbelieving spouse leads to a different instruction. His phrase about the believer being unbound has generated arguments over whether remarriage follows. The chapter's present wording should be kept separate from the later legal systems built from it. An editorial paraphrase that simply announces a universally agreed Pauline remarriage rule would conceal the interpretive problem.[285]

The comparison with Mark 10:2–12 and Matthew 19:3–9 belongs in the source dossier. Mark presents a stringent prohibition with a reciprocal formulation addressing a woman who divorces. Matthew includes an exception involving *porneia*. These texts provide related teachings in different legal and narrative forms. Demonstrating that Mark inherited Paul's formulation would require closer linguistic and literary work than a shared severity toward divorce. A severe remembered teaching of Jesus could also have reached both writers through different routes.[286]

The evidence for James's own divorce rule remains thin in the selected witnesses. The canonical Letter of James supplies no parallel rule, and Acts 15 addresses different obligations. Silence here provides little basis for assigning a permissive or prohibitive rule to Jerusalem. I have to leave that question open and give Paul's attribution to Jesus the evidentiary weight it actually has.

The reason Paul gives for preferring an unmarried condition is historically important: the present distress and the shortening time. He also permits a widow to marry, while stating his preference that she remain as she is. These observations support an account of ascetic pressure operating within an imminent eschatological expectation. They also create a question about later institutions that turned Paul's preference into a ranking of lives across a much longer horizon.

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[284] 1 Corinthians 7:1–9, 25–35. The NABRE introduction to the chapter relates the advice to questions from Corinth. Treating 7:1 as a Corinthian slogan is an interpretation of the epistolary situation rather than an independently preserved quotation from the congregation.

[285] 1 Corinthians 7:10–16, 39–40. Interpretations differ over whether "not enslaved" in 7:15 permits remarriage after desertion. The chapter does not settle that later legal controversy by translating the expression as an unqualified permission.

[286] Mark 10:2–12; Matthew 19:3–9; 1 Corinthians 7:10–11. These passages provide comparable divorce instructions. Their relative dates and literary relationships must be established independently before a Paul-to-Mark direction of transmission is asserted.

Qur'an 2:229–232 and 65:1–2 regulate divorce and make provision for separation, waiting and further marital decisions. A cross-scriptural judgment must decide whether Jesus's severe language concerns abusive repudiation, a particular community's law, or a universal rule that later transmission expanded. This draft does not resolve that choice. It identifies Paul as an early witness who distinguishes a received command from his own application, making his letter essential to the inquiry.[287]

Women, enslavement and public order

The distribution of voices matters equally for social rules. Romans 16 commends Phoebe and names women whose work Paul values, including Prisca. First Corinthians 11:5 presupposes women praying and prophesying, within rules about their appearance. First Timothy 2:11–15 imposes a restrictive teaching rule in a disputed Pauline voice. These passages create an authorship-sensitive history of women's activity and authority; putting them all under a single timeless statement from Paul would conceal evidence the chapter needs.[288]

First Corinthians 14:34–35 adds a textual problem inside the accepted corpus. Its instruction about women's silence sits awkwardly beside chapter 11, and its placement varies in part of the manuscript tradition. Proposals of interpolation require their own manuscript and literary argument. A conflict with our preferred account of Paul's politics is not enough, by itself, to justify cutting it out. For the book's grading system, the passage should carry a textual question as well as a question about its intended setting.[289]

Philemon gives a particular request concerning Onesimus. Paul asks that he be received as a beloved brother and offers to take responsibility for a debt. The appeal changes the moral terms in which Philemon is asked to regard him. Its language has also generated debate over whether Paul is asking for manumission. The letter never develops a general program abolishing enslavement, and the decision of Philemon is absent from the surviving account.[290]

The household instructions of Colossians 3:18–4:1 and Ephesians 5:21–6:9 speak more generally to wives, husbands, children, slaves and masters. They contain obligations for those holding power as well as demands for obedience from those under it. Their later institutional uses deserve scrutiny, but a history of those uses has to identify the text's

[287] Qur'an 2:229–232 and 65:1–2. The comparison is with the author's understanding of lawful separation, procedure and limits. No claim is made here that the surviving record preserves James's own ruling on the Pauline marital cases.

[288] Romans 16:1–7; 1 Corinthians 11:5; 1 Timothy 2:11–15. Phoebe's title, Junia's relation to the apostles and the institutional force of particular offices each warrant Greek lexical study; the present claim is the participation and commendation of women in the earlier texts.

[289] 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Daniel B. Wallace, "The Textual Problem of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35" (2004), discusses the relocation after verse 40 in D, F, G and associated witnesses while defending retention. Richard G. Fellows, "The Interpolation of 1 Cor. 14.34–35…" (2024), DOI: 10.1177/0142064X231226165, argues for interpolation. The chapter records the dispute and preserves the text pending a fuller apparatus.

[290] Philemon 10–21, especially 15–16 and 21. Paul's appeal for reception as a brother is explicit. A request for legal manumission is inferred by some readers; the letter leaves the precise action beyond the appeal unstated.

voice and the additional authority supplied by its reception. The disputed authorship of both letters is consequential here.[291]

Romans 12:14–21 and 13:1–7 create a further challenge for political theology. The first passage opposes retaliation and directs the believer toward care even for an enemy. The next gives governing authority a role within God's ordering of public life. A reader can explore an anti-revenge ethic while questioning the breadth of the mandate given to rulers. Later regimes that appealed to Romans 13 made claims of their own about which authority deserved obedience. Paul's words and those institutional claims need to be assessed at their respective dates.[292]

Ephesians and Colossians: development in Paul's name

Ephesians 2:8–10 is often detached from its final clause. The passage describes salvation as God's gift, then locates good works within the purpose of the resulting life. That continuation must enter the account of its theology. If I criticize belief without moral responsibility, I cannot accuse this writer of omitting the conduct he has just mentioned.[293]

The sharper development appears at Ephesians 2:11–22. The writer describes the union of Jew and Gentile, the overcoming of hostility, and the abolition of the law of commandments in ordinances within the making of a shared community. How broadly the abolished law should be understood remains disputed. This is a different literary presentation from the conflict narrated in Galatians 2, where the terms of shared life are actively contested.

The comparison suggests a question about institutional memory. A later Pauline voice could turn the founder's unresolved conflicts into an account of an achieved unity. The alternative of Paul addressing a new setting would require explanation of the changed rhetoric and relation to Colossians. In either reconstruction, the passage needs its own place in the history of how the Gentile mission acquired a general theology of the church.

Colossians 1:15–20 presents the Messiah as the image of the invisible God, firstborn of creation, agent through whom the cosmos exists, and the one in whom reconciliation is accomplished. At 2:9–10 the language of divine fullness gives the book's theophanic inquiry another major text. The word *firstborn* has to be read with the whole description;

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[291] Colossians 3:18–4:1; Ephesians 5:21–6:9. The instructions address existing household relations, including enslavement. Describing the commands in their social setting does not supply an ethical defense of those relations.

[292] Romans 12:14–21 and 13:1–7. The chapter reads the governing-authority passage alongside the immediately preceding prohibition of personal revenge. Its account of the limits of political application is the author's analysis.

[293] Ephesians 2:8–22; compare 4:28 and 5:5. Verse 10 links grace with good works; 2:14–16 raises the distinct question of the law and corporate unity. Authorship alternatives are summarized in the NABRE introduction to Ephesians.

interpreting it as rank, temporal priority or created origin changes the resulting Christology.[294]

A Qur'an-centered created-mediator reading can test whether image and fullness describe divine activity manifested through a dependent subject. The passage's cosmic reach remains part of the evidence. Its disputed authorship also means that its formulations should first be compared with the accepted letters. An argument about what the historical Paul taught must establish that link before treating the hymn as his own verbal confession.

The same letter warns against a complex of teachings involving food, calendars, ascetic restrictions and angels at 2:16–23. Reconstructing a single named opponent from that polemic is difficult. For this project, the immediate issue is the authority claimed for the Messiah against alternative disciplines. The source should be examined without assuming that every rejected practice belonged to a single coherent Jewish or gnostic movement.

Thessalonians and the Pastorals: the future and the household

First Thessalonians gives a community instructions while it waits for the Messiah and mourns its dead. Second Thessalonians 2:1–12 sets out events that precede the final confrontation and warns against an allegedly Pauline letter that has disturbed believers. At 3:17 its writer invokes an identifying handwritten greeting. These passages make the letter an important witness to the problem of authenticated apostolic correspondence, whichever conclusion one reaches about its own authorship.[295]

The contrast in the timetable can be read as a later adjustment, or as clarification of a misunderstanding by the same author. The debate includes similarities in language as well as differences in presentation. A working history should retain those alternatives until the detailed argument has been made. A general expectation of the end in one letter and a specified preliminary sequence in another establish a comparison, with authorship as a further judgment.

The Pastorals bring the question of continuity into church governance. First Timothy 3 gives criteria for overseers and deacons; Titus 1 concerns the appointment and conduct of elders; Second Timothy 2:2 describes entrusting teaching to reliable people who will teach others. If these are later writings, they show a community using Paul's remembered authority to organize transmission. Their usefulness as evidence for that community remains even when attribution to Paul is disputed.[296]

First Timothy 4:1–5 also complicates a single-direction account of Pauline asceticism. It criticizes teachers who forbid marriage and require abstention from foods that the writer

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[294] Colossians 1:15–20; 2:9–23. The temporal and cosmic range of the passage must be considered alongside its dependence language. The status of "firstborn" and the referent of "all things" require further Greek and contextual analysis.

[295] 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12; 3:17. Second Thessalonians warns about a letter represented as Pauline and supplies a signature claim. Neither feature alone authenticates the letter or proves its pseudonymity.

[296] 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 2 Timothy 2:2. Compare the NABRE introductions to 1 and 2 Timothy for authorship alternatives, including hypotheses of later composition or reused earlier material.

describes as God's provision. The historical referents of the forbidden foods require investigation. The passage cannot be treated as a simple reproduction of First Corinthians 7's preference for remaining unmarried, and its prayer-and-thanksgiving account of food deserves separate comparison with the dedication problem in First Corinthians 10.[297]

The same collection preserves expansive salvific language. First Timothy 2:4–6 speaks of God's desire for all to be saved and describes one God with the human Messiah as mediator. Titus 3:4–8 joins divine mercy to insistence on good works. These texts give a tawḥīdi reader material for argument within the disputed corpus. Their theological usefulness and their authorial attribution remain independently assessable.[298]

Second Timothy 1:15, where the Pauline speaker complains of abandonment by people in Asia, has sometimes been placed beside Revelation's praise of Ephesus for rejecting false apostles. The juxtaposition is an interesting research question. Neither text identifies the other scene, and the authorship of Second Timothy is part of what is disputed. Putting two dramatic sentences beside each other gives us a question. We still need evidence of a historical connection.

Hebrews and the heavenly priesthood

Hebrews deserves a separate account because the saving work it assigns to the Messiah is organized through a heavenly priesthood. Psalm 110 supplies the Melchizedek frame, and the argument develops through the Messiah's entry into a heavenly sanctuary and the efficacy of his offering. Its treatment of the covenant at 8:13 is particularly consequential for readers trying to maintain continuing divine laws for distinct communities.[299]

The work's position in the history of revelation differs from Paul's self-presentation in Galatians. Hebrews 2:3 places its community among those for whom earlier hearers confirmed the message. Hebrews 5:7–9 describes Jesus praying to the one able to save him from death and learning obedience through suffering. These statements belong with the same work's exalted description of the Son. A comparative reading must account for that distribution of divine authority and dependence.

Hebrews 9–10 also provides a sustained exposition of sacrifice that goes beyond brief Pauline formulations. The connection with the *Ascension of Isaiah* concerns access to heavenly realities and the status of the commissioned Messiah; direct literary dependence remains to be demonstrated. Assigning Hebrews wholesale to Paul would blur both the authorship problem and the particular contribution of its priestly theology.

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[297] 1 Timothy 4:1–5; compare 1 Corinthians 7:7–9, 25–40. The contrast concerns forbidding marriage and the preference for celibacy under particular circumstances. The chapter avoids treating all Pauline reception as a single movement toward greater asceticism.

[298] 1 Timothy 2:4–6; Titus 3:4–8; 2 Timothy 1:15. The last passage reports desertion in Asia in that letter's Pauline voice. Its proposed connection with Revelation 2 is a hypothesis requiring further evidence.

[299] Hebrews 2:3; 5:7–9; 7:1–28; 8:13; 9–10; Psalm 110:4. These are the primary anchors for the work's claim about transmitted proclamation, obedience, priesthood and covenant. Its authorship remains separate from its later association with Paul.

Who authorizes this account? In what sense does sacrifice secure forgiveness? And how do its covenant claims stand beside the Qur'anic instructions to the People of the Gospel? The work gives a full argument that deserves a full reply. This chapter establishes its place beside the Pauline corpus while reserving the close reading of its sanctuary language for the apocalyptic and covenant investigations.

Marcion and the struggle over Paul's collection

By the time of Marcion's movement, Paul's authority could organize a collection of Christian scripture. Tertullian's *Against Marcion*, Book V, argues over the apostle's letters in detail and accuses Marcion of altering them. At V.21 he explicitly contrasts Marcion's acceptance of Philemon with his exclusion of the letters to Timothy and Titus. At V.17 he discusses the letter titled to the Laodiceans in Marcion's collection and identified as Ephesians in his own. These notices are concrete evidence of disagreement over a Pauline collection.[300]

Tertullian is a hostile witness, and his account of alteration is part of the argument being tested. Recovering Marcion's text requires comparison of quotations and paraphrases across witnesses, including what an opponent had reason to quote. An omission from Tertullian's discussion by itself supplies no secure proof that a verse was absent from Marcion's copy. Jason BeDuhn's *The First New Testament* offers a modern reconstruction whose individual textual judgments need to be consulted on that basis.[301]

Paul's scriptural arguments in the canonical core retain attachment to Abraham, the law and Israel's God. Romans 11 is an especially important control on an interpretation that makes him the straightforward advocate of rejecting Israel's deity. Marcion's distinction between the Creator and the God revealed by Jesus gives those inherited arguments a different theological setting. A reconstruction must show which wording was present in the collection being interpreted and how it was made to support that distinction.

This history also prevents us from treating the later Catholic collection as self-authenticating. Marcion's opponents preserved and defended a Pauline authority of their own, linking it with other apostolic witnesses. Their success tells us which collection was transmitted widely; it leaves open the criticism of its individual readings and attributions. The project's task is to examine those decisions at the level of recoverable evidence.

Livesey's proposal raises the stakes by connecting the production of the core letters to that second-century setting. Under the working first-century account, Marcion is a later interpreter and collector of earlier correspondence. Under a radical later account, features previously used to reconstruct Paul's lifetime become evidence of a school's apostolic persona. I cannot switch between these models whenever one gives me a convenient

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[300] Tertullian, Against Marcion V.17 and V.21, trans. Peter Holmes in Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, reproduced by New Advent. V.17 discusses the Laodiceans/Ephesians title; V.21 contrasts acceptance of Philemon with rejection of the letters to Timothy and Titus. Tertullian's accusation of alteration remains his claim.

[301] Jason D. BeDuhn, The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon (Polebridge Press, 2013). The publisher's description was consulted to identify the reconstruction and its scope. Detailed passage-level judgments have not yet been checked against the full volume.

explanation. The historical claims here remain conditional on the model stated at the beginning of the chapter.

Simon Magus and the memory of opposition

The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* supplies a stronger basis for discussing an anti-Pauline allusion than the simple equation of Paul with Simon. In Homily 17.19, Peter confronts Simon's claim to knowledge of Jesus through a vision. He asks why a brief apparition should confer authority over someone who accompanied the teacher. He also objects to the way his opponent has represented him as condemned. The combination invites comparison with Paul's visionary commission and the confrontation with Cephas in Galatians 2:11.[302]

That is an argument about the construction of a literary opponent. The passage's named addressee is Simon, and the larger Clementine material gives him traits associated with wider disputes concerning God and creation. Its final literary form is later than the apostolic exchanges it dramatizes. An author can give one antagonist features drawn from several controversies. The allusion can therefore be historically significant without supplying a biography in which Paul and the Samaritan Simon are one man.

The introductory *Epistle of Peter to James* adds a related accusation. Its Peter warns that some Gentile hearers have preferred the lawless teaching of an enemy and distorted his own instruction. James appears as the authority entrusted with the preservation and controlled transmission of teaching. This directly serves the book's investigation of rival claims to the Messiah's tradition. The letter belongs to the later Clementine literary construction. If I question a disputed Pauline signature, I owe these apostolic names the same scrutiny.[303]

Irenaeus gives a different witness when he reports that the Ebionites rejected Paul as an apostate from the law. That testimony demonstrates the existence, by the time of Irenaeus's account, of a tradition remembered as anti-Pauline. It does not supply a first-century transcript from James. The distinction allows criticism of Paul to receive serious historical attention while keeping the date of each witness visible.[304]

Revelation offers another potentially related dispute. Its messages to the Asian churches condemn false apostles and teaching connected with idol-food. The latter concern intersects with a real Pauline controversy. The named opponents in Revelation are described through its own symbolic vocabulary, and Paul is never expressly identified as

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[302] Pseudo-Clementine Homilies 17.13–19, especially 17.19; compare Galatians 1:11–12 and 2:11. The possible anti-Pauline allusion is an interpretation of the later literary scene. The primary text addresses Simon and does not explicitly identify him as Paul.

[303] Pseudo-Clementine Epistle of Peter to James 2, prefixed to the Homilies, in the Ante-Nicene Fathers translation reproduced by New Advent. The enemy's identification is inferential; the apostolic attribution belongs to the work's literary setting.

[304] Irenaeus, Against Heresies I.26.2, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1. The report is evidence for Irenaeus's description of Ebionite rejection of Paul. Its claim about the group's gospel must be studied independently of modern gospel titles.

the target. A chapter that presents Revelation as a recovered verdict from James's party against Paul would require further evidence about authorship, networks and chronology.[305]

These sources make opposition to Pauline authority part of the history we can study. They are most useful when allowed to state their own objections. The Clementine challenge concerns the verification of visionary authority against remembered companionship with Jesus. The food controversy concerns which acts a community may permit. Irenaeus's report locates a rejection of Paul within a Torah-centered Christian identity. The individual claims need separate historical judgments.

What this examination changes in the search for Injil

Paul belongs in the sayings project because he is an early witness, under the adopted chronology, to instructions he attributes to Jesus. His evidence is especially important where he distinguishes received commands from his own advice. The first pilot dossier should therefore add the divorce saying at 1 Corinthians 7:10–11, the support of those preaching at 9:14, the supper tradition at 11:23–26, and the word of the Lord concerning the dead at 1 Thessalonians 4:15. Each entry requires an assessment of its reported source and of the route by which Paul obtained it.[306]

The chapter also changes the grounds on which I would criticize him. His rejection of idolatry, support for Jerusalem's poor, and insistence on love have substantial textual support. His authority to determine the limits of Gentile obligation needs independent examination. The most consequential theological questions concern the saving role assigned to Jesus's death, the relationship between confession and mercy, and the scope of the apostle's claimed power to interpret earlier revelation.

The later Pauline voices distribute these problems in different ways. Ephesians develops an account of union through the Messiah; the Pastorals address a community's reproduction and discipline. Hebrews constructs a heavenly priesthood through which sacrifice receives a sustained explanation. Their historical placement affects who can be held responsible for each teaching and what development the evidence actually records.

My present judgment allows Paul to preserve prophetic wisdom, develop disputed applications and become the source of traditions whose later force exceeds their original setting. I have to defend that judgment passage by passage. For the next critical edition, the outstanding work concerns the Greek of the food rules and *pistis Christou*, the literary integrity of disputed passages, and the textual reconstruction of Marcion's letters. We now have a corpus to work through, saying by saying, and clearer questions to put to it.

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[305] Revelation 2:2, 14 and 20; compare 2 Timothy 1:15. The chapter identifies a shared field of controversy while leaving the historical identity of the condemned teachers unresolved.

[306] 1 Corinthians 7:10–11; 9:14; 11:23–26; 1 Thessalonians 4:15. These are proposed additions to the sayings pilot. A reference to a command or word of the Lord establishes the letter's attribution; it leaves the historical route and exact wording to be assessed.

25. James's Judgment and Luke's Defense of Paul

Acts offers one of the clearest surviving accounts of a Christian legal decision. Gentile believers are admitted without circumcision, and a letter specifies obligations that the community should observe. James helps formulate the judgment. The account is indispensable to a proposed Christian sharia, while its place in a narrative increasingly devoted to Paul requires equal attention.

I refer to the narrator conventionally as Luke. The historical identification of the author and the relation of the narrative to events remain questions for source criticism. The preface to Luke and the opening of Acts announce an ordered account extending into the movement's history. That literary claim invites an assessment of sources, arrangement, and apologetic purpose. It does not make every speech a transcript.[307]

Cornelius before the council

The Cornelius episode establishes a premise before the meeting in Jerusalem. His prayers and alms are received by God before he enters the community through Peter's ministry. The narrative places divine recognition ahead of the later dispute over admission. That puts a concrete case before us: what religious value do a person's prayers and alms have before he crosses the community's confessional boundary?[308]

Peter's vision concerns food, but his explanation to the people he meets concerns the classification of human beings as common or unclean. Both aspects belong to the story. A reader cannot use the imagery as an automatic repeal of every food restriction while disregarding Peter's stated explanation. The subsequent appearance of food rules in the council's decree makes that shortcut particularly unstable.

Cornelius's gesture of reverence receives another useful response. Peter insists on his humanity and raises him. Later, the speech describes Jesus as anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power, doing good and healing because God was with him. Within Acts itself, the description of extraordinary action has a language of divine support and authorization. This supplies a bridge to Qur'an 3:49 and 5:110 without requiring us to identify the two texts' transmission histories.

The Spirit falls upon the Gentile hearers before the final ritual action. Luke uses this order to constrain what human authorities may refuse. The council will subsequently deliberate over an inclusion that the narrative has already attributed to God. That arrangement helps explain why the story's legal question is framed around the conditions of fellowship rather than an unrestricted choice about whether Gentiles can be included at all.

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[307] Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–5. Thomas E. Phillips, "The Genre of Acts: Moving Toward a Consensus?," Currents in Biblical Research 4.3 (2006): 365–396, doi:10.1177/1476993X06064629; abstract consulted. "Luke" is used as the conventional authorial designation, with historical identification left open.

[308] Acts 10:1–48, especially 10:4, 25–28, 34–38 and 44–48. Primary English text consulted in the World English Bible: https://ebible.org/eng-web/ACT10.htm. Peter's explicit explanation at 10:28 concerns people.

What James actually admits

The dispute in Acts 15 concerns the necessity of circumcision and the keeping of the law of Moses. Peter recalls the earlier Gentile reception, Paul and Barnabas report signs, and James invokes scripture before offering his judgment. The proposed letter asks Gentile believers to abstain from idol-related pollution or offerings, blood, what has been strangled, and porneia. The last term needs interpretation in its legal setting; it cannot be reduced to a modern slogan without examining the relevant sexual prohibitions.[309]

The decree appears in several forms within Acts, and the manuscript tradition also varies. Some witnesses move toward an ethical formulation, including a negative reciprocal rule, while the more familiar form preserves the four requirements. The textual question matters because an ethical list and a food-and-fellowship list support different reconstructions of the council's purpose. This draft uses the familiar fourfold form while keeping that variation in its source record.[310]

The four requirements cannot plausibly constitute everything that a Christian is obliged to do. Nobody acquires permission to murder, steal, or neglect the poor because those matters are absent from this list. A limited ruling addresses a particular dispute against a background of teaching that the participants already recognize. James's decision supplies a floor for admission and fellowship. Its relation to the rest of Jesus's instruction must be reconstructed from the wider corpus.

This distinction makes the law historically intelligible. The council could reject a demand that Gentiles become circumcised Israelites while retaining obligations sufficient to regulate meals, sexual conduct, and separation from idolatry. Further instruction would then develop their life in the community. What that instruction contained is the next question.

Noah, Moses and the resident alien

The Noahide analogy is attractive because it locates Gentile obligations before the specific covenant at Sinai. Genesis 9 joins the preservation of life to a prohibition concerning blood. Later rabbinic accounts formulate a set of laws binding on the descendants of Noah. The developed sevenfold enumeration in Sanhedrin 56a is relevant comparative evidence, although its literary date prevents treating it as a verbatim record of James's legal vocabulary.[311]

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[309] Acts 15:1–29; compare 21:20–25. Text consulted in the World English Bible and NABRE: https://ebible.org/eng-web/ACT15.htm and https://bible.usccb.org/bible/acts/15. Porneia requires contextual legal interpretation; the four-item decree does not purport to enumerate every moral duty.

[310] Acts 15:20, 29 and their variants. Daniel L. McConaughy, "Early Witnesses to the Syriac Text of Acts 15 with an Investigation into the Text of Acts 15 in the Didascalia Apostolorum," Hugoye 25.1 (2022), sections on the decree consulted at https://hugoye.bethmardutho.org/article/hv25n1mcconaughy.html. He discusses the Western omission of "strangled" and addition of a negative Golden Rule, while warning that Syriac patristic paraphrase can be mistaken for a manuscript reading. A complete Greek apparatus remains outstanding.

[311] Genesis 9:4–6; Leviticus 17:7–15; 18:6–26; Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 56a. The later rabbinic sevenfold enumeration is a comparator, not an independently attested first-century transcript of James's legislation.

Leviticus 17 and 18 offer another substantial comparison. Their rules extend selected obligations to the resident alien within Israel, including matters of sacrifice, blood, and sexual conduct. That setting has an obvious relevance to Gentiles sharing a community with Jewish believers. The legal subject is a person participating alongside Israel without every feature of Israelite identity being transferred in exactly the same manner.

P. B. Hartog's study explicitly tests both Noah and Moses as group models for Acts 15. Its abstract argues that each illuminates part of the account while the emerging group retains a distinctive character. I use that proposal as a research guide here; the full article requires further consultation.[312]

My phrase "Noahide plus" therefore names a reconstruction. The "plus" includes the Messiah's instruction, allegiance to the God whom he serves, and the communal obligations developed around his teaching. The phrase must not make the four items in Acts pass for a later rabbinic list. A shared concern with Gentile righteousness is significant even when the legal formulations differ.

Does Moses's weekly reading add the Sabbath?

Acts 15:21 supplies the crucial sentence for a Sabbath-inclusive reading. James explains that Moses has long had proclaimers in every city and is read in the synagogues every Sabbath. A reader can understand this as the opening stage of an educational process: Gentile converts begin with the immediate requirements and continue learning the law in the synagogue. That is a serious possibility to investigate.[313]

The sentence also permits other explanations. Public reading of Moses could establish the longstanding authority of the rules just invoked. It could explain why behavior offensive to Jewish communities would disrupt fellowship throughout the cities where the mission operates. Those interpretations concern the visibility of Mosaic law without imposing the entire law on every Gentile after a probationary interval.

The decree's own language constrains the stronger proposal. Acts 15:28 announces that no further burden beyond the specified necessities is being placed upon the recipients. Acts 21 later repeats the Gentile ruling while distinguishing the law-observant Jewish believers whom James describes. A theory of eventual full Torah obligation must account for that continuing distinction.[314]

I therefore retain Sabbath observance as an argued element of a possible Christian law. But I cannot make hearing Moses every week do all the work of proving that every command

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[312] P. B. Hartog, "Noah and Moses in Acts 15: Group Models and the Novelty of the Way," New Testament Studies 67.4 (2021): 496–513, doi:10.1017/S0028688521000199. Institutional abstract consulted: https://pure.pthu.nl/en/publications/noah-and-moses-in-acts-15-group-models-and-the-novelty-of-the-way/. The full article could not be retrieved for this revision.

[313] Acts 15:21. The continuing-instruction, public-authority, and fellowship-sensitivity readings are alternatives assessed here by the author. Verse 21 mentions Sabbath synagogue reading; it does not expressly command Gentile Sabbath rest.

[314] Acts 15:28–29; 21:20–25; Colossians 2:16–17; Qur'an 16:124. These passages constrain the proposed progression from an admission rule to a universally compulsory full Torah code.

eventually becomes compulsory for every hearer. Attendance, rest, and participation in a shared scriptural education are related practices whose obligations need to be established individually.

Qur'an 16:124 gives the proposal a further test by treating the Sabbath in connection with a particular disputed obligation. The later discussion of Colossians 2:16 adds another complication. A Christian sharia that adopts the Sabbath can explain its choice through the Messiah's practice and a theory of continuing covenantal discipline, but it must face these passages openly. If I want this synthesis to stand, I need to say where I have begun to infer.

The restoration of David's tent

James's scriptural argument invokes Amos 9. The wording in Acts follows a Greek form in which the remaining people and the nations seek the Lord. The Hebrew form involves possession of the remnant of Edom and the nations bearing God's Name. This textual difference affects the way restoration is imagined and the way Gentile inclusion is derived from it.[315]

The restored tent of David gives the discussion a messianic and political horizon. Gentile admission occurs within an account of Israel's restoration. Tabor's family-centered reconstruction can therefore place James's authority beside a scriptural expectation of renewed Davidic order. The text supports examining that connection. It does not itself identify a complete hereditary constitution or settle the historical mechanics of Jesus's succession.

An Alid comparison can help formulate the question of legitimate authority within the prophet's family. It remains a comparison developed in this book. Acts's council scene presents a collective setting involving apostles, elders, and the community; its treatment of James's intervention should be read within that setting. My theory of designation has to leave room for the other people the narrator puts in the room.

Paul's authorization and the missing argument

Acts gives Peter the decisive early Gentile episode and places Paul's mission within a broadly agreed course. Galatians supplies a different perspective. Paul stresses the origin of his commission and describes negotiation with the recognized leaders, followed by a conflict at Antioch. The accounts can preserve overlapping events while organizing their significance differently.[316]

The difference is material to the legal question. A reader of Acts may leave with a strong impression of a settled agreement. Paul's letter shows how disputes over meals and communal identity could persist after recognition of his mission. We lose evidence if we

[315] Amos 9:11–12 in the Hebrew and Septuagint traditions; Acts 15:16–18. The Edom/humanity and possession/seeking differences should be printed in the future original-language apparatus. The dynastic and Alid comparisons are the book's interpretive proposals.

[316] Galatians 1:11–2:14; Acts 9:19–30; 15:1–35; 16:1–3. The distinction between Titus's Gentile status and Timothy's Jewish maternal ancestry belongs to the interpretation of the circumcision accounts.

quietly make either witness speak for the other. Paul's first-person account has its own interests, and Luke's presentation has a narrative purpose that the historian must identify.

Titus and Timothy provide a useful control against superficial contradiction-hunting. Galatians treats pressure to circumcise Titus as a test of Gentile freedom. Acts describes Timothy's circumcision in a setting that identifies his Jewish mother. Those circumstances give the actions different social meanings. The comparison may still reveal a difference in presentation, but the bare presence of circumcision in one account and resistance to it in another proves little by itself.

The most explicit defense of Paul appears in Acts 21. James reports the suspicion that Paul teaches Jews to abandon Moses. A public act of purification is proposed to demonstrate his observance. The subsequent accusation that he brought a Gentile into the temple is attributed to an inference about Trophimus. Luke marks the accusation as mistaken.[317]

This is apologetic work in the ordinary historical sense: the narrator answers damaging claims about his central figure. The defense can contain historical information. Its purpose still affects how the reader should assess what is selected, what is explained, and whose complaint survives only through a rebuttal. David Anthony Basham's recent study of Acts, Antioch, and Paul's relation to the Jerusalem temple is registered here at abstract level as a further avenue for this problem.

Homeric mimesis and the manufacture of authority

The literary proposal relevant to Acts is usually called Homeric mimesis: the adaptation of recognizable scenes and patterns from Homer. Metonymy concerns a different kind of verbal relation. Dennis MacDonald's work asks whether an author could give Christian protagonists the prestige of familiar heroic narratives while changing their religious meaning.[318]

His book on four cases in Acts examines the visions of Cornelius and Peter, the departure at Miletus, the selection of Matthias, and Peter's escape against proposed Homeric models. These are specific claims about narrative composition. This draft has checked the publisher's contents and chapter summaries; the full arguments and their critics still require a close reading. The cases therefore enter the book as hypotheses with named advocates.

We should make this proposal work for its conclusion. A proposed imitation gains force from a distinctive sequence, unusual shared details, a plausible route of access, and an intelligible reason for the changes. General similarities such as a sea voyage, an imprisoned

[317] Acts 21:17–29; see the narrative's explanation at 21:29. David Anthony Basham, "Between Acts and Antioch: Discerning Paul on Gentiles and the Jerusalem Temple," Biblical Theology Bulletin 55.2 (2025), doi:10.1177/01461079251339749; abstract consulted, full argument outstanding.

[318] Dennis R. MacDonald, Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles (Yale University Press, 2003), doi:10.12987/yale/9780300097702.001.0001. Publisher contents and chapter abstracts consulted. Its four cases are Acts 10–11 / Iliad 2; the Miletus farewell / Iliad 6; Matthias's selection / Iliad 7; and Peter's escape / Iliad 24. The full comparisons and their critical reception remain to be read. See also MacDonald, The Gospels and Homer (2014), publisher description only.

hero, or a farewell can occur without direct dependence. A biblical precedent may explain the same scene more economically, or several literary traditions may have contributed to its shape.

Acts itself supplies a firmer benchmark in the citation of Greek poetry at 17:28. There the narrator puts recognizable poetic language into Paul's address. That overt engagement establishes a willingness to draw on Greek culture. It cannot automatically authenticate every proposed Homeric correspondence elsewhere in the work.

Eutychus and Elpenor

The account of Eutychus in Acts 20 is especially suitable for comparison. A young man falls from an upper place during a prolonged gathering, and Paul's intervention restores him to the community. Homer's Elpenor also falls from a height, dies, and requires attention from the leader whose company he had joined. MacDonald has argued for a literary relationship.[319]

The differences contribute to that proposal as well as limiting it. Elpenor receives burial, whereas Eutychus is restored alive. A Christian retelling could use that transformation to give Paul an authority beyond the Homeric hero. Yet the embodied intervention of Elijah and Elisha in stories of restored children supplies another close set of models. The historian has to compare the whole action, including gestures and narrative function, before choosing a source.

The story also fits the larger relationship between Peter and Paul in Acts, where comparable signs establish the legitimacy of both missions. That pattern helps explain why the narrator includes the event. It does not settle whether there was an event behind the telling. An author can shape a remembered event. We need criteria for identifying both the shaping and the memory.

The gathering on the first day of the week should also enter the Sabbath dossier. It documents the narrator's account of a meeting, with questions about how the night and the day are being counted. It provides no complete calendar of the participants' worship and rest. The passage can be relevant without bearing the weight of an entire replacement-Sabbath theory.

The shipwreck and the lawful Paul

MacDonald's study of the shipwreck compares Acts 27–28 with the voyages of Odysseus. The proposal concerns how the narrative turns danger into a demonstration of divine

[319] Acts 20:7–12; Homer, Odyssey 10.552–560; 11.51–83; 12.8–15; 1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:18–37. MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus and Homer's Elpenor: Acts 20:7–12 and Odyssey 10–12," Journal of Higher Criticism 1 (1994): 5–24, is registered as a bibliographic lead; its full text was not consulted in this revision. The primary narratives are compared independently here.

protection and the protagonist's authority. Its detailed case requires inspection beyond the article abstract available for this draft.[320]

A comparison should distinguish ordinary maritime circumstances from unusual literary correspondences. Navigation, adverse winds, cargo, and attempts to reach shore belong to the world of real travel as well as to literature. A cluster of distinctive actions in a shared order would carry more evidential weight. The specific transformations would then need to show why Luke's audience was expected to recognize the model.

On Malta, the observers move between incompatible judgments of Paul after the snake incident. Their interpretation of divine justice is unreliable, while Paul survives. Such episodes contribute to a portrait in which accusations against him repeatedly fail. The courtroom scenes perform related work in political language. The narrator's Paul becomes a missionary whose activities can be presented as lawful and whose enemies misunderstand him.

I would not accept this portrait simply because Luke supplies it, or reverse it simply because he is defending Paul. What accusation is he answering, and how much independent evidence confirms his answer? For Christian law, the decree remains a substantial witness inside this literary project. Its authority can be investigated without pretending that the narrative has no stake in the result.

James's judgment gives the inquiry an initial Gentile settlement. The Didache shows how a community might add daily discipline around such a settlement. Sabbath observance remains a further argument, and Luke's defense of Paul remains part of the evidence through which that argument must pass.

[320] Dennis R. MacDonald, "The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul," New Testament Studies 45.1 (1999): 88–107, doi:10.1017/S0028688598000885; publisher abstract consulted. Compare Acts 27–28 with Odyssey 5 and 12. A full lexical collation is required before declaring dependence established.

26. After Paul: Ephesians, Assurance and the Uses of Grace

Paul's name became an authority under which later Christians could organize the meaning of salvation and the order of their communities. The disputed letters deserve their own investigation because their contribution survives even where authorship remains unresolved. The question for this chapter is how a language of grace came to support claims that can detach final salvation from continuing fidelity.

Ephesians is central to that inquiry. Its best-known statement about salvation as a gift is often quoted apart from the ethical consequences developed in the letter itself. Before arguing with what later Christians made of the passage, let us finish reading it. The same document that excludes boasting also warns certain wrongdoers that they have no inheritance in the kingdom.

Whose Paul, and which Ephesians?

The authorship of Ephesians remains disputed. Its language, relation to Colossians, and conception of the church have led many scholars to place it after Paul's lifetime. Other scholars defend Pauline authorship or allow a role for collaborators. The absence of the words locating the recipients in Ephesus from important early witnesses has also supported a circular-letter hypothesis. The evidence should be recorded without turning the conventional title into a secure local address.[321]

That point affects the comparison with Revelation. Revelation's message to Ephesus criticizes false apostles and other conduct. A direct identification of those opponents with the author or recipients of Ephesians requires more than the shared modern label. The letters can be compared as evidence of competing Christian authority claims without assuming that they record a single identifiable quarrel.

The terminology "deutero-Pauline" is therefore a working scholarly classification. Each letter has its own authorship debate. Ephesians, Colossians, and the Pastorals do not form a uniform doctrinal block, while Hebrews presents another problem because its text does not name Paul as author. The existing Pauline chapter treats that distinction; the present chapter follows how the later voices develop law, conduct, and assurance.

Grace in the whole sentence

Ephesians 2 begins with an account of rescue from a condition of death and disobedience. God's mercy supplies the initiative. The well-known statement in verses 8–9 denies that

[321] Ephesians 1:1; USCCB introduction to Ephesians: https://bible.usccb.org/bible/ephesians/0. The introduction records both the address variant and competing authorship proposals. It was consulted in full. No direct identification of Revelation's Ephesian opponents with this letter is established here.

salvation arises from a basis on which the recipients can boast. Verse 10 then describes the recipients as God's workmanship, created for good works in which they are to walk.[322]

We cannot manufacture divine mercy. That still leaves the question of what the life created by mercy requires of us. The letter itself supplies conduct as the intended result. A theory of salvation that uses verses 8–9 to make that result optional must account for the purpose clause that immediately follows.

There is also a grammatical issue in the phrase commonly translated "and this is not from yourselves." The neuter demonstrative can refer to the preceding complex event of salvation by grace through faith. It should not be made to prove, by agreement alone, that the feminine noun "faith" is the single exclusive referent. A full account of the grammar belongs in the critical apparatus. At this stage, the verse does not independently settle every later dispute about the mechanism of conversion or the limits of human response.

The remainder of the chapter places the Gentile recipients within a corporate history. They have been brought near and incorporated into a reconciled community. The argument concerns an altered relationship among peoples as well as the rescue of individual persons. Read in that setting, the rejection of boasting can challenge claims to privileged standing while leaving communal obligations fully active.

For a Qur'an-centered reader, divine mercy and the inability to buy salvation are intelligible premises. The dispute begins when those premises are used to cancel the relevance of the life that follows, or to make a particular confession the sole measure by which every other person is assessed.

The warning Ephesians preserves

Ephesians 5 names forms of sexual wrongdoing, impurity, and greed, and warns that the persons characterized by them have no inheritance in the kingdom. It adds a warning against deceptive words concerning the consequence of such conduct. The language requires explanation from any theology that treats final salvation as wholly insulated from subsequent behavior.[323]

One response is to understand persistent misconduct as evidence that genuine faith was never present. Another distinguishes entry into life from inheritance or reward within it. These are recognizable theological constructions. Their plausibility depends upon how the distinctions fit the letter's wording and the wider corpus. A later system's need to preserve unconditional assurance cannot supply the missing textual argument.

The same issue appears in Ephesians 6:8, where recompense is related to what each person has done. Whatever the author means by salvation as gift, he has retained a structure of

[322] Ephesians 2:1–10, especially 2:8–10; primary text at https://ebible.org/eng-web/EPH02.htm. The syntactic observation about neuter touto and feminine pistis is a preliminary grammatical assessment, not a complete adjudication of grace, election, or human response.

[323] Ephesians 5:3–6; 6:8; primary text at https://ebible.org/eng-web/EPH05.htm. The competing reward, inheritance, and false-faith interpretations are theological models to be tested against these warnings.

morally consequential action. A careful reconstruction has to explain both claims within one argument.

Here is the model of assurance I am questioning: a believer can dismiss warnings addressed to believers because they supposedly have no bearing on the final outcome. Ephesians is a particularly awkward foundation for such a model because its own warning describes the danger in direct terms. Its insistence on grace should be allowed to stand beside that warning without prematurely redefining either away.

The church after the quarrel

Ephesians presents a community founded upon apostles and prophets, with Christ as its decisive point of unity. The first-person voice describes a disclosed mystery concerning the Gentiles. The practical organization of the body depends on gifts distributed among its members. Earlier disputes over Paul's standing recede behind a picture of apostolic authority as a shared foundation.[324]

That presentation can be compared with the sharp negotiations and grievances preserved in Galatians. It represents a different literary task, whether its author was Paul or a later interpreter. A community trying to establish unity can arrange its inherited authorities in a manner that softens the memory of their conflicts. The result gives historians evidence about the later use of the apostolic past.

The confession of one body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father belongs in the chapter on divine agency. It distinguishes terms and functions within an account of unity. Its theological history needs to be traced through the claims the author actually makes. A modern reader should avoid using the presence of several exalted terms as a substitute for examining their relations.

The passage also makes a demand upon a proposed Christian sharia. Law cannot remain a collection of isolated rules if the community's teachers claim authority to bind people together. Who gave the teachers that authority? What limits it, and how can they be corrected? Our reconstruction has to answer those questions. The Didache's scrutiny of teachers is one useful comparator to this more expansive ecclesial picture.

Colossians and the Sabbath objection

Colossians gives the inquiry a more immediate legal challenge. Its warning against judgment over food, drink, festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths bears directly on the Sabbath-inclusive model developed from Acts. I cannot set that sentence aside because it makes my preferred reconstruction harder.[325]

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[324] Ephesians 2:19–22; 3:1–13; 4:4–16; compare Galatians 1–2. The relation between a harmonized apostolic foundation and remembered conflict is a literary-historical inference, not an independently documented editorial event.

[325] Colossians 1:15–20; 2:9–23, especially 2:16–17. Primary text consulted at https://ebible.org/eng-web/COL02.htm. The scope of the warning about judgment over sacred times remains disputed.

The opponents' practices and the force of the warning remain debated. The author may be resisting a system of judgment that uses such observances to subordinate believers to additional authorities. The text may also place these practices within a fulfilled anticipatory order. Neither possibility is settled simply by repeating the word "shadow." The identification of the practices, the nature of the judgment, and the contrast with the Messiah all require close reading.

Some Sabbath-observant interpretations understand the passage as protection against criticism of the way believers keep sacred times. Others understand it as freedom from their obligation. The wording and context must decide how much each interpretation can bear. This book's argument for a Gentile law can therefore distinguish a community's voluntary or inherited Sabbath discipline from the claim that the same rule is universally required for salvation.

Colossians also intensifies cosmic language about the Messiah. Creation through him, his precedence, and the fullness associated with him belong beside the Logos, Enoch, and Ascension of Isaiah comparisons. They should not be treated as though authorship alone settled their meaning. Even a securely Pauline statement would still require theological evaluation under the Qur'anic criterion.

The Pastorals and disciplined respectability

The Pastoral Epistles organize authority and social conduct in ways that warrant sustained comparison with the earlier mission. First Timothy presents one God and a human mediator in 2:5, an important text for the tawḥīdi inquiry. The same chapter restricts women's teaching and connects salvation with childbearing in a sentence whose concluding condition includes continuing faith and moral conduct. These features belong to the same witness.[326]

I cannot select the human mediator and consider my assessment finished. The rules about women need to be studied in their historical circumstances and then evaluated as proposed norms. Their presence also shows why placing the entire disputed Pauline corpus under the heading "faith alone" obscures its actual variety. Some of its most difficult statements attach salvation to continuing practices and social roles.

Titus offers a particularly clear example. Chapter 3 attributes rescue to divine mercy rather than prior righteous deeds, then urges sustained attention to good works. The correspondence between divine initiative and subsequent obligation is explicit. Second Thessalonians, whose authorship dispute differs from that of the Pastorals, gives divine judgment an equally prominent role and warns about falsely attributed communications.[327]

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[326] 1 Timothy 2:5–15, especially 2:5, 12 and 15. Human mediation, restrictions on women, and the childbearing sentence must be assessed within the same source rather than assigning the entire letter one simple doctrinal label.

[327] Titus 3:4–8, 14; 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10; 2:1–2; 3:17. Primary text of Titus 3 consulted at https://ebible.org/eng-web/TIT03.htm. Each disputed letter retains its own authorship question.

Claims to Paul's voice were consequently part of the struggle over authority within the corpus itself. A letter could establish obedience by presenting its instructions as apostolic, while warning readers against messages making the same claim. We should take attribution as seriously as the letter tells its readers to take suspicious messages. That includes the letter itself.

The household material adds another question. Submission and respectability can protect a vulnerable community, but they can also stabilize unjust social relations. The normative inquiry must distinguish an accommodation to circumstances from an eternal command governing every society. The fact that a letter carries Paul's name cannot make that distinction unnecessary.

What later Christians mean by faith alone

The phrase "faith alone" covers positions that need to be distinguished. The Westminster Confession treats faith as the instrument of justification while insisting that genuine faith is accompanied by other saving graces and works through love. That is an official confessional claim. It prevents a fair account from describing all Protestant teaching as indifference to conduct.[328]

Grace Evangelical Society represents a different account of assurance. Its published statement makes belief the sole condition of eternal life and separates assurance from the believer's works, while retaining obligations of discipleship and consequences for failure. That position should be described in its own terms. Its defenders do not present wrongdoing as morally acceptable; they distinguish its consequences from the possession of eternal life.[329]

The exegetical question is whether the New Testament consistently makes that distinction. Ephesians 5, James 2, and the judgment scenes in Revelation become especially important tests. A system can assign threatening language to lost rewards, discipline, or the exposure of false faith, but each assignment needs textual support. The categories cannot do all the explanatory work in advance.

My concern is sharpened by the Qur'anic treatment of moral responsibility. A religious confession can become a device for discounting the deeds of outsiders while insulating the deeds of insiders from ultimate consequence. That danger is not confined to Christianity. If a Muslim theory makes our community label a substitute for fidelity to God, it deserves the same scrutiny.

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[328] Westminster Confession of Faith 11.1–2, official Orthodox Presbyterian Church text: https://opc.org/wcf.html. The confession makes faith the instrument of justification while requiring the accompaniment of other saving graces and action through love.

[329] Grace Evangelical Society, "Affirmations of Belief," sections "Salvation," "Assurance," "Discipleship," and "Motivation": https://faithalone.org/beliefs/, consulted 21 October 2026. This is primary evidence of this organization's position, not a definition of all Protestant or all Free Grace theology.

A judgment on reception

Ephesians supplies a strong theology of grace and a strong warning about conduct. Later interpreters inherit both. The claim that it fueled extreme forms of faith-alone teaching concerns a history of selective emphasis and doctrinal construction; it does not describe every sentence of the letter or every Christian who appeals to it.

I want to ask what a doctrine permits a person to ignore. Divine mercy can sustain repentance and make moral renewal possible. A doctrine of exemption can persuade a person that renewal has no bearing on the final result. The latter claim must answer the warnings preserved in the very documents used to defend it.

This chapter therefore leaves authorship and reception on separate tracks. The historical inquiry asks how the Pauline name came to authorize these voices. The legal and theological inquiry asks what they require of believers, whether those requirements cohere with the Messiah's teaching, and which claims can survive a Qur'an-centered judgment. The next sequence of chapters applies that judgment to the Qur'anic passages themselves.

27. The Gospel of Marcion and the Formation of the Canon

Marcion forces the inquiry to examine the collection as well as its individual books. A reader's Gospel changes when it is paired with a particular set of letters and placed within a particular account of God. The Pauline chapter has already shown how attributed writings can shape the meaning of Paul. Here the question expands: how did a Gospel and an apostolic collection become instruments for deciding which story of Christianity would count as authoritative?

Reconstructing a book through its critics

The Gospel used by Marcion survives chiefly through hostile testimony and later reconstruction. Tertullian accuses him of altering a Gospel associated with Luke. We need his testimony. We also need to remember that accusing someone of deletion does not establish what stood in every disputed passage before he encountered it. A critic can quote, paraphrase, summarize, or argue from material that his opponent omits. Each action has a different evidentiary value. [330]

A reconstruction should therefore specify why each line has been included. Direct quotation has a different footing from a sentence inferred because an opponent's argument appears to require it. Silence is particularly dangerous: a critic's failure to mention a verse does not always prove that the verse was absent from the copy he used. A modern reconstruction earns its usefulness by letting us inspect those decisions.

Dieter Roth's work emphasizes the problems of evaluating the witnesses and using their evidence in textual criticism. A scholarly argument for the importance of Marcion's text is distinct from a claim that every reconstruction agrees about its wording. The present chapter uses Roth's published abstracts as guides to the methodological issue; it does not present a fresh collation of the entire reconstructed Gospel. [331]

Which direction did the text move?

Several models deserve separate tests. Marcion may have revised a text close to canonical Luke. Both may preserve different revisions of an earlier Gospel. A more radical model gives Marcion's form priority in the development of the canonical narratives. Matthias Klinghardt argues for an extensive version of the latter approach. The existence of this

[330] Tertullian, Against Marcion 4.2–5, full English text consulted at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/03124.htm. The polemical claim that Marcion altered Luke is a witness to be tested, not a neutral manuscript apparatus.

[331] Dieter T. Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Its Relevance for Gauging the Textual History of the Canonical Gospels," Expository Times 121.6 (2010): 287–294, https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524609357511; and "The Testimony of Marcion's Gospel in NA28," New Testament Studies 68.1 (2022): 52–60, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688521000163. Abstracts consulted.

debate prevents the book from treating the traditional deletion account as the only question worth asking. [332]

The tests resemble those of the Synoptic problem. Does the shorter text explain a difficulty in the longer one? Does a supposed addition interrupt a sequence? Can the wording be recovered independently of the theological motive proposed for changing it? An argument about direction needs cumulative textual support. A later orthodox editor may have had reasons to revise the passage. We still have to show that this is what happened, and in that order.

A published Greek reconstruction associated with Jason BeDuhn and Mark Bilby illustrates another development: the evidence can be organized as reusable data. That makes comparison easier, while the Greek remains a modern reconstruction based on surviving testimony. A digital format does not convert conjectured wording into an ancient manuscript. Its value is that competing decisions can be compared and revised. [333]

The collection interprets the Gospel

Tertullian's theological quarrel concerns the relation between the creator and the God proclaimed through Christ. That issue changes how the Gospel's scriptural allusions and legal disputes are read. For Finding Injil, a Marcionite interpretation raises a fundamental Qur'anic problem: the continuity of the God who creates and the God who reveals. Studying Marcion's textual evidence does not require accepting the cosmology attributed to him. [334]

The collection also affects Paul. Letters read as the authorized explanation of a Gospel can determine in advance how its sayings about the law will be understood. A different collection can produce a different center of gravity. That is why I cannot leave the history of the canon outside this inquiry. By deciding which writings explain the others, we have already begun to interpret them.

Four Gospels and a later boundary

Irenaeus argues for a fourfold Gospel through an account of the church and the created order. His argument witnesses a commitment to those four books in his own setting. Its cosmological rationale cannot by itself establish that the original disciples fixed the

[332] Matthias Klinghardt, The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels (English edition, 2021), publisher description at https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1q26qbc. This chapter attributes the larger model to Klinghardt and does not claim full-text examination of his reconstruction.

[333] Mark G. Bilby and Jason BeDuhn, "BeDuhn's Greek Reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel," Journal of Open Humanities Data 9 (2023), article 25, https://doi.org/10.5334/johd.126. Dataset description and abstract consulted.

[334] Tertullian, Against Marcion 4, especially its sustained appeal to the Creator's scriptures; Qur'an 3:3–4 and 42:13. The theological evaluation is the author's; the textual dependence question remains independent.

collection in that form. It gives us a historical claim about how an influential Christian writer defended a boundary. [335]

Athanasius's thirty-ninth Festal Letter names the twenty-seven New Testament books while distinguishing other writings used for instruction. The Didache and Shepherd occupy that latter category. This later witness shows that being useful for Christian formation and being included within a defined canon were distinguishable judgments. It also supplies a specific document for a history often obscured by unsupported stories that Nicaea simply selected the Bible. [336]

A Shiʿi comparison in the handling of collections

The Imami evidence already examined in this book demonstrates a practical distinction between preservation and endorsement. Individual reports in al-Kāfī receive different later chain grades. Their presence within one important collection does not remove that differentiation. A similar question can be put to Christian writings: what historical judgment follows from preservation, and what additional judgment follows from canonical status? The two traditions answer through different institutions and criteria, so their terms should remain distinct. [337]

This comparison also protects the inquiry from selective skepticism. A Gospel excluded by a later boundary can still preserve earlier material. Inclusion alone does not establish that every reported speech is a verbatim historical utterance. We still have to judge each passage. The history of the collection explains which witnesses survived and which became authoritative interpreters of the rest.

[335] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.11.8, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103311.htm. The fourfold argument should be distinguished from independent evidence for the authorship of each Gospel.

[336] Athanasius, Festal Letter 39 (367), §§5–7, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2806039.htm. The list and the instructional category are explicit in the letter.

[337] See this book's Spirit chapter on al-Kāfī 1.4.55–56 and al-Majlisī's differing evaluations. The comparison is limited to the distinction between a collection's standing and judgments about individual reports; it does not equate Christian canonicity with Imami hadith classification.

27A. Irenaeus: The Imam al-Shāfiʿī of Christianity?

A historian of Christian origins can read Irenaeus of Lyons as an early architect of authorized memory. Around the 180s he tried to show why some writings should govern Christian teaching, why certain custodians of tradition deserved trust, and why competing accounts of Jesus could be judged against a publicly recognizable rule. The problem resembles the one Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī confronted six centuries later: a community already possessed scripture, remembered instruction, legal and theological practice, and claims of inherited authority, yet still had to explain what made one report binding. I am interested in how a religious inheritance becomes a disciplined body of evidence, and who acquires the right to tell everyone else what it means.[338]

The analogy is functional, with a historical limit. Irenaeus (active in the later second century) was a bishop and controversialist whose proof depended on identifiable churches and an apostolic genealogy. Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) was a jurist whose Risāla reasoned through the relation of Qur'an, Prophetic Sunnah, reports, consensus and legal inference. The Christian argument seeks a public rule of apostolic faith and a bounded four-Gospel collection; the Islamic argument establishes how divine and Prophetic instruction governs law. The two men worked in different institutions and centuries, and each later became a founding figure in a retrospective account that makes a gradual formation look much tidier than the surviving documents allow.[339]

A second-century contest over witnesses

The preceding Marcion chapter examined the struggle over the contents of the book itself. Marcion's followers used a Gospel and an apostolic letter collection to defend a distinction between the God revealed in Jesus and the creator known through Israel's scripture. Irenaeus answered a wider range of rivals, including followers of Valentinus and teachers whom he accused of separating the creator from the highest God. His fundamental point was continuity: the God who made the world, spoke through the prophets and sent Jesus belonged to one economy of revelation. His account of Jesus was therefore inseparable from an account of the earlier scriptures.[340]

Irenaeus wrote before the imperial Christian councils and long before a single empire-wide apparatus could prescribe the New Testament's final list. The author of Against Heresies could still describe dispersed assemblies, rival teachers, competing books and disagreement over practice. His five-book attack on claims of secret saving knowledge is

[338] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.11.8, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103311.htm; al-Shāfiʿī, al-Risāla, edited and translated by Joseph E. Lowry, The Epistle on Legal Theory (NYU Press, 2013). Functional analogy is this author's proposal.

[339] Joseph E. Lowry, Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risāla of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (Brill, 2007), publisher synopsis and contents; Ahmed El Shamsy, The Canonization of Islamic Law (Cambridge University Press, 2013), publisher description.

[340] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.11.1–3; see chapter 27 here on Marcion and canon formation. Public text: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103311.htm.

valuable for reconstructing what influential Christians argued in the second century. It is also a partisan source. An opponent's report gives evidence that an argument was being made, subject to the limitations of quotation, category and attribution; it cannot be treated as a neutral record of a community whose own texts have not survived.[341]

Four Gospels, neither more nor fewer

Irenaeus names the Gospel writers as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and connects their texts to particular apostolic lines. Matthew writes among the Hebrews; Mark records Peter's preaching; Luke records what Paul proclaimed; and John, presented as a disciple who reclined with Jesus, publishes the fourth Gospel at Ephesus. These are explicit second-century claims about authorship and transmission. Their presence in Irenaeus proves that he offered the attributions. The historical accuracy of each link requires evidence independent of his assertion, especially where the suggested author and the surviving Greek composition are separated by generations.[342]

His most famous defense appears in Against Heresies 3.11.8. The Gospel, he argues, must have four aspects because the world has four regions and four winds; the living creatures around the divine throne have four faces; and one Spirit animates the fourfold witness. The lion, calf, human figure and eagle become figures for the evangelists' testimony. The symbolism shows how Irenaeus defended a number he already cherished. Counting winds gives us neither an independent count of first-century disciples nor a date for any Gospel. Its importance lies in the conjunction of a fixed literary boundary with a theological claim that creation itself confirms that boundary.[343]

The chronology prevents a story in which one bishop suddenly invented the four-Gospel collection. Tatian's Diatessaron presupposes access to multiple Gospel texts earlier in the second century, although its precise construction and the history of its transmission remain debated. Darrell Hannah argues, from the Epistula Apostolorum, that a fourfold collection can be detected as early as the 140s. Charles E. Hill's 2026 study likewise presents the four as recognized in many churches before Irenaeus's explicit defense. Both scholarly arguments have been checked here from their published abstracts. They support an inherited boundary becoming conspicuous in controversy; they do not establish one day on which all churches adopted a single list.[344]

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[341] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, book 1 preface and 3.2, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103100.htm and https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103302.htm. His descriptions of opponents require source-critical qualification.

[342] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.1.1, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103301.htm. Explicit attributions are second-century testimony and not first-century authorial colophons.

[343] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.11.8, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103311.htm; compare Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4. Greek/Latin witness comparison not undertaken.

[344] Darrell D. Hannah, "The Four-Gospel 'Canon' in the Epistula Apostolorum," Journal of Theological Studies 59.2 (2008):598–633, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/fln103 (abstract read); Charles E. Hill, "The Early Use of the Memoirs of the Apostles," in The New Testament Canon in Contemporary Research (Brill, 2026), pp. 273–296, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004751071_014 (publisher abstract read). The exact strength of the Epistula case remains for full-text audit.

The rule that interprets the book

A canon settles which books may enter a collection. Interpretation raises another problem: two readers can quote the same Gospel while building incompatible theologies. Irenaeus describes what scholars call a rule of faith or rule of truth, a publicly taught confession in which one creator God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit belong to a common account of divine action. Against Heresies 1.10.1 offers a substantial form of that teaching. It includes doctrines that a Qur'an-centered investigator will contest, especially divine sonship, incarnation and Christological exaltation. Historically, however, it establishes that Irenaeus interpreted Scripture under a prior public summary of apostolic belief, rather than expecting a detached string of quotations to explain itself.[345]

His polemic turns on a sharp question about custodianship. Rivals who invoked esoteric teachings claimed that written books were incomplete or that the initiated possessed superior explanations. Irenaeus replied that the apostles had handed their teaching to identifiable church leaders. He argued from Scripture and from the continuation of the same preaching among communities founded, in his account, by the apostles. Against Heresies 3.2 and 3.3 display the method at work. A reader should separate the demonstrable existence of a second-century public tradition from the stronger proposition that its authoritative form reproduced the apostles' entire first-century instruction without change.[346]

His appeal to Rome makes the stakes visible. Against Heresies 3.3.2–3 provides a succession list and accords the Roman church special argumentative weight. The meaning of the passage for later doctrines of Roman primacy has been debated for centuries. Its immediate polemical work is easier to observe: a named and publicly visible institutional genealogy is set against teachers alleged to possess inaccessible private knowledge. Modern historians also dispute whether the earliest Roman community was governed from the beginning by a single bishop in the later sense. Irenaeus's list is accordingly evidence for late-second-century claims about succession, while individual early offices need their own historical checks.[347]

One caution comes from Irenaeus himself. In Against Heresies 3.4.2 he imagines Christian communities without written apostolic documents retaining the faith through tradition. Such believers are credible for him because their received confession agrees with the public teaching he recognizes. The passage shows that he understood authority to reside in a communal memory capable of outliving a particular manuscript. It also illustrates a circularity the historian must identify: the community's faith confirms the book, while the

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[345] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.10.1, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103110.htm. A form of the rule of faith/rule of truth; this is not a fixed fourth-century creed.

[346] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.2–3.3, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103302.htm and https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm.

[347] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.3.2–3; Eamon Duffy, "Was there a Bishop of Rome in the First Century?," New Blackfriars (online 2024), Cambridge abstract read, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-blackfriars/article/abs/was-there-a-bishop-of-rome-in-the-first-century/DF0CA4A629EDAEB5CB923F2EF96A0F81.

book is interpreted through the community's faith. That may make a coherent theological hermeneutic. That alone still cannot tell us how old each remembered saying is.[348]

John, Polycarp and Irenaeus: a Christian isnād?

Here the Muslim analogy acquires a concrete chain. In a letter to Florinus, preserved by Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History 5.20, Irenaeus recalls seeing Polycarp as a boy and hearing him recount his intercourse with John and with others who had seen Jesus. He describes the place where Polycarp sat and the appearance and habits he remembered. The detail matters: the claim is presented as lived recollection rather than an abstract episcopal list. It offers a plausible path through which second-century teaching could preserve earlier material. The historian must still establish which John is meant in each source, whether an individual teaching is associated with that transmission, and how much of Irenaeus's boyhood recollection can be corroborated.[349]

The familiar shorthand, "John → Polycarp → Irenaeus," is a mnemonic, not a complete isnād for every Gospel sentence. We possess Irenaeus's recollection through a further literary custodian, Eusebius, writing in the fourth century. A linked memory of teachers establishes relationships of persons more readily than the exact provenance of a particular saying. This is precisely the difference our Sayings Volume makes between the existence of a tradition, its literary mediation and the utterance attributed to Jesus. We cannot make that personal chain certify every sentence of John's long Farewell Discourses as a first-century transcript.[350]

Nor was Irenaeus a simple partisan of imposing identical practice everywhere. Eusebius preserves his intervention in the disagreement over when to observe Pascha. Although Irenaeus favored observance on the Sunday, he admonished Victor of Rome against cutting off the churches of Asia for following an inherited calendar practice. He argued that earlier differences in fasting and observance had coexisted with peace between churches. The same writer who defended doctrinal boundaries could therefore distinguish a contested custom from a belief he considered essential. His own practice of drawing boundaries was selective, disputed and embedded in negotiations among communities.[351]

Al-Shāfiʿī: making transmitted instruction binding

Al-Shāfiʿī's Risāla emerges from a different institutional world, yet asks a recognizably related question. How should a jurist decide when the Qur'an states a command in general

[348] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.4.2, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103304.htm; see also 4.26.2 for succession and a "gift of truth," https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103426.htm.

[349] Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.20.4–7, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.3.4. Eusebius preserves the Florinus fragment as a later collector.

[350] Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.20; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.1.1. The "John → Polycarp → Irenaeus" schema is analytic shorthand, not an attested isnād for John 16.

[351] Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.23–24, especially 5.24.9–14, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm. The controversy concerned Paschal observance and communion across churches.

terms, when a Prophetic practice specifies its application, and when a report concerning the Prophet has survived through particular transmitters? The book presents methods of scriptural interpretation and argument concerning reliable testimony. Al-Shāfiʿī places the Prophet's Sunnah within the structure of authoritative guidance and supplies reasons for taking properly transmitted reports seriously in legal judgment. Joseph E. Lowry's bilingual translation and monograph provide the modern basis for this comparison; the full translation has not been line-by-line re-collated for the present chapter.[352]

A familiar description makes al-Shāfiʿī the founder of the four sources of law: Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus and analogy. Lowry's reading of the Risāla warns against importing the complete architecture of later uṣūl al-fiqh into its earliest surviving text. He finds an encompassing account of bayān, in which Qur'an and Sunnah interact through defined forms of explanation, and treats consensus, inference and legal knowledge within that structure. The book's concern with reported instruction should therefore be read through its own argument rather than as a retrospective textbook diagram.[353]

The treatment of a single trustworthy report is the point of closest contact with our project. A report communicated through a narrow line can carry legal force once its transmitter and content satisfy the argument's conditions. Yet legal probativity and historical certainty are separate propositions. One may judge that a legal school has sufficient reason to act on a report while conceding that an isolated chain offers less evidence about a verbatim utterance than several demonstrably independent lines. The sayings catalogue's historical H-grade asks a different question from whether a school obliges a believer to obey a transmitted instruction. Canon, legal obligation and historical authenticity answer different questions. Treating them as synonyms would undo the comparison.[354]

Wael Hallaq has challenged the popular portrait of al-Shāfiʿī as the solitary master architect of Islamic jurisprudence. Ahmed El Shamsy instead reconstructs a longer social process through which al-Shāfiʿī's arguments were read, defended and institutionalized by later scholars. These accounts differ in emphasis but together counsel care about the founding-figure legend. The Risāla is an early preserved intervention into a living juristic dispute. The authority ultimately enjoyed by a school, its books and its procedures formed through later teachers and communities. Al-Shāfiʿī did not personally compile the later Ṣaḥīḥ collections or establish a universal board that could close Islamic law for everyone.[355]

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[352] Al-Shāfiʿī, The Epistle on Legal Theory, ed. and trans. Joseph E. Lowry (NYU Press, 2013), publication entry https://nyupress.org/9780814769980/the-epistle-on-legal-theory/; Lowry, Early Islamic Legal Theory (Brill, 2007). Firsthand line-level inspection of Lowry's bilingual edition is pending.

[353] Lowry, Early Islamic Legal Theory (2007), chapters 1, 3, 5, 7 and conclusion, https://brill.com/display/book/9789047423898/Bej.9789004163607.i-443_002.pdf (publisher contents and introduction record).

[354] Lowry, Early Islamic Legal Theory (2007), chs. 3 and 5; al-Shāfiʿī, Risāla, in Lowry's 2013 edition. Compare Finding Injil: Critical Sayings, vol. 1, §I, for the limited historical sense of the H field. Legal-normative inference here is analytic and not a line-level quotation.

[355] Wael B. Hallaq, "Was al-Shāfiʿī the Master Architect of Islamic Jurisprudence?," International Journal of Middle East Studies 25.4 (1993):587–605, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800059274 (extract/publisher record

What the comparison reveals

The strongest resemblance is the problem of public verification. Irenaeus asks a claimant to point to an apostolic community and a public body of teaching. Al-Shāfiʿī asks what makes reported Prophetic instruction legitimate evidence in a legal argument. In each case, authority becomes mediated through named sources, acceptable modes of transmission and disciplined interpretation. Earlier words enter a later contest in which their custodians must explain why the community should be bound by them. The result is a framework through which new disputes can be judged without returning to the founder in person.[356]

The mechanisms remain distinct. Irenaeus's office, appeal to episcopal succession and appeal to the rule of faith have no precise counterpart in al-Shāfiʿī's jurisprudential role. Al-Shāfiʿī's handling of khabar, textual specification, consensus and analogy goes well beyond Irenaeus's defense of an episcopal preaching tradition. Irenaeus does not grade every Jesus saying by an isnād methodology. Al-Shāfiʿī does not defend a bounded list of four narrative Gospels. Their conceptual resemblance lies in regulating the interpretation of inherited testimony, while their solutions evolved within different histories of books, institutions and law.

The analogy becomes more valuable when it resists giving either figure exclusive credit for a mature tradition. The existence of four favored Gospels precedes the surviving fourfold argument. Prophetic reports and juristic methods circulated long before the Risāla. Looking backward, it is tempting to find one founder who settled everything the later schools took for granted. Following both men as participants in a developing conversation gives their interventions more historical significance: one can observe the moment an inherited practice becomes a defended rule.[357]

Whose memory survives the boundary?

For Finding Injil, the exclusion problem is practical. In Against Heresies 1.26.2, Irenaeus says the people he calls Ebionites used Matthew and rejected Paul as an apostate from the Law. He also attributes circumcision and Torah-observance to them. This testimony matters because it preserves a second-century report of a Christian identity centered on Israel's scripture that resisted Pauline authority. We have Irenaeus's classification of these people, rather than a securely identified first-century document authored by James. The same text witnesses a real dispute and may distort its opponents through a polemical label.

read); El Shamsy, Canonization of Islamic Law (2013), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139649711 (publisher description read).

[356] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.2–4; al-Shāfiʿī, Risāla, as analyzed by Lowry (2007) and El Shamsy (2013). The method comparison is this chapter's reconstruction.

[357] Hannah (2008), abstract; Hill (2026), abstract; Hallaq (1993), extract; El Shamsy (2013), book description. Evidence for inherited practice precedes the two theorists in different ways.

His notice should be compared with each later Ebionite report and each surviving Jewish-Christian Gospel fragment, without amalgamating them into one lost community.[358]

The Gospel of Thomas, Jewish-Christian Gospel fragments, Marcion's Gospel, and writings circulating in other Jesus movements have different manuscript histories. Some could preserve early sayings; others show later composition or adaptation; a single writing may contain material of uneven ages. Their absence from Irenaeus's authorized fourfold collection is a fact about reception, with only indirect bearing on the date of a particular tradition. Conversely, inclusion in that collection guarantees neither eyewitness access nor the historical exactness of a Greek speech. A canon can organize a community's reading. It still leaves us with historical work to do at every individual textual unit.

Our companion Sayings Volume now offers the necessary operational test. FI-001 provisionally assigns H-B to Jesus's teaching nucleus concerning the Shema and love of neighbor; FI-002 separates a probable Torah-affirming nucleus from Matthew's contested four-verse formulation; FI-003 assigns secure T3 literary attestation to John's Paraclete discourse while keeping its exact historical speech at H-D. The fourth entry, FI-006, asks whether the oath prohibition in Matthew and James rests on independent reporting or on a shared tradition. Irenaeus could treat all four canonical passages as ecclesiastical Scripture. That decision addresses their standing in his theological system; it leaves the distinct historical questions intact.[359]

The Qur'anic test and the value of Irenaeus

A Qur'an-centered reader encounters Irenaeus at an instructive intersection. His insistence that the God of Jesus is the maker of heaven and earth opposes Marcion's separation of the creator from the redeemer. That commitment has marked resonance with Qur'anic insistence on the continuity of God's revelation to Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (Q 3:3–4; 5:46–48; 42:13). The same rule of faith contains doctrines concerning Christ that the Qur'an disputes (Q 4:171; 5:72–75; 112:1–4). My theological disagreement cannot dispose of his testimony about second-century books. Nor can his defense of the creator certify every component of his Christology as something Jesus originally said.

His historical value is strongest when the question is properly dated. What texts did an influential bishop recognize around the 180s? How did he describe apostolic succession, and how did he classify dissenters? How did he argue that books and inherited confessions authorized one another? The surviving works answer those questions with unusual richness. If the question becomes what Jesus himself said in Palestine more than a century earlier, the evidence must pass through literary dependence, earlier witnesses, setting, redaction and variation. The title "Imam al-Shāfiʿī of Christianity" names the architecture of

[358] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.26.2, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103126.htm. Compare this master manuscript, chapters 18, 22 and 24, for the difference between heresiological labels, surviving Jewish-Christian Gospel fragments and arguments about Paul.

[359] Finding Injil: Critical Sayings, Vol. I, pilot edition v1.3 (22 October 2026), FI-001, FI-002, FI-003 and FI-006. The FI catalogue's historical grades do not function as Christian canonical judgments.

authority Irenaeus defended. His most useful contribution to this book is to make that architecture visible and historically testable.

Source status and outstanding checks

Primary Christian texts read here in public English translation: Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.10, 1.26, 3.1–4, 3.11, 4.26; and Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5.20 and 5.24. These establish the language and argumentative structure of the claims attributed to Irenaeus. The complete surviving Greek fragments and early Latin translation of Against Heresies have not been independently collated. The Greek identity of John in the Polycarp line and the historical construction of early Roman episcopal office remain open source-critical questions.[360]

Secondary scholarship consulted at available publication level: Darrell D. Hannah (2008), Charles E. Hill (2026), Joseph E. Lowry (2007; 2013 edition description), Wael B. Hallaq (1993), Ahmed El Shamsy (2013), and Eamon Duffy (2024). The Hannah and Hill reconstructions, Hallaq's criticism and Duffy's article were read from abstracts, previews or publisher records rather than complete journal articles. The chapter does not claim a manuscript-by-manuscript Gospel collation, a direct Arabic edition check of the Risāla, or a full reconstruction of Ebionite libraries. Before a final edition, compare critical editions of Against Heresies and the Risāla and audit the early fourfold-Gospel arguments against their complete publications.[361]

[360] Against Heresies survives chiefly in an ancient Latin version alongside Greek fragments and other versions; the English extracts cited here are the Ante-Nicene Fathers translation hosted by New Advent. The precise testimony and transmission routes require critical language editions.

[361] Source-access register for chapter 27A: primary texts in public English translations; secondary monographs and articles from verified publication descriptions and abstracts where noted. No original-language collation represented as completed.

PART VII · PASSION, RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

28. The Resurrection, the Empty Tomb and the Earliest Witnesses

An account of Jesus's fate has to identify what each source claims its witnesses encountered. An appearance, a vacant burial place, a vision of heavenly exaltation, and a proclamation of resurrection are related pieces of evidence with different content. We have to show how they fit together. The later Qur'anic discussion can then address an actual historical dossier rather than an undifferentiated Christian claim.

The tradition Paul says he received

First Corinthians 15 presents Paul as transmitting a received proclamation of death, burial, resurrection, and appearances. Its sequence includes Cephas, the Twelve, James, and Paul himself. That is an early literary witness to the proclamation and to Paul's representation of its witnesses. It does not provide separate surviving statements from every person named. A large number of people in Paul's report does not give us the same number of surviving reports. We still have the one letter. [362]

The appearance to James is important for the family inquiry. Paul names it without narrating a commissioning speech. Later traditions can connect an appearance with recognition and leadership, but those details require their own assessment. If I make the appearance an automatic designation, I hide my own inference. If I discard it because a later account is elaborate, I lose an early point of comparison.

Paul's language about a spiritual body also belongs to an argument about transformed life. Reading "spiritual" as a simple denial of embodiment misses the form of his contrast. The conceptual relation between present and transformed existence must be examined within the chapter's argument, including its distinction between mortality and the life to come. [363]

Mark's ending and what it already affirms

The resurrection announcement appears in Mark 16:6, before the disputed longer ending. A manuscript ending at 16:8 therefore still contains an explicit proclamation that Jesus has been raised. What changes is the presence of narrated appearances and subsequent instructions. The historical problem is the development of the ending and the relationship

[362] 1 Corinthians 15:1–11, https://ebible.org/eng-web/1CO15.htm. Distinguish the antiquity of Paul's letter, his claim to receive a tradition, and independent authentication of each named appearance.

[363] 1 Corinthians 15:35–54. This discussion concerns Paul's expressed model; it does not establish the metaphysical truth of the transformation he describes.

between announcement and encounter. A claim that the shorter ending has no resurrection would misdescribe the surviving words. [364]

The women's fear and silence also need to be read as narrative features. They can produce a question about how a message becomes known, but a literary tension is not an independently documented failure of all historical transmission. Different explanations of Mark's ending should be evaluated through the manuscript evidence and the Gospel's wider use of fear, recognition, and misunderstanding.

The addition or circulation of other endings matters for our method because the most confident later wording may have the least claim to belong to the earliest recoverable form. A later tradition can still tell us something, provided we ask it the right question. A second-stage account can reveal what a community believed needed to be told when a shorter narrative left its hearers unsettled.

The encounters acquire scenes

Luke 24 combines an opened understanding of scripture with encounters that emphasize recognition and bodily presence. John 20 gives Mary Magdalene a personal recognition scene and later gives Thomas a direct encounter with Jesus. Their accounts deserve individual reading before a combined itinerary is constructed. The differences in speakers, places, and actions should remain visible in a critical dossier. [365]

Mary Magdalene's place is especially important because reconstructions centered on dynastic succession can allow family leadership to dominate the witness record. The narratives also assign recognition and testimony to people outside the line of kinship. A historical account has to explain both. Subsequent office and the experience claimed in a narrative are related dimensions of authority, with neither simply reducing to the other.

Matthew adds guards and a dispute about the explanation of the empty tomb. That narrative witnesses an apologetic contest over competing accounts. It also requires careful attention to the groups to whom responsibility is attributed. An ancient polemic concerning particular leaders cannot justify collective blame against Jews in another period. The historian's task includes examining how a story's distribution of guilt served its author. [366]

Vindication, martyrdom, and the different kinds of return

The Qur'an's description of those killed in God's path as living with their Lord offers a comparison for the relation between death and divine vindication. It does not by itself determine what happened to Jesus. The later verses concerning Jesus have to be

[364] Mark 16:1–8 and the longer ending 16:9–20, https://ebible.org/eng-web/MRK16.htm. The primary narrative was consulted; the website's editorial defense of the longer ending is not adopted as a settled scholarly judgment.

[365] Luke 24, https://ebible.org/eng-web/LUK24.htm; John 20, https://ebible.org/eng-web/JHN20.htm. The comparison concerns each evangelist's narrative claims, not an assumed harmonized sequence.

[366] Matthew 27:62–66 and 28:1–15. This source documents Matthew's presentation of the controversy and does not independently authenticate every element of the guard narrative.

interpreted in their own wording. The analogy is useful because it shows that a scriptural account can deny an enemy's ultimate success while acknowledging a person's death. [367]

Shiʿi vocabulary requires equal precision. Resurrection after death, the occultation of a living Imam, and the return associated with rajʿah are different claims. Al-Ṣadūq's creed affirms resurrection after death; al-Muẓaffar's account of Imami belief separately describes a return of selected people in connection with the final restoration. Neither exposition should be used to turn every early Christian appearance into one of those later Islamic categories. [368]

The comparison helps expose an otherwise hidden choice in modern retellings. A writer can treat all extraordinary post-departure encounters as evidence of one metaphysical event. Before combining them, we need to ask each witness: what happened, and how do you claim to know? That question remains useful whether the investigator accepts miracles or brackets them while comparing the documents.

The next historical judgment

The earliest proclamation is a serious datum. Its explanation requires a model of what Jesus's followers believed they had experienced and how their accounts were transmitted. Later elaboration does not erase that datum, while an early belief does not independently verify every subsequent narrative. The next stage of the apparatus should put the appearance to James, the women's testimony, the empty tomb, and the disputed endings in separate records. Then we can examine their relations without giving a composite story more authority than its sources warrant.

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[367] Qur'an 3:169–171; compare 4:157–158. The martyrdom comparison is a conceptual aid, not a substitute for interpreting the explicit denial in 4:157.

[368] Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, A Shiite Creed, "Concerning the Return (Baʿth) After Death," https://al-islam.org/shiite-creed-shaykh-saduq/concerning-return-bath-after-death; Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, The Faith of the Imamiyyah Shiʿah, Part 3, section on rajʿah, https://al-islam.org/it/faith-imamiyyah-shiah-muhammad-ridha-al-muzaffar/part-3-imamate.

29. The Gospel of Peter and the Other Passion Narratives

The surviving Passion fragment conventionally called the Gospel of Peter supplies an unusually vivid account of what happens around the tomb. If we want to recruit an alternative Gospel for our preferred theology, this one gives us good reason to read the work first. Some details overlap with the canonical narratives; others develop the story in striking directions. Its claim to Petrine authority is itself part of the evidence to assess.

A witness preserved through a fragment

The Akhmim fragment is the main surviving text used in modern discussions of the Gospel of Peter. Questions about its relationship to other proposed fragments and to the work known by ancient writers require a manuscript catalogue. The title alone cannot guarantee that every item assigned to the work belonged to one stable composition. The NASSCAL entry provides a starting inventory for that inquiry. [369]

The narrative describes an extraordinary emergence from the tomb, with towering figures and a cross that answers a heavenly question. This gives the resurrection a publicly witnessed cosmic spectacle. The scene differs considerably from Mark's announcement at an emptied tomb. The difference should be described before theories of priority are proposed. Spectacular detail may be an expansion. Its spectacle will not tell us when it was written. [370]

Its portrayal of Jesus's suffering also invites scrutiny. Expressions about silence and the departure of power have been used in arguments concerning its Christology. Whether the text treats the body's suffering as real, apparent, or subordinate to the Savior's heavenly identity requires attention to the exact phrases. A single label such as docetic can conceal several different accounts of embodiment.

An ancient reader changes his judgment

Eusebius preserves Serapion's account of encountering a Gospel bearing Peter's name. Serapion initially tolerated its use, then reconsidered after examining its connection with teachings he opposed. The passage witnesses an evaluation of a book's authority through

[369] Mark G. Bilby, "Gospel of Peter," e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha, https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/gospel-of-peter/. Catalogue description consulted; no new facsimile collation of the Akhmim manuscript or proposed Oxyrhynchus fragments was undertaken.

[370] Gospel of Peter 35–42, translation by Mark M. Mattison at https://www.gospels.net/peter. The passage was read directly; the interpretation of its relation to canonical narratives remains disputed.

its contents and associations. It also shows that a prestigious apostolic name did not end the inquiry for this Christian reader. [371]

That episode is pertinent to the hadith analogy. A report can possess an impressive attribution while remaining subject to scrutiny of its wording and transmission. Serapion's decision is evidence for an ancient process of reception. His doctrinal criterion is also part of the process and must be identified. We cannot take his acceptance or rejection and enter it as the historical grade of every passage.

The Shiʿi comparison developed in the source chapter applies here. Reports directing believers to test teachings against scripture explain a normative procedure within a tradition. They do not eliminate the possibility that a sincere critic rejects an early text because its theology differs from the critic's own. Recovering history requires the evaluator to make those different judgments visible.

Who bears responsibility?

The Gospel of Peter gives particular prominence to the culpability of Jewish authorities and contains an apologetic distribution of responsibility involving Pilate. The historical inquiry should ask how those choices relate to the work's audience and circumstances. A later author's effort to explain guilt is an event in the history of Christian storytelling, even when the precise setting of that effort remains disputed. [372]

Getting this source criticism right has moral consequences. An account of a Roman execution can be retold in ways that make other people bear increasing responsibility. I have to expose that narrative tendency without repeating its accusation as a collective verdict. The same method belongs in our examination of Muslim reports about the Prophet's family: identifying a perpetrator, a faction, or a later polemical target requires evidence at the appropriate scale.

Pilate and Nicodemus acquire further stories

The Acts of Pilate, in its later Latin forms often associated with the title Gospel of Nicodemus, expands the trial and its aftermath. The NASSCAL catalogue describes a diverse manuscript tradition and an attached descent-to-the-underworld narrative in parts of that tradition. Its account includes witnesses whose matching testimony authorizes the extraordinary story they report. These features are important evidence for the literary construction of credibility. [373]

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[371] Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 6.12, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250106.htm. The report concerns Serapion's response to a work called the Gospel of Peter; identifying all of its contents with the surviving Akhmim fragment requires further argument.

[372] Gospel of Peter 1–12 and 45–49, https://www.gospels.net/peter. This assessment concerns the narrative's allocation of responsibility and does not generalize its accusations to an ethnic or religious population.

[373] Stephen C. E. Hopkins, "Acts of Pilate/Gospel of Nicodemus," e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha, https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/acts-of-pilate-gospel-of-nicodemus/. Catalogue summary consulted; the full multilingual manuscript tradition was not collated.

A narrative can imitate the structure of an investigation. It can name officials, describe separate examinations, and report agreement between witnesses. We can see how the writer wants to be believed. We still need independent evidence that anyone conducted the examination. This is a useful distinction for a project interested in isnād: the presence of a chain or investigative scene within a story is the beginning of its assessment.

The late Gospel of Barnabas belongs farther along this reception history. Its Judas-substitution narrative is already examined in the Qur'anic death chapter. Keeping it separate from the Gospel of Peter prevents the word "apocryphal" from turning texts of very different dates into one alternative apostolic archive.

Martyrdom and the household comparison

The remembrance of a wronged holy person can shape a community's account of power long after the event. For a Shiʿi reader, Karbalāʾ makes that process familiar. The comparison can illuminate the moral questions a Passion narrative asks: who remained faithful, how authority behaved toward the innocent, and what obligations remembrance places upon later adherents. It does not establish that Christian and Shiʿi accounts give death the same metaphysical function.

A sacrificial theory in which one death changes the terms of forgiveness differs from a witness theory in which a death exposes injustice and calls hearers to fidelity. Each tradition contains further distinctions. The comparison should therefore focus on a named text and the work its narrative performs. The ethical force of martyrdom cannot excuse invention about an enemy, and devotion to a victim does not automatically vindicate everything later done in the victim's name.

For the sayings catalogue, these Passion works will primarily supply evidence about narrative development and reception. Individual reported words of Jesus can still be evaluated separately. We have to judge their wording, witnesses, and literary relationships. The surrounding scene should not win the authenticity argument by being dramatic.

30. Revelation, the Lamb and the Judgment of the World

Revelation begins by describing how its message arrives. God gives a revelation to Jesus Christ, who communicates it through an angel to John for the servants who will receive it. The opening gives us a declared sequence of authority. That is the sequence I want to examine: how does divine speech reach a human community through agents who depend upon God?[374]

Its literary form changes the question of authenticity. John presents visions and messages from the exalted Messiah. He is not narrating an ordinary conversation remembered from Jesus's ministry. A saying attributed to the risen figure in Revelation therefore requires a different evidential account from a saying placed in Galilee by a Gospel author. The book is testimony to claimed revelation and to the community addressed by that claim.

It also brings several of this project's questions into the same field. The Lamb receives extraordinary heavenly honor while continuing to speak of his God. Churches are judged by what they do. Disputes over idol food expose boundaries within early Christianity, and imperial power is accused through the effects of its wealth. The force of those themes makes Revelation indispensable to the inquiry even where its theology creates difficulties.

A John whose identity requires investigation

The author calls himself John and addresses named assemblies in Roman Asia. He places himself on Patmos, associated with affliction and testimony. These are the biographical claims of the text. They do not identify him automatically with the son of Zebedee, the Beloved Disciple or the writer responsible for the final form of the Fourth Gospel.[375]

The distinction is already present in ancient scholarship. Dionysius of Alexandria, whose discussion Eusebius preserves, questioned common authorship of Revelation and the Gospel on the basis of their language and style. He could respect Revelation's religious authority while doubting the familiar identification of its writer. His discussion shows that critical comparison of the Johannine books belongs within the history of Christianity itself.[376]

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[374] Revelation 1:1–3, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV01.htm. The narrative chain is a claim of mediated revelation within the book. It is not an independently verified human isnād to a saying from Jesus's earthly ministry.

[375] Revelation 1:4, 9–11. The name John, Patmos setting and named Asian assemblies are textual claims. Further identification of the author requires external evidence and comparison of the Johannine writings.

[376] Eusebius, Church History 7.25, preserving Dionysius of Alexandria's discussion, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm. The translated section was consulted. Dionysius distinguishes authors on linguistic and literary grounds while maintaining respect for Revelation; hostile attribution to Cerinthus is reported in the discussion rather than adopted as his own conclusion.

Before explaining a theological difference between Revelation and John as one author changing his mind, we need to establish that we have one author. Nor can every similarity establish identity. Word and witness language circulate through more than one Christian setting. We need to compare their use before reconstructing the relationship of the texts.

Dating presents another problem. Irenaeus associates the vision with the end of Domitian's reign, although the wording and its implication have been debated. The book's Roman imagery and its letters to actual assemblies give it an ancient political setting that should remain central to interpretation. This chapter does not depend on selecting one precise year of composition.[377]

Daniel's beasts in a Roman world

Revelation's imagery is built through Israel's scriptures. Its humanlike heavenly figure and composite beast invite comparison with Daniel 7. Exodus supplies plagues and deliverance, while prophetic visions of restored Jerusalem contribute to the ending. Recognizing these inherited patterns helps explain how the author interprets the empire around him.[378]

The beast's authority is repeatedly described as received. That feature belongs to the vision's account of evil under a higher sovereignty. It also creates a distorted counterpart to the legitimate authority given to the Messiah. Power can be transmitted within the narrative while the moral character of its exercise remains decisive.

The number attached to the beast requires historical discipline. A prominent interpretation connects 666 with a Hebrew-letter rendering of Nero Caesar; a shorter form can account for 616. Irenaeus already knew the numerical variation, although he preferred 666 and offered other possibilities for the name. His testimony establishes an early textual dispute, not his endorsement of the modern Nero calculation.[379]

A cipher that acquires a new answer every time we acquire a new enemy is explaining very little. The first responsibility is to ask what the cipher and imperial imagery could have meant to the original audience. Subsequent moral applications must be identified as applications. They cannot be passed off as a recovery of the author's numerical intention.

Is Revelation attacking Paul?

The church at Ephesus is praised for testing people who claim to be apostles and finding them false. Given Paul's association with Ephesus and his contested authority, the passage

[377] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.30.3, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103530.htm. The traditional late-Domitian dating derives in part from this testimony. The referent of the statement about being seen and its historical force remain debated; the chapter does not treat it as a manuscript colophon.

[378] Daniel 7; Revelation 1:12–18 and 13:1–7; compare Exodus 7–12 and Revelation 8–9, 16. The imagery supports a comparison of scriptural reuse, independently of assigning one author to different Johannine books.

[379] Revelation 13:18; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.30.1–3. The NABRE translators' note at https://bible.usccb.org/bible/revelation/13 explains the Nero calculation and 616 alternative. The textual variant is ancient; Irenaeus's own preferred name proposals differ from the modern explanatory use of Nero.

naturally attracts an anti-Pauline interpretation. It is an important hypothesis for a project examining how the Jerusalem tradition survived alongside Paul's mission.[380]

The surviving wording does not name Paul. It speaks of claimants in the plural and tells us little about their teaching. Identifying them with Paul or his followers requires an argument using evidence outside that sentence. Geography gives us possible contact. We still need to identify the unnamed adversary.

Another frequently invoked passage is 2 Timothy 1:15, where the speaker says that people in Asia have turned away from him. The Pauline chapter has already distinguished the Pastorals from the seven letters most widely accepted as Paul's own. That distinction must remain in force here. Combining Revelation 2:2 with 2 Timothy 1:15 does not produce two secure contemporary reports that the Asian churches exposed the historical Paul as a false apostle.[381]

There is also a contextual complication in Revelation itself. Ephesus receives criticism for abandoning its first love. Its detection of false claimants is one feature of a larger moral assessment. The book is not presenting an unqualified endorsement of everything the congregation has done.

Paul Trebilco's study situates Revelation among different forms of Christianity in Asia Minor, with disputes over accommodation and authority. That model offers a more historically flexible starting point than assuming a single contest between John and Paul. An argument about a specific opponent needs to explain the particular teaching criticized and how that teaching reached the church.[382]

Idol food provides the stronger comparison

The warnings to Pergamum and Thyatira identify the teaching at issue more concretely. Practices associated with Balaam and the figure called Jezebel lead believers toward idol food and sexual immorality. These names interpret present opponents through scriptural villains. The labels cannot be treated as straightforward biographical information about the teachers.[383]

Here the comparison with Paul has real substance. First Corinthians 8–10 permits certain eating under conditions Paul carefully distinguishes, while prohibiting participation in a demonic cultic table. Food purchased in a market and food knowingly marked as sacrificial

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[380] Revelation 2:1–7, especially 2:2 and 2:4, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV02.htm. Paul is not named among the rejected claimants. The geographic and polemical comparison is a hypothesis for testing.

[381] 2 Timothy 1:15; compare the separate authorship discussion of the Pastorals in chapter 26. The claim of Asian abandonment cannot be treated as an uncontested contemporary statement by the historical Paul and then used to authenticate an identification of Revelation's unnamed opponents.

[382] Paul Trebilco, 'John's Apocalypse in Relation to Johannine, Pauline, and Other Forms of Christianity in Asia Minor,' in The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation, ed. Craig R. Koester (2020), 184–201, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190655433.013.11. Abstract and publication information consulted; the detailed chapter was not available in full for this revision.

[383] Revelation 2:12–29, particularly 2:14 and 2:20. Compare Numbers 25 and 31:16 for the Balaam framework. The adversarial labels are distinguished from independently established identities or biographies.

receive different treatment. Revelation's denunciations sound far less accommodating toward the disputed conduct.[384]

The exact extent of disagreement depends on the setting of the meals. A cult banquet would fall under Paul's own prohibition in 1 Corinthians 10:20–21. Market food or private hospitality could expose a more substantial difference in policy. Revelation's compressed polemic does not give us enough detail to identify every meal being condemned.

The possible conflict with a Pauline reception is therefore easier to defend than the claim that Paul is personally named and rejected. A community may broaden a teacher's permission, or a rival may classify the permission more severely than the teacher does. Those possibilities belong in the history of the dispute.

Acts 15 and the Didache provide further comparisons through their restrictions on idol food. Qur'an 5:3 brings a related prohibition concerning dedication to another than God. The sources belong to different historical settings. Their convergence makes food a serious religious boundary in the reconstruction of Christian law; it does not by itself establish a single continuous line of legislation.[385]

Rival religious claims and the limits of polemic

Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 employ the severe expression commonly translated as synagogue of Satan for people whose claimed identity the author contests. The language belongs to a particular ancient conflict. The identity and social location of the targeted groups remain subjects of scholarly disagreement. David Frankfurter's investigation is one important starting point for that question.[386]

The passage cannot be converted into a description of Jewish people in general. John draws constantly upon Israel's scriptures and assigns Israel's names to the restored city. A responsible reading must explain the polemic within that world, including the destructive possibilities of such rhetoric when later readers detach it from its setting.

This is also a methodological test for Finding Injil. When a religious author describes an opponent, we first learn what he wants us to believe about that person. Establishing what the opponent actually taught or did requires additional evidence. The same rule must govern Christian heresiologists describing Ebionites and Muslim polemicists describing their own rivals.

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[384] 1 Corinthians 8:1–13 and 10:14–33; Revelation 2:14, 20. The comparison uses the actual distinctions in Paul's instructions, including his prohibition of cultic participation, rather than a generalized claim that he permitted idol worship.

[385] Acts 15:19–29; Didache 6.3; Qur'an 5:3. These sources provide distinct witnesses to restrictions associated with idolatrous food. Their dates, audiences and legislation should not be collapsed into one demonstrable transmission chain.

[386] Revelation 2:9; 3:9. David Frankfurter, 'Jews or Not? Reconstructing the "Other" in Rev 2:9 and 3:9,' Harvard Theological Review 94.4 (2001): 403–425, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816001038020. The abstract was consulted as evidence of the scholarly identity question, not as a basis for claiming that a particular reconstruction has been established.

The Lamb receives his commission

In Revelation 5, the Lamb takes the sealed scroll from the one seated on the throne. The scene distinguishes the source of the commission from its recipient. The Lamb's worthiness is attached to the death he has undergone and to the people acquired for God. That structure belongs beside Daniel's grant of dominion and the commissioned Beloved of the Ascension of Isaiah.[387]

The image is powerful because the slain figure stands. The vision asks the community to recognize authority in one whom the world has subjected to lethal force. A reconstruction of its meaning should include vindication and deliverance alongside sacrificial interpretations. Robyn Whitaker's study emphasizes the Lamb as the victim who becomes victorious and questions the automatic restriction of this imagery to atoning sacrifice.[388]

The text nevertheless contains explicit blood-redemption language. My preference for a political interpretation cannot make that language disappear. We need to ask what the language of purchase means in this vision, whom the people are acquired for and what account of salvation the author intends. A later theory of penal substitution contains additional claims that must be demonstrated separately.

The purchase imagery also gives a useful comparison with Qur'an 9:111, where Allah purchases the believers' lives and property. In Revelation, the Lamb's costly action forms a people for God. The parallel concerns a religious use of acquisition and costly fidelity. It does not establish identical doctrines of sacrifice or authorize the same conduct in every setting.[389]

Heavenly honor and the tawḥīd question

The liturgy of chapter 5 addresses both the enthroned one and the Lamb. This is stronger than an account in which the Messiah receives an assignment and then leaves the scene. The Lamb occupies a central place within heavenly honor. If I want a strict monotheistic reading, I have to account for that placement too. I cannot stop reading at the commission.

Elsewhere, the exalted Jesus speaks repeatedly of his God. Revelation 3:12 is particularly clear. At 3:21, the Messiah offers the faithful a share in his throne in correspondence with his own participation in the Father's throne. Sharing royal authority can therefore extend to created servants in the book's conceptual world.[390]

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[387] Revelation 5:1–14, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV05.htm; Daniel 7:13–14; Ascension of Isaiah 9–11. The comparison concerns the recipient of heavenly authority and the distinct source of the commission.

[388] Robyn Whitaker, 'Victim to Victor: The Appeal of Apocalyptic Hope,' Religions 11.9 (2020): 455, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11090455. Open-access article text consulted. Her emphasis on the Lamb as slaughtered victim and on liberation is used as one interpretation; Revelation's blood-redemption language is retained independently of accepting every element of her reading.

[389] Revelation 5:9–10; Qur'an 9:111–112. This is the book's conceptual comparison of purchase, belonging to God and costly fidelity. No direct literary dependency or identical doctrine of atonement is asserted.

[390] Revelation 3:12, 21, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV03.htm; compare 1:13–18 and 5:13. Received authority and shared acclamation are both features of the text. The tawḥīdi interpretation must account for both.

A non-ghulāt comparison can begin there. A bearer of divine guidance receives authority and enables others to participate in a kingdom. The giver remains the ultimate source. That framework can explain substantial material without requiring every elevated predicate to denote independent deity.

The difficult question is whether that accounts for everything the author means. Revelation associates Jesus with titles and imagery of extraordinary divine significance. The opening vision gives the humanlike figure features drawn from Daniel's heavenly scenes, and the first-and-last designation demands examination. A statement that the Messiah has a God establishes dependence; it does not by itself settle every question about the author's account of his nature.

The angel who refuses worship

Twice John attempts to prostrate before the revealing angel and is redirected toward God. The angel identifies himself as a fellow servant. These scenes provide an explicit internal limit upon reverence for a mediator. The text recognizes the possibility that a recipient of revelation may misunderstand the status of its bearer.[391]

That is a close conceptual comparison with the Metatron material considered earlier. A glorious agent can be encountered without becoming an independent object of divine worship. The parallel illuminates a religious problem. It does not establish that Revelation used the later literary form of 3 Enoch.

The distinction within Revelation also sharpens the question of the Lamb. The author refuses angel worship while placing the Lamb within a shared heavenly acclamation. Calling both figures agents leaves this contrast unexplained. A tawḥīdi interpretation remains possible as a proposed understanding of delegated honor, but the different treatment of the figures is part of the evidence it must explain.

Judgment according to deeds

The messages to the assemblies repeatedly evaluate their works. Chapter 20 culminates in a judgment in which the records are opened and the dead are assessed according to conduct. The final promise at 22:12 again associates reward with what each person has done. These passages belong centrally in the book's comparison of salvation accounts.[392]

They prevent us from describing Revelation as though allegiance to a theological proposition made subsequent conduct irrelevant. The community's testimony has practical consequences, and its failures are judged. At the same time, the Lamb's blood and the book of life remain central. The author has placed moral accountability inside a specifically messianic account of deliverance.

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[391] Revelation 19:10 and 22:8–9, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV19.htm and https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV22.htm. Compare the later Metatron discussion in chapter 8 and the divine-agency analysis in chapter 6; similarity is not evidence that the surviving 3 Enoch was a source for Revelation.

[392] Revelation 2–3; 20:11–15; 22:12. Compare 19:8, where the bride's clothing is related to righteous conduct. Works are a sustained theme; the book also retains messianic redemption and the book of life.

This leaves a genuine comparative question for a Qur'an-centered reading. Moral accountability can be affirmed while the exclusivity and sacrificial framework receive separate evaluation. I cannot certify the whole theology because I like one phrase. Equally, my disputes with other parts of it should not stop me hearing its insistence on deeds.

Revelation 14:6–7 gives the comparison another point of contact. Its universally announced message directs people toward the Creator and the hour of judgment. The surrounding vision is firmly Christian. The summons itself provides material for studying how worship of the one Creator and accountability could be expressed within that setting.[393]

A textual variant that matters to this argument

Revelation 22:14 circulates in two important forms. One blesses those who wash their robes; another blesses those who do the commandments. The difference affects a sentence often used to make a direct legal argument from the ending. A chapter investigating textual transmission has to record both forms.[394]

The works theme does not depend upon choosing the more convenient reading. It is established elsewhere in the book. Washing language also has an internal history through the robes and the Lamb's blood. Neither form should be explained as an intentional corruption solely because it serves or frustrates a preferred doctrine.

A second variant concerns 13:10. Some forms emphasize the captivity and death the saints must endure, while others present a more reciprocal warning about taking captives or killing with a sword. The difference is directly relevant to the later chapter on armed resistance. Our argument should cite the textual form being used and distinguish it from the other surviving reading.[395]

These examples supply a practical demonstration of the book's method. We begin with a religious question, then the manuscripts can complicate the answer we wanted. Good. We can now see exactly which wording our reconstruction depends on.

The empire as a religious problem

Revelation 13 associates public allegiance with economic access. The mark governs participation in buying and selling, while the beast claims a kind of authority that draws

[393] Revelation 14:6–13, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV14.htm. The universal summons to worship the Creator is read within the surrounding messianic vision rather than detached from it as a separate recovered document.

[394] Revelation 22:14. WEB's textual note records the critical-text reading 'wash their robes' beside the commandments reading printed in its base text. This draft records the variation without claiming a direct collation of the full manuscript apparatus. https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV22.htm.

[395] Revelation 13:10. WEB's note distinguishes the Textus Receptus reciprocal formulation from the endurance-focused wording in its base text. https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV13.htm. The existence of the variant matters for the argument about swords; the final Greek apparatus remains unfinished.

people into worship. The vision presents compromised worship as something with social and material force. It reaches beyond a private intellectual error about the gods.[396]

For the project's account of shirk, this is a useful comparison. A system can demand a share in the obedience owed to God and punish those who refuse. The comparison should be made through the behavior being described. We do not need to identify a present technology or institution as the mark in order to examine the religious danger of coerced allegiance.

The beast wins against the saints. Within this vision, worldly success is plainly no guarantee of divine approval. Within the vision, the faithful can lose a confrontation while remaining faithful. The author measures that loss against a future judgment in which the power responsible must answer.

Revelation's criticism reaches those within the churches who have learned to accommodate the surrounding order. The charge of complacent wealth at Laodicea is especially clear. Religious self-confidence can coexist with a failure to perceive one's condition. This is a point of contact with Thomas's concern for blindness and James's account of deception through hearing without acting.

Babylon's merchandise

The lament over Babylon in chapter 18 describes an economy accustomed to luxury. Its cargo list eventually reaches human bodies and lives. The city's prosperity is inseparable from transactions that turn people into merchandise. The surrounding merchants mourn the loss of their market, while the vision remembers blood shed under the city's power.[397]

This passage deserves to stand beside James's unpaid wages. One text enters the field where laborers have been deprived of payment. The other surveys the commercial order whose appetite includes human beings. Together they make economic conduct a major part of Christian accountability.

The passage should not be inflated into a complete ancient abolitionist program. Its indictment of a slave-trading imperial economy is explicit enough that we cannot confine its concern to private vice. A reconstruction of Christian sharia has to account for the social injuries that these writings place before God.

The city's portrayal as a sexually corrupt woman introduces another problem. Revelation draws on prophetic imagery, but its use of feminized humiliation and violent punishment can carry damaging assumptions about women. The appeal to inherited symbolism does not exempt that rhetoric from ethical scrutiny. The description of the faithful in 14:4

[396] Revelation 13:7–18 and 3:14–22. The comparison with coercive divided allegiance is theological analysis of the narrated practices. It is not an identification of any contemporary payment mechanism, population or technology with the beast.

[397] Revelation 18:1–24, especially 18:11–13 and 18:24, https://ebible.org/eng-web/REV18.htm; compare James 5:1–6. The indictment of trade in human beings is explicit. A comprehensive abolitionist political program is not thereby established.

likewise requires care where it associates their purity with freedom from defilement with women.[398]

Testimony under violence

The faithful overcome through the Lamb's blood and their testimony, accepting the possibility of death. This is an account of resistance whose visible cost can be execution. The book supplies no ordinary instruction for the Asian congregations to assemble an army and carry out its heavenly battles. Its recurring human imperative is endurance.[399]

That gives us no reason to sanitize the visions themselves. Chapter 19 depicts lethal judgment, and the rider's sword produces actual destruction within the narrated scene. A weapon issuing from the mouth makes divine speech and judicial power central to the image. It does not make the imagined destruction harmless.

The chapter "To kill and be killed" can therefore use Revelation as a witness to costly resistance without treating it as a general warrant for human violence. The authorization, actor and setting of a commanded action remain essential. A claim that one's own campaign reproduces a heavenly judgment requires evidence the apocalypse does not supply to an arbitrary reader.

The Alid comparison becomes useful precisely at this point. A rightful cause and a religiously legitimate use of force require judgment about circumstances and the moral character of those acting. Revelation's exposure of the empire can illuminate the refusal of unjust allegiance. It cannot replace that judgment with a vision-derived exemption from responsibility.

The difficult timetable

The book repeatedly insists that the relevant events are near and that the Messiah is coming soon. Its ending tells the recipient to leave the prophecy unsealed because the time is close, in contrast with Daniel's instruction to seal a book until a later time. The original audience is being asked to understand itself as living within an urgent horizon.[400]

A historical reading has to preserve that urgency. If every expression of nearness can mean an undefined span of millennia, we have removed something the book was saying to its first hearers. Some interpretations relate much of the vision to the Roman order, while others give the scenes repeated patterns or a future completion. These are interpretive models that must explain the language they inherit.

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[398] Revelation 17–18 and 14:4. The critique of the gendered imagery is the present book's ethical evaluation. It should be kept distinct from any historical claim about the actual women in the addressed assemblies.

[399] Revelation 12:10–17; 13:10; 19:11–21. The distinction concerns the commanded response of the congregations and the actions narrated in heavenly judgment. The latter remain violent imagery and are not treated as harmless solely because they are symbolic.

[400] Revelation 1:1–3 and 22:6–20; compare Daniel 12:4. The contrast between sealing and leaving the prophecy unsealed supplies the textual basis for the chronological question. This chapter does not offer a new calendar prediction.

For Finding Injil, the timetable is part of evaluating a claimed revelation. A reader can find truthful moral insight in a text while questioning a proposed chronology. A religious defense of the book should make its understanding of the timing explicit. Simply identifying a new enemy in each generation does not answer the historical difficulty.

The second death and the nations' healing

Revelation gives the afterlife inquiry material that pulls in different directions. Death and Hades are destroyed in the lake of fire, described as the second death. Elsewhere the text uses language of unending torment for the devil, beast and false prophet. Chapter 14 extends severe imagery to human worshippers of the beast, including the denial of rest. A simple claim that the book teaches only annihilation would leave substantial language unexplained.[401]

Its ending also depicts the healing of nations and an illuminated city whose gates remain open. These images encourage reflection on the scope of restoration. The same passages maintain exclusions and the importance of the book of life. If I read these images hopefully, I still have to account for both features.

The Qur'anic question of the final reach of mercy should therefore remain a distinct inquiry. We can compare the imagery of renewed creation, judgment and deliverance without importing a conclusion that has not been established from either text. The visions describe God's response to evil through symbolic sequences whose internal relations require interpretation.

An apocalypse in the search for Injil

Revelation cannot be graded as a collection of remembered sayings from Jesus's earthly ministry. Its contribution is of another kind: a visionary author speaks under the authority of God and the exalted Messiah, addressing communities whose conduct he believes is under judgment. The claimed chain and the response it demands must be evaluated as such.

The strongest initial findings are specific. The book exhibits dependence upon Israel's apocalyptic and prophetic scriptures. Its resistance to idol food belongs in the dispute over early Christian law. Its judgment by deeds and its indictment of exploitation deserve sustained comparison with the Qur'an. The personal identification of its false apostles with Paul remains unproved.

The Lamb's status carries the inquiry back to the earlier chapters on divine agency. The Messiah receives, reveals and reigns within a vision whose ultimate throne belongs to God. The honor given him exceeds ordinary human praise and requires its own theological account. I want to hear the book's moral testimony and leave this difficulty visible. I have not reconciled all its claims.

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[401] Revelation 14:9–11; 20:10–15; 21:1–8, 24–27; 22:1–5, 14–15. These passages must be considered together before assigning Revelation a single doctrine of final punishment or universal restoration. The Qur'anic inquiry into final mercy remains separately argued.

31. The Son of Man and the Return of the Messiah

Daniel's humanlike figure approaches the Ancient of Days and receives dominion. The interpretation of the vision also speaks about the holy people. This combination of an exalted figure and a community's future is part of the background against which the Gospel Son of Man sayings must be read. The title cannot be assigned one fixed meaning before its scriptural uses are examined. [402]

Received authority and future judgment

Mark 13:26 and 14:62 connect the Son of Man with heavenly coming and authority. The Enochic material already examined gives a further Jewish setting for an exalted judge. Whether a particular Gospel saying depends directly on a particular Enoch passage is more difficult than recognizing a shared scriptural field. The dates of the Parables of Enoch and the history of individual sayings remain necessary parts of the comparison. [403]

The received character of the authority matters for this book's theology. A judge commissioned by God can possess extraordinary scope without becoming an independent source of justice. How, then, does the text describe the giver's relation to the recipient? John's language of delegated judgment supplies a separate Christian formulation of that relation. It deserves comparison without assuming that the evangelists all mean exactly the same thing by the figure's heavenly status. [404]

The problem of the timetable

The Gospel expectation also contains statements about nearness and the limits of knowledge. Mark 13:30–32 places the generation saying beside a declaration that the hour is unknown to the Son. A responsible reconstruction must address both. It should investigate whether the discourse concerns several events, whether traditions of different origins have been combined, or whether an early expectation later required reinterpretation. [405]

A community can revise its interpretation of a promise while continuing to regard the promise as authoritative. That process is historically interesting in its own right. We should not assume conscious deception every time that happens. Sincerity, however, does not settle whether the new interpretation is sound. The evidence should show when an interpretation first appears and which difficulties it attempts to explain.

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[402] Daniel 7:9–14, 18, 22 and 27, https://ebible.org/eng-web/DAN07.htm. The relation between the individual figure and the holy people is an interpretive question raised by the chapter itself.

[403] Mark 13:24–27 and 14:61–62; 1 Enoch 46, 48, 62 and 69. See the earlier Enoch chapter for composition and manuscript distinctions, especially the absence of the Parables among the surviving Qumran Enoch fragments.

[404] John 5:19–30; compare Daniel 7:13–14 and Qur'an 5:116–118. These texts distribute knowledge and authority in different literary settings.

[405] Mark 13:28–37. The alternatives are historical and exegetical models, rather than a claim that the Greek text explicitly divides the predictions into an agreed timetable.

The same discipline applies to Islamic expectations of the end. A report's confidence about a future event cannot by itself date the event or authenticate the report. A scholar comparing traditions should resist the temptation to construct a present political chronology from images whose original audiences and references remain disputed.

Jesus's descent and the unnamed leader

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 156 describes Jesus descending and declining an invitation to lead the believers' prayer, recognizing leadership within the community. The commander in that wording is unnamed. If we identify him as the Mahdī, we need to supply the sources for that further interpretation. The report supports an inquiry into coordinated authority; it does not itself provide every later identification attached to the scene. [406]

A Shiʿi reading can place Jesus's mission within an account of the Imam's restoration of justice. That theological model should be described on its own terms. It also raises a question useful to the Christian material: can distinct sacred offices cooperate without the higher rank of one figure abolishing the function of the other? The James–Peter debate and the account of Jesus with a later community's leader offer different cases for testing that question.

Al-Muẓaffar's exposition distinguishes the awaited Imam from the selected persons who return in rajʿah, and separates that return from the final resurrection. These distinctions prevent an indiscriminate use of the word "return." They also make the limits of the analogy visible. A Christian expectation concerning Jesus should first be reconstructed from its own witnesses before it is compared with a developed Imami sequence. [407]

A scholarly link between the Paraclete and the Alid Messiah

Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi's article "Muḥammad the Paraclete and ʿAlī the Messiah" proposes a relationship between early apocalyptic expectation, Christian messianic language, and the formation of Shiʿi imamology. Its published abstract argues that some followers understood ʿAlī through an identification with the returning Christ. This is a historically consequential thesis, closely related to this book's interest in theophany. It remains the scholar's reconstruction, requiring examination of the specific reports and their dating. [408]

The proposal creates a useful distinction between historical description and the theology I am constructing. A historian may recover language more exalted than later non-ghulāt

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[406] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 156, Arabic and English at https://sunnah.com/muslim:156. Compare Muslim 155a for a different cluster of descent motifs. The proper name or title al-Mahdī is absent from the cited wording of report 156.

[407] Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, The Faith of the Imamiyyah Shiʿah, Part 3, sections "Al-Mahdi" and "The Return (Rajʿah)," https://al-islam.org/faith-imamiyyah-shiah-muhammad-ridha-al-muzaffar/part-3-imamate. The work is consulted as a theological exposition, not an independently verified chronology of future events.

[408] Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Muḥammad the Paraclete and ʿAlī the Messiah: New Remarks on the Origins of Islam and of Shiʿite Imamology," Der Islam 95.1 (2018): 30–64, https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2018-0002. Publisher abstract consulted; this draft does not claim full examination of the article's report apparatus.

authorities considered acceptable. I cannot make such language disappear from early communities to protect my preferred tawḥīdi interpretation. Nor does recovering an early attribution oblige me to accept its ontology. The same separation governs the reading of John and the Enochic figures.

It also complicates a simple borrowing story. Similar messianic language can arise through shared scriptures, later interpretation, or actual contact. Establishing which route operated requires evidence beyond the similarity itself. The article belongs near the top of the next specialist reading list because it makes a definite historical proposal that can be tested, rather than leaving the Jesus–ʿAlī comparison at the level of an evocative resemblance.

The Qur’anic limit

Qur’an 43:61 and 4:159 have become major sites for interpretation of Jesus’s eschatological role. The reading and pronoun problems examined later in the book remain relevant here. Neither the expectation of a return nor a particular interpretation of these verses should be inserted silently into the Arabic through an expansive translation. The reader needs to see what the text says and which further reports supply the developed account. [409]

The return inquiry therefore remains attached to delegated authority and moral accountability. A future victory is a claim about divine justice. Invoking that promise does not give a contemporary actor its authorization. That distinction also governs the earlier restoration hypothesis: a messianic claim has to be studied through the teaching and conduct associated with it.

[409] Qur’an 43:57–65 and 4:157–159; see the chapters on Jesus’s death and Companion reading traditions for the attributed variants and competing antecedents.

32. Gospels and Apocalypses beyond the Canon

The word apocrypha gathers works with very different purposes. A sayings collection, an infancy narrative, and a journey through the heavens each make different kinds of claims. I include them because Jesus tradition has a history beyond the books eventually collected in the New Testament.[410]

Sayings and revelatory dialogues

Chapter 21 now gives Thomas a full treatment, including its manuscripts, the James designation, mystical teachings and difficult legal sayings. The remaining works in this section still require comparable source-by-source development.

The Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Judas and Gospel of Truth belong to the wider inventory. Their titles alone give little guidance about their genre or historical claims. For the present manuscript, these works remain shorter research programs. Each needs its own account of surviving manuscripts, proposed composition, and relationship to the traditions already examined.

The methodological interest is the range of ways communities represented access to Jesus. Some accounts preserve public speech within a remembered life. Others place teachings in a setting of revelation to a particular disciple. The authority claimed for a revelation and the evidence for its historical source must be assessed separately.

Revelation and the wider apocalyptic inquiry

The chapter on Revelation examines its claimed revelation chain, the Lamb's authority and its moral judgment beside the proposed anti-Pauline polemic. The interpretation remains accountable to the actual anonymous opponents and the surviving textual variants.

That chapter also develops the contrast between the angel's refusal of worship and the honor given to the Lamb. It supplies a Christian apocalyptic control for the comparisons with Enoch and the Ascension of Isaiah.

The other apocalypses listed below remain an open comparative program. Their accounts of judgment, punishment and heavenly journeys should be assessed individually before they are combined into a history of Christian eschatology.

The other apocalypses

The Apocalypse of Peter and Apocalypse of Paul are priority texts for the history of punishment and salvation. The Apocalypse of Thomas and related works extend the comparison. Jewish apocalypses such as 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and the Apocalypse of Abraham provide further contexts for heavenly journeys and divine judgment.

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[410] Dossier v7, version-2 addendum D, records the expanded source corpus requested for the book. The works named in this chapter have uneven research coverage. Titles without an accompanying close reading are registered as subjects for development.

As I develop this inquiry, I need to distinguish the named ancient visionary from the author writing in that figure's voice. A pseudonymous title gives the text a claim to authority. Its actual composition and transmission require their own evidence.

My later research also opened a question about the duration and purpose of punishment. The archive calls this the hopeful-annihilationism inquiry. It remains a distinct theological investigation, to be tested through the scriptural terms for destruction, life, duration and mercy. Collecting more vivid afterlife narratives will not, by itself, settle their authority or their compatibility with the Qur'an.

A comparative motif inventory

The supplied essay by Emmanuel Ifergan argues that Gospel motifs derive from an ancient Proto-Qur'an. It includes a claim to have identified 230 parallels. That essay belongs in this project as an external comparative proposal. The linked spreadsheet has not been inspected in the current source set.[411]

A future use of the inventory would require each motif to be checked against its passages and wider Jewish parallels. Direction of transmission is an additional question. The author's larger theory and personal religious claims remain his own. Finding Injil's case rests on the textual comparisons that can be independently evaluated.

[411] Emmanuel Ifergan, What if the Gospels stemmed from a "Proto-Quran"?, supplied 11-page essay, especially pp. 2–7 and the attribution on p. 11. The claimed motif count is the essay's own statement. Its linked spreadsheet was not inspected for this manuscript.

PART VIII · JESUS AND THE SPIRIT IN THE QUR'AN

33. From Nazarenes to Naṣārā: Christianity in Arabia

Between James's Jerusalem and the Qur'an lie people and institutions we have to identify. Similar teachings at either end will not fill in that history for us. Arabia has to be studied within its own late-antique setting, including Christian communities whose theology differed from the Jewish-Christian reconstruction favored in parts of this book.

The vocabulary on a monument

The South Arabian inscription CIH 541 provides a concrete witness. Its opening invokes Raḥmānān together with his Messiah and the Holy Spirit. This places closely related religious vocabulary in a Christian public text in Arabia before Islam. Sigrid K. Kjær discusses the inscription within a study of the earlier use of Raḥmānān. The inscription's wording is more secure evidence for a local religious vocabulary than a conjecture about an otherwise unattested sect. [412]

That evidence has a limited but important reach. It establishes use of the terms within an identifiable Christian context. It does not identify every hearer of the Qur'an with the theology of the inscription. Nor does common vocabulary establish direct dependence on that particular monument. The historical task is to reconstruct the range of speech and practice available in the region.

The Qur'an's account of the Messiah can then be examined as an intervention in a world where these terms already carried religious weight. Its disagreements become more specific: the status of a messenger, the meaning of divine sonship, and the relation of Spirit to revelation. I cannot assign every disagreement to an obscure group just because that would make reconciliation easier.

Books, hearing, and translation

Sidney Griffith's work on the Bible in Arabic provides a research framework for distinguishing the circulation of biblical teaching from the dates of surviving Arabic translations. A community can hear scripture through preaching and interpretation as well as through a bound book in its own language. The earliest surviving manuscript of a translation consequently provides a different kind of chronological information from the earliest possible circulation of a story. [413]

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[412] Sigrid K. Kjær, "'Rahman' before Muhammad: A pre-history of the First Peace (Sulh) in Islam," Modern Asian Studies, full HTML article consulted at https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-asian-studies/article/rahman-before-muhammad-a-prehistory-of-the-first-peace-sulh-in-islam/280B60BFF68749648057202B29C7C8F0. CIH 541 is a mid-sixth-century inscription; exact chronological discussion should be checked against its epigraphic edition.

[413] Sidney H. Griffith, The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam (Princeton University Press, 2013), publisher description at https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt28550z. The whole volume was not newly read for this draft.

This distinction improves the intertextual inquiry. A Qur'anic scene can be compared with a Christian narrative without assuming that its wording derives from a direct reading of the extant version. Oral explanation, liturgical use, and multilingual retelling offer possible routes. Each route should be supported where possible by particular witnesses. If we invoke orality whenever a link is missing, we may as well invent a lost manuscript for every parallel. Either explanation needs a way to be tested.

Gabriel Said Reynolds's Christianity and the Qur'an gives a recent statement of a broad Christian context for Islam's emergence. Its publisher description presents a thesis to engage, not a substitute for reading its detailed evidence. The book belongs in the bibliography because it can challenge reconstructions that place too much explanatory weight on surviving Jewish-Christian minorities alone. [414]

What a community name can establish

Naṣārā invites comparison with the names used for followers of Jesus in earlier sources. The comparison needs philology and historical geography. A resemblance to "Nazoraeans" does not establish that every Qur'anic Christian belonged to the particular community described under that label by a heresiologist. A broad name can survive after doctrinal and institutional changes. A narrow sectarian identification therefore requires evidence about the people as well as the word.

The earlier chapters on Ebionites and Nazoraeans supply a dossier of reported beliefs. The Arabia inquiry has to add a location and a route. A late writer's assertion that a group existed in a region is evidence to assess; it is not a complete account of the group's influence upon every later religious text from a neighboring region. This is where we should leave a gap in the transmission diagram. Drawing an arrow will not supply the missing evidence.

Households and the encounter with Christians

Qur'an 3:61 places family members within a disputed encounter after the discussion of Jesus. A report in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim associates the verse with Muhammad bringing ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn. The tradition gives the household a public place in testimony about a theological dispute. Its relevance to the James comparison concerns the use of a family as a bearer of a sacred claim. It does not independently establish the later office of every descendant. [415]

The comparison permits a question about the social form of witness. A family can embody continuity and expose itself to the consequences of a public claim. That is different from using its biological existence as proof that all its members possess the same authority. The

[414] Gabriel Said Reynolds, Christianity and the Qur'an: The Rise of Islam in a Christian Arabia (Yale University Press, 2025), https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300281750/christianity-and-the-quran/. Publisher description consulted; detailed arguments remain to be assessed from the complete book.

[415] Qur'an 3:59–61; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2404d, https://sunnah.com/muslim:2404d, within the reports from Saʿd concerning ʿAlī's merits. The third remembered occasion identifies the household in connection with Qur'an 3:61; Arabic and English checked.

moral qualification discussed through Qur'an 2:124 remains relevant. A dynastic reading gains explanatory precision when it specifies the particular relation between kinship and commission.

Stories of a transmitted trust

The Salman account collected in Jesus through Shiite Narrations presents guidance through a sequence of religious teachers toward the recognition of Muhammad. The narrative is evidence for an Islamic memory of continuity with earlier Christianity. Its hagiographical character and later source history prevent it from serving, on its own, as a documented institutional chain from James. [416]

A modern Ismaʿili account can likewise describe the convergence of a Christian sacred lineage with the Prophet's family. Such a theological history expresses how its author understands the unity of guidance. The historian has a separate obligation to establish the identities and contacts it proposes. I can respect that religious argument without lending an unverified genealogy the authority of historical research. [417]

The historical space before the Qur'an consequently contains several questions that should remain distinct. Which Christian ideas were publicly expressed? Which texts and stories circulated? Which communities claimed continuity with Jesus's family? The existing evidence gives a strong reason to investigate Christian Arabia and a more limited basis for reconstructing one continuous Jerusalem succession into it. The Qur'anic chapters that follow compare the actual passages against that differentiated background.

[416] Mahdi Muntazir Qa'im, Jesus through Shiite Narrations, "The Successor of Jesus," report 6, citing al-Kharāʾij wa-l-jarāʾiḥ 3:1078–1081, https://al-islam.org/jesus-through-shiite-narrations-mahdi-muntazir-qaim/successor-jesus. The cited earlier work was not newly collated.

[417] Ismaili Gnosis, "The Imamat of James," https://www.ismailignosis.com/p/the-imamat-of-james-brother-of-jesus-successor-of-christ-leader-of-early-christianity, especially its later discussion of Bahīrā and the prophetic cycles. Cited as modern theological interpretation.

34. Maryam, the Word and the Disputed Birth

The Qur'anic investigation needs a defined corpus. The following six chapters cover every explicit occurrence of the name ʿĪsā, the title al-Masīḥ, and the noun rūḥ, together with the narrative passages and adjacent statements required to understand them. Appendix D records the boundaries of that coverage. It distinguishes an explicit reference from an allusion proposed by an interpreter.[418]

This is how I want to approach the Christian comparisons. A resemblance may identify a shared story, a scriptural pattern, or a later interpretation. Direct dependence is a further claim. The date of an extant manuscript must also be kept apart from the proposed date of a tradition preserved within it. Those distinctions are particularly important for Maryam, whose Qur'anic story intersects with several kinds of infancy literature.

A child dedicated to God

Qur'an 3:33–37 introduces Maryam within a history of election and a household's vow. Her mother dedicates what she carries to God, encounters the unexpected significance of a female child, and entrusts the child and her descendants to divine protection. Maryam's acceptance and provision then establish a sacred setting before the annunciation of Jesus.[419]

Hannah's dedication of Samuel supplies an earlier scriptural pattern involving a mother's vow and a child assigned to sacred service. The Protoevangelium of James offers a closer narrative comparator for Mary's childhood, dedication, and extraordinary provision in the temple. These comparisons should be placed alongside each other. The biblical pattern helps explain the kind of story being told, while the infancy narrative supplies more particular correspondences.

The names also require discipline. The Protoevangelium names Joachim and Anna, whereas the Qur'anic account speaks within the household of ʿImrān. We have to explain that difference. Quietly replacing one genealogy with the other only hides it. Cornelia Horn's study of Mary between the Bible and Qur'an provides a specialist point of entry into the Greek, Coptic, and Copto-Arabic material. Its abstract and bibliographic information have been consulted for this draft; its detailed transmission argument remains to be read in full.[420]

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[418] Scope of this concordance: 25 explicit occurrences of ʿĪsā; 11 occurrences of al-Masīḥ in nine verses; 21 occurrences of the noun rūḥ in 20 verses. Quranic Arabic Corpus, Jesus concept page and root dictionary: https://corpus.quran.com/concept.jsp?id=jesus and https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rwH. Appendix D prints the complete explicit-reference lists and distinguishes contextual additions.

[419] Qur'an 3:33–37; 1 Samuel 1:9–28; Protoevangelium of James 4, 7–8. Primary infancy text consulted at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0847.htm. The comparisons identify dedication and sacred provision; they do not equate every character or genealogy.

[420] Cornelia B. Horn, "Mary between Bible and Qur'an: Soundings into the Transmission and Reception History of the Protoevangelium of James on the Basis of Selected Literary Sources in Coptic and Copto-Arabic," Islam

Qur'an 3:44 refers to the casting of pens in deciding Maryam's guardianship. The Protoevangelium's account uses rods in the selection of Joseph. The common structure is a sacred decision concerning her custody, with different objects and narrative details. That degree of specificity warrants a source comparison. It still leaves open whether a shared narrative tradition, adaptation, or another route explains the relationship.[421]

The annunciation in two settings

In Qur'an 3:42–47, angels announce Maryam's election and the Word from God, named as the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary. The passage identifies honor in this world and the next and places him among those brought near. Maryam asks about having a child without a man touching her, and the answer turns to God's act of creation.[422]

Luke 1 supplies a recognizable annunciation setting, including the promise of a child and the question concerning conception. The Qur'anic account has its own theological arrangement. The Word and Messiah language should be studied in relation to the wider Gospel corpus, while the immediate response about divine creation belongs beside the comparison of Jesus and Adam in Qur'an 3:59.

Surah Maryam gives the encounter a more embodied form. Maryam withdraws, a Spirit is sent, and it appears to her as a well-formed human being. Her appeal for protection establishes the perceived danger before the visitor declares a divine commission. The language of chastity and of a man's touch remains central to her response. We lose part of the narrative's force if we treat that physical setting as irrelevant.[423]

The reading traditions of 19:19 vary in how the granting of the child is expressed, with a first-person form and a form referring the giving to God. That variation bears upon the agency of the messenger. It does not supply a description of sexual intercourse. The narrated sequence moves from the announcement of divine purpose into pregnancy without identifying Joseph or giving a biological account of the process.

The Jewish-Christian disagreement

The conception dispute already examined in this book belongs beside these passages. Origen describes groups called Ebionites who differed over the virgin birth. His testimony

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and Christian–Muslim Relations 18.4 (2007): 509–538, doi:10.1080/09596410701577332. Abstract and bibliographic material consulted; full argument outstanding.

[421] Qur'an 3:44; Protoevangelium of James 8–9. Pens and rods occur in different versions of a guardianship-selection pattern; they should not be silently harmonized.

[422] Qur'an 3:39, 42–47, 59; Luke 1:26–38. The Word/Messiah titles and the question concerning conception belong to the comparison, with Qur'an 3:59 supplying an internal Adamic control.

[423] Qur'an 19:16–22; al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, on 19:19: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura19-aya19.html. The li-ahaba/li-yahaba variation concerns expressed agency. It is not independent evidence for a sexual mechanism of conception.

prevents a rigid equation of Ebionite identity with one universal birth doctrine. Later reports about Nazoraeans and Ebionites must be assessed in their own settings.[424]

My proposal is that the Qur'anic story can be examined as a revelation heard amid competing Jewish-Christian accounts of Jesus's origin. Its preferred plain reading is miraculous conception without a human father. The conspicuous concern with the visitor's human form, Maryam's vulnerability, and her chastity also invites a study of what rival hearers would have understood the scene to exclude or permit.

The alternative Joseph-mediated reading proposed earlier remains an esoteric hypothesis within this project. Joseph is absent from the Qur'anic account. The hypothesis consequently needs to explain both the omission and the relation of the conception narrative to Qur'an 3:47, 21:91, and 66:12. Until a source witnesses such an interpretation, I cannot present it as something historically attested among early Muslims.

There is a striking comparative passage in Pseudo-Matthew. Characters consider the possibility of an angelic conception and the possibility of an impostor presenting himself as an angel. The narrative vindicates Mary's chastity. These are concerns close to the interpretive questions raised by a visitor appearing in human form.[425]

Pseudo-Matthew's textual history creates a chronological obstacle. The presence of a parallel in a later Latin compilation does not establish a source available to the Qur'anic audience. The passage shows that Christian storytelling could explicitly confront the same problem. The age and route of the underlying motif require further evidence. That is already useful: we have an actual text to compare, rather than an ancient debate we have had to invent.

Breath, pregnancy and the meaning of possession

Qur'an 21:91 and 66:12 connect Maryam's chastity with the breathing of God's Spirit. The pronouns differ in form, and their grammatical antecedents require attention. A difference in grammatical gender cannot, on its own, establish an anatomical mechanism. The wider Qur'anic language of breathing Spirit into Adam supplies a necessary control.

The possessive expression "Our Spirit" likewise needs to be read within the Qur'an's usage. A relation to God can indicate origin, authorization, or honor. It does not automatically mean a portion of divine substance. The same caution applies when Christian vocabulary about divine power is translated into later categories of incarnation. Let us first follow the syntax: who acts, and what does the act accomplish? The metaphysical model has to answer to that.

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[424] Origen, Against Celsus 5.61 and 5.65, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm. Origen describes two groups called Ebionites with different birth doctrines; the author's proposed Qur'anic accommodation is a separate hypothesis.

[425] Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 10–12, primary translation at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0848.htm. The suspicion concerning an angel or an impostor is part of this text. The chronological relationship of its surviving Latin form to the Qur'an prevents using it as an established pre-Qur'anic source.

The palm and the place of birth

Maryam's labor takes her to a palm, with water and dates entering the scene of consolation. Pseudo-Matthew also contains a palm-and-water episode, although its narrative places the event during travel after the birth. The motif is more particular than a general resemblance between two miraculous biographies. The changed setting matters to any account of transmission.[426]

A proposed source relationship must explain which details are shared, which are changed, and how the relevant form could have reached the later text. An inherited oral story could move an episode into a new context. A written adaptation could do the same. The parallel alone selects neither mechanism.

Qur'an 23:50 describes the son of Mary and his mother as a sign and refers to a refuge on elevated ground with security and water. Its geographical identification has a long interpretive history. The verse supplies too little information to fix a location solely through resemblance to one Christian itinerary. It belongs in the dossier as a separate statement requiring triangulation.

The child's testimony

The infant's speech in 19:30 begins with servanthood and continues with scripture, prophethood, prayer, almsgiving, and duty toward his mother. The account therefore gives the miraculous event an explicitly ethical and theological content. Qur'an 3:46 and 5:110 recall speech in the cradle alongside later speech, making the motif part of a repeated portrait.[427]

The Arabic Infancy Gospel preserves a cradle-speaking child whose statement identifies him through Sonship and Logos language. In one recension, the report is attributed to a book associated with the priest Joseph Caiaphas. The same composite narrative later links the visiting Magi with Zoroaster. These elements belong to its actual transmitted arrangement.[428]

The Magi-as-isnād proposal remains my conjecture about a possible human transmission channel. The surviving attribution of the cradle speech does not give me the Magi as its chain. The useful comparison at present is the recurrence of an extraordinary infancy testimony accompanied by different Christological declarations. The Qur'anic form puts the declaration of dependence and the demands of worship at the center.

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[426] Qur'an 19:23–26; 23:50; Pseudo-Matthew 20. The palm and water episode in the Christian narrative occurs during travel after the birth. The Qur'anic relocation and the history of the motif require separate explanation.

[427] Qur'an 19:15, 27–34; 3:46; 5:110; 4:156. The infant's declaration is paraphrased here. Maryam's designation in 19:28 and the relation of 19:33 to the Yaḥyā formula require interpretation without silently replacing their wording.

[428] Arabic Infancy Gospel 1 and 7 in the Sike-related recension, primary translation: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0806.htm. Chapter 1 supplies the Caiaphas/book attribution; the Magi and Zoroaster material is distinct. NASSCAL's recension inventory was recorded in the earlier research dossier. A Magi-to-Qur'an eyewitness chain remains unestablished.

Maryam’s being addressed as a sister of Aaron in 19:28 must also be examined within the passage’s appeal to family honor. Literal kinship, ancestral association, and typological language are interpretive possibilities with different historical demands. The phrase should remain visible in the argument instead of being quietly replaced with a preferred paraphrase.

The formula concerning peace at birth, death, and resurrection in 19:33 belongs beside the corresponding statement about Yaḥyā in 19:15. It places Jesus within a prophetic pattern. The precise chronology of his death requires the other passages studied below. At this point, the account has established an extraordinary messenger whose life remains a life of service to God.

34A. The House of Aaron: Maryam, the Magdalene, and the Essene Horizon

Maryam and the priestly household

The Qur’an introduces Maryam within a family already bound to sacred service. In 3:35, the wife of ʿImrān dedicates the child in her womb to Allah. The child is a girl, and the dedication stands. Zechariah becomes her guardian; when he enters the *miḥrāb*, he finds provision waiting for her. The narrative gives Maryam a childhood organized around worship, sanctuary and divine election.

Later, when Maryam returns carrying Jesus, her people address her as *ukht Hārūn*, sister of Aaron (19:28). They immediately invoke the reputation of her parents. The accusation assumes a woman raised under an extraordinary expectation of purity. Her ancestry or religious household matters to the people speaking.

There is a possible historical explanation for that language.

Luke 1:5 identifies Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, as a descendant of Aaron. Zechariah is a priest belonging to the division of Abijah. In Luke 1:36, Elizabeth is called Mary's *syngenis*, her kinswoman. The Greek establishes kinship without specifying its degree or the line through which it passes.

This makes an Aaronide family environment historically intelligible. Maryam's association with Aaron could express descent within a priestly clan, participation in its sanctuary traditions, or an inherited religious identity. The exact genealogy remains to be reconstructed.

Suleiman Mourad has argued that the Qur'anic designation can describe someone belonging to Aaron's lineage or people. Nicolai Sinai develops a related interpretation centered on sanctuary affiliation. The two proposals deserve separate consideration. Maryam might be invoked as Aaron's sister because the people confronting her recognize her as a woman belonging to a religious household whose sanctity has been publicly compromised, according to their accusation.

The *Protevangelium of James*, composed in the second century, supplies a remarkable literary comparison. It depicts Mary growing up in the Temple, receiving miraculous nourishment, and later facing accusations that invoke her sacred upbringing. Its parallels with Qur'an 3:37 and 19:28 are substantial. As a later narrative, it witnesses the development and transmission of Mary's sanctuary traditions, while leaving the events of her actual childhood historically unverified.

The same text calls Mary a member of David's family (section 10). Luke 1:5 and 1:36 establish Elizabeth's Aaronide descent and kinship with Mary, rather than Mary's direct paternal line. The sanctuary comparison should therefore be kept distinct from a demonstrated genealogy.

The Qur'an's repeated insistence upon Maryam's identity therefore invites a question about the institutional world behind her family. What kind of household could have preserved this combination of sacred ancestry, childhood dedication, prophetic expectation and intensive religious formation?

The Essene connection

The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal an organized Jewish religious world in which priestly descent and communal holiness were central.

The *Community Rule*, 1QS 8:1, describes a council of twelve men and three priests. Its members are expected to possess unusually complete knowledge of the Law and to conduct themselves according to rigorous standards of justice and purity. The following lines describe the community in the language of a holy house for Israel and a most holy assembly associated with Aaron.

At 1QS 9:11, the text anticipates a prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel. This remarkable division preserves the possibility of differentiated priestly and Israelite messianic offices.

The composition of the community matters for any reconstruction of Jesus's earliest environment. Sacred authority could depend upon inherited office, mastery of scripture, initiation into a disciplined religious group, and recognition by those already entrusted with interpretation.

Josephus describes another order of Essenes whose members married. In *Jewish War* 2.160–161, he reports their concern with producing descendants and their regulations governing marriage. The existence of married Essene communities allows us to examine how families participated in such movements. The relationship between Josephus's Essenes and the precise communities represented by the Qumran manuscripts remains a scholarly question.

This is where the analogy with Frank Herbert's Bene Gesserit becomes useful as an analytical model. A religious movement can perpetuate itself by educating successive generations, preserving privileged interpretations, cultivating marriage networks, and assigning special obligations to particular families. Such a model is recognizable in forms of ancient priesthood and aristocratic religious culture.

The Essene and Qumran evidence establishes organized formation and priestly hierarchy. It permits investigation of family transmission. A coordinated program to produce particular prophets, along with Maryam's membership in it, remains a speculative extension.

There is nonetheless a specific connection worth pursuing. The Qumran community understands itself as preparing God's way in the wilderness, drawing upon Isaiah 40:3. The Gospels place John the Baptist in the wilderness under the same prophetic language. His family, as Luke presents it, belongs to the Aaronide priesthood.

Our existing reconstruction of John and Jesus as potential priestly and royal figures gains historical context here. John belongs to a priestly household in Luke. Jesus receives a

Davidic royal announcement. The Qumran texts establish that a Jewish community could anticipate differentiated offices of Aaron and Israel within its hope for restoration.

The hypothesis would acquire greater strength if distinctive purification laws, calendrical traditions, interpretive formulas, or identifiable intermediaries connected John's movement to an Essene community.

The Magdalene and the house of Hillel

Mary Magdalene requires a separate inquiry.

Luke 8:2–3 places her among the women accompanying Jesus and describes the group as contributing material resources. Another named woman, Joanna, is the wife of Chuza, an administrator in Herod's household. The passage offers a direct literary witness to women sustaining Jesus's movement and to its possible connections with influential households.

John 20 gives Mary Magdalene an exceptionally prominent role as a recipient and transmitter of testimony. The later *Gospel of Mary* portrays its Mary as a bearer of special teaching whose authority becomes a point of controversy among the disciples. The identification of that figure with Mary Magdalene is widely entertained, although the writing is a later witness to Christian debates over authority.

A proposed descent from Hillel the Elder would connect Magdalene with another prominent Jewish teaching lineage. Hillel's family is associated with the Pharisaic tradition; Gamaliel, whom Acts 5 and 22 place within the intellectual environment of the early Jesus movement, is identified in later Jewish accounts as Hillel's grandson.

At present, the surviving early sources leave Magdalene's parents and grandparents unnamed. Identifying her as Hillel's granddaughter must therefore remain an explicit genealogical hypothesis pending a recoverable source.

The teaching connections can be tested independently.

The House of Hillel preserves a recognizable tradition of legal and ethical interpretation. Jesus's teachings can be compared with its attributed judgments, including the reciprocal treatment of others, obligations to the vulnerable, and marriage law. The Mishnah's report of Hillel's permissive divorce rule in *Gittin* 9:10 provides a particularly revealing comparison with Matthew 19:3–9. Shared legal controversies establish a Jewish intellectual setting in which direct agreement and disagreement can be studied.

A further line of inquiry concerns Magdalene's name. Elizabeth Schrader and Joan Taylor have argued that *Magdalene* may preserve an epithet meaning something like a tower or an exalted woman. Their investigation of early Christian literature complicates the conventional assumption that the designation straightforwardly identifies a particular Galilean town. The proposal is debated, yet it creates a productive question about Mary's remembered religious standing.

If she possessed authority as a teacher, the explanation may lie in the transmission of knowledge through Jewish households and discipleship networks. Her role in the Gospel narratives supplies evidence for prominence; an association with Hillel's descendants would require further genealogical testimony.

A reconstruction of the women surrounding Jesus should therefore keep several kinds of authority in view: priestly ancestry, religious learning, control of resources, and remembered access to his teaching. Maryam and the Magdalene occupy different places in the surviving sources. Their possible connections to influential religious households can be pursued without assuming a shared ancestry.

The Essenes, prayer, and the earth as sanctuary

A separate but closely related issue concerns the location of worship.

Josephus reports that the Essenes offered inherited prayers before sunrise (*Jewish War* 2.128). The Qumran manuscripts preserve a considerably richer devotional system. The *Community Rule* 1QS 9:26–10:3 describes blessing God at appointed times associated with the coming and departing of light. The Daily Prayers manuscript, 4Q503, offers further evidence of regular communal worship.

More importantly, 1QS 9:4–5 employs the language of offerings made by the lips. The community could describe its worship through the imagery of sacrifice and sanctuary, even while its members were separated from Jerusalem's Temple establishment.

There is a significant distinction between observing prayer outside the Temple and asserting that every earthly location possesses equal ritual status. The Qumran evidence establishes the former and supplies a historical setting for studying the latter.

Jesus's own reported conduct adds a further witness. Mark 1:35 places him praying in a deserted location. Luke 5:16 describes his repeated withdrawal into solitary places for prayer. In John 4:20–24, the discussion with the Samaritan woman turns explicitly to sacred geography. Jesus announces worship that will transcend the competing claims of Mount Gerizim and Jerusalem.

These texts belong before the seventh century and preserve forms of Jewish and Christian worship that were already practiced beyond designated sanctuaries.

This raises a direct historical objection to the report transmitted from Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 335 and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 521a. The report attributes to Muhammad five privileges granted to nobody before him. Among them is the statement:

Wa-juʿilat lī al-arḍu masjidan wa-ṭahūran.

The earth has been made for me a place of prayer and a means of purification.

The report immediately explains that a member of Muhammad's community may pray wherever the appointed time overtakes him.

The assertion of unprecedented privilege includes prayer's geographical availability. Earlier Jewish and Christian practice therefore bears directly on the matn's historical credibility. The related assertion concerning earth as a means of ritual purification requires its own investigation into pre-Islamic purification practices.

The point is important for this book's method. Muhammad's mission can be evaluated as an inheritance and restoration of prophetic worship. A hadith that represents an inherited

practice as unprecedented makes a historically consequential claim. The evidence should determine whether its wording accurately preserves the Prophet's teaching.

The *Didache* adds another instance of continuity, instructing believers to recite the prayer attributed to Jesus three times daily. The ritual pattern and its theological content can be compared with Jewish prayer and the later Muslim ṣalāh tradition without assuming identical forms.

From the sacred house to the sound heart

The priestly material also opens a theological question.

The Qumran community employs sanctuary imagery for a human association ordered toward holiness. Jesus blesses the pure in heart in Matthew 5:8 and speaks in John 4 of worship in spirit and truth. The Qur'an, at 26:88–89, associates salvation with approaching Allah with a *qalb salīm*, a sound heart.

These traditions offer a history of worship in which spiritual purity receives increasing attention. Physical sanctuaries and prescribed observances continue to matter within their respective religious systems, while the worthiness of the worshipper becomes an explicit religious concern.

Later Islamic mystics, including al-Ḥallāj, develop the heart as a site of spiritual encounter with God. The Christian devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus belongs to a much later theological history, expressing Christ's love through the image of the heart. These later traditions can be compared as receptions of the relationship between inward purity and sacred presence, provided their distinct historical developments remain visible.

Maryam's consecration, the Essene discipline of holiness, the prayers of Jesus, and the Qur'anic sound heart belong within that larger inquiry.

The historical question concerns the transmission of people and practices. The theological question concerns what the prophetic inheritance teaches about the place in which God is worshipped.

Source apparatus and editorial tests

Primary texts: Qur'an 3:35–37, 19:28, 26:88–89, 66:12; Luke 1:5, 1:36, 8:2–3; Mark 1:35; Matthew 5:8, 19:3–9; John 4:20–24, 20; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.128 and 2.160–161; *Community Rule* 1QS 8:1–9:11 and 9:26–10:3; 4Q503; *Didache* 8; *Protevangelium of James* 7–15; Mishnah *Gittin* 9:10; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 335; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 521a and 2135.

Modern studies:

Suleiman A. Mourad, “Mary in the Qur'an,” in *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*, on the Aaronide interpretation.

Nicolai Sinai, “The Christian Elephant in the Meccan Room,” *JIQSA* 9 (2024), on Maryam's sanctuary identity.

John J. Collins and James Nati, *The Rule of the Association and Related Texts* (2024), chapter 5.

Elizabeth Schrader and Joan E. Taylor, “The Meaning of ‘Magdalene,’” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 140 (2021), 751–773.

Jennifer V. Pietz, “Mary Magdalene and the Early Jesus Movement,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia* (2026).

Outstanding verification: Locate an identifiable ancient or modern source proposing Magdalene's descent from Hillel; compare Luke's kinship terminology with Aaronide marriage and ancestry; assess evidence for women in married Essene communities; collate 1QS and 4Q503 against early Gospel prayer traditions; and test the Bukhārī/Muslim five-privileges report against the complete pre-Islamic evidence, preserving its explicit claim of novelty.

Editorial research notes

The outstanding verification listed above remains open research. Maryam’s Essene membership, a coordinated program to produce prophets and the Magdalene–Hillel genealogy are hypotheses, not established findings. The comparison with al-Hallaj is thematic; a precise work and passage must be identified before attributing an exact quotation.

The five-privileges reports were checked for both their novelty formula and their permission to pray where the prayer time arrives. The geographical claim is retained alongside the separate purification claim; no conclusion here depends on reducing the report to tayammum alone.

The source checks distinguish primary testimony from later reconstruction. Josephus, the Gospel passages, the Protevangelium, the Didache, Gittin and the hadith reports supply textual comparisons. Modern interpretations remain attributed proposals. The 1QS prayer passages were compared with published translations; 4Q503 was identified in its manuscript catalogue, without a new fragment-by-fragment collation. Publisher and author-institution records verify the modern bibliography; consultation of abstracts is not a claim to have verified every argument in the full works.

Reference links

Protevangelium of James 7–15, including the Davidic designation in 10

Luke 1:5 and 1:36: Elizabeth and Mary’s kinship

Josephus, Jewish War 2.128 and 2.160–161: Greek text and translations

Sahih al-Bukhari 335: the five privileges and geographical prayer claim

Sahih Muslim 521a: the parallel five-privileges report

Sahih Muslim 2135: names of earlier prophets and pious people

Didache 8: prayer three times daily

Mishnah Gittin 9:10: the divorce-law comparison

4Q503, Daily Prayers: Israel Antiquities Authority manuscript record

Collins and Nati 2024, chapter 5: 1QS 8:1–9:11, An Elite Community

Mourad, Mary in the Qurʾan: A Reexamination of Her Presentation
Sinai 2024, The Christian Elephant in the Meccan Room, 57–118
Schrader and Taylor 2021, The Meaning of Magdalene, 751–773
Pietz 2026, Mary Magdalene and the Early Jesus Movement
Esther Chazon 2026, The Origin of Fixed Communal Prayer: Evidence from Qumran

35. The Injil, the Signs and the Table from Heaven

The Qur'an describes Jesus through a commission. He receives teaching, confirms an inherited revelation, changes some obligations, and calls his hearers to worship God. The miracles belong within that mission. The repetition of divine permission in the accounts of his acts makes agency an explicit part of the description.

This chapter follows Qur'an 3:48–53, 5:46–48, and 5:110–115, with the later summary in 43:63–65. These passages supply much of the positive content needed to reconstruct the Qur'anic Injil. They also set limits on what can be recovered by comparing the Qur'an with Gospel stories that use similar motifs.

What Jesus receives

Qur'an 3:48 places the Book, wisdom, Torah, and Injil together in a statement about Jesus's instruction. The list has prompted different accounts of the relationship between scripture, practical understanding, and a specific revelation given to him. There are no four evangelists named here, and no account of Jesus writing his own biography.[429]

Qur'an 5:46 describes the Injil as containing guidance and light and as confirming the Torah. The following verse instructs its people to judge by what God revealed within it. Verse 48 then describes the Qur'an's relation to the earlier scripture while recognizing a law and a way assigned to communities. My reconstruction of Christian sharia begins from this combination of authorization and judgment.

A literary Gospel can preserve a teaching associated with Jesus without every part of its narrative acquiring the same status. The distinction between a reported saying, an editorial explanation, and a later liturgical use is consequently essential. The Qur'anic injunction creates a reason to recover guidance; historical work must establish what survives and how securely it can be attributed.

We will not get far by giving "the Bible" one verdict. We need to examine smaller units. A particular teaching about almsgiving can have a different history and normative status from a narrator's account of heavenly preexistence. A verse's canonical position does not remove that difference, and an apocryphal location does not itself make a saying inauthentic.

Confirmation with a change in law

Jesus's announcement in Qur'an 3:50 combines confirmation of the Torah with permission concerning part of what had been forbidden. The scope of the change is left unspecified in

[429] Qur'an 3:48–50; 5:46–48. Distinguish the revelation attributed to Jesus, its surviving sayings, Gospel biography, and later reception. The verses do not list the four canonical Evangelists.

that sentence. We have grounds to investigate a lawful change, but we have not been given a ready-made list of abolished rules.[430]

Matthew's insistence on fulfillment of the law and Mark's account of disputes over purity belong in the comparison. So do the Sabbath controversies. The historical task is to determine which practices were at issue and whether a saying addresses a command, a customary interpretation, or the circumstances of application. A statement about alleviating some prohibitions should not be inflated into a claim that all inherited obligations have disappeared.

Qur'an 43:63 describes Jesus as bringing wisdom and clarifying some of the matters over which people differ. We should keep that limited formulation. A prophet can resolve an actual dispute without supplying an encyclopedia of every legal question anyone will ever ask. A community's later decisions therefore need a theory of legitimate interpretation as well as a memory of the prophet's words.

The command to worship God in 3:51 and 43:64 supplies the theological center of that legal work. The relation between law and worship remains active even where a restriction is relaxed. Liberation from a particular rule does not authorize freedom from responsibility toward the God who sent the messenger.

Clay, breath and permission

The formation of a bird-like figure from clay in Qur'an 3:49 and 5:110 is a particularly precise comparative motif. Jesus fashions the form and breathes into it, with its transformation occurring by God's permission. The sequence raises the question of creative agency within a prophetic act.[431]

The Qur'an itself compares Jesus with Adam in 3:59. The creation of Adam and the biblical association between clay, breath, and life therefore provide an internal and scriptural frame before we turn to Christian infancy literature. The act can display divine power through a creature without granting that creature independent sovereignty over life.

The Infancy Gospel of Thomas places the making of clay birds in Jesus's childhood and associates the episode with a Sabbath dispute. In the commonly printed Greek A form, the birds take flight at his command. The Qur'anic accounts do not retain that entire setting. They place the sign within an account of mission or divine recollection and emphasize permission.[432]

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[430] Qur'an 3:50–51; 43:63–65; Matthew 5:17–20; Mark 7:1–23 and Sabbath controversies. The Qur'an permits some change but does not enumerate the relaxed prohibitions in 3:50.

[431] Qur'an 3:49, 59; 5:110; Genesis 2:7. The creative act and the permission clause both belong to the wording under assessment.

[432] Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Greek A-related form, chapter 2: https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/infancythomas.html. The page identifies its Greek basis through Ronald F. Hock and Tischendorf A. The childhood Sabbath setting is distinct from the Qur'anic presentation; a complete recension history remains outstanding.

That difference is important. Shared narrative material can receive a different theological function. The comparison establishes a distinctive affinity; it does not by itself establish the age of the precise Christian recension, the direction of every detail's transmission, or the historicity of the event. A full argument requires the textual history of the childhood tradition.

The Qur'anic verb associated with making or creating also deserves care. Its occurrence in a statement about Jesus's action need not be suppressed. The surrounding clause defines the act's dependence. My tawḥīdi reading has to explain this authorized agency. I cannot protect my theology by refusing the verb the text uses.

Healing, knowledge and resurrection

The healing of the blind and the leper and the bringing forth of the dead belong to the Qur'anic portrait of Jesus's signs. These categories overlap with canonical Gospel narratives. The overlap supports comparison at the level of the prophetic portrait. It does not identify every named patient or establish the wording of a particular Gospel conversation.

The same discipline applies to knowledge of what people eat or store in their houses in 3:49. Biblical prophetic stories already make hidden knowledge a sign of divine support, as in the narratives associated with Elisha. John's accounts of Jesus knowing persons and circumstances also provide comparisons. Such a pattern can describe a prophet's exceptional knowledge without resolving the metaphysics of omniscience.[433]

The resurrection miracles need to be kept apart from the question of Jesus's own death and resurrection. An author can narrate God's restoration of someone through a prophet without claiming that the prophet possesses life independently. Elijah and Elisha provide earlier examples; the accounts involving Peter and Paul show how Christian writers applied the pattern to apostolic figures.

This matters for the book's Shiʿi-style comparison. A divinely supported servant may perform an extraordinary act while remaining wholly dependent upon the source of the power. The historical presence of that model helps us read the vocabulary. It does not authenticate every later report about a saint or establish a universal theory of delegated cosmic government.

The disciples' answer

Qur'an 3:52–53 records Jesus's appeal for helpers and the disciples' response. Qur'an 61:14 reuses the scene to address the believers' own responsibilities. The disciples' confession joins faith in God to participation in the messenger's mission. Their status is defined through a response and a commitment.[434]

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[433] Qur'an 3:49; 2 Kings 5:26; 6:12; John 1:47–49; 4:16–19. These are comparisons of prophetic knowledge, not established direct literary dependencies.

[434] Qur'an 3:52–53; 5:111; 61:14; Acts 10 and 15. Divine communication to the disciples is not, by that fact alone, an appointment of each recipient as a lawgiving prophet.

Qur'an 5:111 uses the language of divine communication to the disciples. That occurrence belongs in the wider inquiry into waḥy. The term's range in the Qur'an exceeds the delivery of a new law through a prophet. Before making every recipient of revelation a lawgiving messenger, or granting all later disciples infallibility, we need to read this verse.

The comparison with Acts is especially productive. Acts repeatedly places divine guidance within a community and uses the Spirit's action to establish who may be admitted. The Qur'anic account likewise recognizes a group's divinely prompted response. Their precise theories of authority remain different questions. A shared language of guidance cannot settle the later conflict over whose decision binds the whole community.

The request for a table

The request in Qur'an 5:112 introduces a celebrated reading difference. In one form, the disciples ask concerning the Lord's ability to send down a table; another directs the question toward Jesus's ability to ask his Lord. Al-Ṭabarī discusses both forms and the interpretive concerns attached to them. The variant changes the grammatical focus of the petition and deserves a place in the apparatus.[435]

The disciples explain their desire in terms of eating, reassurance, recognition of Jesus's truthfulness, and witness. Jesus's prayer asks for a table that will be a festival for the first and last of them and a sign from God. The response gives the promise a severe condition concerning subsequent rejection. The event is framed as a disclosure that increases responsibility.

Several bodies of material can help triangulate the scene. Exodus 16 and Psalm 78 give food from heaven a setting of divine provision, trial, and response. Gospel feeding narratives join Jesus's mission to communal nourishment. John 6 interprets food in an extended theological discourse, while the Didache's meal prayers associate the table with revealed knowledge and the gathering of the community.[436]

These comparisons should remain distinguishable. The Qur'anic passage does not explicitly identify the table as Jesus's body and blood. It also does not narrate a complete institution ceremony. The story records the request and divine response, leaving several details supplied by later interpretation outside its own wording. If we identify this precisely with the Last Supper, we owe the reader more than the observation that both involve a sacred meal.

The wider pattern nevertheless has legal significance. A community receives provision, recognizes a sign, and acquires an obligation of fidelity. The table can therefore be read alongside admission and fellowship rules without being reduced to a private miracle. Its consequences reach the people who ask to become witnesses.

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[435] Al-Ṭabarī on Qur'an 5:112: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura5-aya112.html. Arabic discussion consulted for hal yastaṭīʿu rabbuka and the reading directed to Jesus's petition, hal tastaṭīʿu rabbaka. A fully vocalized qirāʾāt apparatus should accompany the eventual critical edition.

[436] Qur'an 5:112–115; Exodus 16; Psalm 78:19–29; Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–10; John 6; Didache 9–10. The narrative records the petition and divine response without an explicit body-and-blood interpretation or a detailed consumption scene.

A mission recalled at judgment

Qur’an 5:110 places the signs within God’s address to Jesus. The retrospective account repeatedly names divine support and permission. It also recalls protection against opponents who interpreted the signs as sorcery. The passage gives us a compressed judgment on the relation between the messenger’s action and its source.

That setting helps establish the sequence of the next chapter. The authority given to Jesus is substantial, yet the narrative later asks him about what people made of his mission. As time passes, we have to distinguish the revelation and miracle from what the community remembers and makes of them. The question of death and departure determines what the messenger can witness and how the community becomes responsible for what follows.

36. They Did Not Kill Him: Death, Elevation and Witness

I begin at Qur'an 4:153, where the People of the Book confront Muhammad with a demand. What follows is an indictment of their remembered speech and conduct. The claims about Jesus occur inside that address, after the covenant, the prophets, and Maryam have already been named. The surrounding syntax identifies the people whose boast Allah answers.

For the history of Jesus, we need to keep track of who is claiming to have done what. Early Christian accounts and Roman testimony concern the execution under Pilate, while the Qur'an quotes a different party boasting that it killed the Messiah. I read the Arabic from the opening address through the response, preserving the person responsible for each assertion. That is where the Jewish judicial counter-narrative recorded in the Talmud enters the investigation.

The continuous accusation in Sūrat al-Nisāʾ

At 4:153, ahl al-kitāb is the nominative subject of yas'aluka. Verse 155 continues the accusation with fa-bi-mā naqḍihim, 'because of their breaking,' followed by wa-kufrihim, wa-qatlihim and wa-qawlihim. Verse 156 adds wa-bi-kufrihim and wa-qawlihim concerning the calumny against Maryam. At 4:157 the same construction returns: wa-qawlihim, 'and their saying,' introducing the boast innā qatalnā al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā ibn Maryam. The later alladhīna hādū at 4:160 confirms the specifically Jewish referent within this larger address to the People of the Book. The passage has resumed clauses and parenthetic replies, all within the same sustained accusation.[437]

The boast uses the first-person plural qatalnā, 'we killed.' Allah answers with third-person plural negations: wa-mā qatalūhu wa-mā ṣalabūhu. In each verb, -ū is the plural agent and -hu is the masculine singular object referring to Jesus. The quoted group remains the antecedent supplied by the passage. Allah then describes dispute and uncertain knowledge, repeats wa-mā qatalūhu yaqīnan, and states bal rafaʿahu Allāhu ilayhi. In this book the denial concerns the Jewish claimants' assertion that they killed and crucified the Messiah. Roman execution belongs to a separate historical proposition, discussed with the Christian sources in Chapter 28.

The Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a, records a Jewish legal counter-story in which Yeshu is accused of sorcery and leading Israel astray, with an announced stoning and a hanging on Passover eve. Its allocation of judicial responsibility is precisely the sort of claim 4:157 rebuts. Ian Mevorach (2017) develops the intertextual reading; Juan Cole (2021) situates the Qur'anic polemic in a wider late-antique setting. The Talmud's surviving literary form is later than Jesus, and its transmission into seventh-century Arabia requires

[437] Qur'an 4:155–159, especially the two negations and the knowledge/conjecture language of 4:157. The immediate verse contains no name for a substitute.

a historical argument. That open documentary issue leaves the Arabic referential sequence intact.

The passive shubbiha lahum gives the claimants an appearance whose precise mechanism the wording leaves unstated. The subsequent alladhīna ikhtalafū introduces those who disputed the matter, while yaqīnan reinforces the final negation. We can therefore ask what the claimants knew, what they claimed to have done, and how Allah vindicates Jesus. Those questions come from the passage's own vocabulary.

What does tawaffā mean here?

Qur'an 3:55 promises Jesus divine taking, elevation, and purification from his opponents. The participle formed from tawaffā has a range that must be established through usage. The Qur'an can associate the verb with death and with the taking involved in sleep, as the contexts of 6:60 and 39:42 show. That range makes the local sequence and the relation to other passages important.[438]

Al-Ṭabarī preserves interpretations involving death, sleep, and removal, while his preferred explanation is shaped by the transmitted expectation of Jesus's return. That is a useful example of how hadith informs an exegetical choice. The preference is part of the interpretive tradition; the existence of the alternatives is part of the same record.

Gabriel Said Reynolds's study of whether the Muslim Jesus is dead or alive develops a different account of the relevant Qur'anic language. I have included the article on the basis of its abstract; I still need to read it in full before using its larger argument to settle the problem. What we can establish here is that several early interpretations existed, and the semantic question cannot be resolved merely by declaring one English gloss obvious.[439]

What, then, does the promise to place Jesus's followers above their opponents until the Day of Resurrection establish? It does not make every later church's political ascendancy a certificate of doctrinal truth. We still have to identify those followers and explain what superiority means in the promise's setting. Otherwise we are supplying the triumphalist history ourselves.

Death and the limits of witnessing

The infant's statement in 19:33 places peace upon the day of birth, the day of death, and the day of being raised alive. The neighboring story of Yaḥyā uses a similar pattern in 19:15. The formula locates both lives within divine care and an eschatological horizon. It does not supply the complete chronological relation among the crucifixion claim, elevation, and a future return.

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[438] Qur'an 3:55; 6:60; 39:42; 5:117. Al-Ṭabarī on 3:55, Arabic text consulted: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura3-aya55.html. His preference is distinguished from the alternative explanations he transmits.

[439] Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 72.2 (2009): 237–258, doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000500. Publisher abstract consulted; full article remains to be evaluated.

Qur'an 5:117 makes tawaffā central to Jesus's account of his knowledge. He describes himself as a witness over his community while present among them; after God took him, God remained the watcher over them. Once he has departed, his testimony has a limit. Jesus does not claim to have personally observed everything later done in his name.

That limitation belongs beside the Gospel sayings about received knowledge and action. John's language about a messenger who speaks what he hears can be compared with a Qur'anic witness who knows the mission entrusted to him and submits the later history of his followers to God. A theory of heavenly preexistence must still account for this bounded testimony if it seeks Qur'anic coherence.

Before whose death?

Qur'an 4:159 contains an antecedent problem. The statement that the People of the Book will believe in him before "his death" has been interpreted with reference either to Jesus's death or to the death of the individual person. Al-Ṭabarī records the disagreement and favors a reading related to Jesus's descent and eventual death.[440]

The alternatives produce different narratives. One supports a future moment of widespread recognition associated with Jesus. The other concerns recognition at the individual's own death. The verse's concluding description of Jesus as a witness on the Day of Resurrection is important under either reading, but it does not independently select every detail of the preceding scenario.

The apparatus still needs the relevant Arabic, the grammatical options, and the named exegetical witnesses printed in parallel. Until that work is done, I am leaving the ambiguity visible. Choosing an antecedent does not turn that choice into an uncontroversial historical fact.

Elevation in the apocalyptic world

Enoch's taking, Elijah's departure, and the Qur'anic elevation of Idrīs provide comparators for a righteous person's removal or exaltation. Daniel's heavenly scene and the Enochic traditions also supply language for authority conferred beyond ordinary earthly life. These sources broaden the set of narrative possibilities available to ancient hearers.[441]

We also have a Christian descent-and-ascent account in the Ascension of Isaiah. Its literary forms include a mission on earth and a return through the heavens. A text with unusual embodiment or concealed identity does not necessarily deny that an execution occurred within its story. Before comparing the texts, we need to separate the claims labeled "Docetic," "substitutionist," and "ascension". Those labels cannot do the reading for us.

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[440] Qur'an 4:159; al-Ṭabarī's Arabic discussion of the pronoun and death interpretations: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura4-aya159.html. The return-related reading and the individual-death reading have different narrative consequences.

[441] Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:1–12; Daniel 7:13–14; Qur'an 19:57; Ascension of Isaiah 9–11. See the earlier Enoch and Ascension chapters for their distinct composition and manuscript histories.

There is a theological consequence here. If God raises someone, that person depends upon God's act. It can signify vindication and exceptional status without identifying the raised figure with the source of the elevation. The various traditions then differ in how much authority, visibility, and continuing activity they assign to the exalted servant.

A sign of the Hour

Qur'an 43:57–65 presents Jesus within an argument about signs, servanthood, and disagreement. Verse 61 is commonly read with Jesus as a sign or source of knowledge concerning the Hour. Translations sometimes make a second coming explicit in English. That wording is an interpretation of the verse; the Arabic does not contain the phrase "second coming."[442]

The antecedent of the pronoun and the reported readings associated with knowledge or sign require a critical apparatus. The resurrection motif, Jesus's exceptional mission, and later return traditions all have a place in the history of interpretation. They should be recorded as interpretations with their supporting arguments.

The passage can be connected with the apocalyptic Son of Man discussion without assuming that every judicial function in one text appears in the other. Nor does heavenly eschatological authority decide how Jesus understood the use of weapons during his earthly mission. The resistance chapter must establish that question from its own sources.

What Jesus is asked to answer

The scene in Qur'an 5:116–118 asks whether Jesus instructed people to take him and his mother as objects of worship alongside God. Jesus denies authorizing what he had no right to say and recalls the instruction to worship his Lord and theirs. His answer then distinguishes his presence among the people from their later history.[443]

What people do in their religion, and whose authority they claim for doing it, can fall within this question. The mention of Mary does not establish that the Qur'an defines the Nicene Trinity as Father, Jesus, and Mary. Formal doctrine and lived devotion must both be examined before identifying the exact target of the challenge.

Jesus ends by submitting punishment and forgiveness to God. The scene gives him no independent jurisdiction over the final fate of his followers. That result belongs beside the exalted titles studied next. The Qur'an can call Jesus Messiah, Word, and Spirit while reserving the judgment of the community, including its later misreadings of him, to Allah.

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[442] Qur'an 43:57–65, especially 43:61. Arabic and translated text compared at https://quran.com/43/61. "Second coming" in an English rendering is an explanatory insertion. The pronoun referent and ʿilm/ʿalam reading traditions require further apparatus.

[443] Qur'an 5:116–120. The account of Jesus's own instruction and the limits of his witnessing are distinguished from later explanations of the community's history.

The Qur’anic reply

The claim quoted in 4:157 belongs to the indictment begun at 4:153. Its speakers assert possession of a death and a victory over God's messenger. The answer is addressed to those claimants and denies the acts they arrogate to themselves. The passage then exposes their uncertainty and asserts Allah's raising of Jesus. I read the entire exchange as a Qur’anic rebuttal of a Jewish execution boast, illuminated by a rabbinic counter-story of judicial authority over Yeshu. The source's actual date and its route of circulation can be evaluated without allowing later interpretations to change the actors in the Qur’anic sentence.[444]

Substitution narratives have a history in later exegesis and Christian polemic. Their separate source histories are retained in Appendix C as an archival dossier. For the present argument, the grammatical speakers, their claimed deeds, and Allah's reply govern the reading.[445]

[444] Qur’an 4:157–158. For the history of interpretations, Lawson (2009); for a detailed defense of the historical non-crucifixion reading, Louay Fatoohi (2023), https://www.ajis.org/index.php/ajiss/article/view/3143.

[445] Todd Lawson, The Crucifixion and the Qur’an, chapter summaries and introduction; compare Fatoohi, 'The Non-Crucifixion Verse' (2023), abstract and text.

37. Messiah, Word and Spirit: The Qur’anic Limits of Exaltation

We cannot spend all our time on what the Qur’an forbids Christians to say about Jesus and then hurry past the titles it gives him. A reading that removes their historical weight leaves the Messiah with a set of unexplained honorifics. What could those titles communicate in the scriptural world we have examined? And where does the Qur’an place their limits?

The title al-Masīḥ occurs eleven times in nine verses. Some verses use it more than once, which explains why an occurrence count differs from a verse count. The explicit title, the name ʿĪsā, and the phrase “son of Mary” overlap without being interchangeable for a concordance. Appendix D makes those distinctions visible.[446]

Messiah and appointment

Qur’an 3:45 introduces the title within the annunciation and associates Jesus with honor and nearness. Qur’an 4:157 retains it in the account of the opponents’ boast, while 4:171 places it in a statement about messengership, Word, and Spirit. The title remains present even where the surrounding passage corrects excessive claims about its bearer.

The earlier scriptural range is substantial. Israelite rulers and priests can be anointed, and Isaiah 45 applies the language to Cyrus. Psalms 2 and 110, Daniel 7, and the Enochic literature contribute different forms of kingship, heavenly authority, and judgment. The word “Messiah” does not automatically import every later expectation attached to each of those texts.

Tabor’s reconstruction helps formulate the historical question of a restoration associated with Jesus’s family and movement. The Qur’an’s use of the title gives a reason to investigate that world. It does not, by itself, establish a Davidic genealogy through Joseph or a particular succession constitution. Those proposals require the sources discussed in the Jerusalem chapters.

Nearness to God should also remain distinct from independent divinity. The Qur’an speaks of differentiated rank among messengers and of beings brought near. It can assign an exceptional place to a servant while retaining the relation of recipient to giver. This gives us something to explain in the theophany chapters: how the servant receives that honor, and what the honor allows him to do.

A Word from God

Qur’an 3:45 describes Jesus through a Word from God; 4:171 relates that Word to its casting to Maryam. Qur’an 3:39 also describes Yaḥyā as confirming a Word from God, commonly

[446] Al-Masīḥ: Qur’an 3:45; 4:157, 171, 172; 5:17 (twice), 72 (twice), 75; 9:30, 31. The eleven tokens occur in nine verses. Their complete coverage appears in Appendix D.

connected with Jesus in the immediate narrative. The identification in the latter verse is interpretive, since the sentence does not repeat Jesus's name.[447]

John's Logos and Philo's account of divine agency are relevant comparators. They explain why a Word associated with creation and revelation could become a vehicle for an exalted account of the Messiah. Origen's treatment of the Father and Logos supplies a further witness to the range of early Christian interpretations. The Qur'an's kalima cannot simply be assigned the complete ontology of any one of those accounts.

Qur'an 3:59 supplies a decisive internal comparison. Jesus is placed beside Adam under God's creative command. The relation between divine speech and a creature's existence is therefore available within the Qur'an itself. A Word can designate the means or commission through which a servant appears without making that servant an uncreated component of God.

Whatever history we propose for the title, this verse places a constraint on its Qur'anic interpretation. A reconstruction of the Messiah's preexistence, whether ideal or as a created heavenly agent, has to explain how its claims remain coherent with creation by God and the comparison with Adam. The sound of "Word" is not going to do that work for us.

A Spirit from Him

Qur'an 4:171 calls Jesus a spirit from God. This grammatical claim differs from the statements that Jesus was supported by Rūḥ al-Qudus. One describes the Messiah; the others describe a support associated with his mission. A theory that equates every occurrence with one entity needs to explain that difference.[448]

The preposition "from" can express origin and relation without indicating a fragment of divine substance. Qur'anic language about the Spirit in the creation of humanity and the support of believers provides a wider field of comparison. The possessive or source relation should be interpreted through that field before the phrase is used as a proof of ontological identity.

We owe Christian theology an accurate description here. Nicene Christians do not ordinarily describe the Son as a biological fragment detached from the Father. Their account of generation and shared nature is a metaphysical claim. If we are going to criticize that claim from the Qur'an, we have to address it. Defeating a sexual account its defenders reject gets us nowhere.

My proposed model reserves independent, uncreated existence for Allah while allowing created servants to communicate divine guidance and power by permission. This is my

[447] Qur'an 3:39, 45, 59; 4:171; Philo, On the Confusion of Tongues 146–147; Origen, Commentary on John 2.2, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101502.htm. The lexical comparison does not establish identity of the complete ontologies.

[448] Qur'an 4:171; 15:29; 32:9; 58:22. Distinguish a description of Jesus as spirit from passages describing his support by Rūḥ al-Qudus.

theological proposal, to be tested against the texts. I am not attributing this precise model to every ancient Christian author or every Shiʿi school.

Servanthood at the limit of honor

Qur'an 4:172 states that the Messiah does not disdain being God's servant and places the nearest angels alongside him in that declaration. The comparison is particularly important after the Enoch and Ascension of Isaiah chapters. Exceptional proximity and heavenly honor can coexist with explicit servanthood.[449]

The ancient texts differ in how they regulate the gestures directed toward an exalted agent. The Ascension's heavenly figures receive veneration and worship the Most High. The developed Metatron traditions dramatize the danger of inferring a second sovereign. These comparisons illuminate the problem, while Qur'an 4:172 supplies its own formulation of the relation.

John 17:3 and 20:17 remain useful controls within the Christian text. They distinguish the one addressed as God and describe Jesus's relation to that God. Their presence should inform the reading of the Gospel's more exalted expressions. The grammatical arguments developed earlier can then be assessed within a narrative that preserves both kinds of language.

Eating food and dependence

Qur'an 5:17 asks who could prevent God from bringing the Messiah, his mother, and the earth's inhabitants to an end. Verse 75 observes that the Messiah and his mother ate food. These arguments bring vulnerability and bodily dependence into the assessment of divine claims.[450]

A Christian defense can answer through a distinction between Christ's human and divine natures. The Qur'anic argument does not state that framework, and the disagreement concerns whether introducing it adequately explains the evidence or changes the identity under discussion. That is the disagreement we have to face, in its strongest available form.

The observation about food should also make us look at our own religious authorities. A person who receives nourishment belongs to a world of created dependency. Sacred status does not sever that relation. We need the same discipline when we attribute extraordinary qualities to them. A claim about manifestation must still explain the creature's actual condition.

Saying three, calling God the Messiah

Qur'an 4:171 warns against saying three, and 5:73 criticizes the formula of God as a third of three. Qur'an 5:72 rejects the identification of God with the Messiah while recalling Jesus's

[449] Qur'an 4:172; Ascension of Isaiah 9:27–40; John 17:3; 20:17. The comparison concerns dependent heavenly honor and servanthood; it does not assert that all sources authorize the same forms of worship.

[450] Qur'an 5:17 and 5:75. The two-natures response is stated as the Christian theological alternative, not as wording found in these Qur'anic verses.

direction to worship his Lord and theirs. The exact historical configuration of the interlocutors' theology remains a research question.[451]

The language should not be used to pretend that all Christians have consciously worshiped three independent creators. Nor should the difficulty of mapping the language onto a later creed make the warning disappear. A comparison must consider theological formulas, popular explanations, and acts of worship as related but distinguishable evidence.

Qur'an 9:30–31 extends the problem to the attribution of sonship and to religious authorities taken as lords. The latter passage belongs at the center of the Christian-law inquiry. A community can subordinate itself to unauthorized human legislation even while professing devotion to one God. The criticism reaches the practice of authority as well as abstract speculation about divine persons.

I treat shirk as a grave liability within God's judgment, without assuming that it automatically cancels every other deed. That is the interpretive premise I am defending. It does not authorize a verdict on any particular person's final standing. We can identify a claim or an act that the text criticizes. Knowing a person's complete account is another matter.

The mother and the favored servant

The judgment scene in 5:116 raises the place of Mary within devotion. Its wording can be investigated alongside prayers, vows, protective appeals, and formal doctrinal distinctions. Those forms of evidence need their own dates. The mere appearance of Mary in the challenge cannot establish that she occupied the place of the Holy Spirit in a creed known to the speaker.[452]

Qur'an 43:59 describes Jesus as a servant upon whom God bestowed favor and whom God made an example for the Children of Israel. This statement gives a positive formulation of exaltation: appointment, favor, and exemplary significance. It leaves room for a profound religious role while fixing the direction in which authority flows.

The next chapter follows the term rūḥ through the whole Qur'an. That wider reading is necessary because the Spirit associated with Jesus also appears in passages about creation, revelation, believers, and the heavenly order. A theory built from the Christological passages alone would leave much of the word's actual usage unexplained.

The readings that accompanied the Messiah's names

An argument about the Messiah's titles is also an argument about how the Qur'anic text reached us. Ibn Masʿūd matters to this book because his status as a learned Companion, his association with Kufan recitation, and the history of codex standardization expose the distance between a canonical text, a reported alternative reading, and the judgment of a

[451] Qur'an 4:171; 5:72–74; 9:30–31; 19:35–36. The bounded-liability account of shirk is the author's working theological premise, carried forward from the supplied manuscript and discussions.

[452] Qur'an 5:116; 43:59. The distinction between formal creed and devotional practice is necessary before identifying the historical targets of the criticism.

later exegete. The inquiry must preserve this distinction at every disputed word. A reading attributed to Ibn Masʿūd may be an actual variant in a transmitted recitation, an interpretive expansion preserving what a teacher understood, or a later scholar's mistaken attribution. These different things can coexist in a source catalogue without receiving the same historical grade.[453]

Ibn Masʿūd's authority was recognized within the hadith tradition, including a prophetic commendation of taking Qur'an from named reciters. The report does not authenticate every later statement assigned to the Kufan school. A further controversy surrounds his objection to the standardization of codices under ʿUthmān. The materials of his textual tradition should therefore be studied without treating the surviving ʿUthmānic text as a complete documentary record of every reading taught in the first generations. Nor should a doctrinally attractive alternative be promoted to an ancient reading simply because a later compiler says that Kufans held it.[454]

Maryam 19:24: ʿAlqama as our named Kufan witness

The closest immediately verifiable example in the Jesus-Maryam cycle appears at Qur'an 19:24. The familiar recitation means that a voice called to Maryam from below her. Another grammatically distinct reading allows the caller to be described as the one beneath her. In al-Ṭabarī's commentary, some transmitters identify Gabriel as the speaker while others identify the newborn Jesus. The distinction matters because an infant addressing Maryam before she faces her people supplies an additional precedent for the later cradle speech of 19:29–33. Under a Gabriel reading, Jesus's public defense before his people receives a different dramatic preparation.[455]

Al-Ṭabarī then preserves the form fa-khāṭabahā min taḥtihā through an isnād passing from Sufyān al-Thawrī to al-Aʿmash, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, and ʿAlqama. The form substitutes the notion of addressing or speaking to her for calling her. Its interest is the preservation of a distinctly worded reading through a Kufan scholarly line with close ties to Ibn Masʿūd's school. The terminal reading attribution in this report is to ʿAlqama. A claim that Ibn Masʿūd himself personally uttered this exact alternative needs another attestation, one that connects its wording to his person rather than to his pedagogical heirs.[456]

Al-Ṭabarī himself prefers Jesus as the caller, reasoning from the proximity of the antecedent and Maryam's subsequent gesture toward her child. Yet he accepts the

[453] On the distinction between Companion codices, reading variants, and interpretive glosses, compare Arthur Jeffery, Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an (1937), with modern work on early Qur'anic transmission and the Kufan reading schools.

[454] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of the Merits of the Qur'an, the hadith 'Take the Qur'an from four'; al-Tirmidhī 3104 on Ibn Masʿūd's response to codex collection; later reading catalogues such as Ibn Abī Dāwūd's Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif.

[455] Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on Qur'an 19:24: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura19-aya24.html. He discusses min taḥtihā and man taḥtahā and preserves both Gabriel and Jesus identifications.

[456] Al-Ṭabarī on 19:24 cites two reports from Sufyān → al-Aʿmash → Ibrāhīm → ʿAlqama reading 'fa-khāṭabahā min taḥtihā', and a further report from Wakīʿ. Source: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura19-aya24.html.

semantic possibility under either common grammatical reading. Here we can actually separate the transmitted wording, the identification of the speaker, and the commentator's inference from the narrative sequence. The Ibn Masʿūd school becomes useful precisely because it furnishes a documented network in which individual readings can be traced, while the same record disciplines careless claims about its founder.[457]

Two genuinely attributable variants in neighboring Jesus passages

At Qur'an 4:159, the standard wording speaks of belief before 'his death,' leaving interpreters to dispute whether the pronoun concerns Jesus or the individual among the People of the Book. Ibn Kathīr reports an alternative attributed to Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, qabla mawtihim, 'before their death,' making the plural reference explicit. This matters greatly for the chronology of Jesus's death and the interpretation of a future return. The attribution is to Ubayy. Comparing him with Ibn Masʿūd does not give us permission to move a reading from one Companion to the other.[458]

At Qur'an 43:61, al-Ṭabarī records the reading la-ʿalamun lil-sāʿah, 'a sign of the Hour,' from Ibn ʿAbbās, alongside the standard la-ʿilmun, 'knowledge of the Hour.' He also reports an Ubayy reading concerning the Hour. Different vowelings of a comparable written consonantal skeleton can redirect the sense toward eschatological evidence. Al-Ṭabarī's own discussion illustrates both the textual and interpretive layers of that movement. We need to name the reported reciters and keep the separate tafsīr disagreement in view: does the pronoun refer to Jesus or to the Qur'an?[459]

Can we document an Ibn Masʿūd variant in 4:171?

The central theological verses in this chapter are 3:45 and 4:171, with their descriptions of the Messiah as Word and Spirit. The present source inventory establishes no securely located Ibn Masʿūd alternative at either verse. That is where the checked sources leave us for now. It would be easy to conflate a Kufan exegesis of 'His Word' with a written variant attributed to Ibn Masʿūd. If we conflate the two, what was the point of borrowing hadith science for this project? We should preserve a blank in the variant column until an identifiable primary quotation, source date, and transmission path have been established.[460]

The exact Arabic of 4:171 deserves the philological scrutiny a Companion-variant project demands. The text describes the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, as Allah's messenger, a word He cast to Maryam, and a spirit from Him. Interpreters differ on whether the sequence

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[457] Al-Ṭabarī on Qur'an 19:24, conclusion after discussion of the speaker, as well as the distinct reading through ʿAlqama.

[458] Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr on 4:159, reports 'qabla mawtihim' as the reading of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura4-aya159.html. Compare al-Ṭabarī on 4:159.

[459] Al-Ṭabarī, commentary on Qur'an 43:61: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura43-aya61.html. Ibn ʿAbbās is named for la-ʿalamun; an Ubayy formulation is also noted.

[460] The present working dossier has no independently verified Ibn Masʿūd reading at 3:45 or 4:171. The statement is limited to the material audited here; it is not a claim that no such report exists anywhere.

denotes divine communication, a created being brought into existence by command, or an elevated agent of revelation. Those disputes can occur while the transmitted verse remains stable. A speculative difference in wording would have to be verified before it could affect the theological assessment. We are trying to recover the authentic words of an earlier prophet. We had better keep an attested variant separate from our own conjectures.[461]

The Kufan materials invite a further archival task: build a concordance of every reported Ibn Masʿūd or ʿAlqama reading in the Qur'anic Jesus and Maryam passages; note the earliest source, transmitter sequence, rasm compatibility, putative reciter, and whether the report is explicitly called a qirāʾah. Separate genuine textual substitutions from lexical explanations introduced by phrases such as 'he meant'. The resulting table would tell us what evidence there is for a specifically Masʿūdian approach to the Messiah, including a possible finding that the most meaningful alternative interpretations were transmitted by people near the school rather than as alternative letters of the scripture itself.[462]

[461] Qur'an 4:171; 3:45; 3:59. Compare Arabic exegesis and early readings; avoid inferring an unattested variant from a disputed theological conclusion.

[462] Research protocol for the companion-reading register. Principal primary search targets: al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Dāwūd, Ibn Jinnī al-Muḥtasab, and later qirāʾāt compendia; Jeffery as an imperfect starting index.

37A. Different Trinities under Qur’anic Judgment: Shirk, Kufr and Fisq

When the Qur’an tells Christians not to say “three,” what precisely has it condemned? The question belongs to this book because different Christian communities describe God’s unity, Jesus’s divine status, and the Holy Spirit in differing terms, while other Christians express their religion most vividly through prayers, images, and the authority granted to clergy. It would be convenient to treat all these differences as one identical assertion. The text itself names distinct expressions, appeals to the created dependence of Jesus and Maryam, and gives more than one moral vocabulary for departure from divine guidance. Before we assign a theological name to the offense, we need to identify what we are criticizing.[463]

I am proposing an explicitly liberal Qur’an-centered reading. I want to examine doctrinal contradiction, worshipful association, disobedient conduct and culpable rejection separately. “Liberal” here means a willingness to limit religious accusations to the propositions and actions the text establishes, to distinguish persons from formulas, and to leave the final accounting to God. It does not mean declaring every form of Trinity compatible with tawḥīd. The Qur’an’s explicit descriptions of unbelief constrain my argument, including when I want to recognize good faith or partial theological proximity. The proposal will be tested against classical readings that take the condemnation more generally.[464]

First establish the propositions the Qur’an actually condemns

Qur’an 4:171 addresses the People of the Book, warns against excess in religion, identifies the Messiah as God’s messenger, His Word conveyed to Maryam and a spirit from Him, and orders its hearers to desist from saying “three.” Its concluding insistence on God’s oneness and His transcendence above having a child defines the theological issue. The verse does not give a list of all historically named Christian schools. Its command must be applied to those schools only after their claims have been described in their own vocabulary. The next passages sharpen some of the targets without erasing this first textual restraint.[465]

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[463] Qur’an 4:171; 5:72–76; 5:116–118; 9:31. Finding Injil v0.15, chapters 34–39 and Appendix F, especially QC-CHR-001–020. These are distinct scriptural locations, not interchangeable quotations of one Christian doctrinal statement.

[464] This liberal construal is a constructive proposal of the present book, not a claim that early Muslims or the major Sunni exegetes adopted this taxonomy. Compare Qur’an 5:72–74 with 5:66, 5:69 and 5:82–85; and the audit discipline in Appendix F, F.1–F.2.

[465] Qur’an 4:171 Arabic and its related Qur’anic depiction of Jesus as Word and Spirit. See Quranic Arabic Corpus, translation and word-by-word resource, https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=4&verse=171. Greek/Syriac or Church Fathers cannot silently determine the referent of an Arabic statement.

Qur'an 5:72 is especially definite: la-qad kafara alladhīna qālū inna Allāha huwa al-Masīḥu bnu Maryam. It identifies a condemned statement that God is the Messiah, son of Maryam, and quotes Jesus himself directing the Children of Israel toward "Allah, my Lord and your Lord." The verse then warns against associating partners with God: man yushrik bi-llāh. Here kufr is an express textual predicate and shirk is an express warning about the theological violation. The relative relation between "God is the Messiah" and the incarnational claims of particular Christians must be investigated; that inquiry cannot make the words kafara and yushrik disappear.[466]

Qur'an 5:73 similarly declares that those who say God is thālithu thalāthatin have committed kufr, and insists that there is only one God. The phrase can be translated as "third of three"; a reader must argue, with grammar and historical evidence, whether a particular confession says precisely that or entails what the Qur'an attacks. The next verse, 5:74, calls its hearers to repentance and seeking forgiveness. These verses give the chapter both a boundary and an invitation: definite religious criticism accompanied by the possibility of repentance. Qur'an 5:75 then adduces a concrete fact about Jesus and Maryam, that both ate food. Dependence, creatureliness and the limits of exaltation are part of the Qur'an's own case.[467]

Qur'an 5:116 poses another proposition. God asks Jesus whether he instructed the people to take Jesus and Maryam as gods besides God, and Jesus denies such authorization. The wording concerns divine honors attributed to two named figures. It does not specify Maryam as one of the three hypostases in the Nicene creed. The question can reach enacted devotion as well as explicitly formulated doctrine, but its historical application requires evidence about the kind of honor and agency worshippers assigned to Mary. Qur'an 9:31 extends the warning again, toward religious scholars, monks and the Messiah treated as lords alongside God. The scope of this last criticism can involve the practical substitution of human authority for divine command.[468]

Shirk, kufr and fisq name different failures, with overlapping scope

A proposed scale from shirk to kufr to fisq initially seems natural: associating another with God is graver than holding an erroneous doctrine, which in turn may seem graver than disobedience while acknowledging God. Qur'anic usage is less mechanical. Shirk is named a great injustice in 31:13 and receives a severe warning in 4:48 and 4:116. Kufr can denote the denial of a claim taken as divine truth and is expressly predicated of particular sayings about Jesus in 5:72–73. Fisq describes departing from rightful obedience, sometimes with

[466] Qur'an 5:72 in Arabic (kafara; yashrik). Compare 5:17 and 43:59. Quranic Arabic Corpus, https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=5&verse=72. Chapter 37 supplies the existing discussion of dependence and prophetic servanthood.

[467] Qur'an 5:73–75. Quranic Arabic Corpus, https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=5&verse=73. The precise phrase is thālithu thalāthatin (third of three); glossing it as a modern named creed requires a historical argument.

[468] Qur'an 5:116–118 and 9:31. Compare the separate dossiers in Appendix F, 5A and QC-CHR-009–012. These passages differ in who is said to be honored and what kind of obligation is in question.

consequences far beyond minor moral lapses. One person's conduct can instantiate more than one of these descriptions.[469]

The most revealing control comes from the Qur'an's own discussion of revealed law. In 5:44, those who fail to judge by what Allah revealed are called al-kāfirūn; in 5:45, al-ẓālimūn; and in 5:47, where the People of the Injīl are explicitly addressed, al-fāsiqūn. The words concern related forms of departure within a contiguous argument. They provide a taxonomy of what can be wrong with disregard of revelation, rather than a numerical ladder whose lowest rung is harmless. Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī's modern commentary makes the same structural observation: rejection of God's judgment, injustice and disobedience may coexist in one act, while conviction and actual obedience vary from case to case. His theological conclusions are his own, and his reading is useful here as a comparandum rather than a settled interpretation of every Qur'anic use.[470]

This distinction yields a conditional rather than automatic severity judgment. Someone can affirm the one creator yet disobey a command, which can be assessed under fisq. A confessional formula that contradicts the Qur'an's account of God may fall under kufr as the text defines the rejected claim. Treating a creature as an independent object of worship invokes the warning of shirk. When a given formula is said to entail an additional deity, the entailment itself must be demonstrated. We may describe the object of a practice as shirk-like and still withhold judgment on what the practitioner knows or where that person stands eternally. If I demand precision in historical claims, I cannot abandon it when making religious accusations.[471]

The Trinity of the councils in its strongest available formulation

The Catholic Catechism §253 says that the Trinity is one God in three persons, and explicitly refuses the confession of three gods. The distinction between ousia or substance, hypostasis or person, and relation is offered to explain why the Father, Son and Spirit are three without multiplying divine essence. Sections 254–255 insist that the persons are distinct by relations while possessing the one divinity wholly. That is a real metaphysical claim deserving engagement. A critique that attributes three self-existing creator deities to this creed would substitute a position its official defenders reject. I owe the creed that accuracy even if I ultimately judge its metaphysics incoherent with Qur'anic tawḥīd.[472]

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[469] Qur'an 31:13; 4:48, 4:116; 5:72–73. The chapters should avoid converting the vocabulary into a numerical system of severity not supplied by the text.

[470] Qur'an 5:44, 5:45 and 5:47, with their respective words al-kāfirūn, al-ẓālimūn and al-fāsiqūn. Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī, Tafhīm al-Qur'ān, commentary on Q 5:44–47, https://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=5&to=50&verse=44 (accessible translated commentary read). The degree and coexistence argument is his interpretation.

[471] Qur'an 5:44–47; 5:72–73; 17:15; 22:17. A proposition classified as illicit worship and a pronouncement about an individual's destiny are different claim units.

[472] Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§252–255, official Vatican text, https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_one/article_1/paragraph_2_the_father.html (primary contemporary doctrinal source).

The question becomes more demanding once the full Christian position is granted. The Son is confessed as fully divine, and the incarnate Jesus is identified with that Son. The doctrine of one divine essence may avoid numerical tritheism; it does not automatically resolve Qur'an 5:72's rejection of the theological identification of God with the Messiah. A Christian can distinguish the statement "Jesus is God the Son" from the claim that the divine essence is exhausted by the human person Jesus. The Qur'anic polemic may concern precisely the attribution of uncreated divinity to a human Messiah; the narrower grammatical identity argument alone cannot dispose of it. A responsible response must test both the Christian predication and the Qur'anic objection together.[473]

The same problem arises with the Holy Spirit. For Nicene Christians the Spirit is a divine person, not merely an angel bearing revelation. In Finding Injil, chapters 38–39 develop a Qur'anic comparison in which Rūḥ al-Qudus communicates divine agency and may be understood in created or commissioned terms. Qur'an 2:87, 5:110 and 16:102 assign the Spirit identifiable work; Qur'an 4:171 calls Jesus a spirit from God. Those expressions furnish evidence for a prophetic rather than consubstantial ontology. Their actual co-reference remains a separate question, as Appendix D and the Sayings Volume already insist. A Qur'anic argument against an uncreated third hypostasis requires that doctrinal claim to be described accurately before the scriptural contrast is made.[474]

Philoxenus and the West Syriac severity test

The late antique West Syriac controversy sharpens the referent of 5:72. Philoxenus of Mabbug, writing before Muhammad, called Jesus Christ "God the Word" and said that the single incarnate Word suffered in the flesh. In his Letter to the Monks he also expressly confesses one Trinity, one essence and one divinity, "One in Three and Three in One." This is excellent comparative evidence because it refuses a false division between a forceful incarnational identity and a sincere profession of monotheism. The Christological formulation of the West Syriac Miaphysite tradition must be distinguished from Chalcedon's two-natures confession; both traditions affirm a tri-personal Godhead and identify Jesus with the divine Son.[475]

The historically named Jacobite tradition took shape in the sixth century, especially through the organizational work of Jacob Baradaeus, after Philoxenus's career. Philoxenus is therefore a predecessor whose words document a relevant theological milieu. His testimony supports a real pre-Islamic comparator for the Qur'an's phrase "God is the

[473] Compare Qur'an 5:17, 5:72–75 and 3:59 with Catechism §§253–255. A Christian "Jesus is God the Son" construction and the Qur'anic phrase inna Allāha huwa al-Masīḥ require a semantic and metaphysical comparison rather than a presumed verbal identity.

[474] Qur'an 2:87, 2:97, 2:253, 4:171, 5:110, 16:102, 19:17, 26:193–194; Finding Injil chapters 38–39 and Appendix D. The co-reference among these Spirit occurrences remains a separate research question.

[475] Philoxenus of Mabbug, Letter to the Monks, in A. A. Vaschalde, trans., Three Letters of Philoxenus (1902), pp. 93–105, especially the explicit confession after the introduction of the letter, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/philoxenus_three_04_letter_to_monks.htm. Translator's theological analysis in Vaschalde's introduction, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/philoxenus_three_02_part1.htm. English translation checked; Syriac autopsy pending.

Messiah"; it cannot establish that the phrase was meant for that communion alone. Other Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christians also called Jesus God. We cannot assign shirk uniquely to the Jacobites and give the Melkites an automatic exemption. That would smuggle an unfounded historical boundary into the verdict. More defensible distinctions concern the precise predications, their claimed logical consequences, and worship that follows them.[476]

Subordinationist, adoptionist and Jewish-Christian possibilities

Second-century and later Christian thought included several forms of hierarchical divinity, created or subordinate heavenly agents, and accounts of Jesus as an anointed human servant. These positions cannot be compressed into one tidy "Arian" alternative; the fourth-century Arian controversies themselves included writers who gave the preexistent Son extraordinary status and honored him in worship. Jewish-Christian materials sometimes present stronger continuity with Torah and ordinary human prophethood, although the surviving evidence comes partly through hostile heresiologists. Chapters 18–27A have already set a source rule: an Ebionite claim reported by Irenaeus is evidence for his description, and the accuracy of that description requires independent testing.[477]

The Qur'an's positive model admits a Messiah who is Word, spirit from God, extraordinary sign, and supported by divine Spirit while remaining God's servant (3:45; 4:171–172; 43:59). A Christian confession that affirms one God and understands Christ's exceptional functions as granted by God stands at a different doctrinal distance from that model than a confession that worships Christ as the uncreated Lord. Being closer to that model does not itself confer a new Qur'anic legal status. It gives us questions we can investigate: does the group assert independent divinity, who is addressed in prayer, how is revelation received, and what is the relation between anointed messenger and creator?

Maryam: prayer, intercession and worship under Q 5:116

Lived Catholic religion creates a particularly serious comparison because its own texts permit prayer addressed to Mary. Catechism §§2677–2679 says petitioners can entrust their cares to her, ask her to pray for them, and pray with and to her. The Catholic distinction between the worship due to God and the veneration offered to Mary remains official doctrine. A researcher visiting a church may nevertheless observe kneeling, candles, petitions and bodily orientation toward an image of Mary. Those observations are real religious actions. Their theological referent is established by what worshippers say they believe and by what they ask Mary to do, alongside the words of the prayers themselves. A

[476] Philoxenus, Letter to Emperor Zeno, in Vaschalde, Three Letters, especially pp. 118–121; Appendix F dossier 5A. Jacob Baradaeus's sixth-century organizational role is surveyed in the bibliography of v0.15; no exclusive sect-identification is established by these data.

[477] Finding Injil, chapters 18–27A, esp. 27A on how second-century authoritative chains were constructed; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.26.2, a reported description of Ebionites rather than an extant Jewish-Christian self-document. See Appendix B's controlled bibliography.

statue's presence or a kneeling body alone cannot establish a confession of an independent goddess.[478]

Under a liberal Qur'an-centered reading the central issue is the agency granted to the addressee. A request to Mary to intercede with Allah differs semantically from the assertion that Mary independently grants forgiveness, creates events, or rules the final judgment. Both remain within the field of Q 5:116's challenge concerning elevated devotion, and a strict monotheist may condemn the act of calling upon Mary itself. A narrower judgment would require proof of divine attribution before calling a particular request shirk in its strongest sense. It must also confront the actual Qur'anic phrase "two gods besides Allah," rather than silently changing that into the weaker charge of inappropriate honor. The Collyridian practices reported by Epiphanius and Syriac intercessory literature are important historical witnesses, with genre, dates and polemical mediation duly recorded in Appendix F.[479]

Priests, legislation and the problem of ordinary fisq

Qur'an 9:31 criticizes taking religious scholars and monks as lords besides God. This yields an axis of fault different from the technical Nicene doctrine. A Christian might profess an uncompromisingly single divine creator while assigning a priest, community or institution effective power to cancel a command attributed to God. In such a case the problem is authority and obedience. The Qur'an's command in 5:47 that the People of the Injīl judge by what Allah revealed, followed by the designation al-fāsiqūn for failure, makes fisq a direct category in this book's investigation of Christian practice. The scope of the genuine Injīl remains governed by the manuscript's critical-sayings method, rather than by treating every sentence of a fourth-century codex as an individually authenticated saying of Jesus.[480]

The same warning reaches Muslim communities. If I claim to recover the Messiah's law and then adopt unsupported rules on a scholar's authority, I have failed my own test. These categories have to remain tied to what people claim and do, including close to home. The question "who authorized this?" is answerable through the graded traditions, the Qur'an's explicit demands and the documentary history of interpretation. Where the evidence is incomplete, the case stays open. We do not get to fill the gap with a verdict of fisq or kufr.

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[478] Catechism of the Catholic Church §§2677–2679, official Vatican English text, https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_four/section_one/chapter_two/article_2/the_way_of_prayer.index.html; compare §§971 and 2132 on Marian devotion and sacred images. Modern catechism is evidence for modern doctrine, not a dated sixth-century practice.

[479] Qur'an 5:116. Epiphanius, Panarion 79, on the reported Collyridians, and Cornelia B. Horn (2015) on dated Syriac intercession, as differentiated in Appendix F. The genre of heresiological accusation and the distinct forms of intercession remain publication-stage issues.

[480] Qur'an 9:31, 5:47–48, 5:66–68. Finding Injil chapter 41 and companion Critical Sayings Vol. I; FI-002 addresses Matthew 5:17–20 and Torah continuity; the QC-INJ register tracks the Injīl's authority separately from a textual grade.

A provisional spectrum of propositions and practices

The following spectrum is my working arrangement of specific beliefs and actions. The Qur'an has not issued us a table ranking denominations. Several cases can occur in one community, or in a single person's religion; the same name for a church never decides which has occurred.

Case A · Multiple independent recipients of divine worship

Where a speaker explicitly recognizes several independent gods, or confers uncreated divine power upon Jesus or Maryam as an additional sovereign, the material fit with the Qur'an's warning against shirk is direct. Statements that God is "third of three" or that a creature has been placed alongside Him also face the explicit kufr language of 5:72–73. The analyst must still document the statement and date the witness; supposed tritheism inferred from an adversary's hostile summary is not the same evidence as an attested self-description.

Case B · Incarnational identification and consubstantial personhood

A confession that Jesus is the uncreated divine Word falls squarely within a serious Qur'anic dispute, including 5:17, 5:72 and 5:75. My strongest Qur'anic objection concerns created dependence and the worship directed toward one who shares it. A philosophical defense using hypostatic distinction is relevant, and its evaluation remains open at the historical-referent level. Given the explicit kufr wording of 5:72, this book cannot certify Nicene belief as merely fisq on the strength of professed monotheism alone. It can acknowledge that the creed rejects three gods while investigating how the Qur'an assesses the divinity it assigns to the Messiah.

Case C · One God with a delegated heavenly Messiah or Spirit

A doctrine that preserves God as the sole uncreated deity, treats the Messiah's extraordinary mission as granted, and directs worship to God possesses more points of contact with Qur'anic affirmations. Its disagreement may concern the historical mission, the extent of preexistence, or the nature of the Spirit. A later school name does not determine whether the disagreement is Kufr, fisq, or a legitimate variation. The relevant commitments must be itemized before any theological classification.

Case D · Petition, icons and devotional dependency

Calling upon Mary, a saint, or an image-associated figure requires an audit of petition language and assigned powers. A declaration of autonomous divine agency makes the shirk case stronger. Requests for intercession remain theologically disputed within strict tawḥīd interpretations and are exposed to Q 5:116's critique, even when the petitioner professes that God alone grants the result. Ritual gestures, solemn vows and daily prayer need individual evidence, with earliest attestation distinguished from present-day practice.

Case E · Replacing revealed obligation with human authority

Where a community claims to worship the one God and knowingly fails to judge by the revelation it understands as binding, the category fisq in 5:47 directly concerns its conduct. The same cluster uses kufr and ẓulm, so any lighter conclusion depends on a precise account of what the person affirms, what the command requires, and why it was broken. A

practical error may coexist with a doctrinal one; intentional denial of revelation moves the case toward a different claim. The conditions are what make this spectrum useful. I cannot promise that applying them will produce the more comfortable verdict.

The best classical objection

Al-Ṭabarī's commentary on 5:73 treats the disputed statement as a grave claim of unbelief and association, and discusses Christians' confessions about three hypostases. Al-Qurṭubī names Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites and reasons that, even where Christians expressly deny three gods, their account of the three divine persons entails what the Qur'an condemns. This is the strongest historical resistance to the selective or liberal taxonomy proposed here. The medieval exegetical claim cannot be dismissed by observing that Catholics use the phrase "one God." Al-Qurṭubī already knew that they do. The disagreement is whether tri-personal consubstantiality entails illicit plurality or divinity assigned to a creature.[481]

The most defensible liberal proposal is therefore narrower than a general absolution of trinitarian doctrine. It asks for the proper object of each Qur'anic utterance, counts an expressed condemnation as a constraint, distinguishes a doctrinal statement from a person's full moral record, and attends to the range of Christian practices that the Qur'an might address. When this method leads me away from classical exegesis, I need to say so. Such a disagreement enters the source register with the exact traditional opinion and its strongest linguistic reasoning; an interpretation does not gain historical authority because it happens to suit what I want this book to accomplish.

God's judgment, the faithful Christian, and epistemic restraint

Qur'an 5:66 speaks of an upright or moderate group among the People of the Book, 5:69 gives a conditional assurance linked to belief in God, the Last Day and good action, and 5:82–85 describes Christians who respond humbly and with tears when they recognize truth. Qur'an 3:113–115 praises upright People of the Book engaged in worship and charity. Their standing has been read differently by Muslim interpreters, including arguments about whether such passages apply to communities before Muhammad or to those who accept his message. The restrictive reading deserves a full hearing; the positive Qur'anic descriptions are themselves commitments that must remain visible when other passages pronounce kufr upon particular claims.[482]

Qur'an 17:15 says God does not punish until a messenger has been sent, and 22:17 reserves judgment among named religious communities for God on the Day of Resurrection. Those statements help distinguish a publicly assessable confession from what one individual

[481] Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on Q 5:73, Arabic at https://quran.com/fa/5:73/tafsirs/ar-tafsir-al-tabari; al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān, Q 5:73, Arabic at https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura5-aya73.html. Both passages checked in Arabic electronic text; printed-edition pagination and critical collation pending.

[482] Qur'an 5:66, 5:69, 5:82–85; 3:113–115, 3:199; 57:27; 3:85. For the narrower scope argued here, see Appendix F, QC-CHR-016–018 and QC-DIS-019. Application of these verses across historical communities is contested in tafsīr.

understood, heard or intended. They cannot erase 5:72–73. They can limit the confidence with which a contemporary interpreter passes from those verses to the eternal fate of an ordinary Christian. Someone repeating a creedal formula learned from childhood, someone using metaphysical language to defend one God, and someone knowingly offering worship to another sovereign present different evidence for culpability, even where a theologian judges their propositions mistaken.[483]

Requirements for a publishable comparison

Every proposal that the Qur'an addresses a named Christian theology should carry a claim unit, its Arabic phrase, the earliest independently dated source in which a Christian actually makes the alleged claim, and a statement of how the Qur'anic phrase maps onto that source. For 5:72 this means comparing the direct predication in Arabic with Philoxenus and other Syriac or Greek Christian writers. For 5:73 it means distinguishing numerical plurality from one-essence tri-personality and testing whether the latter entails the former. For 5:116 the evidence must include prayer, liturgical action and claims about Mary's agency. For 9:31 it must identify the norm a religious authority is said to have displaced. None of these can be answered by equating a Christian label with a Qur'anic offense in advance.

Appendix F holds the open audit entries QC-CHR-001–020, especially 001, 003, 005–010, 012 and 016–018, while QC-INJ-005–006 covers the charge of fisq in 5:47. The historical-grade apparatus of the companion Sayings Volume remains independent. Finding a Christian doctrine disturbing tells us nothing by itself about which words the historical Jesus spoke. Nor does a Qur'anic declaration of kufr identify, by itself, the sixth-century Christian author being addressed. This chapter adds a method for comparing the doctrinal, devotional and disciplinary claims without reducing the Qur'an's varied vocabulary to one indiscriminate sentence. The source register preserves the classical objections, the strongest Christian self-descriptions and the limits of the proposed liberal reading.[484]

[483] Qur'an 17:15, 22:17; compare 4:40, 2:286, 5:74. These establish Qur'anic resources for discussing responsibility and divine judgment, while 5:72–73 retain their explicit condemnation of the named confessions.

[484] Finding Injil v0.15, Appendix F, QC-CHR-001–020 and QC-INJ-005–006, and Finding Injil: Critical Sayings Vol. I v1.3. The doctrinal taxonomy is an analytical annotation, not a retroactive change to the original 178 Qur'anic claim IDs.

37B. The Gospel According to Ibn Masʿūd

An unlikely Gospel

The Qurʾān gives Jesus a title so exalted that I spent much of this book asking how it could remain compatible with his humanity. He is God's messenger, the Messiah, a spirit from Him, and His Word conveyed to Maryam. Those expressions occur in a revelation that also insists Jesus ate food, depended upon God, and called God his Lord. The apparent strain has made the Fourth Gospel unexpectedly central to a Muslim inquiry into the Injīl.

Now an early Kufan reading introduces a fresh difficulty. In the account of Maryam, immediately after the infant Jesus declares himself God's servant and prophet, Ibn Masʿūd is reported to have read the identification of Jesus through an expression understood as God's own utterance. The relevant passage is 19:34. I had searched for it under 4:171 and 3:45 because those verses already name the Messiah as a word from God. The forgotten location matters. Sūrat Maryam places the title immediately after Jesus speaks from the cradle and immediately before the rejection of divine offspring.

That conjunction deserves its own chapter. If the Messiah can be called the utterance of God in the same breath that he calls himself God's servant, then a reading of the Qurʾān that makes him merely an ordinary prophet has missed something. The Qurʾān itself supplies the language of his extraordinary status. The question is what that language permits us to say about his existence and authority.

I call this The Gospel According to Ibn Masʿūd because the Companion's reported reading exposes a path through the Christian material this book has been trying to recover. The title is deliberately literary. Ibn Masʿūd transmitted the Qurʾān; no separate Gospel authored by him has been discovered. Our object is an attributed reading and the early interpretive tradition attached to it. That is quite enough to investigate.

The word that became a reading

The received text of Qurʾān 19:34 reads:

ذَٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ

That is Jesus, son of Maryam, the utterance of truth about which they dispute.

The Arabic carries a grammatical question that most English translations quietly decide. In the reading familiar from Ḥafṣ, qawla al-ḥaqq is accusative. Other canonical reciters read qawlu al-ḥaqq, nominative. The words can certify the truth of the preceding account, and the nominative construction can also be understood as predicating the utterance of Jesus himself. There is a difference between saying that the account about Jesus is God's true speech and calling Jesus the divine utterance.

Then comes the reported reading associated with ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd:

قَالُ اللَّهِ (qāl Allāh) or قَالُ الْحَقِّ (qāl al-ḥaqq).

The witnesses differ about the genitive expression following qāl. Al-Farrāʾ, writing in the early third century AH, records the reading in Ibn Masʿūd's name and explains that qāl and

qawl can both function as nouns meaning an utterance. The reading does not turn the clause into a new finite verb, “God said.” It offers another way to name the utterance. Al-Ṭabarī records the tradition and an associated explanation, kalimat Allāh, the Word of God. Ibn ʿAṭiyya and al-Rāzī preserve the association as well.

The actual transmission deserves care. Al-Ṭabarī's report reaches Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī through al-Aʿmash and a later family chain. Ibrāhīm reports that people used to identify the wording as Ibn Masʿūd's recitation. That form of attribution gives us early Kufan evidence for a remembered reading. It does not furnish an eyewitness account of Ibn Masʿūd reciting the verse. Later books that preserve the same attribution are witnesses to its reception, with independence to be demonstrated rather than assumed.

The most important detail is that kalimat Allāh is a transmitted explanation of the reported wording. It is not a separately established replacement written into the verse by Ibn Masʿūd. The reading and the gloss belong in adjacent columns of our source register.

Al-Ṭabarī himself preferred an interpretation in which the expression certifies the truth of God's account of Jesus. He acknowledged that construing it as a description of Jesus as God's Word was grammatically possible. Al-Zamakhsharī subsequently gave a more definite explanation: Jesus is called God's Word because he came into being through the command Be, without an earthly father. Al-Rāzī took the stronger personal predication seriously, arguing that Jesus himself could be called the utterance of Truth because al-Ḥaqq is a name of God.

Here is the evidence the historical critic must preserve: an early reported reading, alternative canonical case-endings, and classical interpreters who saw more than one possible subject for qawl. None requires the Qurʾān to be made into the Gospel of John. All require the Muslim to take the Qurʾān's own Christological language seriously.

Maryam's child speaks

The placement is almost more important than the variant.

Maryam returns carrying her child. The people question her, and she points toward the infant. He speaks with an authority that precedes ordinary human instruction:

إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا

I am God's servant. He has given me scripture and made me a prophet. (19:30)

Jesus then speaks of blessing, prayer, almsgiving, obedience to his mother, birth, death, and being raised alive. The narrative gives his mission a moral shape before it gives the reader the disputed description in verse 34. The word associated with him belongs to a child who announces worship and charity, whose authority comes from God.

The next verse rejects the claim that God takes walad, offspring. God decrees an affair and says kun, and it comes to be. Verse 36 restores the child's own confession: God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him.

This sequence is dense with theology. The speaker is a human child born of Maryam. His commission comes from God. His unusual birth belongs to the divine power of creation.

The disputed title places him within God's speech, while the prohibition of divine offspring prevents readers from treating that speech as ordinary biological generation.

For the high-Christology reading, the sequence offers a remarkable possibility: the Messiah may be identified through God's Word without possessing God's independent, uncreated existence. The title heightens his relation to revelation and creation, and the surrounding declarations establish the direction of that relation. God gives. Jesus receives.

There is a question behind the use of the term kalima. Every creature ultimately exists through God's creative command. Why, then, does this particular human being become known as the Word? His extraordinary conception offers one explanation. His appointment as a prophetic sign and bearer of revelation offers another. The text's peculiar naming of Jesus permits both investigations. It does not force us to pretend that every created thing has been given the same Christological title.

Adam in the room

The Qurʾān already provides its own explanation of why the Word can designate a created Messiah.

In 3:45, the angels announce to Maryam a kalima minhu, a word from God, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus son of Maryam. The noun kalima is feminine, yet the sentence moves to the masculine ismuhu, his name. The person announced is the child, and the naming keeps the word in view.

Maryam asks how she can have a child without a man touching her. The response invokes God's creative authority: when He decrees something, He says Be, and it is (3:47). Then 3:59 compares Jesus with Adam, whom God created from dust and brought into being by that same command.

The comparison is astonishing when read alongside the Christian New Testament. In Romans 5, Paul interprets Jesus in relation to Adam. First Corinthians 15 develops the relationship into a resurrection argument. Adam is the first man formed from the earth; Christ is the last Adam, the life-giving spirit, the second man associated with heaven. Paul is answering a question about the body and resurrection, although the image carries a larger story about humanity's fate.

The Qurʾān also places Jesus beside Adam and invokes the power of the creative word. Yet its argument runs through miraculous origin and creaturely dependence. Adam's creation removes the inference that an extraordinary human birth establishes divine generation.

The parallel is therefore substantial at the level of theological vocabulary. Both textual traditions use Adam to explain the Messiah. Both associate Jesus with extraordinary divine action and with the destiny of human beings. Their accounts of what follows from that relationship differ, especially around death, resurrection, atonement, and the means by which life is restored.

The last Adam designation belongs explicitly to 1 Corinthians 15:45. First Timothy contains adjacent material of its own. In 2:5 it names one God and one mediator, the human being Christ Jesus. In 2:13–15 it turns to Adam and Eve, and some Christian interpreters have

understood the difficult statement about being saved through childbirth as pointing to the birth of the Messiah. That last interpretation is debated. It makes a useful witness to how later readers draw Adam, Eve, Maryam, and Christ into a single story. First Timothy's authorship also remains disputed, so we must resist using its claims as independent confirmation of Paul's undisputed letters without examining their relationship.

Now read the Qurʾānic passages together: the Messiah is the Word announced to Maryam, the infant who professes servanthood, the person compared with Adam, and the one whose exceptional origin is explained by God's command. The Christology reaches upward toward divine speech while remaining anchored to a created human life.

Reading John without amputating his prologue

This finding changes the way I would approach the Fourth Gospel.

The opening of John speaks of the Logos in the beginning, with God, and as participating in divine predication. Then 1:14 states that the Word became flesh. The Gospel's account of preexistence and creative agency is considerably more developed than the wording of Qurʾān 19:34. It deserves to be read at its full strength. A Christian who defends the divine incarnation can point to more than a mistranslated Greek article.

My earlier investigations already distinguished the Gospel's theological narrator from sayings attributed to Jesus. The prologue belongs to the former category. The speech of Jesus in John 17:3 and 20:17 belongs to the latter narrative category, although its historical attribution still requires source criticism. We can investigate the relationship between those voices without deciding it by decree.

The reported Ibn Masʿūd reading introduces a new restraint upon the Muslim side of that inquiry. If the Qurʾān itself can describe Jesus as God's utterance, then the mere presence of exalted Word-language in John cannot establish that the Gospel has abandoned the monotheism of the prophets. The objection must concern what kind of existence the Logos possesses and what worship or authority follows from that existence.

John 17:5 gives Jesus glory with the Father before the world existed. An Arian reader who accepts a preexistent created Son can understand that sentence without affirming the Nicene doctrine of coeternity. Some Islamic accounts of a primordial Muhammadan light furnish another conceptual analogy in which an exalted prophetic reality precedes earthly manifestation through God's creative will. Those Islamic accounts have a separate and often weak hadith foundation, and they cannot supply the missing history of John's Gospel. Their usefulness is to show that a theologian can distinguish primordial honor from being the supreme Creator.

The Word of God at 19:34 makes that distinction worth examining inside the Qurʾān itself. An elevated title alone does not answer the question of ontology. The title also deserves more than a dismissal as decorative language. The evidence permits a range of models, from a human Messiah created through God's command to a preexistent dependent heavenly agent. We must test each model against the full corpus, including the Qurʾān's account of Jesus's birth, miracles, vulnerability, servanthood and dependence on God.

The Christian challenge remains strong. John's prologue presents the Logos as involved in the creation of all things and as the one who becomes flesh. A Qurʾānic comparison can illuminate that assertion without establishing that the two works refer to exactly the same metaphysical entity. That is the next level of source-critical work.

The curious case of Timothy's flesh

The textual history of 1 Timothy supplies a revealing companion problem. Its statement in 2:5 calls Christ Jesus human while distinguishing him from the one God. At 3:16, a later textual tradition reads that God was manifested in flesh. Modern critical Greek editions instead print a relative pronoun, who was manifested in flesh, reflecting significant early manuscript evidence.

The difference matters because it changes how explicitly the sentence attributes incarnation to God. It does not resolve every question about the author's Christology. The older pronoun still introduces an exalted confessional hymn about Christ's manifestation, proclamation, and glorification.

This is precisely the kind of textual history our method is designed to inspect. A transmitted phrase can become the bearer of a much more definite theological proposition. Its history can be studied with manuscripts and citations. The two readings of 1 Timothy 3:16 must be assessed as New Testament manuscript variants; the qāl forms of Qurʾān 19:34 are reported noncanonical readings preserved in tafsīr and qirāʾāt literature. Their evidence differs, even though both cases expose the importance of grammatical detail for confessional theology.

The most unexpected connection may be that the writings used to defend the divine incarnation also preserve the language of a human mediator and the Adam typology. The same Christian library contains the material with which a Qurʾān-centered reader can undertake the comparison.

Sonship and the limits of exaltation

This leads directly into Chapter 37A's inquiry concerning kufr, shirk, and fisq.

Qurʾān 4:171 calls Jesus God's messenger, His Word conveyed to Maryam, and a spirit from Him. It commands the People of the Book to desist from religious excess and from saying “three.” The passage is the hinge of my argument about ghulūw and obedience. The related instruction in 5:47 identifies failure to judge by God's revelation with fisq.

Al-Māʾida 5:72–73 provides a more severe judgment upon specified confessions. The identification of God with the Messiah receives the description kufr, followed by a warning about shirk. The claim that God is third of three also receives explicit condemnation. Their force must be carried into this chapter, even when the believer being examined professes monotheism.

The reading attributed to Ibn Masʿūd helps make the disputed boundary concrete. If Jesus can be described as God's utterance while explicitly confessing himself God's servant, then Word-language alone cannot be the entire offense. The divine status conferred on the Messiah and the worship demanded in consequence become the crucial questions.

A Biblical Unitarian calls Jesus Son of God and may identify that title with divine election or miraculous creation while affirming the Father alone as God. A Nicene Christian confesses the uncreated Son, eternally begotten and consubstantial with the Father. A West Syriac Miaphysite such as Philoxenus described the incarnate Jesus as God the Word while defending a single divine essence. These assertions differ in ways that matter when Qurʾān 5:72 is applied to their historical speakers.

Qurʾān 9:30 supplies a serious difficulty for any Muslim willing to retain biblical sonship as a purely metaphorical title, because it explicitly condemns the Christian formula the Messiah is God's son. Verse 31 connects inherited confession with unauthorized religious lordship. Qurʾān 5:18, in turn, challenges Jews and Christians who describe themselves as God's children and beloved, directing attention to their sins and accountability. The terms of the theological problem cannot be settled by importing one church's modern definitions into every occurrence of ibn and walad.

For this book, the more exact proposal is that the Qurʾān distinguishes extraordinary divine election from the independent divinity of a created recipient. Its ethical and theological judgments require a determination of what each speaker means and does. A doctrine judged erroneous may also be repeated through taqlīd, and persistence after recognizing a command creates a further question of disobedience. The judgment upon a fully informed proposition and the destiny of an individual person are separate matters within God's accounting.

The reported reading of 19:34 cannot decide those questions for us. It prevents the argument from proceeding as though the Qurʾān were embarrassed by an exalted Messiah.

Ibn Isḥāq and the other road to John

A second witness appears in our manuscript from an entirely different direction.

Ibn Isḥāq transmits an early Muslim adaptation of John 15–16 that identifies the promised Paraclete with Muḥammad. Sean Anthony's investigation traces the adaptation to a Christian Palestinian Aramaic Gospel milieu. Its wording and translation history offer a route into the early reception of the Johannine promise.

The sīra's many disturbing stories and disputed transmission practices deserve the audit performed in Chapter 4B. The value of this particular witness turns upon the document it preserves. A questionable compiler can transmit an important historical interpretation.

Ibn Masʿūd presents the complementary case. The attributed variant of 19:34 belongs to the Qurʾānic reading traditions, with its own chain and later witnesses. It precedes Ibn Isḥāq as a claimed point of origin, although the recoverable report is mediated through later Kufan transmitters. Neither reading authorizes us to alter the extant text of John or to write an invented Greek manuscript into the archive.

Together they show why the Fourth Gospel remains central to this project. The Qurʾān's own vocabulary invites us to investigate the Word; the Muslim reception of John makes the Paraclete a specific historical question. Our method must allow exalted Christology while asking which statements can be carried back to Jesus himself.

The antichrist test revisited

The First Epistle of John condemns people who refuse to confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh. Its author also insists upon Jesus as Son and identifies those who deny that he is the Christ with the antichrist. The immediate controversy appears to involve people who departed from the author's own Christian circle. Docetic and separationist reconstructions of their beliefs remain plausible, though contested.

The Qurʾān recognizes Jesus as the Messiah born of Maryam, whose actual human life is central to its story. It also speaks of him as God's Word and a spirit from Him. The higher language of 19:34 makes the Islamic confession richer than a bare acknowledgment that an ordinary man once existed.

The disagreement concerns what further ontology or confessional obligations the author of 1 John attaches to these titles. A Christian may argue from the whole epistle that denial of the Son's divine identity violates its test. That argument requires a historical reading of the epistle, including its relationship with the Gospel and the second-century controversies that shaped its reception.

The text's first-century or early-second-century accusations cannot simply be transferred to Muslims who lived centuries later. Their application is an interpretive act. The Christian who makes that act should be prepared to explain its authority.

The same standard must be applied to a Muslim who reduces Christian belief to a simple slogan of idolatry. We have learned enough about the diversity of Christian sonship, Logos and incarnation doctrines to demand specificity.

The Injīl made flesh

The expression I have been circling is simple: Jesus was the Injīl made flesh. That is a theological proposal about a life through which God’s revelation became visible. It is also a claim with limits. The Qurʾān calls the Injīl something God gave Jesus (5:46); Jesus is the recipient of scripture in his own cradle speech (19:30). Revelation and messenger remain distinguishable even when the messenger’s life bears the revelation so completely that the two seem inseparable.

There is a Muslim analogue. When ʿĀʾisha was asked about the character of Muḥammad, she reportedly answered, kāna khuluquhu al-Qurʾān: his character was the Qurʾān (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 746a). No one needs to infer from this that Muḥammad was the uncreated Qurʾān walking around Medina. His actions furnished a human expression of the divine message. The report also speaks about character, which gives us a way to ask what embodiment means before metaphysics takes over the discussion.

A second Muslim formulation makes the relationship reciprocal. Umm Salama is reported to have heard the Prophet say, “ʿAlī is with the Qurʾān, and the Qurʾān is with ʿAlī; they will not separate until they come to me at the Pool.” The Arabic is ʿAlī maʿa al-Qurʾān wa-l-Qurʾān maʿa ʿAlī. In al-Ḥākim’s al-Mustadrak (no. 4628), the recollection is attached to the Battle of the Camel. A participant uncertain about his allegiance describes consulting Umm Salama after the fighting. The report makes fidelity to revelation legible through the judgment and

conduct of a human being. Its symmetry is stronger than the claim that a righteous person follows a book: the Qurʾān itself is said to remain with ʿAlī.

The hadith has a contestable transmission history. Al-Ḥākim called his route sound; al-ʿAlāʾī graded the report ḥasan. Al-Ṭabarānī preserves another route in al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ (no. 4880), whose narrator Ṣāliḥ ibn Abī al-Aswad was criticized as weak by al-Haythamī. These judgments apply to particular routes. The narrated setting at the Camel also makes this a statement about contested authority, with a political life of its own. I take it here as a report expressing a theological possibility, while the attribution to the Prophet remains subject to isnād criticism.

The analogy now has three forms. ʿĀʾisha describes Muḥammad's character as the Qurʾān. The report from Umm Salama joins ʿAlī and the Qurʾān through a reciprocal, enduring companionship. The Qurʾān calls Jesus God's Word and shows the infant Messiah announcing scripture, prayer and almsgiving. None of these statements requires a human body to be an uncreated scripture in physical disguise. They give a serious meaning to embodied revelation: the divine command becomes visible in the life and judgment of a commissioned human being. For the Injīl made flesh, the historical question is whether the conduct of Jesus permits us to recover revelation where the later books preserve competing accounts of his ontology.

Sūrat Maryam puts that question directly in Jesus's mouth. He says that God has given him scripture and made him a prophet; he is charged with prayer, almsgiving and kindness to his mother (19:30–32). If he is God's Word, his first public act is to direct people toward God's command. In the reported Ibn Masʿūd reading at 19:34, the language of God's utterance stands next to that human declaration. The conjunction gives the phrase "Injīl made flesh" its force: the speech of God can be encountered in the obedient life of a servant.

John 1:14 says that the Logos became flesh. The evangelist places that sentence within a prologue assigning cosmic significance to the Logos. My proposed reading of the Injīl made flesh does not erase those surrounding claims. It asks whether an older prophetic sense of God's Word manifest in a human life survives within the literary and theological construction. The Arabic analogy gives us a question to investigate; it supplies neither a missing Aramaic original nor proof that the evangelist intended a purely human Logos.

This shifts the object of the search. A catalogue of the Messiah's authentic sayings still matters, but a life can transmit revelation through conduct. The words of mercy and judgment must be tested against the acts attributed to Jesus, and those acts must undergo the same historical criticism as his speeches. A title such as Word of God earns its theological weight through what the bearer teaches and does. If the Messiah was the Injīl made flesh, the recovery of his Sunnah is part of the recovery of the Injīl.

What the Word asks of us

The infant Jesus of Sūrat Maryam announces the scripture given to him and the duties of prayer and almsgiving. His first speech names his mother as someone toward whom he

owes kindness. His extraordinary commission appears inside a moral life rather than replacing it.

That detail affects my search for the Injīl. A doctrine of the Word that produces elaborate disputes about preexistence while neglecting the hungry has abandoned part of the very testimony it claims to protect. First John, despite its severe language about antichrists, demands practical love for those in need. The Qurʾān places Jesus's blessing and almsgiving beside his miraculous birth.

If an authentic teaching of Jesus survives in the Gospels, our historical responsibility is to identify it and our religious responsibility is to take its instruction seriously. The same inquiry must assess the later claims made in his name, especially claims that alter the moral and religious obligations of his followers.

Ibn Masʿūd's reported reading brings the Messiah's exaltation into view. It also sends us back to the child speaking in Maryam's arms: God's servant, commanded to pray, charged with almsgiving, obedient to his mother, and called by a name associated with God's own utterance. The full meaning of that extraordinary conjunction remains the question.

Supplementary textual controls for “The Injīl made flesh”: Qurʾān 5:46, 19:30–34; John 1:1–18, especially 1:14; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 746a (ʿĀʾisha on the Prophet’s character). The parallel concerns embodiment in conduct and revelation, without equating the ontologies or treating John’s prologue as Jesus’s verbatim saying. ʿAlī and the Qurʾān: al-Ḥākim, al-Mustadrak 4628; al-Ṭabarānī, al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ 4880; al-Haythamī, Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid 14767; al-ʿAlāʾī, Majmūʿ rasāʾil 3:113.

Source notes and apparatus

1. Canonical text and readings: Qurʾān 19:30–37, especially 19:34, and 3:39, 3:45–47, 3:59, 4:171–172. The accusative qawla al-ḥaqq and nominative qawlu al-ḥaqq are both represented in the canonical qirāʾāt; the reported Ibn Masʿūd qāl forms are noncanonical. Quranic Arabic Corpus, https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=19&verse=34.

2. Al-Farrāʾ: Maʿānī al-Qurʾān, commentary on 19:34, preserves the Ibn Masʿūd attribution and identifies qāl as a noun of utterance: https://quran-tafsir.net/farraa/sura19-aya34.html.

3. Al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on 19:34, preserves the al-Aʿmash / Ibrāhīm report, the gloss kalimat Allāh, and competing grammatical interpretations. https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura19-aya34.html.

4. Variant dossiers: al-Tafsīr al-Maʾthūr, on 19:34, citing Ibn Abī Dāwūd, al-Maṣāḥif 1:322, and Ibn Khālawayh, Mukhtaṣar fī shawādhdh al-Qurʾān, p. 87. https://quranpedia.net/tafsir/maryam/34.

5. Ibn ʿAṭiyya, al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī: commentaries on 19:34, distinguishing Jesus-as-Word from the truth of the report and connecting Jesus's title with the creative kun. https://quranpedia.net/surah/1/19/book/350 ; https://www.greattafsirs.com/Tafsir_Library.aspx?AyahNo=34&FromMainTafsir=1&LanguageID=1&MadhabNo=1&SoraNo=19&TafsirNo=2 ; https://quran-tafsir.net/alrazy/sura19-aya34.html.

6. The Adam comparison: Qurʾān 3:59 and Genesis 2:7; Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49. Stephen Hultgren, “The Origin of Paul's Doctrine of the Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15.45–49,” JSNT 25.3 (2003), https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X0302500306.

7. Timothy: 1 Timothy 2:5, 2:13–15, 3:16. For the debated messianic reading of 2:15, see Jared M. August, “What Must She Do to Be Saved?,” Themelios 45.1 (2020), https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/what-must-she-do-to-be-saved-a-theological-analysis-of-1-timothy-215/. For 3:16 compare the pronoun in NA28 with theos in the Byzantine tradition; see https://www.anselm-project.com/bible/crux/1-timothy-3-16-god-or-he-who.

8. Johannine Logos: John 1:1–18; 17:3, 5, 22; 20:17. For a strong Christian reading of preexistence and incarnation, see https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/JesusPreexistenceandIncarnation/2024-06-20. The Gospel's authorial and redactional questions remain those treated in Chapters 3–6 and 4A.

9. Christian reception of Qurʾān 4:171: Mourad Takawi, “The Trinity in Qurʾanic Idiom,” Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations 30.4 (2019): 435–457, https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2019.1690828. Early Arabic Christian writers adapted the Qurʾānic Word-and-Spirit language in defenses of the Trinity.

10. Ibn Isḥāq and John: Sean W. Anthony, “Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete,” BSOAS 79.2 (2016): 255–278, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X16000458. This establishes an early reception history, not the historical identity of the original Paraclete.

11. Manuscript controls: Finding Injil v0.17o, Chapter 2 on historical attribution; Chapters 3–6 on John; Chapter 4A on Johannine antichrists; Chapter 4B on Ibn Isḥāq; Chapter 27A on Irenaeus; Chapter 37 on Messiah, Word and Spirit; Chapter 37A on shirk, kufr, and fisq; Chapters 38–40 on Spirit and prophetic covenant. Preserve Appendix F entries QC-JES-011, QC-JES-012 and QC-JES-022 pending an explicit variant-reading annotation.

38. Rūḥ al-Qudus and the Full Vocabulary of the Spirit

The argument about the Spirit began in this project with a distinction between Gabriel's delivery of a message and the support through which a prophet speaks or acts. Then we read the whole Qur'anic vocabulary, and the distinction becomes more demanding. We have to account for a Spirit involved in revelation, a Spirit appearing to Maryam, the breathing associated with creation, support given to believers, and the Spirit's place in heavenly scenes.

The noun rūḥ occurs twenty-one times in twenty verses. Qur'an 17:85 contains it twice. Four passages use the exact designation Rūḥ al-Qudus: 2:87, 2:253, 5:110, and 16:102. The wider root also produces words for wind, relief, and other meanings. A root count is consequently different from a concordance of the noun at issue here.[485]

The scope matters. The expression in 12:87, for example, is vocalized rawḥ and appears in an appeal against despair of God's relief or mercy. It should not be added to the count of rūḥ merely because the unvocalized consonants resemble one another. Before building the metaphysics, we need to know which word we are counting.

The four Holy Spirit passages

Qur'an 2:87 places Jesus's support by Rūḥ al-Qudus within a history of messengers and their reception. The charge against the audience concerns rejection when a messenger brings what they do not desire. The Spirit's support marks the authority of Jesus's mission within that history. It supplies no independent description of the Spirit's essence.[486]

Qur'an 2:253 again gives Jesus clear signs and support by the Holy Spirit, this time within a statement about differentiated rank among messengers and the conflict that followed their communities. Divine guidance did not prevent later disagreement. That setting is important for an account of inspiration: the presence of a divinely supported messenger does not make the subsequent community immune to fragmentation.

Qur'an 5:110 recalls the same support in connection with speech and miracles. The acts are carefully attributed through divine permission. Of these four settings, this gives the strongest support to my empowerment model: the Spirit supports the capacities through which the mission is carried out.

Then Qur'an 16:102 makes us qualify that model. Rūḥ al-Qudus brings down the revelation from the Lord in truth, strengthening believers and providing guidance. The passage

[485] Quranic Arabic Corpus, root r-w-ḥ: https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rwH. The entry distinguishes 21 rūḥ tokens from rawḥ, rīḥ, rawāḥ and other forms. Qur'an 17:85 has two rūḥ tokens, giving 20 verses. The index in Appendix D was checked against this list.

[486] Rūḥ al-Qudus: Qur'an 2:87; 2:253; 5:110; 16:102. Gabriel is named in 2:97–98 and 66:4. The revelation-delivery comparison uses 2:97 and 16:102; common function alone does not settle every identity claim.

assigns the Spirit a communicative role. A simple division in which Gabriel carries words while the Spirit only performs miracles does not cover the text's actual usage.

Gabriel is named in 2:97 as bringing revelation to the heart by God's permission. He is also named in 2:98 and 66:4. The overlap in the delivery function gives the conventional identification a real textual basis. Shared function does not prove that every occurrence of rūḥ is Gabriel, and a theory of distinct agencies has to explain the overlap rather than ignore it.

We need to ask how the names relate to what the Spirit does, and how that action comes from God. The Qur'an may use different expressions for one agent in some contexts. Other occurrences may concern a gift, a revelatory content, or a form of support. A universal equation requires more evidence than a local resemblance.

The Qurʾān's conspicuous affirmation of the Spirit

A puzzle emerges from the Qurʾān's treatment of Christian doctrine. The text rebukes the claim that the Messiah is God (5:72), the language of divine sonship (4:171; 9:30), and the assertion of "three" (4:171; 5:73). It simultaneously speaks with unembarrassed approval of Rūḥ al-Qudus. Jesus receives the Holy Spirit's assistance in three passages; the same title appears in the communication of the Qurʾān at 16:102. There is no corresponding Qurʾānic scene in which Jesus must renounce the Holy Spirit or explain why divine inspiration should cease. The affirmative treatment is particularly conspicuous in 5:110, where God himself recounts his support of the Messiah by the Spirit.

The asymmetry requires exact language. The command to abandon "three" bears upon any Christian formulation that makes Father, Son, and Spirit three coequal divine persons; the Qurʾān has not exempted the later Nicene metaphysics by its silence. The phenomenon of the Spirit, its holiness, and its assistance to the Messiah are affirmed, while the classification of that Spirit as an uncreated divine hypostasis remains unendorsed. The designation "one third of the Trinity" works as informal rhetoric; in Nicene Christianity each person is held to be fully God, and the three are not fractional portions of deity.

The wording of 4:171 is more arresting than a generic rejection of Christian theology. Jesus is called God's messenger, his word conveyed to Maryam, and a spirit from him, immediately before the warning against saying "three." The Qurʾān retains remarkable Christian-sounding designations while restricting their theological consequence. At 5:116 the question about taking Jesus and Maryam as deities concerns unauthorized worship; the verse does not itself enumerate the Father, Son, and Spirit as the constituent members of the Nicene Trinity. Qurʾānic criticism of worship and Qurʾānic silence concerning the Holy Spirit's supposed personal deity should be examined within their separate contexts.

There is also a historical control against explaining the phrase as a later Muslim creation. Nicolai Sinai documents the South Arabian Christian inscription commissioned by Abraha in 548 CE, where rḥ qdš corresponds to Syriac rūḥā d-qūdshā, alongside a cognate of Messiah. An earlier Christian South Arabian inscription employed the Ethiopic-derived manfas qaddūs instead. These inscriptions establish that a term cognate with Rūḥ al-Qudus already belonged to the Christian vocabulary of Arabia before Islam. They establish lexical

circulation, not the metaphysical agreement of the communities that used the expression. That is sufficient to make the Qurʾān's adoption of the term a historically consequential act of reception (Sinai, Key Terms of the Qurʾān, 2023, introduction and entry rūḥ, pp. 355–356).

The breathing of life

Qur'an 15:29 and 38:72 place the breathing of God's Spirit into the fashioned human immediately before the command that the angels prostrate. Qur'an 32:9 associates the breathing with human formation and the gifts of hearing, sight, and hearts. These passages belong to the account of created humanity, even when their language is later extended in mystical interpretation.[487]

Genesis 2:7 provides the most direct scriptural comparison for breath and living humanity. Ezekiel 37 offers a different prophetic use of breath in restoration. John 20:22 describes Jesus breathing upon disciples in the giving of the Holy Spirit. The recurrence of breathing links life, renewal, and religious empowerment across the sources, but the objects and narrative functions differ.

The possessive phrase "My Spirit" can be read as indicating a relation to God through origin or special association. It need not identify a divisible piece of the divine essence. The interpretation should be tested against the Qur'an's insistence that the formed recipient remains a creature. A theology of divine manifestation can then describe the significance of the gift without turning human life into a second necessary being.

The prostration command adds another distinction already developed in the Enoch chapters. A gesture directed toward a created being can be authorized by God within a particular narrative. Its presence does not establish permission for every later practice of veneration. The act's meaning depends upon its command, setting, and object.

Maryam and the Spirit who appears

The Spirit sent to Maryam in 19:17 is represented as an agent that assumes a human appearance. The account of breathing in 21:91 and 66:12 describes divine action in relation to her chastity and pregnancy. Qur'an 4:171 then describes Jesus himself as a spirit from God. These statements require a model capable of distinguishing a messenger, an act of divine giving, and a description of the resulting person.[488]

A theory may argue that one spiritual agency is active across the scenes. That proposal still has to account for the differences in grammar. A description of Jesus as spirit does not automatically make him identical with the visitor who announces his birth. Nor does the absence of the name Gabriel in 19:17 prove that the visitor must be a separate entity. We still have an interpretive problem. Repeating the term does not solve it.

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[487] Qur'an 15:29; 32:9; 38:72; Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 37:1–14; John 20:22. Breathing, life, and empowerment are compared as related motifs with different recipients and narrative functions.

[488] Qur'an 19:17; 21:91; 66:12; 4:171. The chapter distinguishes sent agent, divine giving, and description of the Messiah rather than assuming an unqualified equation among all four passages.

The Jewish-Christian birth dispute and the infancy narratives supply context for that problem. Their value lies in showing how divine communication and conception could be discussed in related traditions. The theological conclusions of those traditions should remain distinguishable from the Qur'anic statements being explained.

The Holy Spirit before the Johannine promise

The earlier scriptures make the strongest objection to treating the Holy Spirit as an agency that came into existence, or entered human history for the first time, after the departure of Jesus. Psalm 51:11 speaks directly of God's Holy Spirit, asking that it not be taken from the psalmist. Isaiah 63:10–11 recalls the Holy Spirit among the people of Moses and describes their rebellion against it. Numbers 11:25–29 places the Spirit upon the elders, who prophesy. The Spirit of the LORD also comes upon prophetic and royal figures in Judges and Samuel. These passages constitute a prior history of revelation, guidance, judgment, and empowerment within Israel.

The Greek Gospel tradition preserves the same priority. Luke says that John the Baptist will be filled with the Holy Spirit before birth (1:15), that Elizabeth is filled with it (1:41), and that Zechariah prophesies under its influence (1:67). Luke 1:35 associates the Holy Spirit with the annunciation to Maryam. At the baptism, the Spirit descends upon Jesus (Luke 3:22; compare Matthew 3:16). The dove belongs to the narrative's visible sign of descent. Its shape establishes nothing about the Spirit's essential form. John (Jack) R. Levison's study of the biblical Spirit finds the roots of Spirit-as-agent language in the Hebrew scriptures themselves, especially Isaiah 63 and the exodus tradition (The Spirit in the Christian Bible, 2024).

That history sharpens the apparent novelty in the Fourth Gospel. John 7:39 explains the expected reception of the Spirit by saying, in its shorter Greek form, oupō gar ēn pneuma, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. English versions often supply "given." The translator supplies a reasonable interpretation of the intended new gift, but the supplied word should remain visible in the textual apparatus. The very same narrative knows the Spirit resting upon Jesus in 1:32–33. A reader must therefore ask which new relation to the Spirit is being announced at 7:39, rather than assuming that every earlier witness simply vanishes.

The Qurʾān gives a theological name to continuity in the sunnat Allāh that cannot be changed (33:62; 35:43; 48:23). Those verses concern divine patterns in the histories of communities and the consequences of resisting God's messengers. Their immediate subjects are important. Extending that constancy to the availability of divine inspiration is an inference from the scriptural pattern, supported by the biblical evidence just assembled; it is not an explicit tafsīr of 48:23 supplied by the verse itself. A revelation that regularly sustains the servants of God can acquire new recipients or a new social scale without requiring the creation of a new divine faculty.

Joel 2:28–29 is the major Christian counterexample to an overly simple continuity argument. The ancient oracle anticipates a widespread outpouring of the Spirit upon sons, daughters, old, and young. Ezekiel 36:26–27 likewise promises divine Spirit placed within a renewed community. Acts 2 interprets Pentecost through Joel. These sources let a Christian

distinguish a new distribution of an ancient Spirit from its first appearance anywhere. That response has substance. It still leaves an exegetical burden: a reading of John's departure condition that turns Christ's glorification into the necessary source of the Spirit itself strains against the prior scriptures. The Qurʾānic evidence for Jesus's support and for revelation to subsequent believers invites a less restrictive theology of access to divine guidance.

Revelation through and as Spirit

Qur'an 16:2 speaks of angels descending with the Spirit by God's command upon chosen servants. Qur'an 26:193 names the Trustworthy Spirit as the bearer of revelation. Qur'an 40:15 describes the casting of the Spirit from the divine command upon a chosen servant so that warning can be given. These passages vary the grammatical relation between the Spirit, the messenger, and the communication.[489]

The difference matters for translation. Rendering rūḥ as "inspiration" may make one passage intelligible, while losing the agent-like description of another. Rendering every occurrence as a proper name may solve the agency in one sentence while making a gift of revelation in another unnecessarily opaque. We should tell the reader which choice the English makes. One gloss will not exhaust the Arabic.

Qur'an 42:52 is especially important. It speaks of a rūḥ from God's command revealed to the messenger and then describes light through which guidance is given. Its relationship to the scripture and to prior knowledge requires attention. The verse can support a conception of revelation as life-giving disclosure, while an Imami interpretation may identify a created supporting agency. Those are interpretations of the same wording with different explanatory commitments.

The preceding verse, 42:51, does not contain the noun rūḥ. It nevertheless belongs in the apparatus because it distinguishes modes of divine communication, including revelation, speech from behind a veil, and the sending of a messenger. My original distinction between inspired understanding and delivered speech draws upon this range. Its precise mapping onto the Spirit vocabulary remains a constructive proposal to be tested.

For this book I use waḥy for the act and content of divine disclosure, while preserving the possibility that the Spirit is its personal or created bearer in a particular verse. At 26:193 the Trustworthy Spirit is the agent who descends with revelation; 2:97 explicitly names Gabriel as the one who brings it down upon Muhammad's heart by Allah's permission. At 16:102 the Holy Spirit is likewise the grammatical agent who has brought it down. The overlap makes an identification of Rūḥ al-Amīn with Jibrīl plausible, while a universal equation of every Spirit title with Jibrīl exceeds the explicit statements. For the present interpretation, Rūḥ al-Qudus denotes the sanctifying, truth-bearing action of revelation across prophets, without prematurely deciding whether each description names a bearer, the imparted gift, or both.

[489] Qur'an 16:2; 26:192–195; 40:15; 42:51–52. Verse 42:51 is a companion passage about communication and contains no occurrence of the noun rūḥ.

What the hearer is allowed to know

Qur'an 17:85 responds to a question about the Spirit by relating it to the Lord's command and describing human knowledge as limited. The verse does not say that a named esoteric elite possesses a complete explanation. That stronger claim would need another source.[490]

The surrounding discussion of revelation prevents the statement from floating free as a generic theory of the human soul. At the same time, the history of interpretation has taken the question in several directions. A complete commentary will need to record those readings and their reasons. Here I am comparing possible referents while taking the verse's limit on our knowledge seriously.

A mystical interpretation can treat this restraint as a discipline of knowledge. Experience may be meaningful without making every conceptual explanation infallible. The difficulty becomes urgent when someone moves from claiming spiritual insight to claiming the right to command other people. Then we need to ask whether the authority they claim respects the limits revelation places upon it.

The Spirit among the heavenly company

Qur'an 70:4 describes the angels and the Spirit ascending; 78:38 places the Spirit and angels standing in ranks under restrictions on speech; 97:4 describes their descent by the Lord's permission. The repeated coordination invites the question whether the Spirit is a distinguished member of the angelic order or a separate agency.[491]

Arabic can coordinate a class with a specially emphasized member, so the conjunction alone cannot decide the ontology. A separate category is also grammatically possible. The argument has to draw upon the broader use of the terms and the functions assigned to them.

The heavenly scenes studied in the Ascension of Isaiah and Enoch help identify the kind of world these passages address: ranked beings, authorized speech, ascent, and communication between levels of creation. The analogies are valuable even when no direct literary dependence can be demonstrated. Each text still establishes its own hierarchy and its own rule concerning what the beings may do.

Permission is particularly important in the Qur'anic scenes. The Spirit's exalted place does not make it an independent source of command. Its activity takes place within a created order governed by Allah. That relation supplies a consistent limit to the more speculative comparisons.

Support given to believers

Qur'an 58:22 attributes the inscription of faith in hearts and support by a spirit from God to a group defined by fidelity in a setting of conflict. The verse extends Spirit language beyond

[490] Qur'an 17:85–87. The verse asserts limited human knowledge and relation to the divine command; an esoteric elite's complete knowledge is not stated in the verse.

[491] Qur'an 70:4; 78:38; 97:4. Coordination of angels and Spirit allows a question about class and distinguished member; the conjunction alone is not a complete ontology.

the named prophets. It does not make every feeling claimed by every believer a divine communication.[492]

The distinction is essential to the project's account of continuing inspiration. The possibility of divine support after a prophet's earthly life can be affirmed without treating a later interpreter's judgment as revelation equal to scripture. The criterion for recognizing the support remains a question of conduct, fidelity, and the limits placed on claims to authority.

Qur'an 5:111, with its communication to the disciples, belongs beside this verse even though it lacks the noun rūḥ. Other Qur'anic uses of waḥy also show that the term has a range wider than the office of a lawgiving prophet. A vocabulary of guidance can therefore accommodate more than one kind of recipient. Its breadth should not erase the distinctions among them.

John 14, the future guide, and the continuity of waḥy

The question for John is consequently more precise than whether the Paraclete can be called the Holy Spirit. John 14:16 promises "another" Paraclete; 14:17 calls him the Spirit of Truth and says that the disciples know him because he dwells with them and will be in them. Verse 26 gives the decisive apposition: the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in Jesus's name, who will teach and remind them of Jesus's sayings. The present tense of 14:17 already concedes the Spirit's availability. The future in 14:16 and 14:26 therefore has to designate some change in commission, relationship, or mission. John 16:7 formulates the future condition more sharply: unless Jesus goes away, the Paraclete will not come to the disciples.

Read against Psalm 51, Isaiah 63, Numbers 11, and Luke 1, the absolute interpretation of this postponement collapses. God's Holy Spirit was already active among his servants. The Johannine text can be defended as promising a fresh mission after Jesus's departure, and that is the strongest Christian explanation. My objection is directed toward the stronger theological move that makes the divine Spirit's very arrival dependent upon Jesus's glorification. Under the criterion of sunnat Allāh, a history of the prophets in which divine guidance operates continuously has priority over a later claim that locates the source of inspiration in a new christological event.

There is a separate literary reason for treating John 14 as a competing interpretation of the inherited promise. At 14:31 Jesus announces departure, yet a second sustained farewell continues through chapters 15–17 and the narrative departure is postponed until 18:1. John 16:12–13 promises the hearers further truth that they cannot yet bear, brought by a speaker who conveys what he hears and announces what is coming. John 14:26 gives that open-ended promise a prior frame of remembrance and explicit identification with the Holy Spirit. The sequence of those clauses makes my conjecture intelligible: a later prefatory farewell can regulate the authority of continuing revelation while retaining the older-sounding oracle. This is the direction of composition argued in Chapter 3. Many

[492] Qur'an 58:22; 5:111; compare the wider waḥy vocabulary in 16:68 and 28:7. Inspiration of recipients outside the lawgiving prophetic office must be distinguished from claims to new universal legislation.

scholars instead treat chapters 15–17 as subsequent expansions of a discourse that once ended at 14:31. The literary seam supports compositional analysis; it does not settle the direction without independent arguments.

The five Paraclete passages must remain in view together. John 15:26 calls the figure the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father and testifies about Jesus. John 16:8–11 gives him a forensic role toward the world, and 16:12–15 connects what he hears with new disclosure and Jesus's glorification. John 14:26 has two functions, teaching and reminding, so its Greek cannot be reduced to an instruction to repeat past sayings. An earlier human-successor oracle remains a further historical hypothesis, examined elsewhere in this book in relation to Qurʾān 61:6 and Ibn Isḥāq's reception of the Paraclete. The more secure argument here concerns the prior Spirit tradition and the way the received Gospel makes the timing of divine guidance depend upon Jesus's departure.

The Qurʾān's own sequence of revelation supplies another control. It attributes the Spirit's support to Jesus (2:87; 5:110), sends revelation to Muhammad by Rūḥ al-Qudus (16:102), and speaks of a Spirit from the divine command in 42:52. The modes of 42:51 include waḥy and the dispatch of a messenger, whose mediated speech is by Allah's permission. The text thus offers a vocabulary in which messenger, divine instruction, and spiritual empowerment are distinguishable even when their activities intersect. That framework can receive the biblical history of the Spirit while resisting the theological monopoly implied by some readings of John 14.

The Great Commission: transmission, baptism, and the name of the Spirit

The same Gospel that makes the Messiah the bearer of the Spirit also ends by placing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within a formula for baptizing the nations. Matthew 28:18–20 reports that Jesus has received authority in heaven and earth, instructs the disciples to make disciples of all peoples, and directs baptism in one name associated with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The final promise is that Jesus will remain with the disciples until the end of the age. This is an unusually important passage for Finding Injil. Our inquiry asks what the Messiah authorized his community to do and how a remembered instruction became a stable ecclesial formula. At the same time, the text is often made to carry a later, elaborate account of three coequal divine persons that Matthew's words by themselves do not specify.[493]

We must ask three related questions. Was the triadic language part of the Gospel of Matthew from its earliest recoverable written form? Did a remembered commission from Jesus circulate in a simpler form before the evangelist or the community cast it in baptismal language? And what did a second-century Christian mean when naming the Holy Spirit alongside God and the Messiah? Answering the third question does not answer the first two for us. A ritual formula can be ancient without constituting a transcript of the

[493] Matthew 28:18–20; Greek text and fourth-century witness: Codex Sinaiticus, Matthew 28, fol. 217, https://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=33&chapter=28&lid=en&side=r&verse=19&zoomslider=0.

historical Jesus's final speech; an early formula can be genuinely triadic without yet containing the metaphysical determinations reached by fourth-century councils.[494]

The extant Greek witnesses and the evidence we lack

The extant Greek manuscripts containing Matthew 28:19 preserve the baptismal formula. Codex Sinaiticus provides an especially accessible fourth-century control: its transcribed folio gives the command to baptize into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Codex Vaticanus likewise transmits the longer wording. There is at present no known extant Greek continuous-text Gospel manuscript that preserves a shorter verse ending simply 'in my name.' Nor can a missing leaf be counted as a witness to either reading. The earliest relevant complete textual witnesses are considerably later than the probable composition of Matthew, creating a chronological space in which questions of earlier redaction remain possible. The manuscript record alone does not fill that space.[495]

The Old Syriac witnesses are important here for precisely the opposite reason from their usefulness at John 14:26. Curetonian Syriac Matthew ends at 23:25 in its surviving material. The Sinaitic Old Syriac witness also lacks the necessary ending at Matthew 28:19. We consequently cannot use either to claim the earliest Old Syriac Gospel actually omits the triadic baptismal formula. The Peshitta and other later versions preserve the received instruction. In assessing a lost early form, the absence of physical Old Syriac leaves is a gap in testimony; it is not a variant. Our argument for redaction must therefore rely upon other kinds of evidence.[496]

The Old Syriac manuscript inventory is now larger than the two codices commonly cited. Brock's Sin. syr. M37N and M39N fragments and Kessel's distinct Vat. iber. 4 witness preserve further Gospel passages; Bcheiry (2026, pp. 25–33) identifies Matthew 8–9 in Vat. iber. 4, folios 6 and 10, in a preliminary study whose published abstract is presently our evidence. Their surviving contents lie elsewhere in Matthew and other Gospel passages, rather than at Matthew 28:19. Consequently the enlarged corpus changes how we describe the range of Old Syriac transmission but supplies no new direct reading of the Great Commission. Future spectral recovery could alter the apparatus. For now, if the fragment does not contain the passage, it has given us no reading of that passage.[497]

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[494] For distinct questions of text and historical formulation, see W. C. Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew (ICC, 1907), on 28:19; Jane Schaberg, The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (SBLDS 61, 1982).

[495] Codex Sinaiticus, Matthew 28:19, online facsimile/transcription; NET Bible, text-critical note to Matthew 28:19, https://classic.net.bible.org/passage.php?passage=Mat+28%3A19.

[496] Old Syriac witness inventory: Sebastian P. Brock, 'Old-Syriac Version,' Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage, https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Old-Syriac-Version.html; University of Helsinki Research Guides, 'Syriac Gospels and Related Works,' https://libraryguides.helsinki.fi/c.php?g=678207&p=4853161; W. C. Allen, ICC on Matt. 28:19, notes S1 and S2 wanting.

[497] For the newly identified Old Syriac witnesses see Brock (2016), 7–18 (Sin. syr. M37N/M39N), and Kessel (2023), 210–221 (Vat. iber. 4 ff. 1 & 5, Matt 11:30–12:26; https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688522000182). An additional preliminary analysis of Vat. iber. 4 ff. 6 + 10 concerns Matthew 8–9: Iskandar Bcheiry, Vatican Library Review 5.1 (2026): 25–33, https://doi.org/10.1163/27728641-00402004 (abstract only). The Kessel study

Eusebius and the commissioning 'in my name'

Eusebius of Caesarea creates the textual problem. In Demonstratio Evangelica 3.6 he quotes Jesus commissioning the disciples to make disciples of all nations 'in my name' and teaches them to observe his commands. In 3.7 Eusebius repeats 'in my name' because the power of Jesus's name is doing the argumentative work: the unlikely success of a mission carried out by unlettered followers is evidence that the commission was divinely authorized. The Greek expression usually rendered 'in my name' is en tō onomati mou. It is a significantly different formulation from the received Matthew 28:19, which contains the instruction 'baptizing them' followed by the threefold designation.[498]

Eusebius cites the shorter form more than once, which explains why Frederick C. Conybeare and other scholars argued that he knew a Gospel text before the baptismal expansion. Yet his discourse centers on the power of Jesus's name, which also explains why a writer might abbreviate, paraphrase, or combine familiar Gospel expressions. Eusebius elsewhere cites or endorses the full threefold wording. The historical question is not settled by the number of occurrences counted without attention to literary purpose. To infer an early short Greek Matthew, we would ideally require an independent textual witness or a pattern of citations that cannot plausibly arise through adaptation. What we have is an early fourth-century witness to a significantly different way of transmitting the commission.[499]

For our project, the case for an earlier commissioning tradition remains worth pressing. Matthew 12:18–21 quotes Isaiah's chosen servant and imagines the nations placing hope in his name; Matthew 28 concludes with the peoples receiving the Messiah's mission. Jesus-name baptism is repeatedly reported in Acts, and Paul's letters associate baptism with Christ. An earlier command authorizing a mission in Jesus's name would fit that setting. That fit gives us a hypothesis about literary development. We still have no missing manuscript in hand, and we still have to reconstruct the history of the practice.[500]

The threefold baptism predates the Nicene councils

A simple fourth-century interpolation date cannot account for the evidence. The Didache, an early Christian teaching manual whose composition is usually placed in the first or second century, directs baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Didache 7.1 specifies living water and offers practical alternatives; 7.3 repeats the threefold

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was published online 8 March 2023, not October 2026. None of these surviving leaves witnesses Matthew 28:19; Sinaitic and Curetonian lack that ending physically. Compare the Old Syriac apparatus discussion in Chapter 3.

[498] Eusebius, Demonstratio Evangelica 3.6–7 (short commission in 3.6; repeated name argument in 3.7), W. J. Ferrar translation with Greek/source markers, https://adfonteslibrary.org/work-eusebius-proof-gospel.

[499] F. C. Conybeare, 'The Eusebian Form of the Text of Mt. 28:19,' Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 2 (1901): 275–288; Eusebius, Demonstratio Evangelica 3.6–7; NET Bible note to Matthew 28:19, which disputes Conybeare's conclusion. For later full citations compare Eusebius, Contra Marcellum 1.1.9 and De Ecclesiastica Theologia 3.5.22, editions of Spoerl and Vinzent (2017).

[500] Matthew 12:18–21; Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27. Compare B. J. Hubbard, The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning (SBLDS 19, 1974).

invocation when water must be poured. The only surviving complete Greek manuscript of the Didache is much later, the Jerusalem manuscript copied in 1056. Its early composition is inferred from literary, historical and reception arguments. The Didache consequently witnesses a developed triadic baptismal practice in an early church tradition even while the distance between its composition and its surviving manuscript must be recorded.[501]

Justin Martyr, around the middle of the second century, explains that converts undergo baptism in the name of the Father and Lord of the universe, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. He is describing Christian practice to a Roman audience, not supplying a word-for-word quotation of Matthew's closing verse. Near the end of the second century Irenaeus quotes the threefold commission directly in Against Heresies 3.17.1. Tertullian, writing around 200, repeats it explicitly in On Baptism 13. These witnesses predate Nicaea by well over a century. Their cumulative force places any proposed liturgical insertion substantially earlier than the fourth-century doctrinal settlements, and constrains the alternative to an early editorial or inherited ritual formulation.[502]

The Didache is especially interesting because it couples this form of baptism with a direct ethical program for Gentile adherents. Its ritual practice was one part of an administered communal law. If Matthew's author adopted an already familiar baptismal form, the concluding commission would be a Gospel-shaped authorization of existing religious practice. If the Didache itself learned from Matthew, the agreement would record relatively early adoption of Matthew's form. The direction of dependence is disputed, and the textual data do not decide it without broader literary comparison. In either case, the threefold naming language deserves attention in our reconstruction of Christian sharia rather than a reflexive verdict about the entire Christian doctrine of God.[503]

Jesus-name baptism and the question of the earliest formula

Acts repeatedly refers to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus. Peter's Pentecost instruction in Acts 2:38 uses the name of Jesus Christ. Samaritans are baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus in 8:16. Cornelius's household is instructed to be baptized in Jesus Christ's name in 10:48, and the disciples encountered in Ephesus are baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus in 19:5. These descriptions raise the possibility that the oldest mission practice emphasized a single name and that the evangelist Matthew or a later community expanded its ritual expression. They also permit another explanation: Acts records the distinctive authority under which baptism occurs, rather than every word

[501] Didache 7.1–3, Greek text: https://earlychurchtexts.com/main/didache/didache_bap_euch.shtml; C. C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, Didache manuscript introduction, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/richardson/fathers.viii.i.ii.html.

[502] Justin Martyr, First Apology 61, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.17.1, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103317.htm; Tertullian, On Baptism 13, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0321.htm; Latin and English in Ernest Evans, https://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_bapt/evans_bapt_text_trans.htm.

[503] Didache 1–7 and 9–10; Matthew 28:19; W. C. Allen, ICC on Matthew 28:19. The Didache's relationship to Matthew is debated and not demonstrably a single direct borrowing in every instance.

pronounced over the candidate. We should compare the literary aims of Acts with the concrete instructions of the Didache.[504]

The singular 'name' in the received Greek of Matthew deserves attention without overburdening a grammatical detail. A name may designate authority under which an act is performed; a coordinated list of Father, Son, and Spirit can express a shared liturgical reference while retaining the priority of the Father as source. In the second century, before Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds, different Christian groups understood the relations among these figures in different ways. A threefold baptismal formula therefore establishes use of three designations and a theological relation among them. The proposition that all three are uncreated, coequal persons of one essence requires further philosophical commitments than the words of the formula specify.[505]

Reading the Commission through received authority

The immediate sentence preceding Matthew's triadic command matters as much as the baptismal formula itself: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (28:18). The Greek edothē moi is the language of a grant. Jesus stands as an authorized recipient and sends others under that authorization. The commission ends with obedience to what Jesus has commanded and with his promise of continued presence. A subordinationist reader can therefore hear the threefold name as an ordered economy: God the Father as ultimate giver, the Messiah as commissioned envoy, and the Holy Spirit as the sanctifying support through which the mission becomes effective. Matthew 10:20 already calls prophetic speech among disciples the work of the "Spirit of your Father"; Matthew 12:18 describes God placing his Spirit upon his chosen servant.

The broader Christian canon makes this reading historically recognizable. Acts 2:33 says the exalted Jesus received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and poured forth its effects. First Corinthians 8:6 distinguishes "one God, the Father" from "one Lord, Jesus Christ," while 15:24–28 ends with the Son subjected to the one who subjected all things to him. Such language helped nourish ordered and subordinationist Christian accounts before the fourth-century settlement. Justin Martyr's account of baptism (First Apology 61) names the Father and Lord of all, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. His scheme is hierarchical, as histories of Trinitarian development recognize. Tertullian used the language of trinitas while preserving a strong priority of the Father (Against Praxeas 8–9). These writers supply actual Christian precedents for a threefold confession with an order of origin and authority.

A Nicene Christian has important replies. The single "name" into which people are baptized and the coordination of Father, Son, and Spirit offer positive material for a unity of divine identity. A shared rite can carry a stronger theological claim than its grammar states in isolation. The developed creed of Constantinople in 381 explicitly identifies the

[504] Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5; Didache 7; comparison of literary descriptions of ritual with a manual prescribing its performance.

[505] Matthew 28:19; Justin, First Apology 61; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.17.1. Later theological definitions can be compared through Nicene (325) and Constantinopolitan (381) reception separately.

Holy Spirit as Lord and life-giver, worshipped and glorified with Father and Son, and as the one who spoke through the prophets. The earlier Nicaea creed of 325 ends its treatment with a brief confession of faith in the Holy Spirit, without this extended pneumatological formulation. The doctrinal history is visible in the documents; Matthew 28 alone leaves several questions unresolved.

Gregory of Nazianzus is a striking witness to that history. In his Fifth Theological Oration, section 5, he acknowledges that Christian theologians had understood the Spirit as an activity, a creature, or God. Section 26 explains his mature doctrine through progressive revelation, with fuller knowledge of the Spirit's deity emerging later. Gregory's defense is an intelligent theological argument, and it openly acknowledges a development in how Christians articulated the Spirit. A historical reconstruction can respect his testimony while declining to read the conclusion of 381 backward into every first- or second-century instance of the threefold baptismal name.

What this means for Rūḥ al-Qudus

This inquiry returns us to the Qur'an's deliberate distinctions among the Spirit's activities. Jesus is supported by Rūḥ al-Qudus in 2:87, 2:253 and 5:110; Rūḥ al-Qudus brings revelation down in 16:102. The baptismal formula's invocation of the Holy Spirit need not be treated as an independent assertion that the Spirit is God. Nor does a later liturgical usage automatically authenticate the exact words of the Messiah. The critical task is to identify what earliest sources actually say about the heavenly agent, the authority for baptizing, and the way the Christian community marked a new member's allegiance.[506]

The Great Commission thus functions as a control on our reconstruction of John. It reminds us that Spirit language could be stabilized in liturgy before a later theologian explained its ontology. Eusebius's shorter commissioning and the Acts baptism accounts invite investigation of an earlier Jesus-name tradition; Irenaeus, Justin, Tertullian and the Didache require that any version without the threefold formula be placed very early. The Johannine redaction question remains distinct: John 14:26 concerns the identity of the Paraclete, while Matthew 28:19 concerns the form of a baptismal command. Their shared reception history can be studied without claiming that evidence for a change in one Gospel is a manuscript witness to an identical change in the other.[507]

The third designation as the point of Qurʾānic continuity

This makes the Great Commission a cornerstone of the inquiry. The earliest recoverable Matthew contains the threefold baptismal command, and the Didache, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian establish that triadic practice predates Nicaea. The most economical historical claim is that an ancient Christian rite invoked Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that Christian thinkers subsequently disagreed about what the coordination required ontologically. Matthew's Messiah introduces the mission under received authority; the

[506] Qur'an 2:87, 2:253, 5:110, 16:102; Matthew 28:19; John 14:26 and 16:7–15.

[507] Eusebius, Demonstratio Evangelica 3.6–7; Irenaeus 3.17.1; Didache 7.1–3; Justin, Apology 61; Tertullian, On Baptism 13; John 14:26. Two distinct redaction inquiries.

Qurʾān recognizes a Messiah supported by the Holy Spirit under God's permission. The overlap concerns divine aid and authorized mission, and the difference concerns the theological status of the figures named.

A selective Qurʾānic reception is therefore possible without making the Qurʾān a witness for the Nicene Trinity. The precise name Rūḥ al-Qudus passes into Qurʾānic speech and receives repeated positive use. The Qurʾān disputes the elevation of Jesus into deity and the assertion of three, and at the same time gives divine revelation to a wider history of prophetic recipients. The Spirit's presence in Israel, Jesus's ministry, the disciples, and Muhammad provides a continuity more specific than an abstract appeal to interfaith resemblance. Christians may regard that history as the work of one coequal divine person; I treat it as the recurring revelatory agency of the one God, within the limits of the testimony.

The Imami narrations considered in Chapter 39 become useful at precisely this point. A report attributed to Jaʿfar says that al-Rūḥ is greater than Jibrīl and Mīkāʾīl and accompanies Muhammad and the Imams. The report is about al-Rūḥ, and identification with every occurrence of the longer title Rūḥ al-Qudus is a further inference. Al-Bāqir's five-spirits teachings and the later distinctions preserved in al-Kāfī show a real debate about spiritual guidance, created intermediaries, and the scope of inspired knowledge. I do not make Majlisī's later grading the rule of theological truth. The Qurʾānic passages and the earlier biblical record set the terms of the inquiry; the Imami reports broaden the historical range of possible readings.

A model that has to cover the whole corpus

The proposed distinction between angelic delivery and spiritual empowerment remains useful as a description of different functions. The complete concordance shows that the functions overlap. Rūḥ al-Qudus delivers revelation in 16:102, while other passages use Spirit language for the revelation received, the life given, or the support granted.

We can begin with God's action and ask how each creature receives it. If we then identify all these relations with one named being, we have made a further claim. We need to establish it passage by passage.

The result also returns us to John. The Paraclete's speech, the Spirit's presence in the community, and the Messiah's received authority can be compared with this differentiated Qur'anic vocabulary. The comparison becomes more exact when it preserves the full set of functions. Qur'an 17:85 remains part of that exactness by preventing a proposed map of the unseen from claiming more knowledge than its sources provide.

That inquiry leads to an Imami interpretation in which the Spirit is explicitly created and provides guidance to the Prophet and his successors. It deserves its own chapter, because its historical sources and claims about succession are different from the Qur'anic inventory and from Matthew's baptismal transmission.

Documentary controls for the expanded argument

Hebrew Bible and early Christian narrative: Psalm 51:11 (51:13 MT); Isaiah 63:10–11; Numbers 11:25–29; Joel 2:28–29; Ezekiel 36:26–27; Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; John 1:32–33; 7:39; 14:16–17, 26, 31; 15:26; 16:7–15; Matthew 3:16; 10:20; 12:18; 28:18–20; Acts 2:33; First Corinthians 8:6; 15:24–28.

Qurʾānic passages: 2:87, 2:97, 2:253, 4:171, 5:73, 5:110, 5:116, 9:30, 16:102, 17:85, 26:193, 33:62, 35:43, 42:51–52, 48:23, 58:22, 61:6. Holy Spirit forms can be checked against the Qurʾānic Arabic Corpus, https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rwH.

Historical witnesses: Eusebius, Demonstratio Evangelica 3.6–7 (short commission in 3.6; repeated name argument in 3.7; https://adfonteslibrary.org/work-eusebius-proof-gospel); Didache 7.1, 7.3 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm); Justin, First Apology 61 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm); Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.17.1 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103317.htm); Tertullian, On Baptism 13 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0321.htm); Tertullian, Against Praxeas 8–9 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0317.htm); Gregory of Nazianzus, Fifth Theological Oration 5 and 26 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310231.htm); Creed of Constantinople 381 (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3808.htm).

Critical controls: John (Jack) R. Levison, “The Spirit in the Christian Bible,” St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology (2024), https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/TheSpiritintheChristianBible; Nicolai Sinai, Key Terms of the Qurʾān: A Critical Dictionary (Princeton, 2023), introduction and rūḥ entry, pp. 355–356, https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:2a4e4769-813e-48e9-bf95-c36fdd593c8b; Mourad Takawi, “The Trinity in Qurʾānic Idiom,” Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations 30 (2019), 435–457, https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2019.1690828; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “History of Trinitarian Doctrines,” https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trinity/trinity-history.html; NET Bible textual note on John 7:39, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Joh&chapter=7&verse=39.

39. The Spirit of Jaʿfar: Prophetic Continuity and the Imams

The inquiry into the Spirit now enters the world of the Imams. A report attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq calls the Spirit a creature of Allah greater than Gabriel and Michael, present with Muhammad to inform and guide him, and with the Imams who followed him. I take that description seriously because it offers a way to understand extraordinary access to divine knowledge while preserving Allah as the uncreated source. It is also a tradition that needs historical reconstruction. Jaʿfar died in 148/765. The collections in which his words survive took form much later, drawing upon networks of students, families, theological factions, and compilers. The dating of a manuscript or compilation and the dating of an idea are different matters. Finding Injil asks what the idea contributes to a reading of earlier

revelation; Dark Imams can examine the process by which it became part of the authoritative Jaʿfarian legacy.[508]

The earliest scriptural ground: prophets inspired before Muhammad

The Qur'an gives the theme a firm chronological reach. Allah supports Jesus with Rūḥ al-Qudus, and its account of Jesus's signs keeps divine permission visible in each miracle. The biblical traditions are crowded with comparable scenes. The Spirit resting upon Moses's elders in Numbers 11 enables prophetic speech; God's Spirit comes upon David in 1 Samuel 16; Isaiah describes the Spirit of the Lord resting upon the anointed servant; Luke narrates the Spirit's action at Jesus's conception and baptism. The texts come from different ages and employ multiple conceptions of divine presence. Their common theme is that a chosen human can be acted upon, guided, and empowered by a source beyond him. That broad prophetic continuity is a starting point for interpreting the Imami reports.[509]

The Qur'an also describes its own revelation in the vocabulary of Spirit. At 26:193–194 al-Rūḥ al-Amīn descends with the message upon Muhammad's heart; at 16:102 Rūḥ al-Qudus brings it down from the Lord in truth. Gabriel is named in 2:97 as the one who brought revelation to the Prophet's heart by Allah's permission. A reader can naturally identify all three references with one transmitting angel. The Imami interpretation offers another map of the same heavenly activity. It distinguishes an exalted created Spirit from Gabriel while retaining the latter's scriptural role. Any complete theory must explain the overlap in transmission without assuming that different nouns necessarily establish different beings.[510]

The pre-Kāfī witness: al-Ṣaffār

The doctrinal formulation preceded al-Kulaynī's surviving arrangement. In Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār, who died in 290/902–903, collects reports explaining Qur'an 42:52. One transmission runs through Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and Manṣūr ibn Yūnus to Abū Baṣīr. The answer attributes to the Spirit the status of a creature greater than Gabriel and Michael, accompanying Muhammad and subsequently the Imams, whom it informs and corrects. A second transmission proceeds through Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, al-Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd, al-Naḍr ibn Suwayd, Yaḥyā al-Ḥalabī and Abū al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Kinānī to Abū Baṣīr. That second path closely corresponds to the route preserved in al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1. The same doctrinal package is therefore attested in an earlier compilation and in a closely related later source.[511]

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[508] Al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/1; al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, section on the Spirit, https://usul.ai/ar/t/basair-darajat/474.

[509] Qur'an 2:87, 2:253, 5:110; Numbers 11:24–29; 1 Samuel 16:13; Isaiah 11:2; Luke 1:35 and 3:22. These are textual comparisons, not evidence that Jaʿfar read a single combined biblical codex.

[510] Qur'an 2:97, 16:102, 26:192–194, 42:51–52; al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 and .3.

[511] al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, chapter 16 of the relevant section, text around pp. 474–476, https://usul.ai/ar/t/basair-darajat/474; al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/1.

A third item in al-Ṣaffār's collection transmits a statement from Abān ibn Taghlib through al-ʿAbbās ibn Maʿrūf and Saʿdān ibn Muslim. It presents the Spirit as a creation greater than Gabriel and Michael, first accompanying Muhammad and then the Imams. Abān is an important early transmitter and exegete associated with the fifth and sixth Imams. His appearance broadens the reception history of the teaching, although the statement in this form is transmitted as his rather than quoted directly from Jaʿfar. It is tempting to count the similar reports as three independent confirmations. Before counting, though, we need to compare their common phrases and named transmitters. How many separate sources do we actually have?[512]

This gives us a recoverable early Imami interpretive environment, even though it cannot by itself certify a verbatim conversation in Jaʿfar's lifetime. The third/ninth-century compiler was gathering material already transmitted under Jaʿfar's name by intermediary teachers. The importance of Baṣāʾir is precisely that it carries the doctrine back before the more familiar arrangement in al-Kāfī. The lesson for the companion book is about authorization through transmission: an influential theological formulation could circulate among Imami circles, acquire several chains, and become a distinctive account of how the Imams possessed knowledge after the prophetic office had closed.[513]

The five spirits and a theology of capacity

Another report attributed to Jaʿfar, transmitted through Jābir al-Juʿfī and preserved at al-Kāfī 1.4.55.1, divides people into three scriptural classes by reading Qur'an 56:7–10. The foremost servants, including messengers, possess five spirits. The Holy Spirit permits knowledge; the Spirit of faith grounds fear of Allah; the Spirit of strength supports obedience; the Spirit of desire directs appetite toward what is lawful; and another animating spirit accounts for ordinary human movement. Believers outside the foremost group participate in a smaller number of these capacities. The scheme treats exceptional revelation as one aspect of a person who still eats, walks, chooses, and obeys. It is an account of gradations of created life under divine care, with moral responsibility active at every rank.[514]

This structure has unexpected value for the Johannine investigation. John describes Jesus receiving instruction, performing the works of the Father, and communicating what he hears. A person can be the bearer of a divine word without becoming the independent source of that word. The Qur'an regularly describes Jesus's miracles by adding Allah's permission, making the relationship explicit. The five-spirit model offers a later Islamic language for understanding how extraordinary knowledge might coexist with real creaturely limitation. I am using it as a historical comparison. We have not established that

[512] al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, section on the Spirit, report through al-ʿAbbās b. Maʿrūf → Saʿdān b. Muslim → Abān b. Taghlib, https://usul.ai/ar/t/basair-darajat/474. Source-level comparison with related routes is pending.

[513] al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt; al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī 1.4.56. On the historiography of early esoteric Imamism compare Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, 'Aspects of Imami Shiʿism in al-Ṣaffār's Baṣāʾir al-darajāt' (1992).

[514] al-Kāfī 1.4.55.1, complete Arabic, https://thaqalayn.com/ar/hadith/1/4/55/1; Qur'an 56:7–10. Do not conflate this Jaʿfar attribution through Jābir with the related al-Bāqir report at al-Kāfī 1.4.55.2.

the author of John or a first-century Jewish-Christian school used these exact names for the Messiah's capacities.[515]

The Spirit as a created messenger above the named angels

The report from Abū Baṣīr in al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 takes Qur'an 42:52, 'a spirit from Our command,' as a description of a created being. The decisive words are khalq min khalq Allāh: a creature from among Allah's creatures. The report then places this being above Gabriel and Michael and describes his function with two verbs, yukhbiruhu wa-yusaddiduhu, informing Muhammad and setting him aright. The pairing tells us what this theology was meant to explain. The Imam's exceptional knowledge is associated with the presence of an agent who communicates guidance, while the ultimate origin of that agent and its knowledge remains Allah. This is close to the basic tawḥīd-preserving arrangement needed for our reading of the heavenly Messiah.[516]

A neighboring explanation of Qur'an 17:85 places the Spirit within the malakūt, the realm of heavenly dominion. That makes the being part of God's created order rather than a rival principle. Yet the same set of reports includes one account limiting the presence of this particular Spirit among earlier people, reserving it to Muhammad and the Imams. The broader Qur'anic evidence for Jesus's support by Rūḥ al-Qudus gives a reason to distinguish this specialized imamic formulation from a universal doctrine of prophetic inspiration. Are we dealing with the same Spirit, and in what capacity? Our theology has to explain why the scope differs between these texts. We cannot make the difference vanish.[517]

Succession of guidance and the household

A related report attributed to Jaʿfar through al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar describes Rūḥ al-Qudus passing to the Imam after the Prophet's death. The account distinguishes that Spirit from ordinary human powers: it does not sleep, become forgetful, or engage in frivolous activity. The language is especially relevant to religious succession. It describes a continuing capacity to receive knowledge after Muhammad's earthly life has ended. The report's route and its status within early Imami discussions must be examined on their own terms; our present use is to identify a theological explanation of continuity found in the corpus.[518]

This returns the inquiry to James. The Gospel of Thomas 12 directs the disciples toward James the Just; later Jewish-Christian and ecclesiastical witnesses explain his authority through kinship, entrusted teaching, or appointment. None of these Christian texts says that the Imami five-spirit doctrine was handed from Jesus to James. The comparison raises a question worth asking: does the successor's authority rest on inherited sayings alone, or

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[515] John 5:19–30, 7:16, 12:49, 14:10; Qur'an 3:49 and 5:110; al-Kāfī 1.4.55.1.

[516] al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/1; Qur'an 42:52.

[517] al-Kāfī 1.4.56.3–4, https://thaqalayn.com/chapter/1/4/56; Qur'an 2:87 and 5:110. The special restriction of the Spirit is noted as a question of referent, not made the subject of this chapter.

[518] al-Kāfī 1.4.55.3, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/55/3. The report is attributed in the Arabic to Abū ʿAbd Allāh through al-Mufaḍḍal b. ʿUmar.

does the community claim continuing assistance from God? That question reappears in the debate over the Imams, where family relationship, a recognized commission, and extraordinary knowledge become competing grounds of legitimacy.[519]

Within early Imamism, there were different answers to the same question. Tamima Bayhom-Daou's reconstruction of Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam finds an Imamology based on the Imam as an infallible transmitter of the Prophet's heritage, rejecting new post-prophetic divine communication. That account provides an important contemporary intellectual control on more expansive theories preserved under Jaʿfar's name. The difference has consequences for our use of the word authority. A reliable repository of inherited teaching and a recipient of heavenly guidance may agree about many religious obligations while offering distinct explanations of why the Imam can judge.[520]

The Paraclete and the continuation of the mission

We can now put the same question to John and to the Jaʿfarian material, even though they give different answers. Jesus promises a Paraclete who will teach, remind the disciples, testify, and convey what is heard from another. John 16:7 connects the coming of that figure to Jesus's departure. In the Jaʿfarian material, a Spirit informs Muhammad and supports later bearers of the mission. Both frameworks seek to explain how religious truth remains accessible after an authorized messenger is absent. The chronological distance is profound, and an ancient borrowing cannot be inferred from similarity alone. Yet the comparison supplies a way of understanding the prophetic promise without assigning uncreated divinity to the agent who carries it.[521]

It is precisely because the Qur'an describes the Spirit delivering the Qur'an that this account of transmission is worth examining. At 26:193–194 the Trustworthy Spirit brings the revelation upon Muhammad's heart; at 16:102 the Holy Spirit brings it down in truth. Aḥmad remains the named human messenger of 61:6 in the book's governing interpretation. The proposal is that a prophetic mission can be accompanied by an exalted transmitting agency, and that an earlier promise can refer to the successor's guidance without reducing the successor to the Spirit itself. This remains a reading to defend from the passages, including the Johannine references to the Spirit's continued presence among Jesus's followers.[522]

The same picture should never become a theory of independent heavenly management. The Spirit described in these Imami reports is created, receives its place from Allah, and is invoked to explain a servant's knowledge. Shaykh al-Mufīd later rejects the attribution of divinity or autonomous creative power to the Imams. His polemic against ghulūw places

[519] Gospel of Thomas 12; Galatians 1:19 and 2:9; Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43; al-Kāfī 1.4.55–56. The comparison does not establish a historical transmission chain between James and Jaʿfar.

[520] Tamima Bayhom-Daou, 'Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795) and His Doctrine of the Imām's Knowledge,' Journal of Semitic Studies 48.1 (2003): 71–108, abstract, https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/48.1.71. Full article remains to be examined for individual reconstructed quotations.

[521] John 14:16–17 and 26, 15:26, 16:7–15; al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1; Qur'an 61:6.

[522] Qur'an 16:102, 26:193–194, 61:6; John 14–16; compare Qur'an 2:97 for Gabriel's explicit role in revelation.

their exceptional station inside a framework of worship owed to Allah alone. This supplies a distinctly Shiʿi analogue for reading the Gospel's exalted Messiah as a dependent bearer of God's Name and Word. In both books, the strongest claim concerns authority granted from above. Allah remains the uncreated source of revelation.[523]

A theology the manuscripts carried forward

The early Imami collections let us identify a distinctive interpretive family, with the language of created Spirit, superior heavenly status, prophetic assistance, and continuity among the Imams. Al-Ṣaffār supplies an earlier literary witness than al-Kulaynī, while the Jābir and Abū Baṣīr networks show some of the channels through which competing formulations traveled. What Jaʿfar himself taught, and what later teachers inserted or emphasized in his name, belongs to the historical research conducted in Dark Imams. For Finding Injil, the doctrine has earned its place because it articulates a religious possibility already relevant to John and the Qur'an: revelation can arrive through a created, exalted agent while the prophet's human servanthood and Allah's sole divinity remain intact.[524]

[523] Shaykh al-Mufīd, Tashīḥ al-iʿtiqād, chapter on al-ghulūw wa-l-tafwīḍ, https://al-islam.org/emendation-shiite-creed-shaykh-al-mufid/33-chapter-excess-and-delegation-al-ghuluww-wat-tafwid; Qur'an 4:171 and 5:110.

[524] Al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, section on Spirit, https://usul.ai/ar/t/basair-darajat/474; al-Kāfī 1.4.55–56, https://thaqalayn.com/chapter/1/4/55 and https://thaqalayn.com/chapter/1/4/56; Bayhom-Daou 2003.

40. Aḥmad, the Prophetic Covenant and Christian Obedience

What do the communities formed around Jesus owe to the prophetic history he belongs to? The remaining explicit references connect the announced successor with that question of faithful response. We need to read them alongside the positive account of Christian devotion and the different laws assigned to communities.

It also completes the concordance's coverage of the name ʿĪsā. Several occurrences appear in lists or covenant statements rather than in extended narratives. Their brevity should not make them disappear from a study organized around more dramatic episodes. A list can establish relations that an isolated story leaves unstated.

One prophetic history

Qur'an 2:136 and 3:84 include Jesus among the recipients of revelation whom believers are instructed to affirm. Qur'an 4:163 locates the messenger's revelation within a series that also includes Jesus. Qur'an 6:85 names him among righteous figures, while 33:7 places him within the solemn covenant taken from the prophets.[525]

The injunction to make no distinction in belief does not imply that every messenger has the same rank or performs an identical mission. Qur'an 2:253 explicitly describes differences among messengers. The relationship between the two statements concerns fidelity to the whole divine history while recognizing differentiated gifts within it.

Qur'an 42:13 associates Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the present revelation with the charge to uphold religion and avoid division. That verse gives the project a reason to recover the teaching of earlier messengers. It does not authenticate every document later attributed to them. The duty to respect a prophet's mission and the historical identification of that prophet's actual words remain connected tasks with different evidence.

A Christian law reconstructed under this premise would consequently belong to the same divine concern as the law addressed to other communities. The particular duties may differ. Their legitimacy would depend upon the authority that assigns them and the ethical purpose they serve. We have to establish those details. A continuous prophetic history need not give every community an identical set of duties.

Helpers and the responsibilities of a community

The scene of Jesus asking for helpers in 3:52–53 reappears in 61:14 as a pattern for the believers addressed by the Qur'an. The disciples' answer makes them participants in a

[525] Qur'an 2:136; 3:84; 4:163; 6:85; 33:7; 42:13; compare 2:253. Affirmation of all messengers and differentiated rank occur within the same Qur'anic corpus.

mission. Their relation to Jesus involves action and loyalty, which cannot be reduced to an abstract opinion about his nature.[526]

The account's distinction between those who responded and those who rejected also prevents "Israel" or "Christianity" from functioning as a single moral character. Qur'an 5:78 associates David and Jesus with a condemnation of particular disbelieving wrongdoers among the Children of Israel; the following verse specifies failure to restrain wrongdoing. That criticism is directed toward conduct and its communal toleration. It does not license a judgment upon every member of an ethnic population.

James's community provides a historical setting in which these questions of loyalty and conduct can be investigated. Tabor's dynastic reconstruction and the Alid comparison help formulate the issue of legitimate succession. The Qur'anic helper passages do not identify a particular later hierarchy, however. When a historical institution claims to continue that scriptural model, that is precisely where we need to ask for its evidence.

The promised messenger and the Spirit of Truth

Qur'an 61:6 contains the declaration that opens this book: Jesus confirms what precedes him of the Torah and announces a messenger to come after him whose name or designation is Aḥmad. My thesis identifies the Johannine Paraclete tradition, particularly John 16, as a central surviving witness to the promise.[527]

The identification gives the Fourth Gospel an unavoidable place in the search for Injil. Its validity must still be tested against the whole farewell discourse, including the Spirit's presence with the disciples and the role of remembering Jesus's teaching. A reader cannot retain only the hearing-and-speaking language while suppressing the other functions assigned to the promised figure.

The expanded Rūḥ study permits a more nuanced formulation. A subsequent human mission can be understood as supported by a divine Spirit, while a community can also receive continuing spiritual guidance. Whether such a combination explains the Johannine tradition's formation is an historical question. As theology, this is my modern construction. I cannot attribute it to a lost manuscript.

Sean Anthony's study gives the identification an early Islamic reception history through Ibn Isḥāq's use of a Christian Palestinian Aramaic tradition. It also presents objections to treating that reception as the original meaning of Qur'an 61:6. The earlier chapter has recorded both. The connection remains worth making. It also remains an eighth-century interpretation, whose relation to the earlier Gospel's wording and referent must be argued.

Qur'an 7:157 speaks of the messenger being found written in the Torah and Gospel. It does not name John or identify a precise verse. The passage supports the project's investigation

[526] Qur'an 3:52–53; 61:14; 5:78–79. The condemnation in 5:78–79 is attached to specified wrongdoing and its toleration; it is not a universal judgment upon an ethnic population.

[527] Qur'an 61:6; 7:157; John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15. Sean W. Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete," BSOAS 79.2 (2016): 255–278, doi:10.1017/S0041977X16000458. This chapter carries forward the earlier case study's reception evidence and counterarguments; no new manuscript collation is claimed.

of scriptural testimony, while the selection of a particular testimony remains an exegetical argument that must be made explicitly.

Compassion and the religious life Christians built

Qur'an 57:26–29 places Jesus after an account of the prophetic line and the distribution of scripture. It speaks of the Injil and of compassion and mercy in the hearts of his followers. It then discusses monasticism, its introduction, its relation to seeking God's pleasure, and the failures of observance that followed.[528]

The syntax around what was prescribed and what was undertaken needs careful reading. Translations differ in how they present the relation between the voluntary practice and the seeking of divine approval. A full grammatical treatment should preserve that difference. The passage does not require the reader to treat every historical Christian ascetic as fraudulent or every voluntary discipline as a new divine law.

The distinction helps clarify the Didache's practical contribution. A community may organize fasting, prayer, and shared resources in pursuit of a religious aim. It still needs to distinguish a divine command from a discipline adopted to fulfill one. A voluntary rule can create obligations through a legitimate commitment, but its history and scope should remain visible.

The Qur'anic passage also distinguishes among the followers. Some receive their reward; many are described as failing in obedience. The text supplies a basis for discriminating judgment within the community. A theory that treats all Christian history as either pure fidelity or complete apostasy would lose that differentiated account.

Different laws and the meaning of submission

Qur'an 5:46–48 remains the principal warrant for the Christian-sharia proposal. The Injil contains guidance, its people are called to judge by what God revealed, and communities are described in relation to a law and a way. I take that differentiation seriously as part of the divine order.[529]

Qur'an 3:19 and 3:85 require an answer within that reading. Their statements about islām have been understood as referring to submission to God across the prophetic history or, in other interpretations, as defining the exclusive standing of the community formed around the Qur'an. The argument cannot simply quote 5:48 while leaving these verses unexamined. It has to establish how the terms and contexts fit together.

The positive assessments of some People of the Book in 3:113–115 and the response of receptive Christians in 5:82–85 also belong to the inquiry. Qur'an 2:62 and 5:69 associate faith and righteous action with divine reward in formulations whose scope has a long

[528] Qur'an 57:26–29. The relation between voluntary monasticism, seeking divine pleasure, and prescribed obligation is a grammatical and exegetical question. The verse distinguishes faithful recipients of reward from wrongdoing within the followers.

[529] Qur'an 5:46–48; 3:19, 85; 5:66–69. The differentiated-covenant account is the author's interpretation and must engage the alternative readings of islām rather than assume their conclusion.

exegetical history. These passages make the moral and devotional response of actual persons relevant to the argument.[530]

My working position is that divine signs and revelation guide people toward fidelity. A new sign can create a responsibility for someone who recognizes it, while the judgment of a person's response depends upon knowledge and conduct that God fully knows. That is my theological interpretation. Dating manuscripts alone cannot establish it.

What a reconstructed Christian law can claim

The materials now permit a provisional structure with different levels of authority. The ethical instruction attributed to Jesus supplies the first field of investigation. James's decree offers an early narrative of Gentile admission, with the Noahide and resident-alien comparisons clarifying its legal possibilities. The Didache supplies a developed communal discipline whose instructions must be graded individually.

Sabbath observance can be argued within that reconstruction, but its universal scope remains disputed. Acts 15:21 does not expressly command Gentile Sabbath rest, Colossians 2:16 resists judgment over sacred times, and Qur'an 16:124 speaks of the Sabbath in a particular setting. If we propose such a rule, we have to explain those passages. We cannot quietly write the assumption into the code.

The same procedure applies to food, marriage, and religious authority. Some obligations have strong convergence across the relevant sources, particularly the rejection of idolatrous participation and the demand to care for those in need. Others depend upon a specific community's arrangement or a contested interpretation. Each rule should carry the evidence for its scope as well as the argument for its value.

Qur'an 9:111 places a promise associated with Torah, Injil, and Qur'an within the language of costly fidelity. The later chapter on killing and being killed examines the legitimacy of force and the conditions imposed upon those who claim that promise. Its presence reinforces the need for a law capable of judging a community's actions, including actions undertaken under sacred slogans.

The limits of the concordance

Appendix D closes the accounting for the twenty-five explicit uses of ʿĪsā, the eleven occurrences of al-Masīḥ, and the twenty-one occurrences of rūḥ. It also records the narrative blocks and companion passages used to interpret them. Those counts tell us which words and passages we have covered. Possible allusions to Jesus and theological uses of spirit-related imagery can still lie beyond that inventory.

The distinction protects the next stage of research. A newly proposed allusion can be added with its evidence rather than being treated as a verse that was secretly always part of an undefined corpus. The same discipline applies to the proposed connections with John, Enoch, Isaiah, and the apocryphal narratives.

[530] Qur'an 2:62; 3:113–115; 5:69, 82–85. These passages are included as controls on the book's theological claims about communities and the moral response of their members.

We can now reconstruct Christian law with the Qur’anic premises on the table. What obligation does the evidence support? Whom does it address? And how does the transmission of the Messiah’s teaching authorize what we are asking people to do?

PART IX · RECOVERING GUIDANCE

41. Christian Law and the Prophetic Sunnah

So what does a community following the Messiah actually do? Qur'an 5:47 directs the People of the Gospel toward what Allah revealed within it. My reading takes that instruction to have consequences for conduct. Recovering Injil has to reach the life of the community.[531]

The law inquiry begins with a range of witnesses. The Sermon on the Mount presents an account of righteousness and obligation. Acts 15 gives a narrative of a decision concerning Gentile converts. The Didache preserves community instruction, while Paul's letters address actual disputes about practice. Their relations need to be established before they are assembled into a single Christian sharia.

A differentiated covenant

Qur'an 5:48 is central to my account of different communities receiving forms of law. My theological proposal is that communities can be faithful to God under different covenants. Scripture and history must then tell us whether there are distinct Christian obligations, and what they are.

This reading makes Gentile circumcision, food, prayer, and charity substantive research questions. It also asks who has authority to change an inherited rule. The permission attributed to a messenger differs from an accommodation made by a later preacher. The source history of a command is therefore part of the legal inquiry.

If we bring Noahide concepts into the comparison, we also need their chronology. An analogy between a small body of Gentile obligations and later rabbinic formulations can illuminate a question. Establishing a direct historical equation requires the relevant Jewish sources and their dates.

The command that can be obeyed

The Ḥafṣ reading of Qur'an 5:47 has wa-l-yaḥkum ahl al-injīl bi-mā anzala Allāhu fīhi: a lām of command with a jussive verb and an expressed subject, the People of the Injīl. The reading transmitted by Ḥamzah instead has wa-li-yaḥkuma, in which the lām expresses purpose and the verb is subjunctive. Its clause continues the preceding wa-ātaynāhu al-injīl in 5:46: We granted Jesus the Injīl so that its people would judge by what God revealed within it. Al-Ṭabarī records and accepts both readings as closely related in meaning; al-Qurṭubī likewise explains their grammatical difference. (Al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī, on Q 5:47; Quran.com, Qirāʾāt 5:47.)

[531] Qur'an 5:46–48; original Finding Injil fragment, pp. 7–9; Dossier v7, "Christian law and plural covenant theology." Primary comparisons identified there include Matthew 5–7, Acts 15, 1 Corinthians 8–10, and the Didache.

The two grammatical constructions give the book a firmer starting point for recovering operative guidance. The first presents an injunction; the second identifies the purpose of the revelation within the connected sentence beginning at 5:46. The warning against failure to judge by divine revelation follows in either recitation. Neither construction by itself inventories the surviving contents of the Injīl or identifies every seventh-century addressee. Those questions require independent work with Gospel transmission and reported practice. The Warsh pronunciation yaḥkuma-hlu across the word boundary in the imperative reading is a phonetic realization, distinct from Ḥamzah's purposive construction.

FI-001 offers a strong example. Mark 12:28–34 has Jesus begin his answer with the Shema and follow it with the obligation to love one's neighbor. The scribe responds by affirming God's oneness and placing those duties above burnt offerings. Matthew 22:34–40 retains the double command while omitting Mark's opening quotation and the sympathetic scribe; Luke 10:25–28 has the legal questioner recite the commands and Jesus approve the answer. The published SBL Greek passages have been checked for this comparison. Because Matthew and Luke can depend upon inherited Synoptic material, three written scenes do not establish three independent reports. FI-001 remains H-B for the teaching nucleus, H-C for the exact dialogue, and Q++ for Qur'anic consonance. That is sufficient to identify worship of the one God and love enacted toward others as central duties in a provisional recovery of Jesus's instruction.

FI-006 tests whether that duty can be stated at the right scale. Matthew 5:33–37 rejects routine oath-making and commands an ordinary yes or no to be trustworthy. James 5:12 transmits the paired heaven-and-earth examples and the yes/no formula in a different literary setting. The published Greek passages agree on this memorable moral core; the historical independence of the transmission lines remains open. Qur'an 5:89 meanwhile distinguishes deliberate from idle oaths and prescribes expiation. FI-006 therefore retains H-B for truthful speech without habitual oath-dependence, while a universal and exceptionless legal ban on solemn oaths receives its separate Q0/Q− assessment. A recovered Injīl needs its own source history and the Qur'an's actual legal limits.

The companion also registers FI-005, FI-007, FI-012, FI-015 and FI-017, treated in the following sections. The additional primary-text and versional checks inform their existing provisional grades; the textual apparatus and manuscripts still require specialist collation. We can examine the proposed obligations now, provided we keep those limits on the historical claims visible.

Wealth and the master a person obeys

FI-005 supplies a recoverable moral demand. Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 preserve a close Greek formulation in which allegiance to God is incompatible with service to Mammon. Matthew places it within teaching about treasure and anxiety; Luke sets it after the steward and among disputes about wealth. The two placements show what each evangelist wished the prohibition to do. Under the working Synoptic source models, their close agreement supports a shared teaching tradition rather than two separately verified eyewitness utterances. The Gospel of Thomas 47 also uses the image of two masters,

without the explicit God-and-Mammon conclusion; 2 Clement 6.1 applies the maxim to wealth as an early reception witness. Those witnesses require separate assessments of literary contact (FI-005; Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; Thomas 47; 2 Clement 6.1).

The published Coptic SCRIPTORIUM edition allows a more direct text-level check of Thomas 47. It states that a servant cannot serve two masters (ⲙⲛ ϭⲟⲙ ... ⲟⲩϩⲙϩⲁⲗ ⲩⲙⲩⲉ ⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ) and joins the image to horses, bows and wine. This logion contains no named God–Mammon application; that application is explicit in the related Matthew–Luke stream. The Coptic passage is a transmitted Thomas saying, with its dependence and Jesus-attribution still unresolved. (Coptic SCRIPTORIUM, Gospel of Thomas, NHAM.02, edition 6.2.0; NASSCAL, Thomas manuscript inventory.)

What can a person do with this guidance? He can test his commercial decisions by whether they subordinate truthfulness, prayer or another person's rights to acquisition. Qur'an 24:37 praises people engaged in commerce whom buying and selling do not distract from remembering Allah, prayer or zakāt. Qur'an 63:9 gives the warning its sharper moral edge. We have guidance about allegiance and conduct here. A universal ban on property or trade would need a different textual case. FI-005 remains H-B for the probable anti-Mammon teaching nucleus, H-C for exact phrasing and placement, with Q++ for exclusive loyalty and a qualified Q+ for the economic application. Afetame Alabi's 2024 papyrological study also cautions against treating the proverb as a literal sociological rule about every jointly owned ancient slave.

Poverty: who is promised the kingdom?

FI-007 asks a harder question than whether Jesus sympathized with the poor. Luke 6:20 speaks to the poor in the second person and joins that promise to hunger, weeping and corresponding woes against those satisfied by their present abundance. Matthew 5:3 calls the blessed 'poor in spirit,' then develops the discourse through righteousness, mercy and peacemaking. James 2:5 recalls the poor as heirs of the kingdom while rebuking preferential treatment in an assembly. The wording of these sources gives a recoverable social demand: favoring the wealthy over a needy person contradicts the order of values represented by the teaching. Source history remains important. Matthew and Luke may draw on a shared sayings tradition or one upon the other, and James may adapt circulating language; his epistle is an additional early Christian use of the theme rather than a verified transcript of the same encounter (FI-007; Luke 6:20–26; Matthew 5:3–12; James 2:1–7; Gousopoulos 2025).

Qur'an 2:177 and 90:12–16 make generosity toward people in distress a concrete duty. The Qur'anic judgment of final honor in 49:13 supplies a limit upon treating material poverty itself as a certificate of salvation. My Injīl reconstruction can therefore affirm a probable reversal proclamation (H-B), identify the poor as people whose claims require practical care, and leave the earliest form of the Matthean qualification at H-C. I can approve of the social teaching without pretending that my approval tells us which text changed which.

Prayer: a transmitted petition and an adopted schedule

A physical check now sharpens the question. The Vatican Library's edition of P75, Pap.Hanna.1, folio 1B2v, gives a full published Greek transcription of Luke 11:1–4, and its facsimile exposes the prayer on lines 7–13. The directly visible sequence begins Pater, hagiasthetō to onoma sou, elthetō hē basileia sou, then asks for bread, remission of sins, and freedom from temptation. It lacks the extended appeal for God's will to be done on earth and the final request for deliverance from evil familiar from Matthew. The Vatican editor judges this short text very close to modern critical Luke, apart from minor spellings. I checked the published transcription against the displayed photograph for the presence and order of the petitions; this is a source-level control on the transmitted Lukan text, not an independent reconstruction of Jesus's original Aramaic prayer. (Vatican Library, A Venerable Witness of the Gospels of Luke and John: Bodmer Papyrus XIV–XV, 2008, p. 1; Pap.Hanna.1 fol. 1B2v.)

Didache 8:2–3 makes the next stage visible in Greek: the prayer is introduced as what the Lord commanded in his Gospel, follows the longer Matthean pattern with a doxology, and ends with tris tēs hēmeras houtō proseuchesthe, a requirement to pray this way three times each day. The oral petition, the written Gospel forms, and the adopted communal frequency can therefore receive distinct historical assessments. The copied prayer has identifiable early material support; the three-times-daily rule is a rule attested for the Didache's community. The papyrus's copying date remains contested: the Vatican's conventional early-third-century assignment and Nongbri's fourth-century argument should be listed together before any firm terminus is asserted. (Didache 8:2–3, Greek text; Nongbri, Novum Testamentum 68 [2026]:518–538.)

FI-015 is particularly useful because it offers more than an ethical maxim. Matthew 6:9–13 preserves a developed communal prayer; Luke 11:2–4 has a shorter version, framed as an answer to a disciple's request. Both direct worship toward God and ask for the coming kingdom, daily provision, forgiveness and protection. The forms differ in their petitions and their debt language. Published critical notes support a shorter Lukan form at several variation units, with P75 among the witnesses cited for those readings. That is printed-apparatus evidence here; I have not completed an independent papyrus folio transcription. The Didache 8:2–3 reproduces a form close to Matthew and commands its use three times daily. Its rhythm documents organized Christian devotion; the historian must separately establish whether Jesus himself prescribed that exact frequency (FI-015; Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; Didache 8).

The Qur'anic comparison begins with prayer directed to Allah in 1:1–7, 2:186 and 20:14. The inherited address 'Father' calls for analysis within Jewish devotional speech; the Qur'an's denial of divine begetting in 112:3 governs any proposed literal reading. I include the short God-directed petition nucleus as H-B, while the complete and exact Matthean or Lukan liturgical wording remains H-C. A community can pray from this preserved tradition. It can also be honest about which words it received through an evangelist or church manual and which were certainly spoken by the Messiah. The undecided Greek expression epiousios, commonly rendered 'daily,' deserves independent lexical study before turning the bread petition into a highly specified economic or ritual law.

A new check of Paul's Greek also sharpens the boundary. In 1 Corinthians 7:10, ouk egō alla ho kyrios explicitly introduces a command attributed to the Lord; 7:12 reverses the formula for Paul's further pastoral direction, egō, ouch ho kyrios. This is strong documentation that the Corinthian community recognized an earlier Lord-associated rule and that Paul differentiated his own ruling. It remains Paul's indirect rendering of what the Lord taught. Modern scholarship disputes whether the resulting legal prohibition is a universally exceptionless rule or Paul's adaptation to a particular Corinthian case. I retain that disagreement in the historical-grade column, while protecting the book's practical concern for an injured spouse. (1 Corinthians 7:10–16, SBLGNT; ‘Paul's Divergence from Jesus’ Prohibition of Divorce,’ Open Theology [2021]; Murphy-O'Connor, ‘The Divorced Woman in 1 Corinthians 7:10–11,’ 2009, abstract.)

Marriage, consent and obligations after separation

FI-017 has an unusually early source control. In 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 Paul expressly assigns a prohibition concerning separation to 'the Lord.' He then acknowledges separation as an eventuality and advises remaining unmarried or reconciliation. In verses 12–16 he openly distinguishes further pastoral counsel addressed to marriages involving an unbelieving spouse, including the case in which that partner leaves. This is a written pre-Gospel use of a Jesus-associated instruction, though Paul supplies no complete chain to the first occasion or verbatim Aramaic wording. It strengthens an H-B nucleus against arbitrary repudiation while leaving the reach of a universal legal code unsettled (FI-017; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16).

The Synoptic witnesses themselves resist compression into one unqualified divorce statute. Mark 10:2–12 criticizes dismissing a spouse and portrays remarriage as a violation of fidelity. Matthew 5:31–32 and 19:3–9 include exception language associated with porneia. Luke 16:18 transmits a shorter categorical form. Some copies of Matthew 19:9 include an additional final clause; its exact witness allocation awaits the critical apparatus. Within Paul, the meaning of 'not bound' in 7:15, especially for a new marriage, is contested. If we reconstruct Christian law from these sources, we need to say which instruction we attribute to Jesus and which exceptions came through particular authors or community circumstances.

The textual geography is now precise enough to block a false independence claim. The Gospel of Thomas survives complete in Coptic at Nag Hammadi Codex II,2; the Greek Oxyrhynchus pieces preserve other logia, not 47 or 95. Thomas 47 shares the two-master illustration with Matthew and Luke but moves into horses, bows, and wineskins, without the God-and-Mammon conclusion. Thomas 95 gives a distinctive warning against interest-bearing loans and favors giving without expected recovery. Neither Coptic parallel supplies an additional extant Greek Jesus-quotation for its own wording. Coptic SCRIPTORIUM's Dilley edition, version 6.2.0 (2025), is now recorded as the controlled original-language edition to collate for both logia. Its published metadata and the English logion translations have been checked here; a line-by-line Coptic diplomatic transcription and translation audit remain outstanding. (NASSCAL, Gospel of Thomas, witness inventory; Coptic SCRIPTORIUM, NHAM02; Gospels.net, Thomas 47 and 95.)

The Greek in Luke 6:35 deserves the same restraint. Mēden apelpizontes occurs amid a demand to lend generously; the compound verb can carry the sense of despair, while traditional translations infer an absence of expected repayment from the setting. Its interpretation has a documented lexical dispute and an edition-level variant involving mēden or mēdena. That uncertainty weakens any claim that Luke alone promulgates a rule cancelling every loan principal. In Qur'an 2:279 the creditor may recover principal while ribā is rejected; 2:280 recommends forbearance and charity toward hardship. I record the shared moral aim and the difference in juridical scope, with Thomas 95's explicit interest language assigned its own historical grade. (Luke 6:34–35, Greek SBLGNT and lexica; Qur'an 2:279–280; FI-012.)

Qur'an 2:229–231 treats divorce as a regulated act and requires retention in recognized kindness or release with good treatment; verse 2:231 explicitly condemns retaining a spouse to cause harm. Qur'an 65:1–2 supplies further procedure. These provisions ground my Qur'anic commitment to protecting people against oppressive marital power. They also require me to acknowledge where the traditions give different legal formulations. A categorical claim that every effective divorce violates the Qur'an would fail this comparison. FI-017 keeps H-B for the anti-repudiation teaching, H-C for the exact exceptions and universal legal reach, Q+ for protection against harmful dismissal, and Q− for a proposed timeless absolute divorce ban.

The audience question has an archival answer at the level of available languages. Sidney Griffith's history of the Bible in Arabic describes scriptural material circulating orally among Arabic-speaking Christians before Islam, with surviving Arabic translations of biblical books emerging and multiplying after the Qur'an. A seventh-century command to the People of the Injīl need not presuppose that its recipients possessed a printed Arabic New Testament. Its legal reach still depends on which communities and practices the Qur'anic discourse addresses. I will not use later Arabic Bible manuscript dates to infer that the Qur'an was commanding obedience to a vanished revelation. Equally, an extant Syriac or Greek text must earn its status as the relevant teaching by examination of its particular contents. (Griffith, The Bible in Arabic, Princeton University Press, 2013, publisher description; New Cambridge History of the Bible, ‘The Bible in Arabic,’ 2012.)

Loans, repayment and the obligation to give

FI-012 intersects with the wealth instruction but demands its own evidence. Thomas 95 tells a holder of money to avoid interest-bearing lending and to give where return is unlikely. Its particular form survives in Coptic, without an extant Greek Thomas witness to this logion. Luke 6:34–35 presses generous lending, and the participle apelpizontes has a lexical history that complicates a mechanical translation as 'expecting nothing back.' The broader literary setting strongly supports a generous disposition; the exact scope of a legal command still needs argument. Qur'an 2:275–280 supplies an explicit prohibition of ribā, maintains the principal in 2:279 and enjoins respite for a debtor in hardship in 2:280, while praising remission as charity. The plausible Jesus teaching of generosity remains H-B; an exact original no-interest sentence in Thomas 95 stays H-C until its Coptic text and literary dependence have been assessed.

At Thomas 95 the normalized Sahidic source names money (ϩⲟⲙⲧ), prohibits giving it at interest (ⲙⲡⲣ ϯ ϵ ⲧ ⲙⲛⲥϵ), and then commands a gift from which repayment will not be received. This checks the previously translated distinction between the explicit interest warning and the further counsel of unrecoverable giving. It is one Coptic textual witness rather than an additional early Greek line, since no surviving Oxyrhynchus Thomas fragment covers saying 95. FI-012's H-C attribution of the specific prohibition to the historical Jesus therefore remains provisional. (Coptic SCRIPTORIUM, Thomas 95; NASSCAL witness inventory.)

What the historical grading presently permits

Five recoverable obligations can now be illustrated through actual Gospel and associated community witnesses: fidelity to God amid the use of money, care for the materially vulnerable, prayer, restraint against injurious repudiation, and mercy in lending. The companion assigns H-B to their probable teaching nuclei, with weaker grades on exact wording, institutional forms and stronger legal extensions. These are provisional results under its existing rubric. None of the five has been elevated to H-A by the present pass. Textual attestation, literary independence, historical origin and Qur'anic consonance remain separate columns in the archive.

The command in Qur'an 5:47 addresses the People of the Injīl and gives their revelation an operative role. Qur'an 5:48 also speaks of law and a way assigned to communities, while 3:50 describes Jesus as permitting some things previously prohibited. I therefore have to recover obligations at a scale the surviving evidence can bear. This book can give a reader practices to examine and sources through which to examine them. A larger scheme of ritual and jurisdiction will depend upon further direct Greek, Coptic, Syriac and Arabic collation, especially where a specific legally binding rule is proposed.

Source-status update: Pap.Hanna.1 / P75 fol. 1B2v and the Vatican published transcription were checked at the cited prayer lines; Didache 8 checked in public Greek; Thomas 47 and 95 checked in translations and documentary inventory, with Dilley's Coptic SCRIPTORIUM v6.2.0 registered for forthcoming token-level alignment; the exact legal source behind all seventh-century interlocutors remains an open historical question.

The law of the Injīl among Christians who lived under Islam

The first documentary evidence for this inquiry comes from the people who had to live under Christian law. A teacher can give a command; later communities must decide how disputes about it are resolved. Qur'an 5:47 calls the People of the Injīl to judge by what Allah revealed therein. Its two transmitted grammatical constructions, discussed above, make the normative responsibility intelligible. An actual Christian court, an actual rule for a loan and the obligations of a bishop furnish historical controls on what it meant for communities to judge, even while the status of each specific rule as revelation still requires proof.

A sixth-century source: oaths, loans and property

In 585, the synod of Ishoʿyahb I in the Church of the East treated lending at interest as a disciplinary problem. Canons 15–16 address the enrichment of lay people and church

personnel through usury. The collected synodal material also preserves questions addressed to the catholicos by Jacob, bishop of Darai: whether priests and the faithful may swear oaths, and under what circumstances interest might be taken. These questions belong precisely beside FI-006 and FI-012. They show an established Christian legal tradition confronting oath-taking and lending in its ordinary affairs a generation before the Qur'anic proclamation. (Synodicon Orientale, Ishoʿyahb I, 585, canons 15–16, appended questions 10 and 12; published headings at syri.ac; Chabot, ed., 1902.)

We need to read a question differently from a canon. The condemnation in a synodal heading establishes a promulgated ecclesiastical rule. A question to the catholicos establishes that someone sought an authoritative answer; its conclusion still requires the full response. Neither gives us fresh eyewitness testimony to Jesus's words. When I call this historical Injīl practice, I mean a community's claim to apply inherited religious law. To establish its continuity with the Messiah's teaching I need the Greek, Syriac and Coptic lines assessed under the existing FI grades.

Other provisions of the 585 collection regulate lawful marriage, the protection of orphans' property and a widow's claim to her dowry. The headings alone establish their inclusion in the church's legal agenda. Their precise effects upon a particular child or widow require the Syriac text and its legal context. A church order from third-century Syria, the Didascalia Apostolorum, supplies an older model for such regulation, with attention to bishops, discipline, lay conduct and penitence. Its Syriac manuscript tradition begins among surviving copies of the seventh or eighth century and later. Its claim to apostolic authorship is a feature of the work's own self-presentation. (Didascalia Apostolorum, Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage; Synodicon Orientale, 585, canons 13, 22, 24.)

The eastern Arabian synod of 676

The more geographically specific case comes from Beth Qaṭrāyē, the eastern Arabian Gulf region. In 676 Catholicos Gewargis I convened a synod in Dirin. Its nineteen canons survive through the Church of the East's Synodicon Orientale. The sixth canon directs Christian litigation into a jurisdiction overseen by persons selected through the bishop with the participation of the community. The eleventh assigns the protection of minor heirs' property to ecclesiastical responsibility. Other canons regulate religious attendance and the marital conduct of the faithful. This is an identifiable Christian institution administering law in Arabia under early Islamic rule. (Synodicon Orientale, 676, canons 6, 11, 13–16; Van Rompay, 'Gewargis I'; Popa reviewed in Hugoye 21.)

The marriage provisions expose a problem of authority that belongs inside this book. Canon 13 expects parental approval and priestly involvement in a woman's marriage; canon 14 restricts marriage with outsiders; canon 16 condemns taking a second wife. Each rule documents what the late seventh-century hierarchy sought to regulate. Before calling these rules the Messiah's own legislation, we need to examine what they do to the spouses' rights and the duties of consent. FI-017 provides probable historical testimony to Jesus's resistance to injurious repudiation. The additional permissions and restrictions of these bishops require a different chain of justification.

The cathedral did not stand apart from society. A Christian seeking the ruling of an outside authority, a bishop protecting an orphan's inheritance and a priest deciding how a marriage was to be recognized all occupied a wider world in which Muslims and Christians encountered one another. Lev Weitz's study of Syriac family law identifies precisely this process of renewed boundary making across the seventh to tenth centuries. I have consulted its publisher account and chapter descriptions for this pass; its full critical argument remains a source-reading task. Carter's archaeological redating of the monastery on Sir Bani Yas places that site's occupation in the later seventh and eighth centuries, giving material context to continued Christian presence after the conquest rather than proof of any particular Hijazi practice.

A wider audience than one episcopal province

Beth Qaṭrāyē and Najrān belonged to different regional histories. The sixth-century martyr accounts from Najrān document a Christian community associated with West Syriac networks. A Syriac inscription from the Ḥimā area, paleographically dated to the sixth or seventh century, preserves a liturgical invocation, although its writer may have been a traveler. That is concrete evidence of a Syriac devotional setting in southern Arabia. The East Syriac canons of 676 establish a different and later juridical setting around the Gulf. I cannot silently make the law of one bishopric stand for every Christian to whom the Qur'an spoke. (Briquel Chatonnet, Kiraz and Prioletta, 2022; Griffith, The Bible in Arabic, 2013.)

The historical language of the scriptures also matters. Sidney Griffith's work documents the circulation of biblical traditions among Arabic-speaking Christians through oral use before the emergence of surviving Arabic Gospel translations in Islamic centuries. A community could know teachings in Syriac, hear them explained in Arabic and preserve juridical norms through church usage. A seventh-century reference to the Injīl is therefore intelligible within a multilingual religious world. The surviving evidence has yet to identify a single Arabic Gospel codex owned by the Qur'an's first addressees or to demonstrate that the entire ecclesiastical legal corpus of Beth Qaṭrāyē was known to them.

The threshold for calling a Christian law revealed

I will distinguish the report that Jesus taught a principle, the community rule claiming to implement that principle, and the Qur'anic judgment on what Allah revealed to Jesus. For lending, FI-012 rates the historical generosity nucleus H-B and the Thomas 95 interest formula H-C, while the 585 canons show later Christian rule making against usury. For prayer, FI-015 provides a probable God-directed petition; the Didache and the 676 synod show its communal administration. The 676 marriage canons enter the same register beside FI-017, with their particular legal claims and authority documented separately. These are ways of putting a historical foundation under the command of 5:47.

Qur’an 5:48 appoints the Qur’an to a criterion-bearing relation with earlier revelation and speaks of differentiated law. Under the reading advanced in this book, that comparison preserves the serious possibility that the People of the Injīl had real obligations. A synod's confidence in its own rules establishes an identifiable system of church authority. The decisive question remains whether the obligation came from Jesus, from a transmitted apostolic practice or from a later act of governance. If I ask the reader to follow a

recovered Sunnah of the Messiah, I owe them that distinction all the way through the evidence.

Source status: the dated synod headings were checked in the syri.ac outline of Chabot's Synodicon Orientale, with the 585 and 676 sections located by canon and question number. Van Rompay's scholarly encyclopedia entry and Hugoye review were inspected. The complete Syriac clauses and Chabot's 1902 French translation still require line-by-line comparison; the online book scan was inaccessible in this pass. The books by Weitz and Griffith were consulted through publisher summaries and available extracts. The Ḥimā inscription is known through an institutional abstract. The findings support a dated practice history and retain all existing FI historical grades.

Moral teaching and service

The sayings concerning wealth have an immediate place in the reconstruction. A person’s declared theology is tested by what that person serves. The warning about Mammon and the criticism of religious authorities who consume the livelihood of the vulnerable place moral responsibility at the center of the teaching attributed to Jesus.

This concern shaped the original manuscript. I wanted to ask what Muslim religious history might have looked like if such warnings had remained active criteria for judging authority. Recovering the Messiah’s Sunnah would include that ethical demand, alongside the inquiry into the wording and provenance of each report.

My account of shirk belongs here. I treat it as an unforgiven liability whose moral weight must be reckoned, while allowing other deeds to retain their significance in the final accounting. This is the minority interpretive premise I developed in my earlier work. It requires a full reading of Qur’an 4:48 and 4:116 alongside the passages about judgment and deeds.[532]

That premise preserves a reason to examine the actual life of a Christian or Muslim whose theology includes errors. The judgment of a person involves the person’s deeds and responsibility before Allah. I cannot assign someone a final destiny from the label their community gave them.

What has been recovered so far

The present draft has established the book’s governing inquiry and developed the principal source clusters. The Aḥmad–Paraclete thesis gives John a central place. Greek and Aramaic interpretation reopen claims often presented as settled. Enoch and the Ascension of Isaiah enlarge the historical vocabulary for divine agency, while the Maryam and Magi inquiries give the infancy narratives specific transmission questions.

The companion Critical Sayings Collection, Volume I v1.9, now contains twenty developed FI dossiers and forty-six first-pass claim-unit appraisals, FI-001 through FI-066. Appendix A

[532] Qur’an 4:48; 4:116; 5:69; original Finding Injil fragment, pp. 5–6, and Dossier v7, “Salvific scope, shirk and the afterlife.” The bounded-liability reading is the author’s stated minority theological premise and is presented here as such.

retains the fourteen original pilot texts as historical archive locators. The proposed 120–150-saying corpus, independent manuscript collation and final historical-grade review remain unfinished. Individual apocryphal apocalypses, Iranian primary-language evidence and competing Synoptic source models likewise require fuller treatment.

The religious purpose is the one that began the search: to understand what God's messengers taught and what following them requires of us. I want the reader to be able to trace a proposed teaching back through its witnesses and decide how much confidence its recovery deserves.

41A. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: The Augustine of Islam

In the centuries after Jesus, Christian writers learned to distinguish the authority of revelation from the authority of those authorized to explain it. Augustine of Hippo became a consequential figure in that development. In the Islamic world, Ahmad ibn Hanbal played a comparably enduring role in arguments over inherited teaching and legitimate religious authority. I want to ask what happens when a scholar's response to a controversy becomes the example by which later believers measure fidelity. I also ask whether recovery of the Injil can work backward through a similarly canonized memory without mistaking the memory for the prophet.[533]

Two careers from different worlds

Augustine (354–430) inherited Christian scriptures, creeds, and episcopal institutions that already had centuries of development behind them. His writings on grace, the church, divine signs, and scriptural interpretation subsequently shaped much of Latin Christianity. Ahmad ibn Hanbal (164–241 AH / 780–855 CE) inhabited Abbasid Baghdad, where Qur'an, hadith transmission, juristic judgment, and theological debate competed to define what obedience to Muhammad required. He was a celebrated collector and examiner of transmitted reports, a man of austerity whose public opposition to caliphal interrogation became exemplary for later traditionalists. The analogy concerns the formation of authoritative memory across generations; it is confined by the very different genres and offices in which they worked.

Augustine served as a bishop and wrote large-scale works of systematic argument. Ahmad was a traditionist and jurisconsult whose answers, refusals, and transmitted materials were preserved by students and later adherents. Augustine's letters and books usually expose his arguments directly. Ahmad's school relied heavily on reports about him and on later collections of his responses, with disagreements about which statements can be traced to him. If we give Ahmad a single, complete theological system at the outset, we risk putting the coherence of later Hanbalism into its founder's mouth.[534]

The ordeal of the created Qur'an

In 833, al-Maʾmūn ordered the interrogation of scholars about whether the Qur'an was created. A dispute over divine speech became an administrative test of qualified religious

533 Christopher Melchert, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Oneworld, 2006), publisher synopsis, https://www.simonandschuster.net/books/Ahmad-ibn-Hanbal/Christopher-Melchert/Makers-of-the-Muslim-World/9781851684076; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Augustine of Hippo," substantive revision 2024, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/. Both consulted as web reference material; full books not newly read.

534 Michael Cooperson, Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn (Cambridge, 2000), chap. 4, pp. 107–153; publisher abstract and excerpt consulted, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511497469.008. Nimrod Hurvitz, The Formation of Hanbalism: Piety into Power (RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), publisher synopsis consulted, https://nes.princeton.edu/publications/formation-hanbalism-piety-power.

authority. The policy continued under al-Muʿtaṣim and al-Wāthiq. Ahmad's refusal to endorse the createdness formula exposed him to imprisonment and punishment, and his later biographers retold that refusal as the decisive scene in which religious truth withstood a ruler's coercion. The episode is called the miḥna. Its historical force lies in the state's attempted assertion of authority over doctrine, as well as in the opposition represented by particular scholars.[535]

We need to take the proposition "the Qur'an is uncreated" apart as carefully as the claims we have examined elsewhere. Does it mean that God eternally possesses the attribute of speech? That an articulated Arabic revelation existed in uncreated form? That the letters in a material codex share the same ontological status? Different schools and later controversies handled those questions differently. The Qur'an describes revelation as God's speech and as a recitation in Arabic (for example 9:6; 12:2; 43:3); a later technical formula about createdness is an inference about divine attributes. Recounting its leading defender's courage does not establish its theological truth.

The words of God and the Word who is Messiah

This is where the comparison returns to Jesus. John 1:1–14 describes a Word with God that becomes flesh; Nicene and subsequent Christian theology insist on the Son's uncreated relation to the Father. Qur'an 3:45 and 4:171 identify the Messiah in relation to a word from God while carefully locating him within divine agency, creaturely birth, and prophetic mission. Ahmad's opposition to a created Qur'an concerns a different textual and metaphysical object. Yet the two debates share an underlying difficulty: how do communities speak about God's Word without making the means of revelation either a second independent deity or a disposable created instrument?

The resemblance lets us compare what people claim about Logos, kalima, and kalām. It does not make these terms translations of the same doctrine. Q 4:171's warning against religious excess and Q 5:72–73's judgment of particular Christological formulas remain commitments of the Qur'anic text. Neither Ahmad's theology of the uncreated Qur'an nor Augustine's theology of the Word decides, by analogy alone, what the Qur'an meant by calling Jesus a word from God. Each argument must return to its own texts, chronology, and disputed interpretations.[536]

Tradition, reasoning and the authority of a hadith

Ahmad's preference for transmitted evidence and suspicion of speculative kalām belong within a wider Sunni argument about how Qur'an and prophetic practice are known. In the generation after al-Shāfiʿī, the sheer prestige of preserving reports created a different center of gravity from juristic reconstruction by opinion. Aḥmad's transmitted responses

535 Oxford Bibliographies, "Mihna," https://academic.oup.com/reference/62361/reference-article-abstract/554577879; Christopher Melchert, "The Inquisition outside Baghdad," Journal of the American Oriental Society 141.1 (2021): 201–210, https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:e214abf8-1abf-4b21-ae4f-74b84031199b (abstract consulted).

536 Qur'an 3:45, 4:171, 9:6, 12:2, 43:3; John 1:1–14. Compare Chapter 37A and Appendix F for differentiated Qur'anic commitments. The cross-tradition analogy is the author's interpretive proposal.

helped make the refusal to translate revelation into speculative systems a positive religious ideal. Later Hanbalism, however, still required interpretation, selectivity, analogy, and institutional judgment. Even a school that claims to defer to reports must decide which reports survive examination and how conflicting reports will govern conduct.

Nimrod Hurvitz's account of Hanbali school formation traces the transformation of ascetic discipline, bonds of learning, and prestige into collective power. Michael Cooperson's work treats Muslim biography itself as a genre that authorizes traditions by narrating their exemplary heirs. These research programs challenge the comforting assumption that we can read later pious lives as untouched transcripts of what a founder said and did. Ibn al-Jawzī's twelfth-century Life of Ibn Hanbal is exceptionally rich historical evidence for the making of his reputation, but its date and encomiastic purpose must remain visible whenever it reports an earlier event.[537]

Augustine's problem and Ahmad's problem

Augustine's arguments about grace and original sin developed through close reading of Paul and through polemic against Pelagius. His resulting authority made one interpretation of humanity's inherited condition central to large parts of Latin Christianity. Ahmad's remembered refusal under interrogation helped make one answer about Qur'anic speech a test of orthodoxy. In each case a debate already underway became inseparable from the name of its most successful defender. Their victories were neither identical nor complete: Augustinian soteriology remained disputed among Christians, and many Sunni theologians developed accounts of divine attributes that went beyond early Hanbali restraint.[538]

The distinction between defense and authorship is crucial. Augustine inherited a Christian canon and elaborated a theory of how scriptural claims fit together. Ahmad inherited a body of reports and helped make a particular posture toward them normative. The figure later venerated under either name is also a literary product of disciples, opponents, and institutions. We can admire a witness's courage. That still leaves us to establish whether the propositions his followers adopted came from the prophet.

The Alid alternative to the heroic portrait

This book's treatment of early Islam includes Shīʿī traditions of authority in the household of Muhammad. That parallel complicates any simple picture in which the miḥna draws one permanent line between tyranny and correct religion. Al-Maʾmūn's relationship with the Imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā, whose death preceded the inquisition, enters the same political world. Traditions of imamship generated other claims about transmission, obedience, and legitimate interpretation. They require the same scrutiny given to Hanbali biography,

537 Hurvitz (2002), Princeton/Routledge summaries; Cooperson (2000), Cambridge chapter abstract; Ibn al-Jawzī, The Life of Ibn Ḥanbal, trans. Michael Cooperson (NYU Press, 2016), publisher description, https://nyupress.org/9781479805303/the-life-of-ibn-hanbal/. Direct collation of the Arabic biography remains outstanding.

538 Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Augustine of Hippo," section on original sin and grace, 2024 revision, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/; Christopher Melchert, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (2006), publisher description. This is structural comparison, not a claim of intellectual borrowing.

including distinctions between demonstrable events, later remembered speeches, and polemical reconstruction.

A Shīʿī reader need not deny the suffering of Ahmad to ask how later Sunnī triumph interpreted the other branches of Muslim life. The competence to guard revelation cannot be settled by the number of adherents who later cherished a teacher, or by the approval of a caliph. Nor should a nineteenth- or twenty-first-century use of Hanbalism be retroactively imputed to Ahmad himself. The archive needs separate records for the founder's recoverable views, his community's later authoritative formulations, and the state's uses of the movement.[539]

A criterion for the recovered Injil

The Augustine–Ahmad analogy is useful because it names a transmission hazard already encountered in the Jesus dossier: the most influential interpreter of a religious text can become indistinguishable from the text in later communal memory. The Farewell Discourses, the law material in Matthew, the reported authority of James, and the different readings of Paul all require such a distinction. So do the doctrines of al-Shāfiʿī and his successors. Apply that test to Finding Injil too: does the claim in a saying survive when we remove the later claims of authority surrounding it?

There is only so far this comparison can take us. Ahmad may represent the ethical independence of a scholar under interrogation, while Augustine illustrates how exegesis becomes a lasting doctrinal horizon. Both also remind us that posterity manufactures convenient ancestors. Now ask what happens when a ruler chooses which image of those ancestors his government will finance and enforce.

Sources, comparators, and unfinished verification

Primary witness docket: Qur'an 3:45; 4:171; 9:6; 12:2; 43:3; John 1:1–14; Augustine, Confessions and anti-Pelagian writings; sayings and biographical reports about Ahmad transmitted through his sons, students, al-Khallāl, and Ibn al-Jawzī; Abbasid inquisition accounts preserved in al-Ṭabarī. Modern comparators: Melchert (2006, 2021), Hurvitz (2002), Cooperson (2000, 2016), Turner (2010), and the Stanford Encyclopedia Augustine article (2024 revision). Access status: Qur'anic and biblical passages examined at verse level; academic abstracts, publisher previews and selected passages inspected; full Arabic biographical and Augustine Latin collation pending. This chapter makes no claim to have newly completed those collations.

539 Cooperson, Classical Arabic Biography (2000), chapters on al-Maʾmūn, ʿAlī al-Riḍā, and Ahmad; Hurvitz, Formation of Hanbalism (2002), chapter list and abstract. Both works identified as comparators; complete books await renewed firsthand reading.

41B. The Constantine of Islam: al-Mutawakkil and the Reversal of the Miḥna

A ruler can fail to create an orthodoxy by command and nevertheless succeed in changing which orthodoxy will receive institutional support. The Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (reigned 232–247 AH / 847–861 CE) reversed the policy of interrogating religious scholars about the createdness of the Qur'an. The episode invites a comparison with Constantine's fourth-century imperial patronage of Christianity. The relevant analogy concerns a sovereign using religious allegiance to stabilize rule and to recast institutions. The nickname is memorable. It still has to earn its place against the chronology of each reign.

The policy al-Mutawakkil inherited

Al-Maʾmūn's letters of 833 inaugurated the miḥna as a state-administered examination of the doctrine of created scripture. Al-Muʿtaṣim (833–842) and al-Wāthiq (842–847) continued it, with different degrees of enforcement. Several prominent scholars were threatened, dismissed, imprisoned, flogged or killed under the political machinery of the inquisition. Ahmad ibn Hanbal came to embody the refusal to endorse the approved formula. By the accession of al-Mutawakkil, that memory had political value, although the extent and character of its immediate popular support must be reconstructed from sources composed at different distances from the events.[540]

A reversal over several years

Dates matter. A ban on public discussion of the createdness controversy is reported around 234/849. Other measures unfolded over subsequent years, culminating in the release of those still held on account of the inquisition in 237/852. The literature accordingly gives 849, 851, or 852 for the end of the miḥna depending on whether it means the policy announcement, the practical winding down, or a formal closure. Keep that sequence in view. We cannot invent one conversion day on which the whole Abbasid religious state changed its mind.[541]

The caliph's relation to Ahmad complicates the triumphal picture. Later accounts portray favors offered to the once-persecuted scholar and stories of his reluctance to accept court gifts. Even if every anecdote were authenticated, the ruler's endorsement of a teacher would remain distinct from the teacher's endorsement of the ruler. Ahmad's refusal under al-Muʿtaṣim supplied a counterexample to the idea that governmental approval establishes

540 Oxford Bibliographies, "Mihna," https://academic.oup.com/reference/62361/reference-article-abstract/554577879; Melchert, "The Inquisition outside Baghdad," JAOS 141.1 (2021): 201–210, Oxford abstract, which dates complete abolition to 237/852.

541 Christopher Melchert, "The Inquisition outside Baghdad" (2021), abstract; Şenel, "Translation Activities During the al-Mutawakkil ʿAlāllāh Period," Religions 16.4 (2025): 430, summary; Oxford Bibliographies, "Mihna." Specific dated decrees require al-Ṭabarī and other chronicles in Arabic.

doctrine; therefore his prestige cannot simply be converted into proof that every later measure by al-Mutawakkil was religiously correct.

Why did the caliph reverse course?

John P. Turner proposes a political explanation more specific than the claim that the ʿulamāʾ had already defeated the caliphate: ending the miḥna helped al-Mutawakkil escape the influence of the military and court personnel who had made his accession possible. On that reading, a new religious settlement helped reorganize court power. The piety of individual supporters and the institutional interests of the throne could be real at the same time. Explanations based only on popular demand or an inevitable victory of traditionalism fail to account for the immediate circumstances of the ruler's political dependence.[542]

This gives us a question to carry back to Finding Injil. When a ruler presents the defense of inherited revelation as a restoration, the historian still asks which inherited voices were selected and which rivals lost access to legal office, teaching positions, or public legitimacy. Restoring an orthodoxy changes the conditions under which teaching is transmitted. Whether the favored report originated with Muhammad, Jesus, or another prophetic figure still needs independent evidence.

Constantine as comparator

Constantine's patronage followed the legalization of Christian worship associated with the agreement of 313 and included his intervention in disputes leading to the council of Nicaea in 325. He did not invent Christian scripture or create the church out of nothing; the disputes he entered were already vigorous. His interventions nonetheless changed the circumstances in which some theological positions could gain resources and public authority. Al-Mutawakkil also inherited a developed dispute, reversed an earlier imperial preference, and gave a different coalition of interpreters access to prestige and patronage.[543]

The points of difference are equally consequential. Constantine ruled an empire in which Christianity moved from a persecuted position toward imperial favor. Al-Mutawakkil ruled an already Muslim caliphate and changed the balance among Muslim factions. Nicaea was an ecclesiastical council attended by bishops; the Abbasid reversal was a series of governmental measures about theological examinations and their institutional consequences. The Nicene controversy concerned Christ's relation to God; the miḥna concerned divine speech and the createdness of the Qur'an. The analogy succeeds as a model of imperial patronage affecting orthodoxy, while offering no evidence of direct imitation.

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542 John P. Turner, "The End of the Miḥna," Oriens 38.1–2 (2010): 89–106, abstract consulted at Colby College faculty repository, https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/faculty_scholarship/70/. Full-text argument not claimed as newly read.

543 Constantine: 313 religious toleration and Council of Nicaea in 325, standard chronology; consult Eusebius, Life of Constantine, and Athanasius, De decretis for primary perspectives. The comparison does not presume that Constantine and al-Mutawakkil shared motives or institutions.

The cost imposed on other Muslims

The same ruler who ended the inquisition against traditionalists pursued a severe anti-ʿAlid policy. Accounts place his destruction of the structures at the grave of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ in 236/850–851 and report that visiting the site was forbidden and the ground cultivated. For a book concerned with authority through the Prophet's household, those acts belong at the center of the account. They show that the end of one kind of coercion coincided with coercion against another Muslim community, whose claims about inheritance and leadership had their own textual lineages.[544]

Even the narrative form of the event must be graded. An account of demolishing a structure, an account of forbidding pilgrimage, and an account of the theological intentions of the caliph are separate claim units. They may appear side by side in a later chronicle without having identical witnesses. The category “persecution of the ʿAlids” describes an observable pattern only insofar as each alleged action receives a dated source and its own corroboration. The evidence already suffices to make Karbalāʾ indispensable to any political portrait of the ruler.

The cost imposed on Christians and Jews

Al-Ṭabarī’s account under 235/850 reports discriminatory requirements imposed on Christians and other protected non-Muslims, including distinctive clothing, restrictions on government employment, and measures against places of worship. A study in the Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies quotes the relevant passage from the Arabic chronicle, with a reference to the Cairo edition (vol. 9, pp. 171–172). This part of the reign matters especially to a book about the Injil. A government’s declaration of religious orthodoxy could coincide with new state disabilities for people who read the Torah and Gospel.[545]

These acts also complicate the common use of “orthodoxy” as a synonym for moral improvement. Qur’an 5:82–85 records praise for receptive Christians; 5:47 calls the People of the Injil to judge by what Allah revealed; 49:13 judges distinction among people by piety. A modern interpreter can argue about how those verses apply to political law. We still have to ask, on ethical and Qur’anic grounds, whether a ruler who protects one theological position while burdening other communities has exercised legitimate religious authority. Applying those grounds to ninth-century policy requires interpretation.

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544 Encyclopaedia Iranica, “Karbala,” entry, https://doi.org/10.1163/2330-4804_eiro_com_10750, with references to al-Ṭabarī and later chroniclers. Event dated 236/850–51. This secondary synthesis was consulted; direct Arabic chronicle wording pending.

545 “The public role of Dhimmīs during ʿAbbāsid times,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Cambridge Core article notes quoting al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 9:171–72, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bulletin-of-the-school-of-oriental-and-african-studies/article/abs/public-role-of-dhimmis-during-abbasid-times/BBDBD0F51B3941495DEA819256E538AE. Primary citation found via published article; full Arabic passage requires collation.

Caliphal authority versus the authority of transmission

The miḥna exposed a question that al-Shāfiʿī, Irenaeus, and the Gospel transmitters had faced in their different settings: who may speak for inherited revelation? Al-Maʾmūn attempted to make official examination decisive. Ahmad's refusal asserted a limit on that procedure. Al-Mutawakkil revised the official answer, but the question of interpretation remained. The later success of one movement must be separated from the independent merits of its evidence, exactly as a fourth-century Christian council cannot settle whether Jesus said every surviving sentence in John.

The "Constantine" comparison is also a reminder that a change in patronage affects the survival of texts. Court favor may support copying and teaching; disfavor may shrink a network's institutional reach. A historian can investigate those asymmetries without concluding that a doctrine was true because the state transmitted it, or false because it lacked a court sponsor. The same discipline governs the treatment of Marcion, Irenaeus, the Jewish-Christian Gospels, the Paraclete, and traditions attributed to the Prophet's family.

Verdict on the title

"The Constantine of Islam" is an effective analytical title if the reader knows exactly what is being compared: the ruler's intervention in a preexisting religious controversy and the political consequences of institutional favor. The analogy becomes misleading wherever it suggests that a council equivalent to Nicaea fixed Islam's canon, that Ahmad held an office comparable to a Nicene bishop, or that the 849–852 policy changes settled all Sunni theology. The historical al-Mutawakkil combined doctrinal realignment with policies toward the ʿAlids and non-Muslims that must be evaluated independently.

Winning the dispute cannot confer the right to grade the reports. That applies to a Christian emperor, an Abbasid caliph, a bishop, and to me. The standards are explicit claims, recoverable witnesses, documented dependencies, and a dated account of how interpretation entered the record. Only on those terms can a reconstructed saying remain answerable to both history and the Qur'an.

Source-status ledger

Primary source routes still required: al-Ṭabarī under 234–237 AH for the end of the miḥna and the caliph's religious measures; Ibn al-Jawzī and earlier Ahmad collections for caliphal contact; parallel accounts of the destruction at Karbalāʾ; Eusebius and other fourth-century sources for Constantine's patronage. Modern publications consulted at abstract, metadata or passage level: Turner (2010), Melchert (2021), the Oxford Bibliographies miḥna entry, Encyclopaedia Iranica "Karbala," and the BSOAS study citing al-Ṭabarī on dhimmīs. This record states its access limitations because a chronology reconstructed through modern scholarship is a provisional scholarly synthesis, not direct autopsy of every Arabic chronicle.

42. The Judgment of the Nations: Salvation Beyond the Church

The question that began this book concerns people as well as texts. A Christian can live a life of costly mercy while receiving theological explanations that I judge mistaken. A Muslim can profess an accurate formula while abusing another person. The scriptures themselves force an inquiry into the relation between truth, conduct, and responsibility. A reconstruction of the Injil should make those relations more intelligible without pretending to possess Allah's judgment of a particular individual.

Those who did not recognize the encounter

Matthew 25 describes a judgment in which people discover the significance of actions whose recipient they had not recognized. Feeding, visiting, and receiving the vulnerable become encounters with the king through the people he calls his brothers. The precise scope of "these brothers" is debated: identifying them with disciples gives the scene a more particular missionary setting than a general reading of every needy person. We need to face that difference before repeating the familiar moral paraphrase. [546]

Even on the more particular reading, the people discover at judgment that their encounter meant something they had not understood at the time. That feature deserves comparison with a theology concerned about unequal access to revelation. It cannot alone establish every proposed form of religious pluralism, but it resists a model in which a public label supplies all the information necessary for a verdict.

Matthew 7 adds a related problem within the professing community. Appeals to Jesus's name and claims of powerful religious acts do not settle the judgment. The text directs attention toward doing the Father's will. The legal and ethical chapters have already examined what that demand includes. Salvation language should be read with those obligations in view. [547]

Paul's law outside the covenant community

Romans 2 describes impartial judgment according to conduct and gives a role to conscience among people outside possession of the law. It belongs in the assessment of Paul alongside the confession language of Romans 10. Their relationship requires an account of the

[546] Matthew 25:31–46, https://ebible.org/eng-web/MAT25.htm. The primary wording was consulted. The identity of "the least of these my brothers" remains an exegetical question; this chapter does not treat one identification as settled by the English translation.

[547] Matthew 7:21–27. Compare James 2:14–26 and Revelation 20:12–13, whose separate settings also connect judgment and conduct.

argument as a whole. If our reading makes one passage erase the other, we still owe the reader an explanation. [548]

The comparison with Christian sharia is particularly useful. Different communities can have different legal obligations while remaining accountable for what they know and do. A shared moral judgment does not automatically make their laws identical. Conversely, a difference in law need not imply that all conduct outside one community is religiously meaningless. The book's proposed covenant model turns on establishing those relations rather than assuming them.

The Qur'anic promises and warnings

Qur'an 2:62 and 5:69 associate hope with belief in God, the Last Day, and righteous action among named communities. Other passages warn against rejecting messengers and against religious excess. My reading treats the positive promises as active elements of the Qur'anic argument. It also requires an account of what counts as culpable rejection. Encountering a distorted presentation of a religion and rejecting a truth one recognizes are different epistemic situations. [549]

I need to be precise about my account of shirk here. I understand its unforgiven liability as serious within the final moral accounting, while resisting an automatic erasure of every other deed. I am defending that interpretive premise; I am not presenting it as a consensus statement about Muslim theology. Qur'an 4:48 and 4:116 have to be read alongside the other texts about judgment and repentance, including the force of particular warnings. The argument cannot be completed through a metaphor of scales alone. [550]

An Imami discussion of ignorance and responsibility

Murtadha Muṭahharī's Divine Justice distinguishes culpable refusal from inability to apprehend the truth. His discussion of quṣūr, taqṣīr, and those whose affair rests with God offers a developed Shiʿi account of unequal religious circumstances. He retains the claim that truth matters and considers how intention affects the value of deeds. This supplies a serious comparison for the book's hopeful reading without making his conclusions identical with my own. [551]

This changes what we can responsibly say about another person's religion. A person who claims that everyone has already received an adequate presentation of the truth is making

[548] Romans 2:6–16, https://ebible.org/eng-web/ROM02.htm; Romans 10:8–13. See the Pauline chapter for the letter's larger tensions and competing interpretations.

[549] Qur'an 2:62; 5:69; 4:150–152; 5:72–75. The author's inclusivist reading is a stated theological position; competing interpretations of the promises and their scope require separate treatment.

[550] Qur'an 4:48 and 4:116; 5:72–74; 21:47; 99:7–8. The bounded-liability formulation belongs to the author's research framework and should not be attributed without qualification to al-Muṭahharī or to Shiʿi theology generally.

[551] Murtadha Muṭahharī, Divine Justice, "Good Deeds of Non-Muslims," especially "The Incapable and the Powerless" and the concluding propositions, https://al-islam.org/divine-justice-murtadha-mutahhari/good-deeds-non-muslims. Relevant full-text sections consulted.

an empirical claim about other people's lives. That claim requires evidence. A polemical encounter, an inherited caricature, or an experience of religious abuse can shape what a hearer understands the invitation to mean. If we are discussing responsibility, those circumstances have to count.

Rejection may still be culpable. But to judge it, we would need to know the person's actual circumstances. My historical project can identify teachings, compare interpretations, and describe harms. It lacks access to the whole inward history on which an individual's final standing would depend.

Loyalty to the household and the demand to act

A report attributed to al-Bāqir asks whether professing love for the household suffices while obedience is neglected. It locates fidelity in piety and practical responsibility and denies that the household possesses an immunity from judgment. The report provides an internal Imami challenge to a religion of affiliation alone. Its chain must remain visible: the online grading record consulted assigns it a weak status, so the moral force of the wording should not be presented as proof of its historical attribution. [552]

The comparison reaches the Christian faith-alone debate through a concrete question: what relation does allegiance to a sacred person have to the life that person commands? A confession can be the beginning of fidelity. Turning it into protection against the consequences of persistent wrongdoing requires a further theological argument. That problem remains when the sacred name invoked is Jesus, ʿAlī, or another revered guide.

Punishment, mercy, and the future

The duration and character of punishment require their own textual investigation. Matthew 25:46 and Revelation 20–22 cannot be settled by a single English word or an isolated appeal to etymology. Qur'anic passages that describe punishment with qualifications also need to be read with passages stressing its severity. The possibility of a hopeful annihilationist or restorative interpretation remains a research question, with its strongest adverse evidence kept in view. [553]

Meanwhile, the hungry person still needs food, the wronged worker is still owed justice, and the neighbor still has a claim upon us. Difficult theological questions do not put those obligations on hold. Confidence in a preferred interpretation cannot cancel those duties. A religious community's promise of guidance should be assessed in part through the conduct it cultivates among the people who trust it.

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[552] Al-Kāfī 2.1.36.3, Arabic and English chapter text at https://thaqalayn.net/chapter/2/1/36; individual grading record associated with https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/2/1/36/3 records al-Majlisī, Miʾāt al-ʿuqūl 8:50, ḍaʿīf. The main chapter wording was directly checked; later access to the individual page was intermittent.

[553] Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:10–15 and 21:8; Qur'an 11:106–108 and 78:21–30. No universalist, annihilationist, or endless-torment conclusion is claimed as established by this draft.

43. To kill and be killed

The promise in the Gospel

Near the end of Sūrat al-Tawbah, the Qur'an describes a transaction. Allah purchases the believers' lives and possessions, with paradise as their return. The people described fight in His cause, killing and being killed. The promise is affirmed in the Torah, the Injil and the Qur'an. For a book attempting to recover the teachings of Jesus, the reference to the Injil demands attention. Where, within the surviving Christian testimony, should we look for this covenant? What kind of Messiah could have taught it?[554]

The question became sharper as I returned to the swords in the arrest narratives. A man accompanying Jesus draws a blade and injures the high priest's servant. Luke also preserves an instruction to acquire a sword. These are awkward details within the remembered ministry of a teacher who commands love of enemies. They give us a reason to examine how the Evangelists shaped their narratives, especially where one account supplies an explanation or restraint absent from another.

An earlier note for this project treated Qur'an 9:111 as a challenge to Christian martyrdom understood as suffering without resistance. The verse itself makes no explicit accusation against Christian martyrs. I now want to ask a more specific question. Can this shared scriptural promise be understood within a Jewish messianic movement that expected God to establish justice on earth? And do the traditions about Jesus allow morally constrained resistance within that expectation?[555]

The Alid comparison helps articulate the possibility. A claimant to legitimate religious authority can refuse submission to an unjust ruler, possess the capacity to defend companions, and still place severe limits on the use of force. Acceptance of death can accompany that refusal. We still have to explain what makes the authority legitimate, why someone accepts suffering, and when resistance is permitted. A portrait of Jesus concerned with the restoration of Israel gives these questions a historical setting.

James Tabor's reconstruction of Jesus's family supplies one route into that setting. Josephus's accounts of popular prophets provide another. The Egyptian prophet whom Josephus places under Felix is particularly suggestive because his followers gathered on the Mount of Olives in expectation of deliverance. Lena Einhorn has developed the much stronger proposal that this figure and Jesus were the same person, separated by an artificial shift in chronology. That hypothesis deserves a hearing. We also need to count its evidentiary cost.

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[554] Qur'an 9:111–112. Arabic text and al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on 9:111: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura9-aya111.html. The chapter paraphrases the verse; its title condenses the active and passive verbs. A surah's canonical position is distinct from the date of every constituent passage.

[555] Aleph Funk, Ruh Qudus, supplied four-page research essay, opening paragraph. The earlier phrase "passive jihad of martyrdom without fighting back" is treated here as an authorial hypothesis requiring revision, rather than an explicit accusation found in 9:111.

I will begin with the Qur'anic passage and the conditions attached to it, before considering what the Gospel weapons can establish. The historical evidence for an armed companion is appreciably stronger than the evidence for a planned insurrection. Whether either proposition is needed to understand the promise in the Injil remains a further question.

Reading the next verse

The Arabic of 9:111 describes fighting in the way of Allah. The expressions for killing and being killed are direct. Any interpretation of the verse has to account for the possibility of believers taking life. At the same time, the plural language describes a community in conflict. It supplies no requirement that each member personally kill someone before receiving the promise. Al-Qurṭubī records canonical readings with the passive and active verbs in the opposite order, a variation that leaves the collective encounter with lethal violence intact.[556]

There is a condition here that political rhetoric can easily conceal. An army can call its struggle God's cause. We still have to judge whether it is. The next verse describes the people concerned through repentance, worship, moral accountability and care for God's limits. Read together, the passages ask about the character of those who fight and the obligations they continue to observe.

A report in al-Kāfī makes this connection through ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn. On the road to Mecca, ʿAbbād al-Baṣrī accuses him of choosing the ease of pilgrimage over the hardship of jihad. He cites 9:111. The Imam asks him to complete the passage, whereupon he recites the qualities in 9:112. The response attributes superiority to jihad with people who possess those qualities. Who is fighting, and how they conduct themselves, therefore matters to the campaign's religious value.[557]

That brings us very close to the question I am asking. The protagonist belongs to the family through which the memory of Karbala passed, and his answer concerns the very verse that appears to promise salvation through combat. Within the report, abstaining from a particular campaign is compatible with taking the Qur'anic covenant seriously. The citation cannot compel participation until its moral conditions have been addressed.

The report comes through al-Ṣādiq and survives in al-Kulaynī's later collection. Al-Majlisī grades its chain muwaththaq; al-Bahbūdī accepts it as ṣaḥīḥ in his selection. Those are traditional assessments of transmission. Establishing the precise historical conversation would require further source comparison. Its presence in the Imami corpus gives us an Alid reception of the passage in which the promised reward depends upon more than the occurrence of a battle.

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[556] Al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān, commentary on 9:111, discussion of the readings associated with Ḥamza, al-Kisāʾī and Khalaf, among others: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura9-aya111.html. Reading-order variation supplies no license to erase either killing or being killed from the clause.

[557] Al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī 5, Kitāb al-jihād, chapter 6, report 1 (5.1.6.1), through ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, his father, ʿUthmān ibn ʿĪsā, Samāʿa and Abū ʿAbd Allāh. Arabic text and traditional gradings: https://thaqalayn.com/ar/hadith/5/1/6/1. The displayed grades are al-Majlisī, muwaththaq, Mirʾāt al-ʿuqūl 8:347; al-Bahbūdī, ṣaḥīḥ, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Kāfī 2:277–278. The present analysis concerns the content and reception of the report, with historical attribution left to further study.

A comparable concern appears in al-Ṭabarī's commentary. In a report attributed to al-Ḍaḥḥāk, a man asks whether he should charge the polytheists and fight until killed. The reply asks where the condition is and invokes the penitents and worshippers of the following verse. Al-Ṭabarī also preserves a pledge narrative in which protection of the Prophet is compared with protection of one's own people and property. The commentary's broader language of fighting God's enemies exceeds a modern defensive-war formulation, so its testimony needs to be read in full.[558]

These reports do not settle every question of legitimate war. They do establish why killing or dying cannot do all the theological work by itself. A person's cause can be unjust even when the danger is real. Courage cannot supply missing authority, and a sincere expectation of paradise cannot remove the rights of the people on the receiving end of a sword.

The promise and its earlier scriptural referent

The grammar of Qurʾān 9:111 must determine what I ask the Gospel to preserve. The passage describes Allah purchasing the lives and possessions of the believers for Paradise, then says that they fight in His way, killing and being killed. The accusative waʿdan, followed by ḥaqqan and the expression fī al-tawrāti wa-l-injīli wa-l-qurʾāni, attaches an affirmed promise to the earlier scriptures. How much does that promise cover? A reader may understand the earlier-scripture claim to encompass the entire military depiction, or may understand the promise of divine recompense as the inherited covenantal core while the community fighting is described in its Qurʾānic setting. Either way, we have to explain why the fighting verbs stand immediately before waʿdan. Grammar cannot make them vanish (S01–S02).

Galadari has compared the covenantal vocabulary with Jewish exposition of the Shema, where love of God extends to life and property, and with Gospel promises made to disciples who relinquish their possessions and suffer for fidelity. That argument identifies textual antecedents for the divine bargain. Its own proposed nonviolent construal of the Qurʾānic battle language remains a separate interpretation requiring justification. I am asking first what promise of costly obedience we can recover historically, and then whether it authorized lethal defense. A hypothetical lost Gospel command cannot be counted as a surviving witness (S01–S02).

The cost of discipleship

The closest Gospel parallels to the commercial language concern the surrender of life and property. Mark 8:34–37 places the loss of life for Jesus and the good news beside a question about what someone can give in exchange for life. In Mark 10:28–30, the disciples' abandonment of their former lives receives a promise extending to the coming age.

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[558] Al-Ṭabarī, commentary on 9:111, reports 17266, 17270 and 17271 in the cited electronic edition. The last is attributed to al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim and explicitly returns the questioner to the condition supplied by 9:112. The pledge narrative associates the bargain with protecting the Prophet. These transmitted explanations are distinct from independently dated evidence for the verse's original occasion.

Matthew 19:29 explicitly associates renunciation with eternal life. These passages give the inquiry a concrete starting point: costly allegiance to a divine mission is connected with a return beyond death.[559]

Their immediate subject differs from the battle described in Tawbah. They do not contain a matching instruction to kill opponents. The comparison concerns the covenantal structure of the promise, including the exposure of one's life to danger. We have a real parallel here. We have not found an omitted sentence about warfare.

The Qur'an itself makes a related connection in Sūrat al-Ṣaff. Verses 10–13 offer a saving transaction involving faith and striving with lives and possessions, followed by forgiveness and divine help. Verse 14 then invokes Jesus asking for helpers in God's cause and describes support for the believing group against its enemy. The proximity matters. It places Jesus's disciples inside the same surah's language of allegiance and vindication, while leaving the means of their eventual ascendancy unspecified.[560]

That distinction allows an interpretation worth testing. The shared promise can concern faithful service under conditions of conflict, while the particular responsibilities of different communities vary. Under one set of circumstances, allegiance demands endurance of persecution. Under another, it includes protection of people against violence. The text of 9:111 affirms fighting within its own description; its reference to earlier scriptures does not specify that every detail of military practice was identical across all prophetic communities.

A Christian reader could accept the parallel concerning surrendered life while rejecting the extension to human combat. That would be a substantive disagreement: how is the covenant enacted, and does the Qur'an rightly authorize the fighting it describes? Recovering a genuinely political Jesus could make the debate more historically informed, although it would leave this moral disagreement available.

For the purposes of Finding Injil, I therefore keep two propositions separate. The Gospel tradition contains a strong promise to those who risk and relinquish their lives for the divine mission. An additional case is needed to show that Jesus included lethal resistance within the mission of his own followers. The sword narratives belong to that second inquiry.

A dynasty with an earthly constituency

Tabor's Jesus Dynasty places Jesus within a family and a project for Israel's restoration. Its proposed relationship between the priestly role of John the Baptist and the royal role of Jesus gives renewed weight to ancestry, succession and the government of a people. James's later leadership becomes part of the movement's continuity. This approach opens

[559] Mark 8:34–37; 10:28–30; Matthew 19:29. Comparisons concern the respective texts' exchange, renunciation and future-life motifs. They do not establish direct literary dependence between the canonical Gospels and Qur'an 9:111.

[560] Qur'an 61:10–14, especially the transition from the transaction and striving in 10–13 to Jesus and the helpers in 14. Text: https://legacy.quran.com/61/10-14. The nature of the believing group's ascendancy is an exegetical question; the verse does not narrate a battle fought by the historical Jesus.

questions that are easily obscured when the kingdom is treated exclusively as an inward religious experience.[561]

The canonical material offers reasons to ask those questions independently of accepting Tabor's complete reconstruction. In Luke 22:28–30, Jesus grants a kingdom to his companions and associates their future with judgment of the twelve tribes. Matthew 19:28 gives a related picture. The language organizes a restored Israel under appointed authorities. Interpreting the scene as eschatological still leaves it concerned with public authority and the fate of a people.

The dispute over who may govern becomes more visible when read alongside Jesus's criticism of rulers who dominate their subjects. In Luke's final meal, the account of service precedes the promise of thrones. The juxtaposition imagines an exercise of authority answerable to the teacher's example. We can therefore ask what makes government morally answerable. We do not have to assume an existing military organization every time we read the word kingdom.[562]

My Alid comparison develops from this feature. A household associated with a prophet may claim a continuing responsibility for the community's religious and public life. Its authority can challenge an established regime even when its immediate conduct is restrained. That is the structure of legitimacy I want to compare. The comparison leaves room for substantial differences between the family of Jesus and the later Islamic institutions through which imamate was expressed.

It also leaves Tabor's own argument intact. His family-centered restoration thesis does not by itself establish that Jesus organized an armed uprising. A promised intervention by God could transform the political order without a conventional campaign led by the disciples. If I go further and propose a Jesus who permits defensive force, that is an additional claim of my own. I have to establish it from the particular traditions we are examining.

The title attached to Jesus at execution, king of the Jews, supplies a further datum within the Passion narratives. It identifies a charge that Roman authority could recognize as political. Yet the charge records the authorities' interpretation as mediated by the Evangelists. A ruler may fear a popular prophet before that prophet has planned an attack. The political significance of the movement and its precise willingness to use force remain distinct historical questions.[563]

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[561] James D. Tabor, The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity (Simon & Schuster, 2006). For this chapter, the publisher's account of the thesis and Tabor's retrospective description were consulted; the complete book was not newly read. Publisher: https://www.simonandschuster.net/books/The-Jesus-Dynasty/James-D-Tabor/9780743299183. Tabor, "The Jesus Dynasty: Looking Back on Fifteen Years!": https://jamestabor.com/the-jesus-dynasty-looking-back-on-fifteen-years/.

[562] Luke 22:24–30; Matthew 19:28. Luke 22, NET text: https://biblehub.com/net/luke/22.htm. The immediate literary sequence is important to the proposed interpretation of authority through service.

[563] Mark 15:26; Matthew 27:37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19–22. The charge's political meaning is distinct from proving the exact conduct alleged or the independence of the four narrative witnesses.

The pre-Christian Aramaic and Hebrew dossier

Before I assign the Messiah a political program, the surviving languages of his Jewish world deserve to be heard. The Aramaic apocalypse 4Q246, copied before the canonical Gospels, speaks of a figure called Son of God and Son of the Most High amid nations trampling one another, the rise of God's people, divine kingship, the defeat of enemies and the cessation of the sword. Its language provides a striking background to the titles given the child in Luke 1:32–35. The figure's identity is disputed: Michael Segal links it to the penultimate kingdom in Daniel 7, while Edward Cook favors a negative ruler associated with the Seleucid crisis. The earlier existence of the words is secure evidence; a claim that Luke copied this precise manuscript, or that its referent was Jesus, requires separate proof (S03–S04).

The Hebrew War Rule fragment 4Q285 also associates a Davidic prince with a killing. Its fragmentary and originally unvowelled form has sustained rival translations in which the prince kills and in which he is killed. The Library of Congress identifies the uncertainty and dates the copied fragment to the early first century. It therefore documents a royal-apocalyptic discourse in which lethal struggle was available, while the direction of the action remains a textual-critical issue. The War Scroll tradition belongs to an identifiable Jewish group; membership of Jesus or his family in that group has not been demonstrated (S05).

The Community Rule 1QS 9:11 speaks of a future prophet and the anointed figures of Aaron and Israel, a relevant configuration for Tabor's proposed priestly–royal division between John and Jesus. John J. Collins and James Nati document that passage within a distinct association and resist reconstructing its institutions from the messianic titles alone. We can establish that people expected differentiated sacred offices. Applying that configuration to the historical Baptist, Messiah and James takes a further inference (S07).

The jubilee apocalypse 11QMelchizedek reads Isaiah 61 as liberation, forgiveness and eschatological judgment through an exalted agent. Logan Williams connects this scriptural cluster to the Son of Man's authority in Mark 2. Neither the text nor its modern comparison supplies an oath of militant service spoken by Jesus. It does show that royal authority, remission of sins, release and judgment were joined in a Jewish interpretive environment that need not be described as merely inward or apolitical (S06).

Four tellings of a drawn sword

Mark's arrest scene contains a sudden injury. One of those standing nearby draws a sword and strikes the high priest's servant. Jesus then challenges the way the arresting party has approached him and refers to the fulfillment of scripture. The companions flee. Mark supplies neither the attacker's name nor an explicit command from Jesus rebuking the stroke in the manner found in the later parallels.[564]

[564] Mark 14:43–50, especially 14:47. Text: https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/14. The Greek description of the assailant does not name Peter; identification with a follower is more explicit in the other accounts.

Matthew identifies the attacker as one of Jesus's companions and adds an instruction to return the weapon to its place. Those who take up the sword, Jesus says, will perish by it. He also invokes access to heavenly assistance and the necessity of scripture's fulfillment. Luke has the companions ask whether to strike, narrates the injury, and adds Jesus's intervention and healing of the servant. John names Peter and Malchus, then gives a command to sheath the sword in connection with accepting the cup given by the Father.[565]

The changes are substantial. Matthew explains the relation between the act and a teaching about the sword; Luke repairs the harm within the story. John locates responsibility in a named disciple while presenting Jesus as accepting his appointed ordeal. Each account interprets the violence for the reader.

Under the usual hypothesis that Matthew and Luke used Mark, their additional material is evidence of a changed literary presentation. Its historical source still needs investigation. An Evangelist can supply material from another tradition, compose an explanatory speech, or reshape inherited wording. We can be more confident about the difference between the completed Gospels than about the exact process that produced it.

Here redaction gives us something to work with. A remembrance involving a weapon has survived inside narratives that increasingly explain how Jesus's submission should be understood. We can see the change in narrative emphasis. Did the tradition once allow a less comprehensively passive picture of his circle?

The same comparison also restrains the argument. Mark's narrative already has Jesus accept arrest as the scriptures are fulfilled. Its silence about a sword command cannot be converted into an order to fight. We would need evidence for such an order beyond the absence of Matthew's warning. Mark also describes the assailant only as a bystander at this point. The identification of the act with a particular disciple emerges more explicitly in the other accounts.

Nor can four Gospels be counted as four independent eyewitness depositions. Matthew's and Luke's relationships to Mark matter, and John's relationship to earlier Passion traditions is debated. The persistence of the incident is significant even with those dependencies. It suggests a durable tradition that the authors had to accommodate. Its strongest historical implication is that an encounter remembered as involving Jesus's followers included a blade and an injury.

We also need to be clear about what we are claiming happened to the manuscripts. The difference between Mark and Matthew is observable across their respective narratives. It does not establish that a copyist inserted the sword warning into an earlier manuscript of Matthew. A claim about Matthew's composition and a claim about later textual interpolation belong to different investigations. I am pursuing the claim about composition where the parallel texts support it.

[565] Matthew 26:51–54; Luke 22:49–51; John 18:10–11. Texts: https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/26; https://biblehub.com/net/luke/22.htm; https://biblehub.com/net/john/18.htm. The comparisons assume Markan priority for Matthew and Luke while leaving John's literary relationship a separate question.

Luke and the editorial selection of Isaiah

Luke 4:18–19 provides a further observable instance of editorial selection. The Nazareth speech cites Isaiah 61's announcement of liberty and divine favor, stopping before the subsequent expression concerning the day of God's vengeance. The omission is verifiable by placing the passages side by side; the underlying prophetic book joins liberation with judgment. Luke also incorporates language from Isaiah 58:6 into the quotation. A study of the passage identifies these operations and examines their theological function. I cannot turn this single omission into a demonstration that every pacifying statement elsewhere in Luke is fabricated, yet it makes an argument about selective presentation concrete rather than speculative (S14).

The literary setting is equally important for the sword incident. Under Markan priority, Matthew's added condemnation of sword-taking and Luke's narration of healing are distinguishable developments from the sparse Markan injury scene. The relation of Matthew 10:34 to Luke 12:51 provides a useful control: sword and division occur in parallel settings describing division within families. Matthew Black treats this as a sayings-tradition problem with an explicit Micah 7:6 background. A metaphorical sword in one saying and the real implement used at arrest are separate claim units (S15, S22–S24).

The instruction to buy a sword

Luke's earlier scene makes an explanation based solely on an impulsive disciple less complete. Jesus recalls an earlier mission in which the disciples lacked ordinary provisions, then describes changed circumstances. The instruction now includes acquiring a sword, even at the cost of a cloak. A citation of Isaiah 53:12 follows. The disciples produce two weapons, and Jesus ends the exchange with an expression commonly rendered "It is enough."[566]

The immediate literary context makes it difficult to isolate the procurement command. Luke relates the change to Jesus being numbered with transgressors. Later, the companions' resort to their weapons is interrupted. The same chapter therefore gives a reader the acquisition of swords and a rejection of their use in the arrest. Both belong to the account we possess.

One interpretation understands the instruction as provision for dangerous travel after the earlier protected mission. On that reading, a weapon can belong among practical equipment while remaining subject to limits on its use. A second interpretation treats the scene as symbolic preparation for hostility or as part of Luke's scriptural explanation of the coming arrest. The disciples' literal response would then expose a misunderstanding. An apocalyptic interpretation places the weapons within expectations of divine intervention against the present order. Each reading has to explain why the narrative specifies two swords and why the injury is subsequently stopped.

[566] Luke 22:35–38, read with 22:49–51; Isaiah 53:12. The expression hikanon estin in 22:38 admits competing pragmatic interpretations. The chapter evaluates possibilities without claiming a lost manuscript that resolves them.

The final expression remains a difficulty. It can be read as a statement of sufficiency or as a termination of an unproductive exchange. We have no accompanying gesture to settle which meaning was intended. Two weapons would be an extraordinarily slight provision for a normal attempt to conquer Jerusalem. They could suffice as equipment for a few travelers, as a narrative sign, or within an expectation that God would supply the decisive power. Their small number limits the sort of action we can imagine, but still leaves us with those competing readings.

The prophetic fulfillment explanation also has a cost. Weapons become props in an account of how an innocent figure comes to be treated as an offender. That is a possible literary construction, but the Gospel never spells out a plan to stage the arrest through mere possession. It gives us a command, a scriptural reason and a response whose relation must be interpreted.

This leaves an opening for my reconstruction: a teacher could permit his followers to carry weapons without authorizing their use against the people who came for him. The distinction is intelligible within an ethic of constrained defense. It remains a reconstruction of the scene, and the passage's singular attestation in Luke limits what can be asserted about Jesus's precise words.

The verb translated buy also deserves to retain its ordinary force during interpretation. A reader who treats the instruction metaphorically should explain what in the narrative licenses that move. Conversely, a reader who treats it literally must account for the stopping of the later violence. Whichever reading we choose, we have to explain the whole passage.

Syriac is an extant translation, Galilean Aramaic a reconstruction

The Syriac evidence gives the sword passage a physical transmission history. British Library Add MS 14451, the fifth-century Curetonian witness, preserves the late chapters of Luke, subject to verification of individual folios and corrections. It does not preserve John 18:36, because its surviving Johannine text ends within chapter 14. The Old Syriac Sinaitic and Curetonian texts, the Peshitta and the Christian Palestinian Aramaic Gospel witnesses must therefore be entered with separate dates and verse coverage. If we treat them as one lost Aramaic Gospel, we have manufactured the source we wanted (S17–S19).

The published Peshitta of Luke 22:36 speaks of purchasing a saypā, ܣܝܦܐ, a sword; 22:38 also uses that noun when the disciples present two. This confirms the lexical choice of an ancient Syriac translation tradition, while remaining downstream of the Greek Gospel and distinct from a recoverable Galilean Aramaic utterance. The Curetonian reading at the target verses still needs direct folio or critical-edition comparison. An Arabic Diatessaron harmony preserves the same procurement dialogue, but it reaches us through a later and complex textual transmission; it supplies a history of Christian reception rather than an extra eyewitness line (S17–S19).

Other sayings that can acquire a sharper edge

The saying about bringing a sword in Matthew 10:34 is sometimes recruited as a general endorsement of violence. Its immediate setting concerns divisions within households; Luke

12:51 uses division in the corresponding saying. Matthew continues with family conflicts that recall Micah 7:6. Within that context, the sword expresses the disruptive consequence of allegiance. It has political implications because families and communities can fracture under competing loyalties, yet it supplies no military instruction.[567]

The command to kill opponents at the end of Luke's parable of the minas presents another problem of attribution. The words belong to the returning ruler within a narrated story. Whether the audience should identify that ruler straightforwardly with Jesus, hear a warning about judgment, or recognize the behavior of familiar kings requires interpretation of the parable as a whole. We cannot skip that reading of the parable and turn a character's speech straight into an order from the historical Jesus.[568]

The Temple action has greater historical weight for the public character of the movement. The Synoptic narratives remember disruption of trading activity in a setting of concentrated religious authority. John's telling includes a whip and the removal of animals. The episode makes confrontation difficult to exclude from the portrait. The accounts provide far less support for the proposition that Jesus occupied the entire Temple precinct as the commander of an armed force. Scale, duration and the response of those present all remain important unknowns.[569]

John 18:36 then requires a grammatical distinction familiar from the earlier chapters of this book. The Greek expression concerning the kingdom's relation to this world uses ek, indicating source or origin. A kingdom whose authority comes from God could still have consequences on earth. The verse's counterfactual reference to servants fighting, however, remains part of its argument. John presents the absence of such a struggle as relevant to Jesus's explanation before Pilate.[570]

We need to keep both observations in view. A translation that turns the kingdom into a place entirely removed from earthly affairs can obscure its political force. An interpretation that emphasizes divine origin still has to explain why the speaker adduces his servants' conduct. The verse gives us a claim about authority and a particular response to arrest. It cannot by itself determine what Jesus would authorize in every situation involving another person's threatened life.

Simon's designation as a zealot also warrants care. The presence of a disciple associated with zeal can invite questions about resistance, but translating the epithet directly into

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[567] Matthew 10:34–36; Luke 12:51–53; Micah 7:6. These are literary parallels concerning the division produced by allegiance; the sayings' oral and written transmission remains a further inquiry.

[568] Luke 19:11–27, especially 19:27. The attribution distinction follows the book's separation of narrator, character and reported historical speech. This chapter does not settle the disputed interpretation of the ruler in the parable.

[569] Mark 11:15–18; Matthew 21:12–13; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–17. The differences in wording, scope and narrative placement warrant individual study. Neither the noun whip nor the removal of traders supplies a head count for an armed force.

[570] John 18:36. Greek text and parsing: https://biblehub.com/text/john/18-36.htm; narrative context: https://biblehub.com/net/john/18.htm. The phrase ek tou kosmou toutou concerns derivation or origin, while the counterfactual reference to servants fighting remains part of the argument.

membership of a later organized party is historically precarious. The attempt to identify Iscariot with sicarius faces its own linguistic difficulties. The names may be suggestive. They cannot establish the social history for us.[571]

Stones and inscriptions: the limits of an archaeological argument

The material record supplies a setting for a contested restoration movement. The first-century Magdala synagogue, with its Temple-referencing decorated stone, and the Jerusalem Theodotos inscription documenting synagogue instruction show that Jewish public religious life involved recognized teaching institutions while the Temple still stood. Neither finds a Jesus party or a cache of weapons. The excavated Temple warning inscription makes jurisdiction and the threat of capital penalty materially visible in Jerusalem. These objects belong to the historical environment of a dispute over sacred authority, even as each is silent about the cause of the Gospel arrest (S08–S10).

At Caesarea a Latin dedication names Pontius Pilate as prefect of Judaea, fixing a Roman official's existence and rank independently of the Gospels. The pierced heel of Yehohanan, recovered from a first-century Jerusalem ossuary, documents the bodily reality of Roman crucifixion in the region. Neither artifact is a witness to Jesus's precise conduct. Mark 15:7, meanwhile, places Barabbas among people involved in an insurrection, and 15:26 gives Jesus the political charge king of the Jews. Their immediate evidentiary status remains that of Gospel narration; the archaeological evidence makes the institutions and punishments historically intelligible (S11–S12).

Coinage struck by the rebels in the war beginning in 66 CE speaks openly of Israel, Jerusalem and the redemption of Zion. It documents the persistence of politically charged restoration vocabulary in the generation after Jesus and James. The gap in date matters: these coins are evidence of a later revolt and do not identify Jesus with its organizers. We get the strongest comparison by letting the artifact establish its own date and purpose (S13).

The strongest case for resistance

Dale Martin has argued for a Jesus whose armed followers anticipated participation in an apocalyptic confrontation. On this reconstruction, ordinary estimates of military strength are inadequate because heavenly forces would supply the decisive intervention. Fernando Bermejo-Rubio develops a broader cumulative case for anti-Roman resistance, giving weight to political kingship, the execution context and recurring traces of conflict. His study of the co-crucified men also questions the assumption that Jesus alone from his movement suffered punishment.[572]

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[571] Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13; compare Mark 3:18 and Matthew 10:4. Epithet, ideological zeal and membership in a specific organized faction must be assessed separately. No etymological reconstruction of Iscariot is used as evidence for this chapter's conclusion.

[572] Dale B. Martin, "Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 37.1 (2014): 3–24, DOI: 10.1177/0142064X14544863. Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, "Jesus and the Anti-Roman Resistance," Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus 12.1–2 (2014): 1–105, DOI: 10.1163/17455197-01202001.

These proposals press a real weakness in the method. We can accept each political datum separately, explain each one away, and never look at the picture they make together. A title associated with rule, a disruptive action in Jerusalem and a circle containing weapons could be related features of a movement. They deserve consideration together.

Cumulative reasoning also needs controls. Related features may share a literary source, so their number does not automatically measure independent confirmation. A royal claim can explain why authorities fear a movement, why its leader is prosecuted politically and why the written charge concerns kingship. Those observations could arise from a single perceived challenge without establishing a plan to wage war. What, exactly, does combining the evidence add to the claim? We need to say.

Justin Meggitt's detailed response accepts the likelihood of bladed implements among the disciples while challenging the inference to a military or apocalyptic purpose. His study examines ordinary uses of such implements, the range of the Greek terminology and the distance between the Gospel group and the organized warfare envisaged in texts such as the War Scroll. Paula Fredriksen likewise questions the claim that possession of weapons is enough to explain the arrest and execution.[573]

That objection changes how much weight the evidence can bear. Knowing that a tool can be used violently does not tell us what its owner intended. The injury at arrest establishes that a blade was used violently within the narrative, which is more than simple possession. It still leaves open whether the stroke followed an instruction, expressed panic, or contradicted the leader's intentions. The accounts portray the last possibility with increasing explicitness.

There is also a problem with the customary claim that Rome would necessarily have executed every follower of a genuine resistance leader. It assumes predictable information, uniform enforcement and complete preservation of outcomes. None is guaranteed. Bermejo-Rubio is right to press the inference. Yet identifying the men crucified beside Jesus as members of his own group would require evidence beyond the fact of a shared execution scene. The Gospel labels alone do not establish that affiliation.[574]

We can now separate the claims by how well they are supported. A movement with political implications is well supported by the narrative material. A remembered act of armed resistance at arrest is also substantial evidence, despite uncertainty about its details.

Their abstracts and published thesis descriptions were directly checked; discussion of the full debate was supplemented by the complete text of Meggitt 2023. Detailed independent assessment of the full Martin and Bermejo-Rubio articles remains required.

[573] Justin J. Meggitt, "Putting the Apocalyptic Jesus to the Sword: Why Were Jesus's Disciples Armed?," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 45.4 (2023): 371–404, DOI: 10.1177/0142064X221150484, full open-access HTML consulted. Paula Fredriksen, "Arms and The Man: A Response to Dale Martin's 'Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous'," JSNT 37.3 (2015): 312–325, DOI: 10.1177/0142064X14566371, abstract consulted. These access levels should remain visible before publication.

[574] Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, "(Why) Was Jesus the Galilean Crucified Alone? Solving a False Conundrum," JSNT 36.2 (2013): 127–154, DOI: 10.1177/0142064X13506166, abstract and bibliographical record consulted. Compare Mark 15:27 and its parallels. The identification of the co-crucified men as members of Jesus's movement is an argument to test, not an identification given by those Gospel passages.

A standing plan for armed revolution, or a command from Jesus to attack Roman forces, remains a further hypothesis. We can investigate the Alid comparison without pretending that final step has been proved.

Josephus and the Egyptian prophet

Josephus supplies a vivid comparison under the procuratorship of Felix. In Jewish War, an Egyptian claimant to prophecy gathers a large following, reaches the Mount of Olives and plans to enter Jerusalem, overcome its defenders and exercise power. Felix attacks, the gathering is dispersed, and the Egyptian escapes. Antiquities describes his promise that Jerusalem's walls would fall at his command, allowing entry. It reports four hundred killed and two hundred captured.[575]

We should resist tidying the differing accounts into one. War gives a following of thirty thousand. Antiquities supplies the casualty figures without that same total. Acts 21:38 has a Roman officer ask Paul whether he is the Egyptian who led four thousand Sicarii into the wilderness. The question belongs to the officer within Luke's story; Paul identifies himself otherwise. These numerical and descriptive variations expose the difficulty of reconstructing the movement from hostile or distant reporting.[576]

The comparisons with the Gospel story are worth making. The Mount of Olives is a place of scriptural expectation as well as geography. Zechariah 14:4 locates a decisive divine intervention there. A movement gathering at that site could enact a prophetic interpretation of Israel's future. The fall of walls recalls the taking of Jericho, giving the Egyptian's claim a recognizable scriptural shape. Parallel performances can result from different leaders reading the same inherited texts.[577]

Josephus's account therefore expands our picture of what a popular prophet could signify to the authorities. A promised miracle might have immediate political consequences. Followers expecting God to open a city could appear dangerous even before they had demonstrated the capacity to defeat its garrison. The distinction between religious enthusiasm and political action was especially unstable when access to Jerusalem was at stake.

His treatment of John the Baptist supplies a useful control. Antiquities describes John's teaching positively and attributes his execution to Herod's fear that his influence could develop into rebellion. The report does not require an existing armed campaign to explain the ruler's preventive decision. Josephus thus gives us evidence for the political danger of a

[575] Josephus, Jewish War 2.261–263; Antiquities 20.169–172. William Whiston translation: https://lexundria.com/j_bj/2.254-263/wst and https://lexundria.com/j_aj/20.162-179/wst. The wider ranges include context that must not automatically be assigned to the Egyptian's own followers. Greek and translation can also be compared at https://greekdoc.com/DOCUMENTS/josephus/ant-20.html.

[576] Acts 21:37–39. The officer's identification of the Egyptian's following with four thousand Sicarii differs from Josephus's descriptions. War and Antiquities are separate accounts by one author; they cannot be counted as independent eyewitness sources.

[577] Zechariah 14:4; Joshua 6; compare Josephus, Antiquities 20.169–172. The proposed connection concerns scriptural performance and typology. A shared site or biblical motif does not independently establish identity or direct literary borrowing.

popular religious leader as perceived by a ruler, alongside accounts of movements with more explicit ambitions.[578]

The same problem confronts us when we interpret Jesus's execution. Political repression can testify to a regime's fear, while leaving the victim's exact program unresolved. We cannot trust the Roman state's punishments to tell us the moral character of everyone it punished. Nor should a sympathetic reconstruction remove the political consequences of a prophet's claim simply because his followers expected a miracle.

The Egyptian is consequently a strong comparative figure. He belongs within a regional world where prophetic promises could mobilize crowds and provoke lethal intervention. Identifying him with Jesus is a much larger claim. We would have to reconstruct the chronology and the identities of other actors as well as explain the similarities.

Lena Einhorn and the cost of moving the chronology

Lena Einhorn develops a radical chronological reconstruction in Jesus and the "Egyptian Prophet," presented at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in 2012. The paper argues that Gospel events fit a period roughly two decades later than their stated setting. She highlights the Egyptian, the Mount of Olives and the character of the force in John's arrest account. Her proposal also relates other discrepancies and figures to a systematic displacement of chronology.[579]

The appeal of the hypothesis is understandable. A particular geographical setting and an expectation of deliverance occur alongside an arrest involving substantial force. Josephus supplies an Egyptian leader who escapes, which can invite comparison with disputed reconstructions of what happened to Jesus. Einhorn attempts to explain a pattern through a single historical displacement.

To test that proposal, we first need to ask how specific the matches are. Mount Olivet symbolism was available to more than one religious movement. Opposition by Roman force is also a predictable response to a gathering perceived as dangerous. The Egyptian's promise about collapsing walls has no clear equivalent in the Gospel accounts of the arrest. The Gospels' named governors and rulers create obstacles that a time-shift hypothesis has to explain through deliberate substitution or wider rearrangement.

John's use of a term for a military detachment is important, but it gives no head count for the men present in the garden. Reading a complete regulation-strength formation into the word would overstate the passage. It would also risk treating John's dramatization of

[578] Josephus, Antiquities 18.116–119, especially 18.118. Whiston text: https://lexundria.com/j_aj/18.117-118/wst. The chapter uses Josephus's attributed motive for Herod as a control on reasoning from repression to prior armed rebellion.

[579] Lena Einhorn, "Jesus and the 'Egyptian Prophet'," paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Chicago, 17–20 November 2012, author's full posted text: https://lenaeinhorn.se/jesus-and-the-egyptian-prophet/. Her A Shift in Time: How Historical Documents Reveal the Surprising Truth about Jesus (Yucca, 2016) is registered for further reading; the full book was not consulted. The precise History Valley interview recalled during the project remains unidentified. The conference paper is not described here as a peer-reviewed demonstration.

Jesus's voluntary submission as a neutral military report. The scene includes the arresting party falling back when Jesus identifies himself, a detail whose theological role is unmistakable.[580]

The proposed chronology must also accommodate the Pauline letters. On the ordinary first-century dating of 1 Corinthians, Paul already knows a death and resurrection proclamation transmitted before he wrote, and he names earlier witnesses. Moving Jesus's career deep into the period of Felix compresses or destabilizes that sequence. Paul's reference to an official associated with Aretas in 2 Corinthians 11 adds another chronological question. The location and scope of Aretas's authority are debated, so that passage should not be made to bear the entire case. Together, the letters create external constraints that a large shift must address.[581]

A reconstruction can respond by questioning the dating, integrity or authorship of some Pauline material. That is a legitimate further hypothesis with its own evidentiary burden. We would then be revising several corpora together, far beyond correcting one Gospel timetable. Preferring that reconstruction requires correspondingly more independent evidence.

The distinction between identity and literary influence offers a less demanding line of inquiry. An account of Jesus written after the Egyptian's movement could incorporate motifs circulating from that later event. The direction of influence would have to be demonstrated through specific language or narrative organization. Alternatively, both movements could inherit the same scriptural expectations. Neither possibility requires treating the two leaders as one person.

Einhorn's work is useful to me because it forces attention onto material that a purely spiritual biography often flattens. Her proposed identity remains unestablished. I would not make the meaning of 9:111 depend upon its success. The Egyptian already illuminates the range of prophetic politics available in the first century, even while remaining a separate historical figure.

The sword expected from heaven

The earlier Enoch chapters give this inquiry a wider literary setting. In the Animal Apocalypse, the sheep receive a great sword and act against their enemies. Later in the vision, the sword is laid down and sealed before the Lord. The image joins divine judgment

[580] John 18:3–12, especially the military terms in 18:3 and 18:12 and the falling back in 18:6. The presence of a detachment or commander should not be converted into a certain total number of soldiers without additional evidence.

[581] 1 Corinthians 15:1–11; 2 Corinthians 11:32–33. These chronological controls depend on judgments about the Pauline letters' composition and integrity. Compare the discussion of authentic and disputed Pauline material in chapter 24. The exact political circumstances of the Aretas reference are debated; no single undisputed chronology is inferred from it here.

to a transfer of power, then marks an end to its use. The episode supplies a model of authorized force whose duration belongs within God's transformation of the world.[582]

It cannot be used as a transcript of Jesus's plans. It matters because the Jewish apocalyptic imagination offered more possibilities than ordinary military calculation or complete human inactivity. A community could envisage itself participating in a divinely determined reversal. The size of its present resources would then be interpreted through the promised intervention.

This is where Martin's proposal becomes intelligible. A few weapons need not represent a realistic assessment of Roman strength if the users expect heavenly assistance. Yet the availability of an idea within a literary environment does not establish that a particular group held it. The link between Enochic expectations and the two swords in Luke remains a proposed explanation that competes with ordinary practical and literary readings.

The War Scroll presents a further possibility of coordinated divine and human warfare. Its detailed communal organization differs markedly from the small circle described in the arrest scenes. Importing its entire program into the ministry of Jesus would require evidence that the movement accepted that particular vision. Shared apocalyptic vocabulary can establish a horizon of possibility while leaving group-specific commitments uncertain.[583]

Revelation complicates the picture again. It depicts victorious heavenly warfare and gives the Messiah formidable judicial imagery, yet it also portrays the faithful overcoming through testimony and accepting death. The sword emerging from the rider's mouth in chapter 19 belongs to a symbolic vision of judgment. A reader who turns it into an instruction for a present congregation to attack its neighbors has added an agency and timetable that need independent authorization.[584]

Who, then, is supposed to act? A text can expect violent divine judgment while instructing believers to endure persecution. It can also envisage limited human participation under a particular commission. We need to establish which of these theological arrangements each passage actually presents.

The Ascension of Isaiah, already discussed, makes the problem of agency especially visible through a heavenly figure who receives his mission and descends into a hostile world. Its account of obedience under cosmic conflict belongs beside the Enochic judgment scenes without being reduced to their plot. The same caution applies to the Gospel Messiah. A

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[582] 1 Enoch 90:19, 90:34; compare 91:12. R. H. Charles's public-domain translation of the Animal Apocalypse: https://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/enoch/ENOCH_4.HTM. Charles's textual rearrangements and emendations require comparison with a modern critical edition before original-language claims are made.

[583] 1QM, the War Scroll, as compared in Meggitt 2023, especially his treatment of apocalyptic arming and the difference between that text's organization and the Gospel scenes. No fresh collation of the Hebrew scroll was undertaken for this draft.

[584] Revelation 12:11; 13:10; 19:11–21. The argument distinguishes the narrated agency of the heavenly rider from instructions addressed to the faithful. It does not attempt to resolve all interpretive disputes about Revelation's violence or textual variants in 13:10.

figure may be committed to the defeat of evil while taking a path through suffering that forbids his companions to intervene on one occasion.[585]

Warriors and martyrs within one inherited scripture

Hebrews 11 places battlefield deliverance and suffering for faith within a single account of earlier believers. Its closing sequence remembers victories over hostile forces, then moves through torture, imprisonment and deaths endured in hope of a better resurrection. The author's argument draws on the persistence of faith across these different outcomes. The passage is particularly useful because it occurs inside the New Testament rather than in a modern harmonization of separate religious canons.[586]

The Maccabean literature shows how acute the underlying problem could become. First Maccabees 2 remembers people killed after declining to defend themselves on the Sabbath, followed by a decision that future attacks required resistance. Second Maccabees 7 presents fidelity through torture and death with confidence in resurrection. The traditions preserve different responses to coercion, each shaped by concern for obedience.[587]

The Maccabean material also contains practices that make wholesale endorsement impossible within the ethical proposal of this chapter. First Maccabees describes coercion within the community, including forced circumcision. Its legitimacy claims cannot be transferred intact into a Qur'anic argument about protection from persecution. These sources show us what responses were historically available. We still have to judge the particular acts they describe.

This repertoire helps clarify what it could mean for a promise to extend across the Torah and the Gospel. A later text can inherit accounts of faithful military deliverance together with accounts of steadfast suffering. It need not declare every earlier act exemplary in every circumstance. The continuity can reside in allegiance to God, with the permission to use force governed by the particular covenant and situation.

Hebrews is especially valuable here because it allows the reader to see the inherited diversity from within a Christian argument. Its author honors people who fought and people who endured. That fact does not turn the letter into a command for Christians to wage war. It does show that the categorical claim that the Gospel world knows only religiously valuable nonresistance is too narrow.

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[585] Ascension of Isaiah 9–11. See chapter 9 of the present manuscript and its references to the Ethiopic vision, Jonathan Knight and Darrell D. Hannah. The comparison concerns commissioned agency and suffering, without asserting direct literary dependence upon Enoch or the Gospels.

[586] Hebrews 11:32–40. Text: https://bible.usccb.org/bible/hebrews/11. The sequence itself supplies the comparison between martial deliverance and faithful endurance. Hebrews remains anonymous in this book's treatment of authorship.

[587] 1 Maccabees 2:29–48, including both the decision concerning Sabbath defense and the subsequent coercive acts; 2 Maccabees 7, especially 7:9 and 7:14. First Maccabees text: https://biblia.com/bible/rsv/1-maccabees/2/29-48. These works have different canonical standing among Christian traditions and are used here as Jewish literary witnesses as well as sources received by Christians.

We can therefore approach the question in Tawbah without first finding a lost command that exactly matches its verbs. A history of revelation may preserve a continuing promise through different forms of costly service. The fighting specified by the Qur'an still requires its own justification. What the comparison establishes is a scriptural setting in which martial deliverance and martyrdom can both be discussed under fidelity to God.

Sinai and the Christian history of killing and being killed

Nicolai Sinai gives this question a historical setting that should be considered alongside the Gospel passages. In The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction (2017), pp. 191–196, he examines 9:111 within the Medinan Qur'an's valorization of struggle and identifies older Jewish and late-antique Christian forms of religious militancy. Numbers 25 presents Phinehas as an agent of violent zeal, and 1 Kings 18 narrates Elijah's killing of Baal's prophets. Sinai argues that these precedents continued to shape Christian accounts of holy men who used force against religious opponents. The continuity he proposes is historical and ideological, concerning inherited examples, recognized virtues and the institutions that passed them on.588

The distinction matters for the Injīl claim itself. The extant New Testament gives an identifiable promise to those who surrender life and possessions for the Messiah. Mark 8:34–37 and 10:28–30 speak to costly discipleship and its reward. Luke 23:43 promises Paradise to a condemned man beside Jesus, in a scene about repentance rather than armed combat. Hebrews 11 can honor warriors and martyrs within one account of faithful predecessors. None of these passages reproduces the whole proposition of 9:111 as a direct utterance in which Jesus promises Paradise to believers who fight and kill. We need to let the surviving words say what they say, within those limits.

Sinai draws upon Michael Gaddis and Thomas Sizgorich to show how Christian martyrdom and militant zeal could converge. He gives particular attention to the sixth-century Panegyric on Macarius of Tkow, whose portrait of the Egyptian bishop combines willingness to die for the faith with readiness to kill. A hagiographer's portrayal reveals what its author and audience could take for exemplary Christian action. It remains a much later witness to a community's moral imagination, and the reported deeds require their own historical grading. This is a strong comparator for the cultural world in which the Qur'an was proclaimed.589

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588 Nicolai Sinai, The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 190–196, especially 191–195, on Q 9:111, Biblical zeal, late-antique Christian militancy and the Heraclius comparison. The public challenge's wording about an 'explicit New Testament equivalent' is treated here as a question to test; it is not attributed to Sinai as a verbatim quotation. ISBN 9780748695782.

589 Sinai, The Qur'an, 192–194, citing Michael Gaddis, There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire (University of California Press, 2005), especially ch. 5; Thomas Sizgorich, Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), chs. on

A more pointed Syriac comparison has appeared in Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov's 2026 article, "Byzantine Roots of Muslim Jihad". He examines the Eusebius Narrative within the Syriac Julian Romance, a later antique historical fiction presenting a bishop's supporters as prepared to slay or be slain. The formula gives us an unusually close Christian literary comparison for the active and passive killing verbs in 9:111. Its textual chronology now needs special care: Mazzola and Van Nuffelen (2023) argue for a first-half-of-the-seventh-century date, based partly on dependence upon the Miscellaneous Chronicle of 640, and dispute the older division of the work into independently dated pieces. The shared rhetoric is attested in the extant Romance; direct transmission to the Qurʾānic environment remains conjectural (S20–S21).590

The Syriac Book of Steps gives another point of comparison. Its description of struggle against sin can use violent-sounding language for the combat of the soul, whose object differs from the human victims in the Julian Romance. Tertullian's Apology 37 offers an earlier Christian defense of endurance rather than retaliation. Those differences expose a history of Christian reasoning about killing and suffering. They also forbid using the Romance as an authenticated saying of Jesus or as a securely pre-Qurʾānic sixth-century precedent (S20–S21).591

The seventh-century military environment supplies another context. Tommaso Tesei's study of Heraclius's war propaganda examines the promise of heavenly reward for soldiers dying in battle during the Byzantine-Sasanian struggle. Sinai likewise invokes the proclamation attributed to Heraclius by Theophanes. The latter's chronicle was composed well after the events described, so the date of its testimony and the date of the alleged imperial speech have to be kept separate. The proposed relationship is about the sacralization of contemporary warfare, and the strength of direct borrowing depends on evidence of transmission.592

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militant Christian devotion. Sinai reports the Macarius panegyric through Gaddis; original-language collation of the panegyric remains open.

590 Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov, 'Byzantine Roots of Muslim Jihad,' Review of Ecumenical Studies 17.3 (2025): 373–386, publication online 21 May 2026, DOI 10.2478/ress-2025-0028, especially pp. 380–384, quoting the Eusebius Narrative and discussing its apparent verbal parallel to Qur'an 9:111. The Julian Romance's principal Syriac witness is British Library Add. 14,641, assigned to the sixth century; see Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage, s.v. 'Julian Romance.' This note records Bumazhnov's English rendering; the Syriac lines remain for direct collation.

591 Bumazhnov, 'Byzantine Roots,' 375–380, with Book of Steps 20:4 and Tertullian, Apology 37. The Syriac Book of Steps offers a metaphor about spiritual combat with sin, while the Eusebius Narrative portrays religious conflict among human groups. The distinct literary referents limit any argument from similar word order alone.

592 Tommaso Tesei, 'Heraclius' War Propaganda and the Qurʾān's Promise of Reward for Dying in Battle,' Studia Islamica 114.2 (2019): 219–247, DOI 10.1163/19585705-12341397 (published abstract and research problem checked). Compare Sinai, The Qur'an, 194–196,

The criticism that the canonical Gospels contain no exact version of 9:111 therefore presents a genuine textual question. The historical Christian evidence brings other questions into focus: which communities could hear a promise of divine reward for militant service, what earlier revelation they believed themselves to preserve, and how their conduct might have shaped the vocabulary available to the Qur'anic audience. A tradition understood as Christian does not thereby become an authenticated saying of the historical Jesus. Nor does identifying a pre-Islamic parallel establish that the Qur'an quoted its particular Syriac words. We have to keep those levels of testimony visible so that the reader can check what each one establishes.

For Finding Injil, I retain the difference between the Gospel's attested promise of costly allegiance and the wider Jewish and Christian inherited vocabulary of zeal, war and martyrdom. The Arabic of 9:111 places the fighting verbs beside the true promise, and the scope of the earlier-scripture reference deserves an explicit grammatical argument. Late antique Christian texts can sometimes unite readiness to kill and readiness to die, with dates and moral judgments held apart from Jesus's reported words. Qurʾān 9:112 immediately specifies the ethical character of the people entering the bargain. A claim about the historical Messiah's endorsement of killing can only earn a historical grade from its own witnesses (S01–S02, S20–S26).

The sixth-century Syriac analogy and its contested chronology

Bumazhnov's discussion of the Eusebius Narrative in the Syriac Julian Romance identifies a remarkably close rhetorical formula of readiness to slay or to be slain in a Christian account of violent religious conflict. The setting is a polemical story in which force against religious opponents is presented favorably, and the text itself does not deliver a Gospel promise of Paradise to combatants. Mazzola and Van Nuffelen's 2023 critical reconstruction argues for the first half of the seventh century, partly because the Romance uses material from the Miscellaneous Chronicle of 640. That finding rules out my earlier use of the Romance as an established sixth-century pre-Islamic exemplar. Bumazhnov's proposed antecedent remains an important hypothesis to test, with the chronology and causal direction stated openly (S20–S21).

The comparison with Alid restraint addresses a different question. It asks when a claimant to religious and public leadership may lawfully carry a sword and when justice requires withholding it, with Nahj al-Balāgha and Karbala handled as received traditions whose chains remain to be inspected. In the Christian record, political dignity, dynastic expectation and suffering can coexist. The specific synthesis of rightful guidance, legitimate defensive force and sacrificial restraint that I develop through the household of ʿAlī is my Shiʿi theological proposal. I have to argue for it from its own evidence and then explain the analogy with Jesus. I cannot present the comparison as a newly discovered first-century isnād.

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discussing Theophanes's retrospective report of Heraclius. Tesei's full chronology and Greek textual apparatus remain to be independently collated.

The Alid analogy under pressure

The instruction attributed to ʿAlī before Ṣiffīn gives the comparison more definite ethical content. Letter 14 of Nahj al-Balāgha directs his troops to await the enemy's initiation of fighting and imposes restraints after defeat, including protection of the wounded and those withdrawing. The same text forbids harming women despite verbal provocation. Its period-specific rationale about women should receive scrutiny along with the protective command.[593]

Nahj al-Balāgha is a later compilation, and the provenance of each attributed instruction belongs to a historical inquiry. I use this passage as evidence for a received Alid account of disciplined force. Establishing that every word was spoken at Ṣiffīn would require work beyond citing the collection. I am applying the same distinction here that I apply to the Gospel speeches.

Within the ethical model, possession of a sword is compatible with an obligation to restrain it. A rightful claim does not make every act available. The conduct of one's opponent also matters without abolishing obligations toward that opponent after defeat. At every stage, we still have to ask whether using the sword is legitimate.

The Karbala narrative supplies a related scene. When Zuhayr proposes confronting the smaller force before further troops arrive, Ḥusayn declines to begin the fighting. The account later places his company under coercion and blockade. Acceptance of a mortal risk belongs to a continuing refusal of an imposed allegiance. The comparison with Jesus concerns the coexistence of public authority, companions capable of defense, and a leader who can forbid their initiation of violence.[594]

This helps explain why the label aggressive is poorly fitted to the possibility I am exploring. A movement may threaten a ruler because it offers a more credible claim to legitimacy or refuses to ratify injustice. The ruler's fear can be politically rational even where the movement initiates no attack. Force used against such a movement does not retrospectively establish that its members intended conquest.

An Alid-style reading of the arrest would therefore permit the following possibility: Jesus's companions possessed means of resistance, one of them acted, and the leader judged that this encounter should be borne without further force. That reading accommodates the core of the transmitted scene. It does not establish a general license for violence, and it does not require the sword rebuke to be a late invention. Its value is that it opens an ethical

[593] Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 14, attributed to ʿAlī before Ṣiffīn. Arabic and English: https://al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-14-his-soldiers-battle-siffin. The passage is distinguished from the website's extensive later commentary. Its prohibitions and its period-specific rationale concerning women should both remain visible in an ethical assessment.

[594] The narrative of Ḥusayn's journey reproduced as "The Journey of Imam Husain Part4," Shia Studies' World Assembly, 5 November 2021: https://shiastudies.com/en/4402/the-journey-of-imam-husain-part4/. The excerpt preserves the scene with Zuhayr and the refusal to initiate fighting. A printed-edition and transmission check against the Karbala accounts is still required; the web reproduction is not an independently contemporary witness to the event.

category in which readiness to defend and acceptance of death can belong to the same religious life.

The analogy also illuminates family succession. A persecuted household's continuing authority can be politically significant after the leader's death or removal. James's standing in Jerusalem could therefore matter to the history of the movement even if his own conduct was restrained. This is a comparative possibility within the book's larger reconstruction; a direct historical line between James's community and later Alid doctrine has not been demonstrated.

The report about ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn also turns the comparison back upon us. The religious value of a campaign depends on the people conducting it and the limits they observe. Invoking the family of the Prophet cannot settle those conditions by itself. We still have to judge the claimant, ancient or modern, by the moral demands that lineage is supposed to serve.

How early is the refusal of retaliation?

An argument for pacifying redaction has to face evidence that precedes the later Christian empire. Paul's exhortation in Romans 12 prohibits revenge and directs care toward the enemy. First Thessalonians 5:15 likewise opposes repaying evil with evil. The Didache's opening instruction includes prayer for persecutors and forms of nonretaliatory conduct associated with the Jesus tradition. These witnesses make a simple story of imperial Christianity inventing all restraint historically inadequate.[595]

The dating and composition of each witness require their own assessment. Even so, a theory that treats nonretaliation as a single late imposition must explain why it occurs across these early and differing streams. The Pauline and Didache materials also challenge any reconstruction that assigns the whole teaching to a single hostile editorial party.

There can still be redaction. A community with an inherited commitment to enemy-love may sharpen that commitment when narrating a disturbing act by a disciple. An Evangelist can make Jesus's innocence more explicit while preserving an older memory. Such shaping would intensify an existing ethic rather than necessarily reverse an original instruction to fight. We have more possibilities to investigate than faithful transcription at one extreme and total ideological replacement at the other.

Romans itself creates further complexity because its nonretaliatory exhortation precedes the discussion of governing authority and the sword in chapter 13. Interpretations of those passages remain contested, as the Paul chapter has shown. Their coexistence demonstrates that early Christian moral reasoning could distinguish personal conduct from the coercive

[595] Romans 12:14–21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Didache 1.3–5. Didache text in the Ante-Nicene Fathers translation: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm. These are early Christian reception witnesses of differing literary histories. They do not individually establish verbatim utterances of Jesus.

functions of political authority. Whether that distinction was justified, or became available for abuse by rulers, is a separate question.[596]

If I want to take Jesus's politics seriously, I have to take enemy-love seriously too. The restoration of a just order need not erase concern for those who oppose it. A prophet can condemn domination and still refuse revenge. The historical task is to establish how those commitments were understood together, and whether the earliest recoverable teaching admitted exceptions for protecting others.

For now, the evidence leaves the question open within definite limits. The arrest traditions leave room for weapons within the circle, while early exhortations give nonretaliation substantial antiquity. Reading every peaceful statement as a fabrication would make the method circular. Reading every blade as an irrelevant accident would suppress an inconvenient element of the tradition. In each case, we have to return to the particular witness: what does it say, and where did it come from?

What would justify the fighting?

A historical reconstruction of Jesus's politics cannot itself decide the ethics of taking life. A prophet's followers might misunderstand him, and a later narrative might excuse conduct that deserves condemnation. The Qur'anic expression in the way of Allah is therefore the center of the moral inquiry. The promised return belongs to a justified commitment; attaching a religious name to a conflict cannot create the justification.

My reading of permission to fight begins with passages that identify wrongs suffered and limits maintained. Qur'an 22:39–40 connects permission with oppression and expulsion, then describes the protection of places where God is worshipped. Qur'an 4:75 directs attention to people seeking rescue from an oppressive place. The prohibition of transgression in 2:190 gives force an ethical boundary even while fighting is permitted.[597]

These passages support a case for protection of people whose lives and worship are under attack. Such a case can make sense of believers risking death and using lethal force under grave conditions. It does not provide a moral shortcut around proportionality, protection of those outside the fight, or the possibility of ending hostilities without further killing. Those practical judgments require attention to actual circumstances.

Tawbah itself preserves duties toward those who have kept treaties and toward a person who seeks protection and safe passage (9:4, 9:6). Those provisions matter when interpreting the surah's martial language. Verse 9:29 raises further questions about war, political submission and tribute that cannot be solved merely by quoting the defensive

[596] Romans 12:17–21 and 13:1–7, read together. For the wider historical, authorship and theological qualifications, see chapter 24. The distinction between private retaliation and political coercion is an interpretive issue rather than an automatic defense of any ruler.

[597] Qur'an 2:190; 4:75; 22:39–40. The chapter's normative synthesis prioritizes protection of the wronged and limits on force. It is offered as the author's Qur'an-centered argument rather than as a survey of the entire classical law of jihad.

passages. I am developing a bounded justification of 9:111 here. A complete account of the surah's law would have to address those additional claims directly.[598]

We need to ask who has authorized the fighting before claiming the promise. Verse 9:111 celebrates the covenant of people fighting in God's cause. It does not provide a self-contained procedure for proving that a particular ruler, army or uprising occupies that cause. The report from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn exposes precisely that missing step when a citation is used to demand participation.

The moral difficulty is heightened when the people on both sides believe they are serving God. The history of religious conflict supplies no guarantee that sincerity chooses the just side. An appeal to paradise cannot cancel another person's life. The act must be assessed in relation to the harm it prevents, the authority under which it is undertaken, and the limits it observes. Calling a death martyrdom records a religious judgment that itself requires reasons.

There is also a danger in interpreting the believer's surrendered life as expendable property of a leader. In the Qur'anic transaction, Allah is the purchaser. No earthly claimant thereby acquires unrestricted possession of the believer's conscience or body. The language of covenant increases accountability to God. A leader who orders wrongdoing remains answerable for it, even if those who obey have accepted the possibility of death.

The Alid comparison now requires us to go beyond admiring courageous men and ask how rightful authority acts under moral limits. A ruler's command and God's cause must be judged in their relation to one another. The restraint attributed to ʿAlī, and the ethical qualifications invoked by his grandson, give the interpreter grounds to question a campaign from inside the religious vocabulary used to defend it.

When mercy became a warrant for coercion

We now have to confront an asymmetry between the two scriptural inheritances. Readers have reason to find it disturbing. The Christian Bible contains narrated commands of extermination. Deuteronomy 20:16–18 orders that no breathing thing remain alive among named peoples of the land, and 1 Samuel 15:3 explicitly includes women, children and infants among the Amalekites to be killed. These passages belong to the Christian canon even though they are not sayings of Jesus. A defender of the Bible may read them as unique judgments in an ancient history, fulfilled and incapable of repetition. That is a substantive interpretive position. It cannot turn the commands into nonexistent texts (S29–S30).

The Qurʾān contains fierce commands to fight and therefore supplies no warrant for a flattering assertion that the Islamic tradition is pacifist. But I find no Qurʾānic instruction analogous to the command in 1 Samuel 15:3 to annihilate a named human people down to its infants. The positive discipline has a recognizable form. Qurʾān 2:190 forbids transgression in battle; 60:8 commends goodness and fairness toward those who neither attack believers nor drive them from their homes; and 9:4 and 9:6 preserve the obligations

[598] Qur'an 9:4, 9:6 and 9:29. Treaty fidelity and safe conduct constrain a reading of the surah, while the tribute passage requires its own historical and legal treatment. No claim of a universally accepted defensive-only interpretation is made.

of treaties and protection even within a surah of war. These limits do not make 9:5 and 9:29 disappear. They demand an account of how those verses are read together (S31–S34).

The received Sunnah includes an explicit prohibition of killing women and children: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3015 and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1744 transmit it in connection with a woman found dead during a campaign. A reader seeking the harshest counterexample will turn to Muslim 1745, the report of Saʿb ibn Jaththāmah about night raids. These reports have to be read together, with their subjects distinguished. The prohibition concerns intentional targeting. The raid question concerns women and children being struck amid an attack on an opposing force. Neither text provides a formula for treating their lives as expendable (S35–S36, S60).

In Muslim 1745a–c the descriptions differ: a question about the enemy's women and children being struck, a first-person admission that children were struck, and a hypothetical involving cavalry attacking at night. The short reply, hum minhum, “they are of them,” is not a numerical civilian-casualty allowance. Muslim's chapter heading explicitly construes the report as unintended deaths, although that heading is an interpretive classification rather than part of the Prophet's quoted answer. My reading is that the question concerns unavoidable incidental harm, not a permission to select children for killing. The next question is nevertheless unavoidable: were the military objective, expected harm and precautions morally defensible? An unintended death is not automatically an innocent decision (S60–S61).

A present-day comparison clarifies that question without furnishing evidence about a seventh-century raid. Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor's documentary NAZA (2026), named for the Hebrew term for collateral damage, investigates allegations about how expected civilian deaths were estimated in Israeli strikes on Gaza. Its allegations about particular numerical thresholds and approval procedures are disputed by the IDF. I am comparing the questions we must ask, without equating the two cases. Calculating that an attack may kill civilians, lawfully distinguishing the military objective, selecting precautions and authorizing a strike are separate acts. Each needs its own scrutiny. Modern humanitarian law prohibits expected incidental harm excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated and requires feasible precautions. This is a contemporary ethical comparator, not an anachronistic quotation of Islamic law (S62–S65).

The Banū Qurayẓa episode requires the same discipline about what a witness actually establishes. Qurʾān 33:26 identifies those of the People of the Book who backed the besieging forces, speaks of a party killed and a party taken captive, and 33:27 reports the transfer of land, dwellings and property. The Qurʾān supplies neither a body count nor an instruction to execute every postpubescent male, nor does it adjudicate the culpability of each person killed. It plainly attests killing, captivity and dispossession, which deserve moral examination. But its wording is compatible with a narrower account of wartime deaths and captives; it does not require the later story of hundreds summarily executed after surrender (S37, S59).

The later records are different claims at different distances from the event. Al-Bukhārī 4121 attributes to Saʿd ibn Muʿādh a judgment to kill the muqātila, the fighting men, and take dependants captive; the Prophet is then reported as approving the judgment. Sunan

Abī Dāwūd 4404 transmits ʿAṭiyya al-Quraẓī's account that captive boys were examined for pubic hair and those deemed mature were killed. The sīra tradition attributed to Ibn Isḥāq supplies the famous mass-execution narrative and the large numerical estimates. Those accounts cannot be silently read back into the Quṙān, and their existence does not make their historical reconstruction certain. The puberty-test report is especially serious adverse evidence and demands assessment, not concealment (S38, S56, S66).

W. N. Arafat challenged the historical credibility of the mass-execution narrative in 1976; M. J. Kister defended its substance in a detailed 1986 response. Muhammad Munir later argued against the wholesale execution account, while Lena Salaymeh showed that Muslim jurists used prisoner-of-war narratives in a legal debate in which opinions forbidding prisoner execution preceded the later dominant permissive position. These are arguments with different objects. Arafat and Kister dispute what happened; Salaymeh shows how contested histories became legal precedent, whether or not we can finally reconstruct the incident. I do not concede the mass slaughter of people whose individual guilt was never established because a triumphant narrative says it occurred. Equally, I cannot infer general release, or the innocuous treatment of captives, from the Quṙān's brevity. The text allows a more merciful historical account; the evidence still has to earn it (S54–S58).

We have to ask separately what the texts argue and what Muslims have done. There is a serious Quṙānic and prophetic argument against the annihilation of a people on account of its identity; this is not the assertion that no Muslim has ever committed genocide. An armed movement calling itself Islamic committed genocide against the Yazidis, as established by United Nations investigators. Their findings are part of the history with which an Islamic apologetic must contend. Under the modern legal definition, genocide requires an intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part; a massacre can be an atrocity without satisfying that further element. The same precision must be applied to Christians and Muslims alike (S39–S40).

Nor will I make the protection of life in war an alibi for injuries in domestic life. Some influential Sunni hadith reports about ʿĀ'isha's marriage, including al-Bukhārī 5134, and inherited rules concerning child marriage and sexual access to enslaved women raise grave questions about age, consent, coercion and abuse. Kecia Ali's research on concubinage and consent shows why modern words cannot simply be projected back into classical legal categories to declare the difficulty solved. The possibility of later distortion, or taḥrīf, is one claim to investigate; it does not license me to pretend the transmitted doctrines are absent. Aggressive theories of jihad pose their own problem, even when an argument can be made against them from the Quṙān's restraints (S41–S43).

Why, then, does the recorded history of Christianity include violence against other Christians, as well as centuries of Christian hostility to Jews? The decisive change was not an archaeologically demonstrable deletion of a peace-loving Jesus. It was the conversion of ecclesiastical difference into a matter of coercive public authority. The imperial edict of 380 declared a particular Nicene profession the legitimate public faith and consigned other Christian positions to the category of heresy, subject to imperial punishment. The machinery of rule had been placed at the disposal of determining who belonged to the true Church (S44).

Augustine's letter to Vincentius, written about 408, supplies the theological operation in remarkable clarity. He cites Jesus's command to love enemies, likens the religious dissenter to a sick person restrained for his own good, and appeals to "compel them to come in" from Luke 14:23. He also states that he formerly believed no one should be coerced into the unity of Christ, but changed his mind after observing the supposed effects of imperial laws. I need not impute to him delight in bloodshed. The more serious finding is that coercion could be sincerely rationalized as love. The object of mercy was denied the power to refuse the mercy being imposed upon him (S45–S46).

The later institutional record shows what such a logic could permit. In 1208 Innocent III proclaimed a crusade against heresy in southern France. Mark Gregory Pegg, writing in The Cambridge World History of Genocide, describes it as the first holy war in which Christians were promised salvation for killing other Christians. He calls the massacre at Béziers in 1209 a "genocidal moment", while explicitly resisting an easy equation between that description and the legal category of genocide. The Fourth Crusade's sack of the Orthodox Christian capital Constantinople in 1204 and the slaughter of French Protestant Huguenots beginning on Saint Bartholomew's Day in 1572 provide distinct examples of Christians killing Christians. Their causes, institutions and circumstances differ, and not every massacre is a genocide (S47–S50).

The long history of Christian anti-Jewish violence had a related but not identical theological foundation. Supersessionism and the accusation that Jews collectively killed Christ hardened polemical readings of the New Testament into enduring hostility. John Chrysostom's sermons against Judaizing Christians in the 380s are a primary witness to the rhetoric that helped police that boundary. Crusading attacks on Jewish communities and later persecutions show the consequences of its popular transmission. Modern scholarship traces this history while rejecting any simple claim that one passage caused every crime; in 1965 the Catholic declaration Nostra aetate expressly rejected collective Jewish guilt for Jesus's death (S51–S53).

Here the Qurʾānic reading developed earlier in this book acquires a practical consequence. Qurʾān 4:153–158 places the boast of killing the Messiah in the mouths of Jewish opponents, then denies that those speakers killed or crucified him. I do not take that denial to erase a Roman crucifixion. It withdraws the boast of culpability from those Jewish speakers. The Christian history of assigning transgenerational blame to Jews cannot be reconciled with the moral implications of that reading. My interpretation thus bears on the reception of the passion narrative as well as its historical syntax.

When slaughter became holy

Jerusalem in 1099 gives the problem its terrible clarity. Raymond of Aguilers describes the killing after the city's capture and interprets the bloodshed as divine judgment. His rhetoric is evidence of the religious meaning he gave the violence, not a dependable measurement of the depth of blood or the number of dead. An army had taken a city; a witness made the slaughter part of a sacred vindication. That is the mechanism I want exposed. (W4-1)

The Rhineland massacres of 1096 are even harder to explain away as battlefield necessity. Jewish communities were attacked before these Crusaders reached the eastern war. Albert

of Aix describes the killing of women and children at Mainz and the plunder of their property. He also records attempted episcopal protection and condemns the killers. His account preserves both the religious claim invoked for persecution and Christian opposition to it. The victims' Jewish identity was being made a warrant for violence; Christianity did not speak with one voice about that warrant. (W4-2)

I will not turn those sources into a universal claim that Christians are naturally violent. The question is what institutions, preachers and soldiers did with a theology of enemies. Nor will I add a particular Rhineland rape allegation without its passage and witness. The documented slaughter of families already demands an answer. Its seriousness is not increased by importing an unverified detail.

Mark R. Cohen's comparison of medieval Jewish life under Islam and Latin Christendom supplies a broader test. His account explains a generally less confrontational and violent relationship in the Islamic setting while rejecting an interfaith utopia. That comparison concerns societies and periods, not a moral essence inherited by every Muslim or Christian. Muslim persecution belongs inside the record, as do the Qurayẓa difficulties and modern atrocities already confronted in this chapter. The claim that explicit restraints matter must survive evidence of their violation. (W4-3)

The prohibition on killing women and children gives the Muslim interpreter a concrete instruction against which an army's conduct can be judged. The night-raid reports and their legal treatment remain serious qualifications, already examined above. Christian traditions also possessed restraints, and Albert's condemnation demonstrates that objection was possible from within them. We therefore have to investigate when restraints were enforced, when they were evaded, and when religious authority turned an atrocity into a virtue. A tally of all Christian and Muslim atrocities cannot be inferred from these cases.

Here is the restoration thesis I am defending. Jesus's mercy toward enemies, the Prophet's prohibition of targeting women and children, and the restraint attributed to ʿAlī belong in a continuous argument against sanctifying cruelty. Their historical attestations differ; I have not supplied a new chain of transmission between them. I am arguing that the moral authority of revelation must be recovered against communities that invoke it for domination. Jeremiah's test belongs here: the claim that God commanded an act must itself be judged. A victim does not lose the protection of justice because the killer has acquired a religious vocabulary.

W4-1. Raymond of Aguilers, Historia francorum qui ceperunt Jerusalem, "The Fall of Jerusalem," in the translated selections hosted by Fordham's Internet Medieval Sourcebook. Primary narrative in translation, consulted 29 October 2026: https://sourcebooks.web.fordham.edu/source/raymond-cde.asp. The passage is used for the author's interpretation of slaughter, not a literal casualty calculation.

W4-2. Albert of Aix and Ekkehard of Aura, "Emico and the Slaughter of the Rhineland Jews," translated in August C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants (Princeton, 1921), pp. 53–56; Fordham's Internet Medieval Sourcebook: https://sourcebooks.web.fordham.edu/source/1096jews.asp. Primary narratives in

translation, consulted 29 October 2026; these accounts are not identical and neither is treated as a neutral transcript.

W4-3. Mark R. Cohen, Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages (Princeton University Press, 1994; revised edition 2008). Comparative scope checked against the publisher's description at https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1f886q5 and the author's account at https://nes.princeton.edu/people/mark-cohen. Full book and page-specific comparison remain to be collated.

The strongest Christian reply appeals not only to texts of destruction but to the canonical Jesus who commands love of enemies and restrains his armed companion. A Christian who refuses genocide has substantial biblical grounds for doing so. A Christian who seeks to authorize extermination can point to disturbing passages in the same larger canon, but must explain why an ancient divine judgment would authorize a contemporary army. Who gets to declare another people fit for destruction, and by what rule of interpretation? That is the decisive question. My inquiry cannot settle that by insisting that only my community has ever read its scriptures correctly.

A parallel danger attends Islamic taḥrīf after the Qurʾān. A ruler who treats conquest, forced sexual access, or injury to dependants as an entitlement can preserve the wording of revelation while reversing the direction of its moral commands. The test is not merely whether a religion retains a scripture containing mercy. It is whether its jurisdiction allows the injured, the captive and the dissenting to be subjects of justice rather than objects of someone else's coercive salvation. Christians who have opposed persecution, including those who resisted their own states and churches, are witnesses to this moral struggle, not exceptions who can be written out of their history.

This returns the discussion to the covenant of Qurʾān 9:111. The buyer of the believers' lives is Allah, not the ruler or the bishop who promises the fighter spiritual profit. The next verse imposes moral and religious conditions on those claiming that covenant. A promised reward for faithful sacrifice cannot be converted into an unconditional reward for killing. The restitution authorized by law remains accountable to limits, and the one who can prevail by force can also be called to forgive. That is the Injīl of mercy I am trying to recover. It gives us no license to make enemies disappear.

What the Gospel redaction argument can support

What, then, have these comparisons established? We can answer claim by claim. The Gospels preserve a movement with public significance, expectations concerning Israel, and a remembered incident involving a weapon at arrest. Their different tellings increasingly explain the act and distinguish it from Jesus's acceptance of suffering. These are features of the texts that a chapter about the covenant in 9:111 can legitimately use.[599]

The texts do not establish that Jesus killed anyone. They also supply no secure instruction from him to initiate a campaign against Rome. Those propositions remain separate from

[599] Mark 14:43–50; Matthew 26:47–56; Luke 22:35–53; John 18:1–12. The conclusions here distinguish narrative attestation, literary development, historical inference and moral evaluation, following the method introduced in chapter 2.

the question whether his followers could possess weapons or defend themselves under some circumstances. The narrower possibilities have firmer textual footing than the stronger revolutionary reconstruction.

Tabor's family-centered account gives political substance to the succession question. Josephus supplies a world in which prophecy could threaten rulers and gather people around an expectation of deliverance. Einhorn's Egyptian identification attempts a comprehensive resolution of similarities through chronology, at a cost the current evidence has not met. I can use each of these contributions, but with different levels of confidence. Those differences need to remain visible.

For the redaction thesis, I would focus on how the writers present dangerous memories. A tradition about a blade and an injury is repeatedly given an interpretive setting in which Jesus's chosen submission becomes clearer. The process may preserve authentic restraint, add retrospective explanation, or do both. To decide among those possibilities, we need criteria that do not depend on which Jesus we would prefer: an entirely pacifist one or a revolutionary one.

For the theological thesis, the shared scriptural promise has substantial support at the level of costly fidelity. The Gospel language about relinquishing life and possessions gives it a recognizable shape. Hebrews locates warrior deliverance and martyr endurance within the same inherited history. The Qur'an then explicitly includes fighting under the condition that it serves Allah's cause. This is a coherent comparative reading, while the permissibility of particular acts continues to depend upon the moral conditions already discussed.[600]

I therefore understand the chapter's title as naming a peril within a covenant. The believer's willingness to die can accompany the responsibility to protect others, and the ability to fight can coexist with an obligation to withhold a blow. The Alid sources give this combination a precise religious expression. The Gospel evidence leaves room to investigate it within the ministry of Jesus without first proving an armed insurrection or identifying him with Josephus's Egyptian.

The remaining work belongs to individual passages. Luke's procurement instruction needs a fuller linguistic and source-critical study. Matthew's sword warning should be compared with earlier sayings traditions, and John's military terminology needs close attention to narrative function. The interpretation of 9:111 must continue to be read beside the people described in 9:112, whose fidelity to God's limits is part of the promise under investigation.

Chapter 43 source register: archaeological and Aramaic controls

The following locators distinguish original material, text in critical edition, and interpretive scholarship. References prefixed S refer to this controlled addendum; they do not add independent Gospel witnesses or change the FI historical grades.

S01. Qurʾān 9:111–112, morphological word-by-word analysis. Source status: Primary Arabic grammar. https://corpus.quran.com/wordbyword.jsp?chapter=9&verse=111

[600] Qur'an 9:111–112 and 61:10–14; Mark 8:34–37 and 10:28–30; Hebrews 11:32–40. The proposed continuity concerns the promise and conditions of costly fidelity. An identical military code across the three named revelations is neither demonstrated nor required by the argument developed here.

S02. Abdulla Galadari, “Where in the Torah and Gospel Is the Promise of Qurʾān 9:111 Found?” (2025). Source status: Publisher abstract; full article not collated. https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.70008

S03. Michael Segal, “Who is the Son of God in 4Q246?” Dead Sea Discoveries 21 (2014):289–312. Source status: Specialist abstract; figure identification contested. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685179-12341328

S04. Edward M. Cook, “4Q246,” Bulletin for Biblical Research 5 (1995):43–66. Source status: Specialist abstract, contrasting interpretation. https://doi.org/10.2307/26422126

S05. Library of Congress, War Rule Scroll 4Q285 (first-century physical fragment). Source status: Collection record and translation, preserved ambiguity. https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/scrolls/scr4.html

S06. Logan Williams, “Melchizedek, the Son of Man, and Eschatological Jubilee” (2023). Source status: Open full article; 11Q13/Isaiah 61/Mark comparison. https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X231191176

S07. John J. Collins and James Nati, Rule of the Association, 1QS 8:1–9:11 (2024). Source status: Publisher chapter abstract; two messiahs and prophet. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198845744.003.0005

S08. Posen Library, Theodotos inscription and early Jerusalem synagogue. Source status: Curated archaeological synthesis. https://www.posenlibrary.com/guide/archaeology-ancient-synagogue

S09. Zeev Weiss, “The Magdala stone table,” Journal of Roman Archaeology (2021). Source status: Peer-reviewed archaeological article. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1047759421000544

S10. Posen Library, Temple warning inscription. Source status: Curated inscription; Herodian Temple jurisdiction. https://www.posenlibrary.com/entry/temple-warning-inscription

S11. Pilate Stone, Caesarea Maritima, Latin dedication naming prefect. Source status: Material artifact, secondary catalogue summary. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilate_stone

S12. Early Roman ossuary of crucified Yehohanan, Givʿat Ha-Mivtar. Source status: IAA object description through archaeological catalogue. https://ossuary-bai.org/items/jehohnatan-the-crucified-man-t/

S13. Metropolitan Museum, World between Empires, Great Revolt coins 66–70. Source status: Museum catalogue; later generation evidence. https://resources.metmuseum.org/resources/metpublications/pdf/The_World_between_Empires_Art_and_Identity_in_the_Ancient_Middle_East.pdf

S14. Luke 4:18–19 / Isaiah 61:1–2 omission and compositional effects (2018). Source status: Open exegetical discussion. https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S0259-94222018000100058&script=sci_arttext

S15. Matthew Black, “Not peace but a sword,” Matt 10:34 / Luke 12:51 (1984). Source status: Book chapter summary; context family division. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511554834.018

S16. SBL/Greek John 18:36 and origin (ek) of the kingdom. Source status: Primary Greek with critical translation discussion. https://tips.translation.bible/tip_verse/john-1836/

S17. British Library, Add MS 14451, Curetonian Gospels, c. 450–470. Source status: Primary manuscript inventory with lacunae. https://searcharchives.bl.uk/catalog/040-002086117

S18. Peshitta Luke 22:35–38, Syriac script and transliteration. Source status: Published Syriac electronic text; translation witness. https://peshitta.onrender.com/read?book=Luke&chapter=22&lang=en

S19. University of Helsinki, Old Syriac Gospel witnesses and Burkitt editions. Source status: University bibliography and extents. https://libraryguides.helsinki.fi/c.php?g=678207&p=4853161

S20. Mazzola & Van Nuffelen, “The Julian Romance: A Full Text and a New Date” (2023). Source status: University abstract: dependence on Chronicle of 640. https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/01HCYHY548QASEK16QFR7XAR0G

S21. Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov, “Byzantine Roots of Muslim Jihad” (2026). Source status: Open study; violent Christian literary analogy. https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2025-0028

S22. Dale B. Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous” (2014). Source status: Academic martial-Jesus interpretation. https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X14544863

S23. Justin Meggitt, “Putting the Apocalyptic Jesus to the Sword” (2023). Source status: Open full critical response: blades and context. https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X221150484

S24. Paula Fredriksen, “Arms and the Man” (2015). Source status: Published scholarly response, knife/carrying context. https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X14566371

S25. Tommaso Tesei, “Heraclius’ War Propaganda” (2019). Source status: Published abstract; military martyrdom late antique. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7143226

S26. Nicolai Sinai, The Qurʾan: A Historical-Critical Introduction (2017), pp. 191–196. Source status: Authoritative historical-context comparison. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv1kz4g1p

S27. First Maccabees 2; Second Maccabees 7; Hebrews 11. Source status: Primary scriptural comparators, distinct collections. https://bible.usccb.org/bible/2maccabees/7

S28. Library of Congress, Digital Dead Sea Scrolls collections. Source status: Original manuscripts and curated records. https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/scrolls/late.html

S29. Deuteronomy 20:16–18, NRSVUE. Primary Christian canonical scripture, text checked. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+20%3A16-18&version=NRSVUE

S30. 1 Samuel 15:3, NRSVUE. Primary Christian canonical scripture, text checked. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+15%3A3&version=NRSVUE

S31. Qurʾān 2:190, Arabic/English parallel translations. Primary Arabic scriptural text. https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=2&verse=190

S32. Qurʾān 60:8, Arabic/English parallel translations. Primary Arabic scriptural text. https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=60&verse=8

S33. Qurʾān 9:4–6, treaties, fighting and protection. Primary Arabic scriptural text. https://legacy.quran.com/9/4-54

S34. Use of Force under Islamic Law, European Journal of International Law 24 (2013), 343ff. Open scholarly argument on offensive and defensive theories; doctrinal disputes ongoing. https://academic.oup.com/ejil/article/24/1/343/438602

S35. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3015. Hadith forbidding killing women and children; original Arabic and translation inspected. https://sunnah.com/bukhari/56/224

S36. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1744b and 1745a–c. Separate prohibitory and night-raid reports; Arabic and published translation inspected; the chapter heading is an editorial/legal interpretation, not prophetic speech. https://sunnah.com/muslim/32/29 ; https://sunnah.com/muslim/32/30-32

S37. Qurʾān 33:26–27. The text specifies an allied population, killing, captivity and property transfer, without numerical estimates or a puberty test. Arabic and translations checked. https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=33&verse=26 ; https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=33&verse=27

S38. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 4121. Banū Qurayẓa judgment; original Arabic and translation checked. https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4121

S39. UNITAD, United Nations in Iraq, 11 September 2024, genocide investigation into ISIL crimes against Yazidis. UN investigative determination; not a judgment about scripture. https://iraq.un.org/en/278383-unitad-publishes-detailed-findings-international-crimes-including-genocide-committed-isil-da

S40. UN Genocide Convention, Article II, definition including protected groups and specific intent; legal definition. https://www.un.org/genocide-prevention/definition

S41. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5134, ʿĀʾisha-age report; original Arabic and translation checked, historical implications disputed. https://sunnah.com/bukhari/67/70

S42. Kecia Ali, “Concubinage and Consent,” International Journal of Middle East Studies (2017). Scholarly primary issue article; available extract, not full collation. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-middle-east-studies/article/concubinage-and-consent/F8E807073C33F403A91C1ACA0CFA47FD

S43. Qurʾān 24:33, anti-coercive-prostitution verse, and the legal-distinction problem. Primary text checked. https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=24&verse=33

S44. Theodosian Code 16.1.2, Edict of Thessalonica (380). Latin text from University of Grenoble; primary imperial law. https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Constitutiones/Thessalonique.htm

S45. Augustine, Letter 93 to Vincentius (c. 408). Primary patristic letter in English translation, extensive text inspected; compare original Latin before philological claims. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102093.htm

S46. Peter Brown, “St. Augustine’s Attitude to Religious Coercion,” Journal of Roman Studies 54 (1964): 107–116. Publisher abstract inspected, not full collation. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-roman-studies/article/abs/st-augustines-attitude-to-religious-coercion/DF304F505C12100E0BF430E4E8028C6F

S47. Mark Gregory Pegg, “The Albigensian Crusade and the Early Inquisitions into Heretical Depravity, 1208–1246,” Cambridge World History of Genocide (2023). Publisher abstract inspected, not full chapter. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-world-history-of-genocide/albigensian-crusade-and-the-early-inquisitions-into-heretical-depravity-12081246/AE47E7DDE48278DD70A06F96CEF81123

S48. Fourth Crusade sack of Constantinople (1204), Orthodox Church in America historical overview; ecclesial secondary narrative. https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/church-history/thirteenth-century/the-fourth-crusade

S49. Oxford Cabinet, “St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre,” historical reference and contextualization. https://www.cabinet.ox.ac.uk/francois-dubois-st-bartolomews-day-massacre-24-august-1572

S50. Musée protestant, “St Bartholomew’s Day (24 August 1572),” secondary account; denominational perspective noted. https://museeprotestant.org/en/notice/st-bartholomews-day-24th-august-1572/

S51. John Chrysostom, Orations Against Judaizing Christians (c. 387), primary English translation and source introduction. https://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/primary-texts-from-the-history-of-the-relationship/primary-texts-from-100-to-1000-ce/chrysostom

S52. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Christian Persecution of Jews over the Centuries,” institutional historical synthesis. https://www.ushmm.org/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries

S53. Second Vatican Council, Nostra aetate §4 (1965). Primary Catholic doctrinal source rejecting collective deicide guilt. https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/wss/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

S54. W. N. Arafat, “New Light on the Story of Banū Qurayẓa and the Jews of Medina,” Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society 108.2 (1976): 100–107. Publisher metadata, reference list and abstract consulted; full article not collated. Minority historical challenge. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00133349

S55. M. J. Kister, “The Massacre of the Banū Qurayẓa: A Re-examination of a Tradition,” Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 8 (1986): 61–96. Bibliographic verification via Andreas Görke and Salaymeh; full text not collated. Countercase to Arafat. https://www.routledge.com/Muhammad/Goerke/p/book/9781138791275

S56. Lena Salaymeh, “Early Islamic Legal-Historical Precedents: Prisoners of War,” Law and History Review 26.3 (2008): 521–544. Cambridge publisher abstract and accessible notes consulted: historical precedents and the shift from earlier restrictive to later permissive prisoner execution positions. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248000002558

S57. Muhammad Munir, “Some Reflections on the Story of Banu Qurayzah: A Re-evaluation of Ibn Ishaq’s Account,” Islamabad Law Review 1.2 (2016): 7–28. Abstract and bibliographic data consulted; full text not collated.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2431824

S58. W. Montgomery Watt, “The Condemnation of the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah: A Study in the Sources of the Sīrah,” The Muslim World 42 (1952): 160–171. Bibliographic control only; full text not collated.
https://www.routledge.com/Muhammad/Goerke/p/book/9781138791275

S59. Qurʾān 33:26–27, primary Arabic verse and parallel translations. Explicit killing, captivity and property transfer; no number or chronological mode of killing given.
https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=33&verse=27

S60. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1745a–c. Direct Arabic and English online inspection; three variants of Saʿb ibn Jaththāmah’s night-raid report. “They are of them” supplies no numerical civilian-casualty threshold. https://sunnah.com/muslim/32/30-32

S61. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1744b, direct Arabic and English inspection. Prohibitory report concerning killing women and children; compare al-Bukhārī 3015.
https://sunnah.com/muslim/32/29

S62. NAZA, directed by Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor, Venice Biennale 2026 official film catalogue (festival synopsis); original documentary not watched or transcript collated.
https://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema/2026/venezia-83-competition/naza

S63. Israel Defense Forces, official response to NAZA, 1 October 2026. Primary institutional rebuttal of casualty-threshold and authorization allegations, not an independent determination. https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/october-26-pr/idf-response-to-the-film-naza/

S64. The Guardian, makers of NAZA report corroborating more than 100 interview sources, 1 October 2026. Filmmakers’ response and production-side evidence claim; the specific strikes are not independently adjudicated here.
https://www.theguardian.com/film/2026/oct/01/makers-naza-film-spoke-more-than-100-sources-israeli-actions-gaza

S65. International Committee of the Red Cross, “Frequently Asked Questions: International Armed Conflict,” rules of distinction, proportionality and feasible precautions (modern IHL; not a reading into seventh-century primary sources).
https://www.icrc.org/en/article/faq-international-armed-conflict

S66. Sunan Abī Dāwūd 4404, ʿAṭiyya al-Quraẓī’s puberty-test account, Arabic and translation directly inspected; transmitted account, historical grading still outstanding.
https://sunnah.com/abudawud/40/54

44. What Were the Ṣaḥīḥ Hadith of the Messiah?

Which teachings can we credibly attribute to the Messiah? We now have a method and a body of comparisons with which to judge the transmission more carefully. Its findings vary in strength. Some concerns recur across several early literary settings; other striking sayings survive through a narrow or late chain of witnesses. Those differences need to survive the final assessment. One certificate for an entire Gospel will not do.

The claim attached to a grade

Before giving a grade, say what is being graded. The wording in an extant manuscript can be secure while the attribution of the saying to the historical Jesus remains uncertain. A teaching can fit the Qur'an while its original setting remains unrecoverable. A historically early report can still require interpretation before it becomes guidance. If we use the language of hadith, we owe the reader those distinctions.

I therefore use "historically well supported" for a claim whose actual witnesses and relationships have been examined, with the grounds stated in the accompanying record. "Qur'an-consonant" describes a theological assessment that can be argued independently. "Open" identifies a question for which this draft lacks enough evidence to decide. These descriptions are working judgments rather than a claim that the complete procedures of an Islamic hadith school have been reproduced for ancient Greek narratives. [601]

A monotheistic confession

Mark 12:28–34 gives Jesus a statement of devotion to the one God within a discussion of the greatest commandment. The scene is explicit and coheres with Israel's scripture. That gives the book strong grounds for treating exclusive devotion to God as central to the represented teaching of Jesus. Establishing the precise historical words still requires attention to the literary relationships of the parallels and to the scriptural language available to the narrator. [602]

The Qur'anic compatibility of that teaching is unusually direct. The historical question and the normative question reinforce each other here, while remaining logically distinct. A reader need not decide every issue of Johannine preexistence before recognizing the importance of the command. The harder sayings should be examined within a corpus that also preserves this explicit account of worship.

Mark preserves the Shema in Jesus's mouth; Matthew retains love of God and neighbor while removing the opening confession from this scene; Luke makes a legal specialist speak the double command and has Jesus commend the answer. The source relationships

[601] For the method, see "What Would Count as a Sahih Saying?" and Appendix A. The terminology is the author's adapted grading framework; no established Sunni or Shiʿi classification is being assigned to a Gospel as a whole.

[602] Mark 12:28–34; Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–28. Literary parallels should not automatically be counted as independent eyewitness reports.

determine the historical grade of each wording. The received forms nevertheless place devotion to God beside a demand about the neighbor's treatment. This is one credible answer to 5:47, with the literary and historical qualifications recorded in FI-001.

The oath tradition in FI-006 shows why the same method must govern a hard case. A command toward trustworthy speech appears in Matthew and James; the Qur'an's provisions for intended oaths constrain any extension to a universal prohibition. The collection can give readers concrete guidance and disclose where a proposed law remains contested.

Wealth, mercy, and a life under judgment

The warning about serving wealth, the obligation to aid people in need, and the demand for truthful conduct recur in Gospel teaching and early community instruction. Their convergence gives us a substantial ethical field to investigate. We still need to work through the individual records: the exact saying, its source relations, and its application. A broad family resemblance between texts is evidence for a shared moral world, with the authenticity of each attributed sentence requiring its own argument. [603]

The Christian-law chapters have also shown why historical recovery must include ordinary practice. The communities prayed, fasted, made rules for meals, and tested the behavior of their teachers. The surviving evidence can support a reconstruction of religious obligations without proving that every rule came directly from Jesus. The final legal account should show where a command rests on a Gospel saying and where it rests on a later community's interpretation.

James's authority receives a differentiated judgment

James's importance is supported early by Paul. A personal appointment by Jesus has a different evidentiary history, including Thomas 12 and later Christian witnesses. We need to retain that distinction in the final wording. A strong case for Jerusalem leadership can survive even while the exact form of the appointment remains uncertain. The later reports should continue to be studied, since their lateness alone does not demonstrate that their underlying tradition was invented at that late date. [604]

The Shiʿi comparison has improved this question by making office, designation, and kinship distinguishable. It has also produced adverse evidence for a simplistic equation: Imami reports can name Simon as the successor, while a modern Ismaʿili reconstruction gives James a central imamic place. Those differences must remain visible. The comparison earns its place by generating sharper questions about the ancient sources.

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[603] Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; Thomas 47; James 2:14–17 and 5:1–6; Didache 4. The references identify a comparative field rather than five independent witnesses to a single verbatim utterance.

[604] Galatians 1:19 and 2:9; Thomas 12; Recognitions 1.43; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 7.19. The final two are later literary witnesses, separately evaluated in the family and Gospel-of-the-Hebrews chapters.

John remains inside the inquiry

The Aḥmad–Paraclete identification is the book's principal test case for retrieving an earlier Injil from a composite Gospel. I argue that the received John 14 is a later competing farewell placed before the older promise carried in John 15–17. Its framing gives the coming guide an identity through which the later discourse will be read. The future-directed, received-speech promise survives within that arrangement and supplies the object of historical recovery. Sasse's reported reverse-priority proposal is now part of the discussion, together with Roloff's criticism and the rival expansion account. The philological and versional inquiries test which features of the proposed earlier promise can be recovered.[605]

The specific periklytos mechanism carries a narrower bibliographic foundation than the general case for Johannine redaction. Worthington's 2020 article is the present dossier's only sustained modern case for that particular consonantal wordplay; it expressly stops short of affirming the hypothesized original Greek substitution. Schacht's text-and-translation objection, together with the rarity of the Greek adjective, weighs strongly against treating periklytos as an attested original reading of John. The source-critical thesis therefore asks for independent evidence of an earlier prophetic saying or bilingual reception. The Windisch–Johnston–Brown line concerns the history of the farewell discourses as literature, and cannot on its own authenticate the proposed lexical pathway.[606]

Grammar has opened possibilities too. It cannot do the work of an entire theology. John 10:30's neuter expression of unity, the syntax of John 1:1, and the address in 20:28 belong within their literary settings. Origen's hierarchical interpretation supplies an early Christian witness worth studying. A Qur'an-centered interpretation can then explain how divine agency and a created servant's exceptional rank are understood, with historical authorship kept distinct from the constructive proposal.

The promise of the comparative method

The Alid material has been most useful where it clarifies obligations. A rightful guide can be excluded from rule, a family can carry a religious trust, and a follower can still fail the duties of allegiance. Those comparisons connect the dynasty inquiry with the Sermon and the letter of James. They also expose the danger of making devotion to a sacred figure substitute for the conduct the figure teaches.

These limits apply to my preferences too. Admiration for a text cannot repair a missing transmission link. Suspicion of a later church cannot authenticate its opponent. A comparative interpretation of the Spirit can be coherent while the claim that an Imam or

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[605] Qur'an 61:6; John 14:16–17, 14:26, 15:26 and 16:7–15. See the opening and Aramaic chapters for Sean W. Anthony's reception study and the distinction between manuscripts and reconstructed literary strata.

[606] Schacht, "Aḥmad," EI² 1:267 (quoted by Lambden); Richard Worthington, Religious Inquiries 9.17 (2020): 151–155; Montazery and Karimpur (2018); Sean W. Anthony, BSOAS 79.2 (2016), including his Marracci 1698 citation. These are mutually relevant arguments with distinct evidentiary claims.

apostle historically taught it remains uncertain. The record needs to let the reader inspect each of those judgments.

The collection that remains to be completed

Appendix A preserves fourteen original pilot records, A1–A14, as stable historical locators. Their developed assessments appear as FI-001–FI-014 in Critical Sayings Volume I v1.9; the companion also contains FI-015–FI-020 as six developed additions and FI-021–FI-066 as forty-six first-pass appraisals. These are sixty-six catalogued claim units at different research stages, not sixty-six independently verified historical sayings. When a historical grade changes, the companion must retain the previous verdict and a dated rationale, and the master cross-reference must be updated. Original-language apparatus and publication-stage source checking remain outstanding.

For now, we have an account of fidelity to the Messiah that can be investigated and challenged: attention to his transmitted teaching, scrutiny of those who claim his authority, and an account of obedience that reaches everyday conduct. I still owe the reader a final sayings edition that states, entry by entry, which words can be attributed with confidence, which meanings remain persuasive under uncertainty, and which claims the available evidence leaves unresolved.

Appendix A. A Pilot Collection of Sayings

These entries begin the collection promised in the original manuscript. Each gives a passage, identifies the interpretive question, and records what the current archive supports. A final grade for historical speech awaits collation of the relevant witnesses. The distinction between textual presence and historical attribution introduced in chapter 2 applies throughout.

A1. The goodness of God

Witnesses: Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23; Matthew 19:16–22, with particular attention to 19:17.

Mark and Luke preserve a question about addressing Jesus as good, followed by a statement about God's unique goodness. Matthew's received wording shifts the question toward the good. The wording and its variants make this a useful first exercise in comparing theological framing across the Synoptics.

The saying fits the book's account of the Messiah directing a questioner toward God and practical obedience. Its presence in more than one Gospel must be evaluated through their literary relationships. The next step is an aligned Greek text with the manuscript apparatus for Matthew, followed by an account of what each evangelist has done to the surrounding exchange.

A2. The first commandment

Witness: Mark 12:28–34; compare Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and the related Synoptic exchanges.

Mark's Jesus answers a question about the first commandment by invoking Israel's confession of God's oneness and the demand to love God. The exchange with the scribe is central evidence for the Gospel's own presentation of the Messiah's religious commitments.

Qur'anic consonance is strong under the author's reading. Historical assessment still requires comparison with the other accounts, attention to the narrative setting, and a decision about how precisely the surviving wording can be attributed to Jesus. This entry should become a calibration case for the collection's use of the term sahih.

A3. Serving God and Mammon

Witnesses: Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; compare Gospel of Thomas 47.

The saying connects allegiance to God with a practical judgment about the service of wealth. Its theological force reaches beyond verbal confession. That makes it important to the author's account of mixed service and moral responsibility.

The Thomas comparison requires a separate independence assessment. Shared wording can result from literary dependence or a common tradition. The present draft establishes the comparison and its relevance; a completed entry will need the Greek and Coptic witnesses alongside a history of the saying's placement in each work.

A4. The poor and the kingdom

Witnesses: Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3, read with their surrounding beatitudes.

Luke's wording foregrounds the poor, while Matthew's expression adds a qualification concerning spirit. The resulting difference matters to a reconstruction of the Messiah's teaching about poverty and righteousness. The setting of each sermon also shapes how a reader understands the promise.

The author's ethical interest should guide the questions asked of these texts without supplying their historical answer. A completed entry must test the proposed direction of revision and explain what evidence supports an earlier form of the saying.

A5. Fulfillment and the Law

Witness: Matthew 5:17–20.

This passage belongs near the center of the Christian-law inquiry. Matthew presents Jesus addressing the Law and the Prophets, with consequences for teaching commandments and entering the kingdom. A reconstruction of Christian sharia must account for its force alongside the Gentile disputes in Paul and Acts.

The key historical question concerns the relationship between Jesus's remembered teaching and Matthew's community setting. The passage is well located in the surviving Gospel; its origin before the evangelist remains a separate subject for source criticism.

A6. What defiles a person?

Witnesses: Mark 7:14–23; Matthew 15:10–20.

The entry needs to separate Jesus's reported speech from the evangelist's explanation, especially the phrase commonly translated as declaring foods clean in Mark 7:19. The issue affects claims that Jesus abolished food restrictions and therefore has direct legal consequences.

The next stage requires grammatical analysis of the relevant Greek phrase and comparison with Matthew's handling of the tradition. A doctrinal conclusion about food should remain attached to the exact textual argument that produces it.

A7. The speaker who hears

Witness: John 16:13, within 16:7–15; compare John 5:30 and Qur'an 61:6.

This saying is the pilot collection's central case for the Aḥmad thesis. Received speech and guidance toward truth supply the author's grounds for reading it as a prophetic promise. The phrase Spirit of Truth and the surrounding emphasis on Jesus's glory belong to the same evidentiary record.

The current result is a developed theological identification with an unfinished reconstruction of the saying's earliest form. Manuscript attestation, pre-Johannine tradition, and the identity of the promised figure require distinct judgments. Chapter 3 sets out the necessary tests.

A8. The only true God

Witness: John 17:3, with 17:1–5.

Jesus addresses the Father as the only true God and identifies himself as the one sent. The prayer has a central place in the book's Unitarian reading of John. Its immediate continuation concerning pre-world glory needs to remain visible in any translation or quotation.

The passage provides direct evidence for the theological language of the surviving Gospel. Establishing its wording as a historical prayer of Jesus requires the further literary and transmission analysis applied to the other Johannine speeches.

A9. Unity with the Father

Witness: John 10:30–38; compare John 17:11, 21–23 and Psalm 82:6.

The neuter hen and plural esmen give a grammatical starting point for the reading developed in chapter 5. The protection of the sheep supplies the immediate subject, and the later citation of Psalm 82 makes scriptural agency part of the dialogue.

The Unitarian argument is a substantive interpretation of the Greek and its context. Its historical credibility as Jesus's speech remains a separate grade. The next apparatus should include the whole exchange so that the accusation, reply, and appeal to works can be read together.

A10. Go to James the Just

Witness: Gospel of Thomas 12; compare Galatians 1:19; 2:9–14; Acts 15 and 21; Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43; Eusebius, Church History 7.19.

Thomas explicitly directs the disciples to James. Recognitions and Eusebius also preserve explicit accounts of appointment by the Lord, with differing involvement of the apostles. These later witnesses broaden the history of the claim; their dates and possible dependencies require individual assessment.

The historical act of designation remains unresolved. The surviving Coptic Thomas supplies the wording of saying 12, while the known earlier Greek fragments do not cover it. The new witnesses correct an earlier overstatement of Thomas's uniqueness without creating a contemporary eyewitness chain. See chapters 18 and 21.

A11. The oath instruction

Witnesses: James 5:12 and Matthew 5:34–37. Close verbal and practical correspondence makes this a priority for source comparison. Independence remains to be demonstrated before the witnesses are counted separately. Its Qur'anic legal evaluation must distinguish an ethics of truthful speech from a universal ruling on every kind of oath.

A12. Give where repayment is unavailable

Witness: Thomas 95; compare Luke 6:34–35. The instruction receives a favorable preliminary moral assessment. Literary relationship and historical origin remain open.

Thomas 109's interest-taking detail requires a separate interpretation of parabolic narrative.

A13. The light over all

Witness: Thomas 77, with a portion of its wood-and-stone material corresponding to P.Oxy. 1 in a different arrangement. A received-divine-agency reading is proposed for testing. Cosmic predicates do not by themselves prove an authentic historical utterance or a settled tawḥīdi meaning.

A14. The false apostles at Ephesus

Witness: Revelation 2:2. This is a visionary message attributed to the exalted Messiah. The rejected claimants are unnamed; identification with Paul is unproved. Treat the claim separately from the more concrete idol-food dispute in 2:14 and 2:20.

Appendix B. Sources and Selected Bibliography

This bibliography records the source base used to prepare the first draft and the principal works identified for its next stage. A reference listed here may have been checked through a publisher's abstract or bibliographic record, a public translation, or the supplied research dossier. These levels of access are specified where they affect an argument. Page-specific citations and full original-language apparatus remain to be completed for publication.

John revision 4 additions: Jeremiah's primary passages and Hendrik Bosman are cited in J4-1–J4-3 in chapter 7. Raymond of Aguilers, Albert of Aix, Ekkehard of Aura and Mark R. Cohen are cited with access status in W4-1–W4-3 in chapter 43. These additions do not alter earlier bibliography entries or FI/QC grades.

The author's archive

Aleph Funk. Finding Injil: What Were the Sahih Hadith of the Messiah? Supplied manuscript fragment, 13 pages. The original introduction and statement of aims provide the book's theological purpose, the initial Gospel hierarchy, and the inquiry into Christian law.

Aleph Funk. Ruh Qudus. Supplied essay, 4 pages. Primary source for the author's Spirit/Gabriel distinction and the question of how divine inspiration operates across religious communities.

Finding Injil Research Dossier, version 7. 21 October 2026. Cumulative collation incorporating versions 1–6, the Paraclete case study, the theophany case study, and the Greek-philology correction. Its source links and research questions are the immediate basis for much of this draft.

Finding Injil Source Register, version 1; Passage Evidence Matrix, version 1; and the individual case-study files supplied with the cumulative dossier. These remain supporting research records. They are not independent ancient witnesses.

Emmanuel Ifergan. What if the Gospels stemmed from a "Proto-Quran"? Supplied essay, 11 pages. Catalogued as an external comparative proposal. The claimed 230-motif spreadsheet has not been examined for this draft.

Ancient texts: principal loci

Qur'an: 2:34, 2:87, 2:136, 2:253; 3:45–50; 4:48, 4:80, 4:116, 4:171; 5:46–48, 5:69, 5:72–75, 5:110; 7:157; 8:17; 12:100; 16:102; 17:85; 19:16–36; 21:91; 27:40; 42:51–52; 48:10; 61:6; 66:12; 97:4. Verse references in the prose identify the texts being interpreted; English formulations are generally paraphrases.

Hebrew Bible and related literature: Exodus 3 and 23:20–21; Psalms 2, 22, 82, 110 and 118; Isaiah 6, 7, 9, 11, 40–55 and 61; Ezekiel 1; Daniel 7 and 12. 1 Enoch 1:9, 37–71 and 85–90; 2 Enoch 22, 39 and 44; 3 Enoch 12 and 16. The corpus chapters distinguish surviving textual witnesses from proposed dates of composition.

New Testament: the four canonical Gospels; Acts 12, 15 and 21; Galatians 1–2; 1 Corinthians 8–10 and 15; Romans; Philippians; 1 Thessalonians; Philemon; the disputed Pauline letters; Hebrews; James; Jude 14–15; Revelation, especially 22:8–9. Detailed editions and manuscript apparatus are the next stage of the sayings collection.

Other early Christian texts: Ascension of Isaiah, especially 6–11; Gospel of Thomas 12 and 47; Jewish-Christian Gospel fragments preserved by patristic writers; Arabic Infancy Gospel, S and L recensions; Protoevangelium of James; Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Didache; Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions. The remaining apocryphal Gospels and apocalypses in chapter 32 are registered for further study.

Philo. On the Confusion of Tongues, §§145–147; On Dreams, 1.228–230. References follow the section numbering used in the research dossier. Translation and Greek-text comparisons remain to be completed.

Origen. Commentary on John, book II, chapter 2; Against Celsus, 5.61 and 5.65. Public English translations at New Advent were used for the primary passages concerning divine participation and the two Ebionite birth positions.

Josephus. Antiquities, 20.200. Eusebius. Ecclesiastical History, 2.23 and 3.11, including material attributed to Hegesippus. Epiphanius. Panarion, 29–30. These witnesses require separate treatment of their own dates and the earlier reports they transmit.

Al-Kulaynī. Al-Kāfī, volume 1, book 4, chapters 36, 55 and 56. The supplied dossier identifies individual reports and later chain gradings. Independent inspection of the Arabic editions and grading references remains open.

Shaykh al-Mufīd. The Emendation of a Shiʿite Creed, chapter 33, “Excess and Delegation.” The public English translation at Al-Islam.org was checked for the boundary between honoring the Imams and assigning them divine creative authority.

Johannine language and redaction

Anthony, Sean W. “Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete: New Light on Ibn Isḥāq’s (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15:23–16:11.” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 79.2 (2016): 255–278. DOI: 10.1017/S0041977X16000458. Relevant final-journal text and page images checked in John Passes 01–02, especially pp. 260–261 and 267–268. The primary CPA editions cited there remain to be collated.

Ataie, Ali J. Authenticating the Johannine Injil: Sunnite “Polemirenic” Interpretive Methodological Approaches to the Gospel of John. PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, August 2016. ProQuest no. 10174055. The dissertation’s title page, abstract, and table of contents were consulted through a public reproduction; the title and institutional record were cross-checked against Graduate Theological Union. A chapter-by-chapter, page-specific audit remains open. https://www.gtu.edu/news/2017-gtu-graduates

Brown, Raymond E. “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel.” New Testament Studies 13.2 (1967): 113–132. DOI: 10.1017/S0028688500018221. Publisher extract and displayed footnotes checked in John Pass 01, especially p. 114 n. 3 and p. 115 nn. 1–2. Full-article reading remains open.

Sasse, Hermann. “Der Paraklet im Johannesevangelium.” Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 24 (1925): 260–277. Registered in John Pass 03 through Keener’s survey, Stolle’s historical account and Roloff’s direct criticism. The original article has not been independently collated; its precise allocations remain a source-access task.

Stolle, Volker. “Hermann Sasse als Neutestamentler.” In Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker, edited by Werner Klän, 11–49. Oberurseler Hefte, Ergänzungsbände 24. Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020. Printed pp. 21–22 checked in the publisher preview, including page images, for the account of Sasse’s 1925 hypothesis.

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Keener, Craig S. The Gospel of John: A Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003. “Introductory issues. 13:1–17:26,” subsection “Unity of the Discourse,” checked through the online reproduction at https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/world/the-gospel-of-john/26. The report of Sasse’s direction is in online note 7997; print pagination remains unverified.

Tertullian. Against Praxeas, chapters 1–2 and 25. Public English translation at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0317.htm, checked in John Pass 03 as a control on the coexistence of Spirit identification with continuing prophecy. Latin-text collation remains open.

Burney, C. F. The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922. A foundational reconstruction to be assessed passage by passage.

Torrey, Charles C. “The Aramaic Origin of the Gospel of John.” Harvard Theological Review 16.4 (1923): 305–344. DOI: 10.1017/S001781600001378X. Publisher record and extract checked.

Albright, W. F. “Some Observations Favoring the Palestinian Origin of the Gospel of John.” Harvard Theological Review 17.2 (1924): 189–195. DOI: 10.1017/S0017816000013985. The print year corrects the earlier conversational reference to 1925.

Dodd, C. H. The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. Cambridge University Press, 1953. See “Rabbinic Judaism,” pp. 74–96; DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511520334.004. The publisher’s chapter extract discusses the divergent Aramaic reconstructions of Burney and Torrey.

Harner, Philip B. “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1.” Journal of Biblical Literature 92 (1973): 75–87. Bibliographic lead carried from the Greek-philology addendum; full argument still to be checked for the final edition.

Wróbel, Mirosław S. “Ideological and Intertextual Relations Between the Targum Isaiah and the Gospel of John.” Collectanea Theologica 93.1 (2023): 85–102. DOI: 10.21697/ct.2023.93.1.04. Publisher abstract checked for the Memra, glory and egō eimi comparisons.

Further Johannine leads retained from the research conversations: Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts; Urban C. von Wahlde, The Gospel and Letters of John (2010); John Breck, The Spirit-Paraclete in Johannine Tradition (2005); and James David Audlin’s reconstructed Gospel of John. Audlin’s proposed readings require independent testing against surviving witnesses. These works have not been read in full for this draft.

Boring, M. Eugene. “The Influence of Christian Prophecy on the Johannine Portrayal of the Paraclete and Jesus.” New Testament Studies 25.1 (1978): 113–123. DOI: 10.1017/S0028688500001235. Publisher extract and displayed notes checked in Pass 01; full-body reading remains open. Pass 03 additionally checked the displayed note engaging Congar on new content in John 16:12–13.

Burkitt, Francis Crawford, ed. Evangelion da-Mepharreshe. Vol. 1: Text. Cambridge University Press, 1904, especially pp. 508–511. Searchable primary-edition transcription checked in Pass 02. The Syriac and apparatus require image-level confirmation. The relevant locator is volume 1.

Lewis, Agnes Smith, ed. The Old Syriac Gospels or Evangelion da-Mepharreshe. London: Williams and Norgate, 1910. Contents and list of facsimiles checked for Curetonian John 14:26b; the manuscript image has not been independently deciphered in this pass.

Dukhrana Biblical Research. BFBS/UBS Peshitta, based on the British and Foreign Bible Society edition of 1905/1920, with SEDRA analysis. John 1:33; 14:10, 16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13; 20:22 checked on 28 October 2026. https://dukhrana.com/peshitta/index.php. Digital edition access is distinguished from direct manuscript collation.

Sheridan, Ruth. “The Paraclete and Jesus in the Johannine Farewell Discourse.” Pacifica 20 (2007): 125–141. DOI: 10.1177/1030570X0702000201. Relevant full-text opening and conclusion, especially p. 140, checked in John Pass 01.

Houghton, H. A. G. “The Text of the Gospel and Letters of John.” In The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies, edited by Judith M. Lieu and Martinus C. de Boer, 5–22. Oxford University Press, 2018. Author preprint, especially its pp. 6–8, checked in John Pass 01. Preprint pagination is kept separate from the final volume.

Zumstein, Jean. “Der Prozess der Relecture in der johanneischen Literatur.” New Testament Studies 42.3 (1996): 394–411. DOI: 10.1017/S0028688500020853. Publisher extract and displayed notes checked in Pass 01; detailed source allocations remain open.

Hägerland, Tobias. “John’s Gospel: A Two-Level Drama?” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 25.3 (2003): 309–322. DOI: 10.1177/0142064X0302500304. Publisher and university abstracts checked in Pass 01.

Méndez, Hugo. “Did the Johannine Community Exist?” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 42.3 (2020): 350–374. DOI: 10.1177/0142064X19890490. Relevant full-text sections checked in Pass 01; the proposed conclusion remains contested.

John Redaction Research Packets. Pass 01, “An Earlier Promise?”, and Pass 02, “Syriac Controls and the Palestinian Aramaic Bridge,” 28 October 2026; Pass 03, “John 14 as a Competing Farewell,” 29 October 2026. Pass 03 revises the governing editorial hypothesis in chapters 1, 3 and 4 and records the new source access, without changing the FI-003 grades. The earlier Greek and selected Peshitta collations remain part of the research record.

Heavenly mediation, apocalyptic literature and Iranian religion

Brown, Dexter, and Aaron Michael Butts. “Ascension of Isaiah 6–11 (Ethiopic Version).” In The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings, vol. 3, edited by Mark DelCogliano, 3–15. Cambridge University Press, 2022. DOI: 10.1017/9781107449640.001. Publisher metadata and introductory extract checked.

Knight, Jonathan. “The Origin and Significance of the Angelomorphic Christology in the Ascension of Isaiah.” Journal of Theological Studies 63.1 (2012): 66–105. DOI: 10.1093/jts/fls060. The publisher’s abstract supports the account of disguise, commission and subordination used here; close reading of the full argument remains open.

Hannah, Darrell D. “Isaiah’s Vision in the Ascension of Isaiah and the Early Church.” Journal of Theological Studies 50.1 (1999): 80–101. DOI: 10.1093/jts/50.1.80. Source identified in the supplied dossier for the comparison of Isaiah’s vision across early Christian interpretation.

Knibb, M. A. “The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review.” New Testament Studies 25.3 (1979): 345–359. DOI: 10.1017/S0028688500004963. Publisher metadata and extract checked. The 2009 date displayed for online publication is distinct from the original 1979 article.

Orlov, Andrei A. The Enoch–Metatron Tradition. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. The author-hosted discussion “Metatron as the Deity: Lesser YHWH” supplies a research guide to the Name-bearing tradition. The dossier also identifies his work on the divine Face in 2 Enoch.

Shaked, Shaul. “Eschatology i. In Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Influence.” Encyclopaedia Iranica. Specialist source identified and revisited for the Iranian comparison. The complete Avestan and Middle Persian source apparatus remains a later task.

Catalogues: Emily J. Gathergood, “Ascension of Isaiah,” and Tony Burke, “Arabic Infancy Gospel,” in NASSCAL’s e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha. These entries provide manuscript, version and bibliography guides. Their summaries are used as guides to the textual histories, with critical-edition collation still required.

Further reading retained from the dossiers: George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, the Hermeneia studies of 1 Enoch; Hugo Odeberg, 3 Enoch (1928); Alan F. Segal, Two Powers in Heaven (1977); Charles A. Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology (1998); Daniel Boyarin, The Jewish Gospels (2012); Michael Wade Martin, “Whether and Whence Preexistence in 1 Enoch?” (2023); and J. Andrew Cowan’s study of Isaiah 51:16 and Enochic preexistence (2025). Full-text verification and edition-specific citations remain open for this group.

Paul, the Gentile mission and the Pauline collection

Primary texts and working editions. The Pauline letters, Acts 15, Hebrews and Revelation 2 were compared in the World English Bible and NABRE. NET translator’s notes were used for selected philological questions. Exact passages are identified in the chapter notes. These translations support a working reading; a full Greek apparatus remains to be prepared. World English Bible · NABRE · NET, Romans 3:25

1 Clement 47 and Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians 3. Ante-Nicene Fathers translations, reproduced by New Advent. Primary reception witnesses; dates and literary histories require separate assessment. 1 Clement · Polycarp

Didache 6.2–3. Ante-Nicene Fathers translation, reproduced by New Advent. Consulted for the distinction between the whole yoke and the prohibition of idol-food. Primary text

Nanos, Mark D. “The Myth of the ‘Law-Free’ Paul Standing between Christians and Jews.” Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations 4.1 (2009; published online 2011). DOI: 10.6017/scjr.v4i1.1511. The article’s stated argument on dietary observance informs the comparison. Article

Fredriksen, Paula. “Paul, Pagans and Eschatological Ethnicities: A Response to Denys McDonald.” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 45.1 (2022). DOI: 10.1177/0142064X221110686. Consulted for the argument about Gentile identity and Abrahamic promise. Article

McDonald, Denys N. “‘Ex-Pagan Pagans’? Paul, Philo, and Gentile Ethnic Reconfiguration.” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 45.1 (2022). DOI: 10.1177/0142064X221082363. Published argument and abstract consulted as a counterposition to continuity of Gentile ethnicity. Article

Livesey, Nina E. The Letters of Paul in their Roman Literary Context: Reassessing Apostolic Authorship. Cambridge University Press, 2024. DOI: 10.1017/9781009487061. Publisher description and epilogue summary consulted; the full book’s reconstruction awaits detailed evaluation. Publisher

Wallace, Daniel B. “The Textual Problem of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.” Bible.org, 26 June 2004. Consulted directly for the textual evidence and the argument for retaining the verses. Article

Fellows, Richard G. “The Interpolation of 1 Cor. 14.34–35 and the Reversal of the Name Order of Prisca and Aquila at 1 Cor. 16.19.” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 47.2 (2024). DOI: 10.1177/0142064X231226165. Consulted for the competing interpolation argument. Article

Tertullian. Against Marcion, Book V, especially chapters 17 and 21. Translated by Peter Holmes. Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3. The full online text was consulted; its descriptions of Marcion are polemical testimony. Primary text

BeDuhn, Jason D. The First New Testament: Marcion’s Scriptural Canon. Polebridge Press, 2013. Publisher description consulted to establish scope. Individual reconstructed readings remain to be checked in the full volume. Publisher

Pseudo-Clementine Homilies 17.13–19 and Epistle of Peter to James 2. Translated by Thomas Smith. Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 8. Consulted for the vision/companionship dispute and the lawless-enemy accusation. Homily 17 · Peter to James

Irenaeus. Against Heresies I.26.2. Translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1. Primary witness to a reported Ebionite rejection of Paul. Primary text

Alid sources and Qur’anic interpretation

Al-Kulaynī. Al-Kāfī, vol. 5, Kitāb al-jihād, chapter 6, report 1. Arabic report and displayed gradings consulted through Thaqalayn. The traditional assessments are al-Majlisī’s muwaththaq and al-Bahbūdī’s ṣaḥīḥ. Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on Qur’an 9:111, reports 17266–17271; al-Qurṭubī, commentary on the same verse. Arabic texts consulted.

Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 14. Arabic and English consulted at Al-Islam.org, with the attributed instruction distinguished from later commentary. “The Journey of Imam Husain Part4,” Shia Studies’ World Assembly (5 November 2021), consulted as a reproduction of the Karbala narrative. Further source and printed-edition checks remain necessary.

The historical Jesus, weapons and resistance

Martin, Dale B. “Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous.” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 37.1 (2014): 3–24. DOI: 10.1177/0142064X14544863. Abstract and thesis description consulted; full-paper assessment remains open.

Bermejo-Rubio, Fernando. “Jesus and the Anti-Roman Resistance.” Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus 12.1–2 (2014): 1–105. DOI: 10.1163/17455197-01202001. Abstract and publisher record consulted. Also “(Why) Was Jesus the Galilean Crucified Alone? Solving a False Conundrum,” JSNT 36.2 (2013): 127–154, DOI: 10.1177/0142064X13506166. Abstract consulted.

Meggitt, Justin J. “Putting the Apocalyptic Jesus to the Sword: Why Were Jesus’s Disciples Armed?” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 45.4 (2023): 371–404. DOI: 10.1177/0142064X221150484. Complete open-access HTML consulted.

Fredriksen, Paula. “Arms and The Man: A Response to Dale Martin’s ‘Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous’.” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 37.3 (2015): 312–325. DOI: 10.1177/0142064X14566371. Abstract consulted.

Einhorn, Lena. “Jesus and the ‘Egyptian Prophet’.” Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting paper, Chicago, 17–20 November 2012. Complete author-posted text consulted at lenaeinhorn.se. A Shift in Time (Yucca, 2016) remains registered for full reading. The precise History Valley episode recalled by the author has not been identified.

Tabor, James D. The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity. Simon & Schuster, 2006. Publisher thesis description and author’s retrospective account consulted for the resistance chapter, now chapter 42. The family-restoration thesis is distinguished from this chapter’s proposed Alid comparison and from Einhorn’s chronological reconstruction.

Qur’anic militancy and late-antique Christian sources

Sinai, Nicolai. The Qur’an: A Historical-Critical Introduction. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, pp. 190–196, especially 191–195. Text examined for the Medinan argument, scriptural zeal, Christian militant piety and the Heraclius comparison. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv1kz4g1p.

Bumazhnov, Dmitrij F. ‘Byzantine Roots of Muslim Jihad.’ Review of Ecumenical Studies 17.3 (2025): 373–386; published online 21 May 2026. DOI: 10.2478/ress-2025-0028. Full article examined in the openly published text; the Syriac Eusebius Narrative is analyzed from editions and translations cited by Bumazhnov. Original Syriac manuscript not independently transcribed.

Tesei, Tommaso. ‘Heraclius’ War Propaganda and the Qurʾān’s Promise of Reward for Dying in Battle.’ Studia Islamica 114.2 (2019): 219–247. DOI: 10.1163/19585705-12341397. Abstract and published research framing checked; individual Greek and Syriac chronicle passages await collation.

Gaddis, Michael. There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, especially chs. 5–6. Sinai’s use of the Macarius panegyric was checked against his discussion; full critical Panegyric and Gaddis chapter remain to be collated.

Julian Romance, ‘Eusebius Narrative.’ Syriac principal manuscript: British Library Add. 14,641, sixth-century paleographical assignment. Specialist catalogue: Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage, ‘Julian Romance’; interpretation and citation of Eusebius’s declaration through Bumazhnov (2026), pp. 381–384. Independent Syriac facsimile verification pending.

Josephus and apocalyptic witnesses

Josephus. Jewish War 2.261–263; Antiquities 18.116–119 and 20.169–172. William Whiston translation consulted through Lexundria, with the differing accounts retained. 1 Enoch 90:19, 90:34, in R. H. Charles’s translation, is a primary comparative witness; a fresh Ethiopic collation remains open. The War Scroll is discussed through Meggitt’s study rather than a new Hebrew collation.

The Gospel arrest narratives, Luke 22:35–38, Acts 21:37–39, Hebrews 11:32–40, Revelation 12–13 and 19, 1 Maccabees 2 and 2 Maccabees 7 supply the principal scriptural comparisons. The Didache 1.3–5 was checked in the Ante-Nicene Fathers translation. Footnotes give individual passages and electronic source locations.

Interviews and modern interpreters

The recovered History Valley leads include Frank Hughes, “Why I Believe in Markan Priority” (July 2024), and John K. Winford, “The Historical Paul, James and Peter” (August 2024). A James Tabor discussion concerning Ebionites, Nazarenes, Essenes and Nasareans is also recorded in the research dossier. The transcripts have not been collated for this draft; the manuscript therefore does not treat interview titles as evidence of a detailed argument.

The original manuscript names Douglas Del Tondo and James Scott Trimm alongside James Tabor as interpreters to examine. Their modern reconstructions remain distinct from the ancient communities discussed in chapter 18. The Greek-philology addendum also identifies Biblical Unitarian readings of John 20:28 and Calvin’s commentary on John 10:30; these are arguments to engage in their own settings.

Sources added for James, Thomas and Revelation

The following record distinguishes translated primary passages, open articles and works known here only through their abstracts or publisher descriptions. Access and verification date: 21 October 2026.

Primary texts and translations

The Epistle of James, chapters 1–5; Revelation, chapters 1–22. World English Bible, public-domain translation. Primary passages used in these chapters were consulted online; textual notes were used selectively. A full Greek manuscript apparatus has not been collated. Source

Gospel of Thomas. Mark M. Mattison, public-domain translation of the Coptic sayings. Full translation consulted, with the translator's notes retained where they indicate disputed renderings. The linked manuscript inventory was used for Greek coverage. Source

Fish, Jeffrey, Daniel B. Wallace and Michael W. Holmes. "5575. Sayings of Jesus." The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 87 (2023): 6–14. Oxford's institutional record and a translated excerpt were consulted; the original edition and papyrus have not been directly collated in this revision. Source

Mattison, Mark M. "Sayings of Jesus: P.Oxy. 5575." Public-domain rendering of the published fragment with parallels identified. Consulted as a translation, independently of the attribution of the fragment to any complete Gospel. Source

Eusebius. Church History 2.1.3; 2.23.25; 7.19; 7.25. Ancient reception of James and of Revelation, consulted in the translated New Advent text. Statements about appointment remain later testimony, while the excerpt of Dionysius supplies an ancient authorship argument. Source

Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43. Translated text consulted for the explicit appointment of James by the Lord. The webpage's title metadata is inconsistent; the body identifies Book I and the passage is chapter 43. Source

Jerome. On Illustrious Men 2. Translated notice consulted for the contested attribution of James's epistle and the separate account of his Jerusalem authority. Source

Irenaeus. Against Heresies 5.30. Translated text consulted for the numerical variant 666/616 and the Domitian testimony. Irenaeus's own name proposals are distinguished from the later Nero interpretation. Source

James: modern studies

Allison, Dale C., Jr. "The Jewish Setting of the Epistle of James." In die Skriflig 49.1 (2015), art. 1897. Open article text consulted for authorship uncertainty, Jesus-tradition parallels and the proposed broad Jewish address. Source

List, Nicholas. "Problematising Dependency: Soteriology and Vocabulary in James and Paul." Expository Times 131.9 (2020): 383–391. Abstract consulted. The full comparison remains to be examined. Source

Thomas: models awaiting fuller adjudication

Goodacre, Mark. Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas's Familiarity with the Synoptics. Eerdmans, 2012. Author's institutional publication record consulted for the thesis. The full monograph was not read for this revision. Source

DeConick, April D. "The Original Gospel of Thomas." Vigiliae Christianae 56.2 (2002): 167–199. Repository metadata located; detailed literary stratification remains to be tested against the paper. Source

DeConick, April D. Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas. Baylor University Press edition, 2017. Publisher description consulted for the Jewish mystical and Hermetic approach; the full book remains a priority. Source

Revelation: historical and interpretive studies

Trebilco, Paul. “John’s Apocalypse in Relation to Johannine, Pauline, and Other Forms of Christianity in Asia Minor.” In The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation, edited by Craig R. Koester, 184–201. 2020. Abstract consulted; detailed reconstruction not independently assessed here. Source

Frankfurter, David. “Jews or Not? Reconstructing the ‘Other’ in Rev 2:9 and 3:9.” Harvard Theological Review 94.4 (2001): 403–425. Abstract consulted to register the contested identity of the opponents. Source

Whitaker, Robyn. “Victim to Victor: The Appeal of Apocalyptic Hope.” Religions 11.9 (2020): 455. Open-access article text consulted for the political-victim and liberation reading of the Lamb. Source

NABRE translation and notes, Revelation 13. The translator’s note was consulted for the Nero/616 explanation. Its further historical claims about imperial persecution are not adopted wholesale in the chapter. Source

Sources added for the law and Qur’anic concordance chapters

Didache, chapters 1–16. M. B. Riddle’s English translation in Ante-Nicene Fathers 7 (1886), reproduced by New Advent, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm. The full short work was consulted. The Greek wording of 14.1 was separately checked in the bilingual text at https://sophiascriptura.com/fathers/didache/0/.

Draper, Jonathan A. “Didache.” The Encyclopedia of Ancient History. Online revision first published 25 June 2020. doi:10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah05061.pub2. Abstract and publication record consulted; used for orientation on date, form, and research context.

Hartog, P. B. “Noah and Moses in Acts 15: Group Models and the Novelty of the Way.” New Testament Studies 67.4 (2021): 496–513. doi:10.1017/S0028688521000199. Institutional abstract consulted; the full article download was inaccessible. Its proposal is labeled accordingly.

McConaughy, Daniel L. “Early Witnesses to the Syriac Text of Acts 15 with an Investigation into the Text of Acts 15 in the Didascalia Apostolorum.” Hugoye 25.1 (2022). https://hugoye.bethmardutho.org/article/hv25n1mcconaughy.html. Introduction and sections on the decree variants were consulted in the full-text HTML. The manuscript tables have not been independently collated.

MacDonald, Dennis R. Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles. Yale University Press, 2003. doi:10.12987/yale/9780300097702.001.0001. Publisher contents and chapter abstracts consulted. The four named cases and the distinction between the Iliad and Odyssey proposals were checked against those contents.

MacDonald, Dennis R. “The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul.” New Testament Studies 45.1 (1999): 88–107. doi:10.1017/S0028688598000885. Publisher abstract consulted. His “Luke’s Eutychus and Homer’s Elpenor,” Journal of Higher Criticism 1 (1994): 5–24, is registered as a bibliographic lead; its full text was not consulted.

MacDonald, Dennis R. The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. Publisher description consulted. This larger collection remains a priority for a comprehensive audit of the mimesis proposals.

Phillips, Thomas E. “The Genre of Acts: Moving Toward a Consensus?” Currents in Biblical Research 4.3 (2006): 365–396. doi:10.1177/1476993X06064629. Abstract consulted. The genre discussion remains broader than the Homeric-imitation question.

Basham, David Anthony. “Between Acts and Antioch: Discerning Paul on Gentiles and the Jerusalem Temple.” Biblical Theology Bulletin 55.2 (2025). doi:10.1177/01461079251339749. Abstract consulted; full argument remains outstanding.

USCCB. Introduction to Ephesians. https://bible.usccb.org/bible/ephesians/0. Full introduction consulted for its explicit presentation of the address variant and authorship alternatives. Biblical passages were also compared in the World English Bible at https://ebible.org/eng-web/.

Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 11, especially 11.2. Official Orthodox Presbyterian Church text, https://opc.org/wcf.html. This is a primary confessional witness. Grace Evangelical Society, “Affirmations of Belief,” https://faithalone.org/beliefs/, consulted 21 October 2026, supplies a distinct primary account of assurance and discipleship.

Horn, Cornelia B. “Mary between Bible and Qur’an: Soundings into the Transmission and Reception History of the Protoevangelium of James on the Basis of Selected Literary Sources in Coptic and Copto-Arabic.” Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations 18.4 (2007): 509–538. doi:10.1080/09596410701577332. Abstract and bibliographic material consulted, without claiming a full assessment of the article.

Protoevangelium of James, chapters 4–13; Pseudo-Matthew, chapters 10–12 and 20; Arabic Infancy Gospel, chapters 1 and 7. Primary translations consulted at New Advent, respectively fathers/0847.htm, fathers/0848.htm, and fathers/0806.htm. The chapter keeps their different recensions, literary dates, and narrative settings distinct.

Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Greek A-related form, chapter 2. Primary translation and stated textual basis consulted at https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/infancythomas.html. A complete recension-by-recension collation remains outstanding.

Reynolds, Gabriel Said. “The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 72.2 (2009): 237–258. doi:10.1017/S0041977X09000500. Publisher abstract consulted; the chapter records it as an interlocutor without claiming to adjudicate the full argument.

Al-Ṭabarī. Jāmiʿ al-bayān, on Qur’an 3:55; 4:157; 4:159; 5:112; and 19:19. Arabic discussions consulted in the King Saud University tafsīr interface,

https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/. A report's presence in the collection is distinguished from independent authentication of its contents.

Quranic Arabic Corpus. Jesus concept page and the r-w-ḥ dictionary entry, https://corpus.quran.com/concept.jsp?id=jesus and https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rwH. Used for explicit-reference coverage; the index distinguishes tokens, verses, related roots, and interpretive companion passages.

Al-Kulaynī. Al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 and 1.4.56.4, Arabic text, English translation, and al-Majlisī grading references in the Thaqalayn edition. Direct inspection of report 4 identified an English omission of the Arabic negative. This revision corrects its use locally; the wider Spirit corpus still needs a complete chain and variant audit.

Origen. Commentary on John 2.6, with the Gospel according to the Hebrews fragment about the maternal Holy Spirit. Primary translation consulted at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101502.htm. This extends the existing Origen dossier without establishing a direct Qur'anic source.

Additions verified for version 0.6

Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4; Gospel of Barnabas 215–219; Jan Joosten, 'The Date and Provenance of the Gospel of Barnabas,' JTS 61 (2010), 200–215.

Todd Lawson, The Crucifixion and the Qur'an (2009); Louay Fatoohi, 'The Non-Crucifixion Verse,' AJIS (2023); al-Ṭabarī's commentary on 4:157 and 19:24.

Al-Kāfī, volume 1, book 4, chapters 55–56, including 1.4.55.1–3 and 1.4.56.1, 3–4, with Arabic textual controls and al-Majlisī's assessments.

Sources added for version 0.7

Primary and source-level texts checked for this expansion

Josephus. Antiquities 18.116–119 and 20.200. Baptist and James notices; public English text consulted. https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-18.html.

Eusebius. Ecclesiastical History, books 3, 4, 6 and 7; Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.43; Jerome, On Illustrious Men 2; Origen, Commentary on John, book 2. Relevant public translations at New Advent consulted. Later quotation of an earlier writer is distinguished from an extant earlier manuscript.

Tertullian. Against Marcion, book 4; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.11; Athanasius, Festal Letter 39. Relevant public translations consulted at New Advent.

Muslim. Ṣaḥīḥ, reports 156, 2404a–b, 2404d and 2408a. Al-Tirmidhī, Jāmiʿ, report 3713. Arabic and English records checked at Sunnah.com. A transmitter's or compiler's grade is distinguished from a later displayed grade.

Al-Kulaynī. Al-Kāfī 1.2.22 and 2.1.36. Arabic and English chapter texts checked at Thaqalayn.net. Report 2.1.36.3 is cited with its recorded weak chain assessment, rather than authenticated solely through its ethical content.

Nahj al-Balāgha. Letters 53 and 62. Public English and, where displayed, Arabic text consulted at Al-Islam.org. Attribution through the later collection is explicit; a new provenance study of each letter was not undertaken.

Mahdi Muntazir Qa'im. Jesus through Shiite Narrations, "The Successor of Jesus." The anthology and its citations were read; underlying al-Iqbāl, Maʿānī al-akhbār and al-Kharāʾij passages were not newly collated.

Murtadha Muṭahharī. Divine Justice, "Good Deeds of Non-Muslims." Relevant full-text sections, including the distinction between incapacity and culpability, consulted at Al-Islam.org. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, The Faith of the Imamiyyah Shiʿah, Part 3, sections on al-Mahdī and rajʿah; al-Ṣadūq, A Shiite Creed, resurrection section. Read as theological expositions.

Original research read in accessible full text

Goodacre, Mark. "Fatigue in the Synoptics." New Testament Studies 44 (1998): 45–58. Full author-hosted article: https://www.markgoodacre.org/Q/fatigue.htm.

Kjær, Sigrid K. "'Rahman' before Muhammad: A pre-history of the First Peace (Sulh) in Islam." Modern Asian Studies. Full publisher HTML consulted, including discussion of CIH 541. The epigraphic datum is used without adopting every part of the article's larger reconstruction.

Tabor, James D. "The Jesus Dynasty: Seven Main Ideas." 21 October 2018. https://jamestabor.com/the-jesus-dynasty-seven-main-ideas/. Author's synopsis read in full; the complete book was not newly read.

Catalogues and modern interpretations

Sloan, David B., and Michael J. Kok. "Gospel of the Hebrews." Mark G. Bilby, "Gospel of Peter." Stephen C. E. Hopkins, "Acts of Pilate/Gospel of Nicodemus." NASSCAL, e-Clavis: Christian Apocrypha. Catalogue entries or indexed summaries consulted; their manuscript references identify further work.

Ismaili Gnosis. "The Imamat of James: Brother of Jesus, Successor of Christ & Leader of Early Christianity." 25 January 2019. https://www.ismailignosis.com/p/the-imamat-of-james-brother-of-jesus-successor-of-christ-leader-of-early-christianity. Read as a modern theological reconstruction, with primary Christian claims checked separately.

Located works used at abstract, extract or publisher-description level

Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad-Ali. "Muḥammad the Paraclete and ʿAlī the Messiah: New Remarks on the Origins of Islam and of Shiʿite Imamology." Der Islam 95.1 (2018): 30–64. https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2018-0002. Publisher abstract consulted; full report apparatus remains to be evaluated.

Kloppenborg, John S. "The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus." Harvard Theological Review. Publisher extract consulted. The chapter identifies the Q hypothesis and does not claim a fresh reading of the complete article.

Roth, Dieter T. “Marcion’s Gospel and Its Relevance for Gauging the Textual History of the Canonical Gospels.” Expository Times 121.6 (2010): 287–294. https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524609357511. “The Testimony of Marcion’s Gospel in NA28.” New Testament Studies 68.1 (2022): 52–60. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688521000163. Abstracts consulted.

Klinghardt, Matthias. The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels. English edition, 2021. Publisher description consulted. Bilby, Mark G., and Jason BeDuhn, “BeDuhn’s Greek Reconstruction of Marcion’s Gospel,” Journal of Open Humanities Data 9 (2023), article 25, https://doi.org/10.5334/johd.126. Dataset description and abstract consulted.

Häberl, Charles G., and James F. McGrath. The Mandaean Book of John: Critical Edition, Translation, and Commentary. De Gruyter, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110487862. Publisher description consulted; original-language comparison remains open.

Griffith, Sidney H. The Bible in Arabic. Princeton University Press, 2013. Reynolds, Gabriel Said. Christianity and the Qur’an: The Rise of Islam in a Christian Arabia. Yale University Press, 2025. Publisher descriptions consulted; the complete books were not newly read.

Additional critical sources for version 0.10

Joseph Schacht, “Aḥmad,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, 1:267 (1960). Wording checked through Stephen N. Lambden’s 1997 essay / updated Hurqalya reproduction (https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu/node/73); EI² original page still to be inspected.

Richard Worthington, “You Say Periklute, I Say Paraclete: Towards a Reconciliation Between the Bible and the Quran,” Religious Inquiries 9.17 (2020): 129–168. Full open PDF read; published by the University of Religions and Denominations, Qom. Specific consonantal and wordplay proposal; p. 152 disavows the direct mistranslation scenario.

S. S. R. Montazery and S. Karimpur, “The History of the Idea of a Literal Connection Between the Words ‘Ahmad’ and ‘Paraclete’,” Religious Inquiries 7.13 (2018): 113–129. Full article read, especially claims concerning George Sale, pp. 124–128. Historical-origin claim assessed against Anthony 2016.

Sean W. Anthony, “Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 79.2 (2016): 255–278. Author proof read, especially his reference to Ludovico Marracci, Refutatio Alcorani (1698), pp. 26–27 and 719 (cited through Anthony, footnote 86; direct inspection of Marracci remains outstanding).

Sources added in v0.11

Eusebius, Demonstratio Evangelica 3.6, translated by W. J. Ferrar; F. C. Conybeare, “The Eusebian Form of the Text of Mt. 28:19” (1901); W. C. Allen, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, on 28:19; B. J. Hubbard, The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning (1974).

Didache 7.1–3; Justin Martyr, First Apology 61; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.17.1; Tertullian, De baptismo 13; Codex Sinaiticus, Matthew 28:19, folio 217; textual commentary, NET Bible on 28:19.

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, chapter concerning the Spirit accompanying Prophet and Imams, pp. 474–476 in the digital Arabic text; al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī 1.4.55–56; Tamima Bayhom-Daou (2003) on Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam; Shaykh al-Mufīd, Tashīḥ al-iʿtiqād on excess and delegation.

Additions verified for version 0.14

Irenaeus. Against Heresies 1.10; 1.26; 3.1–4; 3.11; 4.26. English translation in Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, available at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm. Original-language collation pending.

Eusebius. Ecclesiastical History 5.20 and 5.23–24, English translation at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250105.htm. Florinus memory and Paschal dispute extracts read.

Al-Shāfiʿī, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs. The Epistle on Legal Theory (al-Risāla). Ed. and trans. Joseph E. Lowry. NYU Press, 2013. Publication and contents verified; whole-text recollation pending.

Lowry, Joseph E. Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risāla of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī. Brill, 2007. Publisher description and table of contents consulted.

Hannah, Darrell D. “The Four-Gospel ‘Canon’ in the Epistula Apostolorum.” Journal of Theological Studies 59.2 (2008):598–633. DOI 10.1093/jts/fln103. Abstract consulted.

Hill, Charles E. “The Early Use of the Memoirs of the Apostles.” In The New Testament Canon in Contemporary Research. Brill, 2026, 273–296. DOI 10.1163/9789004751071_014. Publisher abstract consulted.

Hallaq, Wael B. “Was al-Shāfiʿī the Master Architect of Islamic Jurisprudence?” International Journal of Middle East Studies 25.4 (1993):587–605. DOI 10.1017/S0020743800059274. Publisher extract consulted.

El Shamsy, Ahmed. The Canonization of Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History. Cambridge University Press, 2013. Publisher description consulted.

Duffy, Eamon. “Was there a Bishop of Rome in the First Century?” New Blackfriars, online 2024. Publisher abstract consulted; pagination and full article to audit.

Additions checked for version 0.16: different Trinity doctrines and Qur’anic verdicts

Qur’an 4:171, 5:17, 5:44–47, 5:66–76, 5:82–85, 5:116–118, 9:31, 17:15, 22:17, 31:13. Arabic and published translations consulted; passage-level grammatical comparison is continued in Chapter 37A. Quranic Arabic Corpus at https://corpus.quran.com/.

Al-Ṭabarī. Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on Qur’an 5:73, Arabic edition at https://quran.com/fa/5:73/tafsirs/ar-tafsir-al-tabari. Electronic primary text consulted; printed critical pagination pending.

Al-Qurṭubī. Al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān, commentary on 5:73, Arabic electronic text at https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura5-aya73.html. Names and theological entailment argument directly checked; printed critical pagination pending.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§252–255 and 2677–2679. Official Vatican texts at https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_one/article_1/paragraph_2_the_father.html and https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_four/section_one/chapter_two/article_2/the_way_of_prayer.index.html. Contemporary official confessional sources; no claim of sixth-century continuity without dated witnesses.

Philoxenus of Mabbug. Letter to the Monks, in A. A. Vaschalde, Three Letters of Philoxenus (Rome, 1902), pp. 93–105; https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/philoxenus_three_04_letter_to_monks.htm. Primary translation read, including one essence, one divinity and God the Word. Original Syriac autopsy remains to be completed.

Vaschalde, A. A. Three Letters of Philoxenus, introduction, “His Doctrine on the Trinity,” at https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/philoxenus_three_02_part1.htm. Historical source commentary read; distinguish the translator’s interpretation from Philoxenus’s words.

Mawdūdī, Abū al-Aʿlā. Tafhīm al-Qurʾān, commentary on 5:44–47, https://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=5&to=50&verse=44. Modern translated interpretation of the overlapping categories kufr, ẓulm and fisq; used as a comparandum, not as a classical consensus.

Supplement to bibliography for Chapters 41A–41B (consulted at publication-summary, abstract or passage level): Christopher Melchert, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Oneworld, 2006); “The Inquisition outside Baghdad,” JAOS 141 (2021): 201–210; Nimrod Hurvitz, The Formation of Hanbalism: Piety into Power (RoutledgeCurzon, 2002); Michael Cooperson, Classical Arabic Biography (Cambridge, 2000), chap. 4; Ibn al-Jawzī, The Life of Ibn Ḥanbal, trans. Michael Cooperson (NYU, 2016); John P. Turner, “The End of the Miḥna,” Oriens 38 (2010): 89–106; Encyclopaedia Iranica, “Karbala”; al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, the 235/850 account of dhimmī measures as excerpted in BSOAS; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Augustine of Hippo,” rev. 2024. Primary Arabic and Latin source collation remains outstanding.

Appendix C. Editorial Record and Work Remaining

Chapter 43 source cross-reference (25 October 2026): Nicolai Sinai (2017), pp. 191–196, and Bumazhnov (2026), pp. 373–386, are now directly engaged on Qur'an 9:111. The direct-New-Testament-equivalent question, the sixth-century Syriac narrative parallel, and uncertainty about transmission are separately documented. Existing Qur'anic and sayings verdicts remain unchanged; the authorial reading of 4:153–158 is unaffected.

Pass 08: Christian legal practice in and around seventh-century Arabia

25 October 2026. Chapter 41 now uses a bounded and documentable case study of Christian legal practice. The 585 synod of Ishoʿyahb I addresses usury in canons 15–16 and includes appended questions on oaths and interest (questions 10 and 12). The 676 synod of Gewargis I in Beth Qaṭrāyē supplies direct canon headings for community judgment, orphan inheritance, marriage, worship and church discipline (canons 6, 11, 13–16). The two archives give institutional reception data for FI-006, FI-012, FI-015 and FI-017 and a historical setting for Qur'an 5:47. Their dates and locations remain distinct.

Editorial constraint: 585 is a sixth-century Church of the East legislative setting; the appended responses require independent dating and complete textual inspection. The 676 synod is post-Qur'anic and local to the East Syriac Gulf. Its canon 13 concerns parental authority and priestly involvement; the present book assigns this rule to its bishops and calls for a separate examination of adult consent. Neither collection authenticates every alleged saying of Jesus or describes all Qur'anic ahl al-Injīl.

Source-use ledger: syri.ac, Synodicon Orientale, 585 and 676 canon headings (consulted); J.-B. Chabot, Synodicon orientale, Paris 1902, Syriac/French edition (bibliographic identification, detailed collation pending); Lucas Van Rompay, Gewargis I, Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage (full entry consulted); Van Rompay on Popa, Hugoye 21.1 (full review consulted); Lev E. Weitz, Between Christ and Caliph (2018) (publisher synopsis); Sidney H. Griffith, The Bible in Arabic (2013) (publisher synopsis); Briquel Chatonnet, Kiraz and Prioletta (2022), Ḥimā Syriac inscription (abstract); R. A. Carter (2008), Gulf Christianity (abstract); Maria E. Doerfler, Didascalia Apostolorum (specialist entry). The standalone Pass 08 dossier gives exact URLs and controlled claims.

Version 0.17h: early material witnesses and the addressed communities

24 October 2026. Chapter 41 now includes a facsimile-backed published transcription check for P75 (Luke 11:1–4), direct comparison with the Greek of Didache 8:2–3, and an updated source inventory for Thomas 47/95 using the Coptic SCRIPTORIUM Dilley 2025 edition, NASSCAL's Greek papyrus coverage, and translated logia. It tests 5:47's imperative grammar and documents Griffith's distinction between pre-Islamic oral Arabic scriptural circulation and later surviving translations. FI-005/012/015/017 retain their historical grades. The P75 copying date and the exact Thomas Coptic readings require further specialist review. No claim of a complete NA28/ECM or critical Coptic variant collation is made.

25 October 2026 · Pass 07. The Arabic legal interpretation in Chapter 41 now records both wa-l-yaḥkum (imperative/jussive) and Ḥamzah’s wa-li-yaḥkuma (purpose/subjunctive) at Q 5:47. This corrects the earlier single-reading description while leaving the author’s recovered-obligations inquiry intact. Coptic SCRIPTORIUM NHAM.02 v6.2.0 was inspected directly at the Thomas 47 and 95 passages. Both sayings have a fourth-century Coptic witness, with no surviving Greek Thomas papyrus at either locus. First-hand codex facsimile collation and a complete Luke 6:35 textual apparatus remain outstanding. All 178 QC and 66 FI identifiers retain their prior historical grades.

Version 0.17g: source-controlled Injīl obligations

24 October 2026. Chapter 41 expands FI-005 (wealth), FI-007 (poor), FI-012 (loans), FI-015 (prayer) and FI-017 (marriage) from the earlier intake mention into worked practical comparisons under Qur'an 5:47. Published Greek texts, the Didache, electronic textual notes and available scholarly sources were checked. No original manuscript autopsy or historical H-grade promotion is claimed. The companion FI identifiers and the 178 QC IDs remain unchanged; Chapter 36 retains the author's established continuous-discourse reading of 4:153–158. See Pass 05 evidence dossier for individual source-access boundaries.

Version 0.17f: the Qur’anic agents and the recoverable commands

24 October 2026. Chapter 36 now opens from the continuous accusatory structure of Qur’an 4:153–158, retains the Jewish judicial counter-narrative as its principal intertext, and carries historical substitution theories only as an archival reception dossier. Chapter 41 applies the imperative of 5:47 to FI-001 and FI-006 using directly checked published Greek editions, while preserving the companion’s T/L/H/Q/R distinctions and pending manuscript collation. The Appendix F priority docket now treats the 4:153–158 authorial reading as fixed for the present edition. The 178 QC records and original footnote references are retained.

Version 0.16: Christian Trinity models and Qur’anic severity

23 October 2026. Chapter 37A adds a controlled liberal interpretive hypothesis distinguishing kufr of explicitly condemned confessions, shirk associated with unauthorized divinity, and fisq in failure to uphold revelation. The new study cross-checks Q 5:44–47, 5:72–75 and 5:116 with the official Catholic Catechism and a primary translation of Philoxenus of Mabbug. It records contrary judgments by al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī. The terms overlap and their meaning must be argued passage by passage. No existing QC ID or Sayings Volume verdict has been revised.

Version 0.15: adversarial register of Qur’anic commitments

22 October 2026. Appendix F adds 178 individually numbered QC propositions in eight subject families. Each record distinguishes what the Qur’an directly asserts from an interpretive expansion, names the kind of evidence needed, and assigns a responsible chapter. It includes eleven extended adversarial dossiers and a verse-anchor coverage check against Appendix D. None of these entries represents a completed critical Arabic

collation, an adjudicated miracle, or a finding that any commitment has been falsified. Chapter numbers 1–44 and intercalated 27A, Appendix A locators and the FI identifiers remain unchanged.

Version 0.14: Irenaeus and al-Shāfiʿī authority comparison

New chapter 27A is an intercalated study placed after chapter 27; numbers 28–44 remain stable for the independent Critical Sayings Volume and existing chapter references. Its Christian primary sources were checked in public translation. Hill, Hannah, Hallaq and Duffy were inspected through publication-level abstracts or extracts, and full-text verification remains on the editorial list. The comparison of Irenaeus with al-Shāfiʿī is an interpretive thesis, with limits set out in the new chapter.

Version history (chronological)

Version 0.1: initial book manuscript

This first manuscript was assembled from the author's original fragment, the Ruh Qudus essay, the cumulative version-7 dossier and the subsequent Aramaic-John discussion. It reorganizes their arguments into a book narrative. The archival files remain unchanged, preserving the development of the project. The following changes and limits are recorded so that the new prose can be revised against its sources.

Version 0.2: expansion of the Pauline chapter

21 October 2026. The Pauline chapter, numbered 15 in that edition, examines Paul's authority and Gentile mission through the letters and early reception, with 60 new source notes. The revision separates disputed writings from the Pauline core and records competing interpretations. Version 0.1 remains preserved.

Version 0.3: covenant, resistance and the Gospel swords

21 October 2026. The resistance chapter, numbered 18 in that edition, adds an extended examination of Qur'an 9:111–112, the Gospel arrest narratives, the Egyptian prophet in Josephus and Alid traditions of restraint. Forty-two source notes distinguish ancient testimony, modern hypotheses and the author's theological synthesis. The exact History Valley interview remains unidentified. Meggitt's article and Einhorn's conference paper were read in full; several other modern works were consulted at abstract or publisher-description level. Version 0.2 is preserved.

Version 0.4: James, Thomas and Revelation

21 October 2026. Version 0.4 added chapters numbered 15, 16 and 18 in that edition, developing the Epistle of James, Gospel of Thomas and Revelation with 69 source notes. That revision numbered the Paul, general apocrypha, Christian-law and resistance chapters 17, 19, 20 and 21. Version 0.3 is preserved. The version 0.5 record below gives the current chapter numbers.

The appointment dossier is corrected: Recognitions 1.43 and Eusebius, Church History 7.19, are explicit later witnesses connecting James's office to Jesus. Thomas 12 therefore cannot be described as the sole ancient appointment tradition. Their presence does not determine the historical origin of the claim.

Revelation's anonymous false apostles remain unidentified. The chapters distinguish a possible conflict with Pauline reception from a proven attack on Paul himself, and preserve the disputed status of 2 Timothy as evidence. Revelation 13:10 and 22:14 are registered as textual variants with consequences for the arguments about violence and law.

The Thomas chapter retains difficult material in sayings 14, 53, 77, 98 and 114. The date of the complete collection, its dependence on the Synoptics and its internal growth remain unresolved. P.Oxy. 5575 is treated as a separate sayings witness. Goodacre's and DeConick's full monographs, the Coptic and Greek apparatus, and further James–Paul comparison remain outstanding.

The new chapters' spiritual and Qur'anic comparisons are proposed book arguments. Their relationship to the historical evidence is assessed separately from their theological suitability. Further studies should address Jude and the Petrine letters and give the remaining apocryphal apocalypses individual treatment.

Version 0.5: law, later Pauline reception, and the Qur'anic corpus

21 October 2026. Nine chapters have been added: the Didache (17), Acts (19), disputed Pauline writings and assurance (20), and six Qur'anic studies (23–28). The previous Pauline chapter is now 18, Revelation 21, general apocrypha 22, Christian law 29, and "To kill and be killed" 30. Appendix D adds an explicit-reference concordance. Earlier numbered revision entries above describe the manuscript at those dates; this paragraph gives the current numbering.

The Acts chapter preserves the proposed Noahide-plus-Sabbath Christian law as an argument to test. It distinguishes the council's expressed requirements from a gradual-full-Torah inference drawn from Acts 15:21, and records the constraints supplied by Acts 15:28, 21:25, Colossians 2:16, and Qur'an 16:124. MacDonald's Homeric proposals are identified as proposals; publisher-level access is stated, and biblical narrative alternatives are retained.

The Ephesians chapter distinguishes the author's grace-and-conduct argument from later confessional reception. Westminster and Grace Evangelical Society are used as named primary examples of different accounts of assurance. The treatment does not attribute moral indifference to all Protestants or claim that Ephesians itself contains no warning about behavior.

The concordance covers every explicit occurrence of ʿĪsā, al-Masīḥ, and the noun rūḥ, with counts stated separately for tokens and verses. Narrative continuations and other companion passages are identified as such. No claim is made to have exhausted every possible Christological allusion in the Qur'an. Original-language comparisons, qirāʾāt details, and the uncertain chronologies of apocryphal parallels still require specialist expansion.

Direct checks of al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 and 1.4.56.4 now supplement the earlier source leads. Report 4's Arabic negation is missing from the displayed English, a material issue for

claims that one identical Spirit accompanied all earlier prophets. The chapter retains both reports and their distinct later gradings.

The author's Aḥmad identification, the Magi transmission conjecture, the esoteric conception proposal, the tawḥīdi agency model, and the differentiated-covenant theology are retained as authored interpretations. None is promoted into an attested manuscript reading or an established transmission chain through the addition of comparative sources.

Remaining major work includes Jude and the Petrine letters, individual apocryphal apocalypse studies, a fuller account of Q and competing Synoptic models, the Iranian primary-language dossier, and the final graded sayings corpus. Several modern works remain accessible here only through abstracts or publisher descriptions. Those access limits are recorded in the bibliography and notes.

Version 0.6: Jesus and the Spirit textual expansions

Version 0.6 expanded Chapters 25–27 with the Simon of Cyrene/Basilides substitution dossier, the late Gospel of Barnabas, a companion-reading audit distinguishing ʿAlqama, Ubayy and Ibn ʿAbbās from independently verified Ibn Masʿūd readings, and Jaʿfarian reports on the five spirits. The chapter count remained thirty at this stage. Version 0.5 was retained.

Version 0.7: historical expansion and Shiʿi comparisons

Thirteen developmental chapters have been integrated into the narrative, bringing the chapter count to forty-three. Existing chapters and source notes are retained. The original v0.6 file remains unchanged. The new source-use guide records where the comparison is historical, theological, or based on a later anthology.

The James–Tabor discussion now includes the Moses–Aaron comparison, the thaqalayn and mawlā reports, Alid restraint, and the distinction between Imami Simon traditions and a modern Ismaʿili reading of James. Return, rajʿah, occultation and final resurrection are kept distinct. The final chapter does not claim completion of the proposed larger sayings catalogue.

The contents and Qur'anic concordance use the new chapter numbering. Clear inherited references to the Pauline, Thomas, apocryphal and resistance chapters have been corrected. References explicitly identifying an earlier manuscript version retain that earlier version's chapter numbers. Individual classical works retain their own chapter numbers.

Version 0.8: six-chapter batch collation

Version 0.8 incorporated the complete expanded texts of six chapters from Batches 01 and 02. These replacements supersede the shorter corresponding chapters in v0.7; all other chapters remain as in v0.7. Their primary witnesses and source-access limitations remain identified in the chapter notes. The independently saved batch documents remain available for comparison.

Version 0.9: the positive Paraclete transmission hypothesis

Version 0.9 advanced the Aḥmad–Paraclete thesis through Old Syriac John 14:26, Johannine literary redaction scholarship and the periklutos / Semitic consonantal-wordplay hypothesis, while distinguishing direct witnesses from reconstructed earlier readings. Version 0.8, the consolidated 43-chapter manuscript, was preserved.

Version 0.10: Paraclete objections and provenance

Schacht's Encyclopaedia of Islam article is now quoted within the argument itself. Its textual and lexical objections bear directly on a proposed original Greek periklytos. The wider historical hypothesis of a pre-Greek prophetic saying must supply separate positive evidence.

Source-update note (v0.13): Iskandar Bcheiry, "The Scriptio Infima of Vat. iber. 4: A Glimpse into Old-Syriac Tradition of the Gospels," The Vatican Library Review 5.1 (2026): 25–33, DOI 10.1163/27728641-00402004. The abstract reports Matthew 8–9 from folios 6 and 10; full-text verification remains open. Worthington's self-qualification is on p. 152; Marracci pp. 26–27 and 719 are still cited secondhand through Anthony.

Worthington (2020) is identified as the one focused source in the present bibliography for the proposed Semitic consonantal-wordplay mechanism, with his express reservations about original Greek periklytos wording included. Earlier Johannine redaction scholars are cited for literary layering, an independent issue.

The Montazery–Karimpur (2018) claim that the Greek emendation originates with George Sale is qualified by Anthony's 2016 identification of Marracci's earlier Refutatio Alcorani (1698). The actual Marracci pages and Schacht's printed EI² text remain on the source-check list.

Version 0.11: Spirit and Great Commission revisions

Chapter 38 now separates the universal Qur'anic vocabulary of the Spirit from the Johannine Paraclete and the independent manuscript history of Matthew 28:19. The shorter Eusebian commissioning is tested against the pre-Nicene triadic witnesses, with the missing Old Syriac ending recorded as a lacuna rather than an omission.

Chapter 39 collects the Imami account of a created Spirit informing Muhammad and the Imams, drawing on the earlier Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt witnesses and the related material in al-Kāfī. Historical attributions and theological comparisons receive separate treatment. Detailed arguments about al-Majlisī's grading belong in the Dark Imams project and are omitted from the running argument here.

Version 0.13: Old Syriac corpus and provenance audit

Chapters 3 and 38 now recognize the distinct sixth-century Old Syriac Gospel witnesses in Sin. syr. M37N/M39N (described by Brock in 2016) and Vat. iber. 4 ff. 1/5 (Kessel, published 8 March 2023). Bcheiry's article (The Vatican Library Review 5.1 [2026]: 25–33, DOI 10.1163/27728641-00402004) covers Matthew 8–9 on Vat. iber. 4, folios 6 and 10. Its abstract is verified; the full article still requires examination. Neither witness supplies a reading for

John 14:26 or Matthew 28:19. The date “5 October 2026” previously supplied for the Kessel article was incorrect. Appendix C has been arranged chronologically, and the v0.7 expansion formerly mislabelled “v0.9” has been restored to its proper place.

Corrections carried into the draft

The earlier manuscript’s description of Thomas, Nag Hammadi and the Dead Sea Scrolls combined separate discoveries. The draft uses the distinct textual histories already established in the later dossier. It also treats the Pseudo-Clementines as their own transmitted literature.

The James chapter cites Josephus for the identity and death of James. The epithet “the Just” is assigned to other Christian traditions; it is absent from the wording identified in Antiquities 20.200. The specific act of Jesus designating James remains a separate hypothesis.

The account of Mark’s ending acknowledges the resurrection announcement already present in 16:6. The textual question concerning the longer ending therefore concerns the continuation of the narrative and its appearances and commission, rather than the complete absence of a resurrection claim.

Qur’anic references in the opening argument have been aligned with the relevant passages: 5:46–48 for the Injil and differentiated law, and 5:72–75 for the Christian theological dispute. Several verse numbers in the original fragment were inaccurate. Its extended sketches of councils and Christian doctrinal development have been held out of this first draft pending source checking.

The assessment of John 20:28 follows the author’s later correction. Unitarian readings receive primary treatment in the chapter. The discussion of John 1:1 distinguishes grammatical case from the presence or absence of the article, and the John 10:30 discussion preserves the neuter adjective and plural verb.

The distinction between Ebionites and Nazoraeans is framed through specific witnesses. Origen’s account of both virgin-birth and ordinary-parentage positions among people called Ebionites complicates a fixed binary. The infancy chapter separately identifies the Arabic Infancy Gospel and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.

Two bibliographic dates have been corrected through publisher records. Albright’s Palestinian-origin article appeared in 1924. Knibb’s review of the dating of the Parables appeared in 1979; 2009 is the date assigned to its later online publication.

Claims retained as the author’s hypotheses

The Aḥmad–Paraclete identification governs the opening argument. The proposed direction of theological revision between John 16 and John 14 remains a literary reconstruction. The archive contains no established manuscript presenting that reconstructed original form.

The Magi-as-isnād proposal remains a possible explanation of how infancy testimony could have circulated. The surviving infancy narrative’s Caiaphas attribution and its Magi material are documented as separate features. An eyewitness chain linking them has yet to be established.

The reading of Maryam's conception narrative as addressing rival Jewish-Christian audiences remains an interpretive proposal. The preferred plain reading of virgin conception is preserved. The Joseph-mediated esoteric reading requires a fuller test against the complete Qur'anic passages and the history of interpretation.

The comparison of Johannine divine agency with Shiʿi vocabulary belongs to the author's theological reconstruction. Evidence of direct historical transmission between these traditions has not been supplied. The same distinction applies to later Metatron literature used to illuminate questions raised by John.

Source checks needed before publication

The Greek, Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic witnesses have not yet been collated verse by verse against manuscript facsimiles. Inventory claims concerning P66 and P75 remain source leads. Proposed dates for manuscripts should be supplied with ranges and the arguments of the specialists who assign them.

Several modern works are known here through abstracts, bibliographic records, or the earlier dossiers. Their full arguments need to be read before the draft attributes page-specific conclusions to them. Appendix B states the level of access for the principal sources.

The Arabic of the two Spirit reports discussed in chapter 38 has now been checked, including a consequential missing negation in the displayed English of al-Kāfī 1.4.56.4. The remaining reports and their later grading references still require independent inspection. Report-level distinctions should remain visible throughout the theological comparison.

The Iranian chapter needs named Avestan passages, a separate Middle Persian apparatus, and a chronology of the relevant contacts. The expanded Pauline chapter still requires a Greek apparatus for its principal legal and theological passages, closer evaluation of authorship arguments, and a passage-level collation of Marcion's letters. The broader apocalyptic corpus, Q and the various Synoptic source models remain open for further development.

The pilot sayings collection supplies a beginning. Its final form should include the original-language text, manuscript evidence, literary relationships and a reasoned historical grade for each entry. No numerical probability or final sahih verdict has been manufactured to fill an unfinished apparatus.

Archival source-history dossier: substitution and later receptions

The following paragraphs were in the main argument of Chapter 36 through version 0.17e. They are preserved for reception-history research, with their original source references, because they explain how a later interpretive literature developed. The governing Qur'anic interpretation is established in Chapter 36 from the Arabic discourse itself.

The text supplies no name for a substitute. It does not identify a volunteer, Judas, or another disciple. Those figures belong to later explanatory traditions whose chains and narrative development require examination. The distinction matters because a reader may be rejecting or defending one of those stories while assuming that it is the wording of the Qur'an itself.

Al-Ṭabarī records several accounts that explain how the appearance arose. The variations are historical evidence of interpretive work around an unresolved narrative detail. They should not be compressed into a single unanimous eyewitness account. His collection offers a source for the history of tafsīr, with each report needing its own assessment.[607]

The strongest hostile questions survive that comparison. Shubbiha lahum is a passive with an unspecified event or appearance; an error about who was responsible is possible, but the Arabic never says 'their agency was confused.' A substitution account must supply its own unidentified victim. The noun phrase alladhīna ikhtalafū fīhi explicitly introduces disputants whose scope could extend beyond the first claimants. Finally, the grammatical analysis treats yaqīnan as emphasizing the negated killing, not merely the actors' uncertain knowledge. Louay Fatoohi (2023) argues that the Qur'an uses a word for crucifixion where Sanhedrin 43a speaks of stoning and hanging and questions any direct Bavli transmission. These are genuine objections to the precise intertextual proposal. The agent-scoped reading remains the authorial position, with these entailment and reception questions kept OPEN.

Source-control note: Qur'anic Arabic Corpus, morphological and iʿrāb entries for 4:153, 4:155–157 (corpus.quran.com); Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a (Sefaria, Hebrew/Aramaic and translation); Ian Mevorach, Journal of Religion & Society 19 (2017); Juan Cole, Religion 51.3 (2021):404–422; Louay Fatoohi, American Journal of Islam and Society 40.1–2 (2023):39–76, esp. 52–58. Origen, Against Celsus II.5, preserves the earlier polemical motif of a 'Jew' saying Jesus was punished for crimes, although the represented speaker's historicity is disputed. Tacitus, Annals 15.44, provides a separate early-second-century Roman attribution of execution under Pilate. These sources illuminate distinct historical claims, and the complete Hebrew/Aramaic textual apparatus remains to be collated.

When did the competing claim circulate?

The dating problem becomes sharper when each witness is allowed to speak in its own voice. Justin Martyr, writing in the second century, blamed his Jewish interlocutors for Jesus's crucifixion. Celsus's Jewish character likewise described Jesus as punished by Jews for alleged crimes, a statement preserved through Origen's third-century reply. These are early literary polemics, and the Jewish speaker in Celsus is not an independently verified Jewish informant. The charge of Jewish agency therefore has a history older than Islam, while the particular route by which it reached the Qur'anic discourse remains unproved.

The rabbinic account in Sanhedrin 43a needs a still finer history. The received form speaks of an announced stoning and a hanging on Passover eve. David Instone-Brewer's 2011 analysis reconstructs a shorter earlier tradition of hanging and accusations of sorcery and inducing Israel astray, with the stoning notice and herald's extended delay treated as editorial additions. This is a serious reconstruction, rather than an extant pre-Islamic manuscript reading. The Munich 95 witness belongs to 1342/43. The conjecture that the core ultimately preserves an original charge sheet carries a greater burden than showing

[607] Al-Ṭabarī on Qur'an 4:157, Arabic report collection consulted at https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura4-aya157.html. Its varying explanatory accounts are treated as tafsīr witnesses, not a single independently authenticated event report.

that the controversy itself existed. The earlier hanging-only model also changes how sharply a critic can oppose Qur'anic ṣalb to the later baraita's stoning language.

The hard test is responsibility. Tacitus assigns the punishment to the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate; the surviving Josephus testimony associates Pilate's sentence with accusations by local leading men, though the authenticity and original wording of that passage are contested. Mark 15 narrates the priests handing Jesus over and Pilate ordering the execution. Acts 2:23 can attribute crucifixion to its hearers while describing other hands doing the deed. Qur'an 2:91 similarly addresses later interlocutors as killers of prophets in the past. Such texts show that collective attribution can exceed physical execution. I therefore retain the reading of 4:157 as a refutation of the quoted claimants' boast, while admitting an exact historical and semantic question about indirect causation. The negative wording and yaqīnan remain forceful; the argument must establish what they deny, rather than dilute the denial.

Pass 03 sources: Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 17; Origen, Against Celsus 2.5; Bavli Sanhedrin 43a (Sefaria and Posen Library); David Instone-Brewer, Tyndale Bulletin 62.2 (2011):269–294; National Library of Israel, Munich 95 manuscript description; Louay Fatoohi, American Journal of Islam and Society 40 (2023):39–76; Tacitus, Annals 15.44; Josephus, Antiquities 18.63–64 (textual dispute); Mark 15:1–15; Acts 2:23; Qur'an 2:91. Full bibliography and graded source statuses appear in Pass 03 dossier. No direct manuscript-to-Hijaz transmission has been established.

The man who carried the cross

The canonical Passion story itself supplies the person later substitution traditions will name. In Mark 15:21, Simon of Cyrene is compelled to carry Jesus's cross. Mark identifies him as the father of Alexander and Rufus, an oddly particular domestic detail in a narrative otherwise moving toward the execution. Matthew 27:32 repeats the conscription, and Luke 23:26 places the cross upon Simon as he comes from the countryside, bearing it behind Jesus. John 19:17 instead narrates Jesus carrying his own cross. The variation gives us a question about remembered action and evangelists' choices. It gives us no canonical statement that Simon was crucified. The named bearer and the condemned prisoner remain separate characters throughout the Synoptic accounts.[608]

Simon's sons may have been recognizable to Mark's first readers, though their names establish neither the setting of Mark's composition nor an eyewitness chain. An attractive reconstruction runs from a remembered conscription, through later uncertainty about which man was executed, to a tradition of substituted identity. Each arrow in that reconstruction requires evidence. What we can presently attest is that Simon entered the surviving Greek narrative as an involuntary cross-bearer. The transformative step occurs in a second-century heresiologist's report, rather than in the earliest Gospel scene.[609]

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[608] Mark 15:21; Matthew 27:32; Luke 23:26; John 19:17. Compare each passage in a critical Greek edition, including the distinct treatment in John.

[609] For the historical inference from Alexander and Rufus consult Adela Yarbro Collins, Mark: A Commentary (Hermeneia, 2007), on Mark 15:21. Cross-bearer identity and crucifixion identity remain distinct claims.

Basilides and the second-century substitution report

Irenaeus, writing around the late second century, reports a doctrine he attributes to Basilides or his followers. The supreme, unnamed Father sends the firstborn Nous, identified with Christ, into the realm made by inferior powers. The heavenly figure appears as a man, works wonders, and escapes the execution. Simon of Cyrene, the person conscripted to carry the cross, is transformed so that his persecutors mistake him for Jesus. Jesus takes Simon's appearance and stands nearby, laughing at their error. The reported purpose is the liberation of those who know the heavenly Savior from the powers that fashioned the world. That theological setting matters as much as the recognizable name Simon.[610]

Here the earliest recoverable Simon-substitution witness is not itself a narrative manuscript of the trial. Irenaeus is hostile to the system he describes and organizes its teachings to show their distance from apostolic Christianity. His detailed report still establishes that a substitution story involving Simon circulated by his time, or at least that he believed his opponents taught it. He gives us a terminus for this particular representation. The independent attestation of its authorship by Basilides, the precise words of its earliest teller, and any contact with the witnesses behind Mark remain distinct inquiries.[611]

Irenaeus's version cannot be placed directly inside Qur'an 4:157 as an explanatory footnote. Its Demiurgic account distinguishes the supreme Father from the inferior maker of the Jewish world, a metaphysical framework foreign to the Qur'an's account of Allah as Creator. The scene of Jesus laughing at those who crucify Simon belongs to the same antagonistic, revelatory drama. A Qur'anic reader can acknowledge the age of the report and investigate its possible underlying memory while rejecting the cosmology in which Irenaeus says it operated. That is precisely what a source-critical method is supposed to permit.[612]

The laughing Savior and the body on the cross

Two texts recovered at Nag Hammadi provide a different solution to the Passion puzzle. The Coptic Apocalypse of Peter depicts Peter seeing a figure nailed to a tree and another, living Jesus who laughs at the persecutors. Its exposition distinguishes a suffering bodily form from the Savior's incorporeal, spiritual reality. The Second Treatise of the Great Seth also makes the spectacle of the crucifixion a manifestation of the rulers' ignorance and portrays the heavenly speaker as beyond their grasp. These are related arguments about

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[610] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4; https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103124.htm. The account is a heresiological report, not a surviving writing by Basilides.

[611] Compare Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.3–5, with other surviving testimonies about Basilides, including Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies 7.20–27, whose presentation of Basilidean thought differs.

[612] Qur'an 4:157–158; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4. Distinguish the dating of the report from compatibility with Qur'anic tawḥīd.

the limits of worldly power over the celestial redeemer. They need to be analyzed in their own Coptic vocabularies, with their manuscript and composition dates stated separately.[613]

These visions are useful because they demonstrate more than one meaning of substitution. A second human may be physically executed in one account. In another, the suffering flesh is contrasted with the living or spiritual Savior. Elsewhere a death can be admitted as an event while denied the final sovereignty its enemies claimed for it. The distinctions are especially important for Qur'an 4:157. The Arabic says that the adversaries neither killed nor crucified Jesus and adds shubbiha lahum, an expression whose subject and force have generated divergent explanations. Translating the clause as the detailed exchange of one man for another supplies information that the verse itself leaves unsaid.[614]

The actual Muslim narrative archive

Al-Ṭabarī's commentary on 4:157 is an especially valuable record because it preserves disagreements about how the resemblance occurred. Through Wahb ibn Munabbih he transmits an account in which the people gathered with Jesus all take on his appearance. One is killed while Jesus is delivered from them. Through Qatāda and other authorities, he gives another version in which Jesus asks which disciple will accept his likeness and death in exchange for Paradise. A third report names a figure transcribed as Sarjis or Sergius. Ibn Isḥāq's transmitted story also knows the possibility that Judas was the man who came to resemble Jesus. These are distinct traditions with distinct chains and motives. The fact that they answer the same Qur'anic sentence does not establish a single historical source behind them.[615]

The contrast between Irenaeus and al-Ṭabarī is almost a methodological experiment. The heresiologist's version sacrifices Simon against his will under a theology of divine deception and laughter. Several Muslim versions offer a willing disciple a promise of Paradise. The ethical distinction is considerable. The volunteered substitute enters a prophetic martyrdom framework; the involuntary substitute creates a difficult question about justice. Al-Ṭabarī himself weighs the competing accounts and reasons about how the disciples could have remained mistaken after directly observing a transformation. This is valuable evidence of medieval reasoning about witnesses and belief, independent of whether his preferred reconstruction describes the first-century event.[616]

An earlier historical question is how such stories could arise. The canonical narratives contain a reluctant cross-bearer, an arrested man whose identity is established through

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[613] The Apocalypse of Peter, Nag Hammadi Codex VII.3, esp. 81–83; https://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/apopet.html. Second Treatise of the Great Seth, NHC VII.2, esp. 55–59.

[614] Qur'an 4:157; Todd Lawson, The Crucifixion and the Qur'an (Oneworld, 2009), Introduction; https://toddlawson.ca/pdf/lawson_crucifixion_quran.pdf; Louay Fatoohi, 'The Non-Crucifixion Verse,' American Journal of Islam and Society (2023), https://www.ajis.org/index.php/ajiss/article/view/3143.

[615] Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān on Qur'an 4:157, reports nos. 10779–10789; https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura4-aya157.html. Examine individual isnāds and edition variants before assigning reliability.

[616] Al-Ṭabarī on Qur'an 4:157, particularly his discussion following reports 10779–10789. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4.

betrayal, disciples who flee, and post-departure reports of appearances. It is possible to imagine generations of readers recombining such details to explain the Qur'an's ambiguity. The documented direction of literary influence for any given recension remains to be reconstructed. A story that bears recognizable marks of earlier Gospel scenes could be an independent memory, a reinterpretation of existing books, or a combination. We should grade those proposals against actual dateable witnesses.[617]

The Gospel of Barnabas: Judas on the cross

The Gospel of Barnabas enters much later. In chapters 215–219, angels lift Jesus away, Judas enters the room, and God changes Judas's appearance and voice so that soldiers and disciples mistake him for Jesus. He protests his identity before the authorities and is crucified. A subsequent revelation explains what happened and promises that Muhammad will disclose the deception. The narrative incorporates recognizable Passion scenes, including the fleeing young man, mockery at the trial, Pilate, the thieves, and the burial. Its Judas-substitution is unambiguous, and its unambiguous character tells us a great deal about the apologetic interests of its author.[618]

Jan Joosten's textual study places the likely composition of the Italian original in the fourteenth century, while the extant Italian manuscript is sixteenth-century and a later Spanish witness reflects translation from it. He identifies dependence upon an Italian Diatessaron-related Gospel harmony. The document is thus evidence for medieval reception and creative harmonization. It cannot serve as an independently surviving apostolic witness to the death of Jesus. The name Barnabas evokes an apostolic associate known from Acts and Paul; the surviving work must still earn its provenance from its linguistic and manuscript history.[619]

Barnabas differs from Irenaeus in the chosen victim, its moral lesson, and its presentation of Jesus. Simon bears the cross in the Basilidean report; Judas is the betrayer who suffers the penalty in Barnabas. The medieval author offers a conspicuously Islam-aware account of prophecy. Although both traditions feature a mistaken execution, their convergence at the level of motif establishes neither the truth of substitution nor the existence of a lost apostolic Gospel of Barnabas. The same discipline must be applied to Jewish-Christian writings invoked elsewhere in this book.[620]

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[617] Mark 14:43–52; 15:21; Matthew 26:47–56; Luke 23:26; John 18:1–12; al-Ṭabarī, 4:157.

[618] Gospel of Barnabas 215–219; text: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Gospel_of_Barnabas/The_Gospel_of_Barnabas . NASSCAL, e-Clavis entry: https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/gospel-of-barnabas/ .

[619] Jan Joosten, 'The Date and Provenance of the Gospel of Barnabas,' Journal of Theological Studies 61.1 (2010): 200–215, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flq010; NASSCAL, Gospel of Barnabas.

[620] Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4; Gospel of Barnabas 215–220; Joosten (2010).

Appendix D. Jesus and the Spirit: A Passage Concordance

This index records the complete explicit-reference corpus used in chapters 34–39. It counts 25 occurrences of Īsā in 25 verses, 11 occurrences of al-Masīḥ in nine verses, and 21 occurrences of the noun rūḥ in 20 verses. A repeated title within a verse counts twice as a token. Companion passages and narrative continuations appear separately. Proposed parallels identify places for comparison; they do not certify direct borrowing or historical authenticity.

The named-Jesus and rūḥ lists were checked against the Quranic Arabic Corpus; the title list was checked at verse level. The corpus distinguishes rūḥ from other words formed from r-w-ḥ. Its English glosses are aids, with the Arabic clause controlling interpretation. References to chapters below use the numbering of the complete book, also retained in the standalone supplement.

A. Every explicit occurrence of ʿĪsā

2:87. Jesus son of Mary receives clear signs and support by Rūḥ al-Qudus within a history of rejected messengers. Compare Acts 10:38 and the prophetic rejection pattern. Chapters 35, 38. Relation: agency and mission comparison.

2:136. Jesus belongs to the revelation believers are instructed to affirm. Compare the scriptural succession of prophets; no exact external quotation is established. Chapter 39. Relation: Qur’anic covenant statement.

2:253. Jesus’s signs and Spirit support appear amid differentiated prophetic ranks and subsequent conflict. Compare communal disputes in Acts and Paul without equating the episodes. Chapter 38. Relation: theological comparison.

3:45. The annunciation names Jesus as Messiah and Word, with honor and nearness. Compare Luke 1, John 1, and Jewish anointing traditions. Chapters 34, 37. Relation: annunciation parallels and title history.

3:52. Jesus asks for helpers; the disciples affirm their commitment. Compare the commissioning traditions and Acts’s community of witnesses. Chapters 35, 39. Relation: mission comparison.

3:55. Divine taking, elevation, and the future of Jesus’s followers. Compare the Gospel ending traditions, Elijah, Enoch, and al-Ṭabarī’s alternative explanations. Chapter 36. Relation: contested interpretation and narrative analogy.

3:59. Jesus is compared with Adam under God’s creative command. Compare Genesis 2:7 and the clay-and-breath sign, keeping the Qur’anic comparison primary. Chapters 35, 37. Relation: explicit internal analogy.

3:84. Jesus belongs to the revelations affirmed without discriminatory rejection of messengers. Chapter 39. Relation: Qur’anic continuity statement; compare 2:136 and 2:253.

4:157. The claim to have killed Jesus, the Messiah and messenger, is rejected. Compare the canonical Passion narratives and later substitution reports, with their different claims kept separate. Chapter 36. Relation: direct theological disagreement and reception.

4:163. Jesus appears in the series of recipients of revelation. Chapter 39. Relation: Qur'anic prophetic genealogy; no single Gospel source identified.

4:171. Jesus is Messiah, messenger, Word cast to Maryam, and spirit from God; the verse warns against excess. Compare John's Logos, Philo, and dependent-agent traditions. Chapters 37–38. Relation: title comparison under Qur'anic constraints.

5:46. Jesus follows the prophets, confirms Torah, and receives the Injil. Compare Gospel accounts of law and mission. Chapter 35. Relation: revelation and legal authority.

5:78. David and Jesus are associated with condemnation of wrongdoing among some Children of Israel; 5:79 specifies failure to restrain wrong. Chapter 39. Relation: prophetic moral criticism, not an ethnic verdict.

5:110. God recalls Jesus's signs, support by Rūḥ al-Qudus, teaching, and protection. Compare healing narratives, clay birds, and Acts 10:38. Chapters 35, 38. Relation: multiple narrative parallels, explicit permission framework.

5:112. The disciples request a table; the reading traditions vary the grammatical agency of the request. Compare Exodus 16, Psalm 78, Gospel feedings, and meal traditions. Chapter 35. Relation: comparative cluster and qirāʾāt question.

5:114. Jesus petitions for the table as a festival and sign. The companions 5:113 and 5:115 complete the petition and response. Chapter 35. Relation: communal provision and covenantal responsibility.

5:116. Jesus is questioned about worship of himself and his mother. Compare Christian devotion and the formal creeds as separate forms of evidence. Chapters 36–37. Relation: theological criticism and judgment narrative.

6:85. Jesus is named among righteous prophetic figures. Chapter 39. Relation: explicit Qur'anic classification; compare the broader list in 6:83–90.

19:34. The infant narrative is identified with Jesus son of Mary. Compare 19:16–36, the Arabic Infancy Gospel, and the earlier annunciation in Luke. Chapter 34. Relation: narrative identification and contrasting infancy testimony.

33:7. Jesus is included in the solemn covenant taken from the prophets. Chapter 39. Relation: Qur'anic covenant statement; read with 42:13.

42:13. Jesus joins the recipients of the charge to uphold religion and avoid division. Chapter 39. Relation: continuity of divine obligation with questions of particular law left open.

43:63. Jesus brings wisdom and clarifies some disputes, directing people to worship his Lord and theirs. Compare Synoptic instruction and legal controversy. Chapters 35, 37. Relation: mission and interpretation.

57:27. Jesus receives the Injil; compassion, mercy, and the history of monasticism enter the account of his followers. Chapter 39. Relation: community reception and voluntary discipline.

61:6. Jesus confirms Torah and announces Aḥmad. Compare John 14–16 and Ibn Isḥāq's later Aramaic-mediated reception. Chapters 1, 3–4, 39. Relation: author's governing identification; historical origin remains disputed.

61:14. The helper scene is repeated as a model for believers. Compare 3:52–53 and 5:111. Chapter 39. Relation: explicit internal reprise and communal obligation.

B. Every occurrence of al-Masīḥ

3:45. One occurrence in the annunciation. Chapters 34, 37; compare messianic appointment and the Word designation.

4:157. One occurrence in the rejected claim about killing the Messiah. Chapter 36; compare Passion narratives while preserving the Qur'an's two negations.

4:171. One occurrence in the messenger, Word, and Spirit statement. Chapters 37–38; compare divine-agent vocabulary.

4:172. One occurrence in the affirmation of the Messiah's servanthood. Chapter 37; compare the nearest angels and delegated heavenly honor.

5:17. Two occurrences: the identification of God with the Messiah is challenged, and the Messiah's vulnerability is invoked. Chapter 37; compare the Christian two-natures response as a distinct doctrinal argument.

5:72. Two occurrences: the identification is rejected and the Messiah's own instruction to worship God is recalled. Chapter 37; compare John 17:3 and Gospel monotheistic commands.

5:75. One occurrence in the statement about messengership and bodily dependence. Chapter 37; Maryam's truthfulness and the eating of food belong to its immediate context.

9:30. One occurrence in the criticism of the claim about divine sonship. Chapter 37; compare Christian sonship language while distinguishing metaphor, generation, and worship.

9:31. One occurrence alongside religious authorities taken as lords. Chapter 37; compare Matthew 23 and the Didache's limits on claimants to authority as ethical analogies.

C. Every occurrence of rūḥ

2:87. Rūḥ al-Qudus supports Jesus. Chapter 38; compare Acts 10:38. Exact Holy Spirit designation, first of four.

2:253. Rūḥ al-Qudus supports Jesus amid the differentiated messengers. Chapter 38. Exact designation, second occurrence.

4:171. Jesus is called a spirit from God. Chapters 37–38. Description of the Messiah; distinguish from statements about his support by the Spirit.

5:110. Support by Rūḥ al-Qudus recalled with speech and miracles. Chapters 35, 38. Exact designation, third occurrence.

15:29. Divine breathing in the formation of the human, followed by angelic prostration. Chapter 38; compare Genesis 2:7 and Qur'an 38:72.

16:2. Angels descend with the Spirit from God's command upon chosen servants. Chapter 38. The relation of carrier, communication, and recipient requires interpretation.

16:102. Rūḥ al-Qudus brings revelation from the Lord in truth. Chapter 38. Exact designation, fourth occurrence; compare Gabriel's role in 2:97.

17:85. Two tokens, in the question and answer about the Spirit. Chapter 38. Relation to the Lord's command and limited human knowledge; companion verses 17:86–87 concern revelation.

19:17. The sent Spirit appears to Maryam as a well-formed human. Chapters 34, 38. Agent-like description; the name Gabriel is absent from this verse.

21:91. Maryam's chastity and divine breathing, making her and her son a sign. Chapters 34, 38. Compare 66:12 with attention to the different pronouns.

26:193. The Trustworthy Spirit brings revelation. Chapter 38; read with 26:192–195 and compare 2:97 and 16:102.

32:9. Formation of humanity, divine breathing, and the gifts of perception. Chapter 38. Creation and human endowment; compare 15:29 and 38:72.

38:72. Divine breathing into the formed human precedes the command to prostrate. Chapter 38. An explicit parallel to 15:29.

40:15. The Spirit from the divine command is cast upon a chosen servant for warning. Chapter 38. Revelation-related gift or agency; compare 42:52.

42:52. A spirit from God's command is revealed, followed by the description of guiding light. Chapter 38. Compare the modalities in 42:51 and the Imami interpretation in al-Kāfī 1.4.56.

58:22. Believers characterized by fidelity are supported with a spirit from God. Chapter 38. Group support in a conflict setting; no universal authentication of every claimed inward experience.

66:12. Maryam's chastity, divine breathing, and her affirmation of God's words and books. Chapters 34, 38. Compare 21:91 and the creation passages.

70:4. Angels and the Spirit ascend. Chapter 38. Heavenly order and divine scale of time; class/member versus distinct-agency question remains open.

78:38. The Spirit and angels stand in ranks with speech constrained by permission. Chapter 38. Compare the ranked heavenly scenes of Enoch and the Ascension of Isaiah as analogies.

97:4. Angels and the Spirit descend by their Lord's permission. Chapter 38. Commission and descent; grammar alone does not settle the Spirit's identity.

D. Narrative blocks and companion passages

Qur'an 3:33–64. Election, Maryam's upbringing, the guardianship decision, annunciation, signs, helpers, elevation, Adamic comparison, and engagement with interlocutors. The material through 3:61–64 supplies the setting for argument and shared worship after the Jesus account. Chapters 34–37, 39.

Qur’an 4:155–172. Defamation, the killing claim, elevation and witness, prophetic continuity, titles, and servanthood. Chapters 36–39. Intermediate verses address the wider accusation and legal history; they should remain visible in a complete commentary.

Qur’an 5:46–48, 66–79, 82–85. The Injil and judgment, performance of scripture, communal salvation claims, Christological criticism, and receptive Christians. Chapters 35, 37, 39. The specific communities and acts should be identified before a universal verdict is proposed.

Qur’an 5:109–120. The messengers’ testimony, Jesus’s signs, the disciples and table, and the judgment concerning later worship. Chapters 35–38. Companion 5:111 contains communication to disciples but no rūḥ token.

Qur’an 19:16–40. The sent Spirit, conception and birth, the infant’s speech, identification of Jesus, and the subsequent theological address. Chapters 34, 36–38. Yaḥyā’s story in 19:2–15 supplies an adjacent comparison, especially 19:15 and 19:33.

Qur’an 21:91 and 23:50. Maryam with her son as a sign; refuge and provision. Chapters 34, 38. The son of Mary in 23:50 is an explicit relational reference without the names ʿĪsā or al-Masīḥ.

Qur’an 43:57–65. The son of Mary is invoked, described as a favored servant, and associated with the Hour and a mission of wisdom. Chapters 35–37. Verse 43:57 is another explicit relational reference outside the name/title lists.

Qur’an 57:26–29 and 61:6–14. Prophetic succession, Injil, followers, monasticism, Aḥmad, and the helpers. Chapter 39. The framing verses contribute to the argument without each containing Jesus’s name.

Qur’an 2:97–98 and 66:4. The explicit Gabriel references; Michael is named in 2:98. Chapter 38. The messenger descriptions in 53:5–18 and 81:19–23 are conventionally related to Gabriel, but the name is not present in those passages.

Qur’an 42:51, 7:157, 9:111–112 and 16:124. Communication modalities, the announced messenger in earlier scripture, the shared covenant of costly fidelity, and the Sabbath. These are companion passages for chapters 38–42, with 7:157 also informing the opening Johannine inquiry.

E. What the index does not establish

A lexical match does not prove that every use has one referent. A narrative parallel does not determine the direction of transmission. A later tafsīr explanation is evidence of interpretation whose date and authority remain distinguishable from the Qur’anic wording. The proposed connections with John, the Jewish-Christian infancy narratives, Enoch, Iranian religion, and Imami doctrine retain their individual evidentiary status.

Appendix E. Shiʿi Comparisons and Source-Use Record

Scope of the comparison

The new chapters distinguish historical reconstruction, an attributed religious report, and the author's theological interpretation. Similarity can motivate a comparison without establishing a line of borrowing. James's recognized leadership and Jesus's reported appointment of him retain separate evidentiary assessments.

Family and commission: chapters 12, 19 and 33

Primary comparators are Qur'an 2:124, 3:33–34 and 3:61; Muslim 2404 and 2408a; and Tirmidhī 3713. The Moses–Aaron analogy is read with the biblical chronology of Aaron's death. The thaqalayn formulation in Muslim is quoted according to that witness, with stronger formulations left to their own transmission records.

James and Simon: chapter 12

The James evidence begins with Galatians and extends to Thomas 12, Recognitions 1.43 and Eusebius 7.19. The Imami Simon al-Ṣafā reports are cited through Jesus through Shiite Narrations with the anthology's earlier references. The Ismaili Gnosis essay supplies a modern James-as-Imam interpretation. Neither interpretation is described as the uniform position of every Shiʿi school.

Authority during exclusion: chapters 12 and 19

Letter 62 of Nahj al-Balāgha supplies an attributed Alid account of restraint and concern for the religious community. Letter 53 supplies obligations of government. Both are used as received texts in al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's later collection; independent documentary authentication has not been newly completed.

Scripture and reports: chapters 14, 27 and 43

Al-Kāfī 1.2.22 supplies transmitted Imami formulations of scriptural scrutiny. The book distinguishes normative conformity from historical authentication. A plausible ethical teaching is not assigned an early speaker solely because its content is appealing.

Spirit and extraordinary rank: chapters 6, 12 and 38–39

The existing Jaʿfar and al-Bāqir reports in al-Kāfī 1.4.55–56 retain their individual attributions and recorded gradings. Thomas 12's cosmic praise is given a possible teleological reading; a claim of James's personal preexistence requires further evidence. This constructive reading does not prescribe what every historical esoteric community believed.

Return and apocalyptic authority: chapters 28 and 31

Muslim 156 gives an unnamed commander in its wording. Al-Muẓaffar's Imami exposition distinguishes the awaited Imam, rajʿah and final resurrection. Al-Ṣadūq's baʿth section concerns resurrection after death. Amir-Moezzi's 2018 article is registered at publisher-abstract level as a historical hypothesis about Alid messianism.

Obedience and salvation: chapters 15 and 41

Al-Kāfī 2.1.36.3 is attributed to al-Bāqir and cited with its recorded weak grade. Muṭahharī's Divine Justice supplies a developed distinction between culpability and incapacity. The author's bounded-liability interpretation of shirk remains separately identified and is not attributed to Muṭahharī.

The remaining documentary work

The new chapters are developmental studies. Complete critical editions of Q, Marcion and the Mandaean Book of John have not been collated here. The Gospel-of-the-Hebrews chapter is a study of quoted fragments, not a restored continuous Gospel. Appendix A retains fourteen pilot records; a 100–150-saying critical collection remains a future stage of the project.

Editorial alignment for v0.17: Chapters 41A–41B address the political reception of doctrine rather than adding or altering Qurʾanic commitments. The 178 Appendix F IDs remain stable; cross-check especially QC records for Word/Spirit and for the Qurʾanic reception of Christians (Q 5:47, 5:82–85, 49:13).

Appendix F. Adversarial Audit of Qur’anic Commitments

QC register · working audit 0.1 · 178 claim units · 22 October 2026

F.1. The commitment and the burden of contradiction

In this book, a Qur’anic commitment is a proposition that the Qur’anic text directly asserts, presupposes, or normatively requires. A source critic may reject a commitment, interpret its referent differently, or treat its supernatural content as outside ordinary historical verification. The editor must still state what proposition is at issue before deciding whether the text entails it. That is the purpose of this register.

The governing challenge is stringent. If the author claims that the Qur’an is infallible, and the Qur’an entails a proposition C, then a demonstrated falsity of C challenges that claim of infallibility. The evidentiary work must establish the entailment and the falsity separately. A missing parallel, an uncomfortable passage, an interpretation favored by an adversary, or the absence of independent corroboration is not itself a falsification. Nor is the supernatural form of a claim a guarantee against criticism.

The method resists doctrinal rescue by paraphrase. A restrictive reading of “they did not crucify him” must be linguistically justified. A Levitical or Aaronide-family reading of “sister of Aaron” deserves direct examination on its own evidence, especially Luke’s information about Elizabeth and her relationship to Mary, Qur’anic kinship language, and the priestly setting. A chronological identification of Maryam with the biblical Miriam has its own entailment burden. Earlier understandings remain in the audit log whenever a reading changes. The same rule applies to polemical Christian readings of Qur’anic texts: the disputed proposition must follow from the wording rather than an extrapolation selected by its opponent.

F.2. How to read the records

Claim force · D / I. D marks a proposition directly presented in the Qur’anic discourse, even when conveyed in reported speech; I marks a specific interpretive synthesis or disputed scope. D does not mean historical verification or literal performance of every quoted utterance.

Verification domain · H / L / T / N / P. H concerns historical events or human conduct; L concerns wording, referents or grammar; T concerns divine agency or the unseen; N marks an ethical or legal demand; P marks an attribution of belief, accusation or social description to a group.

Adversarial test. Each record states the strongest immediate pressure point and the kind of inquiry that could address it. Some tests concern whether a commitment is genuinely entailed, and others concern whether an independently testable event occurred.

Responsible chapter. The chapter numbers are editorial assignments for developing the case. They are not claims that every proposition has already received a full treatment. Existing Appendix D remains the lexical and passage index.

Audit state. Every claim here remains OPEN at the standard of final adversarial adjudication. A direct Qur'anic assertion may be linguistically clear while its historical challenge remains untested; a metaphysical claim may have no straightforward historical falsification test.

Same-book repetition. A proposition repeated in several Qur'anic locations still belongs to one corpus of evidence. Separate Gospel or hadith witnesses require their own provenance and literary-dependence analysis.

Chapter 37A supplements this register with a proposed severity framework for the statements condemned in 4:171 and 5:72–73, the devotional warning of 5:116, and the legal charge of fisq in 5:47. The framework is deliberately provisional. Christian creeds are checked by their own authoritative statements, while al-Ṭabarī's and al-Qurṭubī's broader condemnations remain visible. The 178 QC commitments and their force classifications remain unchanged.

F.3. Highest-exposure dossiers

The following eleven cases examine high-exposure commitments. The author's working defenses are stated when substantial affirmative evidence exists; opposing objections and their entailment burden remain visible. For each case the reader should be able to reconstruct both the proposed fulfillment and the strongest historically grounded challenge.

1. The Jewish execution boast and Roman historical record · Q 4:153–158

The first proposition is the passage's own quotation. At 4:153 the People of the Book are identified; the genitive charges in 4:155–156 include wa-qawlihim, and 4:157 adds wa-qawlihim before 'we killed the Messiah.' The third-person negatives that follow retain those speakers as their referent and Jesus as their -hu object. This book reads the passage as a denial of the Jewish claimants' alleged killing and crucifixion. The immediate syntax establishes who is answered; extending the denial to every possible agent needs a separate argument. Sanhedrin 43a preserves an illuminating Jewish counter-narrative of judicial execution. Its textual age and the history of circulation in Arabia are source-critical questions, independently graded from the Qur'anic grammar.

The received rabbinic account includes a stoning announcement and Passover-eve hanging; its earliest recoverable form remains disputed. An intertextual comparison concerns claimed Jewish judicial authority over Jesus, and should avoid treating the surviving Bavli as a first-century courtroom document. The manuscript records Mevorach (2017) and Cole (2021) as modern interlocutors. The reception history of substitution explanations is kept in Appendix C. The Roman execution record belongs with the independent historical investigation of the Passion in Chapter 28.

Source verification: check 4:153–160 in a single Arabic apparatus, retaining the qawlihim chain and the shift from qatalnā to qatalūhu. Examine the Sanhedrin 43a witnesses and any early independent attestations of the Jewish counterclaim. Record the limits of direct literary transmission. The authorial interpretation is fixed for this edition; the historical intertextuality claim remains subject to source checking.

2. The Injīl remains a criterion · Q 5:46–48, 5:66, 5:68

Qur'an 5:46 describes the Injīl as guidance and light; 5:47 uses the imperative wal-yaḥkum, directed to the People of the Injīl, to require judgment by what Allah revealed in it. The historical sayings apparatus can give that command a concrete object. In the present pass, FI-001 has been checked against published Greek Mark 12:28–34, Matthew 22:34–40 and Luke 10:25–28: it supports the one-God and love-of-neighbor teaching at H-B with Q++ consonance. FI-006 has been checked at Matthew 5:33–37 and James 5:12: its truthful-speech nucleus remains H-B while a categorical oath prohibition encounters Qur'an 5:89. FI-005, FI-007, FI-015 and FI-017 contribute further provisional commands through the earlier companion dossiers. A community can begin testing ordinary practice against these recovered instructions while exact historical words and comprehensive legal scope remain graded separately.

Pass 07 primary-language control: Q 5:47 is read in the predominant imperative construction, wa-l-yaḥkum, and in Ḥamzah's purposive wa-li-yaḥkuma. Al-Ṭabarī accepts both and treats judging by divine revelation as the purpose of granting the scripture and an obligation attached to it. The present authorial case for an actionable Injīl remains anchored in both readings. The reconstructed FI teachings must still be graded individually; neither qirāʾa establishes that every sentence in an extant Gospel is verbatim revelation. For FI-005 and FI-012, the published normalized Coptic Thomas text is now checked directly at the target logia, with direct manuscript-image collation pending.

Pass 08 audience and practice result (25 October 2026): sixth-century East Syriac canons and questions document Christian legal treatment of interest-bearing loans and oaths (synod of Isho'yahb I, 585); the Beth Qaṭrāyē synod of 676 gives a concrete Christian adjudicatory forum (canon 6), duties to minor heirs (11), and later marriage and worship regulations (13–16). These establish that communities in and around Arabia possessed operative church law during the relevant wider period. The later canons do not by themselves represent direct speech by Jesus or identify all first Qur'anic hearers. QC-INJ-005/006 remain OPEN for precise audience attribution and scriptural norm testing.

For the adjacent criterion and differentiated-covenant claims (QC-INJ-007/008), the current crosswalk retains the distinction between a Gospel command with an independently graded FI teaching nucleus and a local synodal rule. A rule that burdens adult consent or adds clerical jurisdiction needs its own historical and Qur'anic justification. The 585/676 source headings have been checked; critical Syriac clauses, corresponding French translation and dated transmission remain research tasks.

Pass 05 expansion: the command's proposed practical core now includes FI-005 on Mammon, FI-007 on the poor, FI-012 on generous lending, FI-015 on the transmitted prayer and FI-017 on marriage obligations, with FI-001 and FI-006 retained. Their historical H-B nuclei remain provisional; wording, literary dependence, institutional rules and stronger legal claims carry separate limits. Still required: original-language variant apparatus and individual manuscripts, a clearer account of seventh-century addressees and the force of the 5:47 warning.

3. A named successor and the written messenger · Q 61:6; 7:157

Q 61:6 is a core commitment of this book: Jesus actually foretold a later messenger named Aḥmad. Q 7:157 separately asserts that the messenger is found written with earlier scriptural communities. Their historical burdens survive every uncertainty about John. The author's leading recovery hypothesis associates the promise with the Paraclete

complex and treats the received John 14 as a later competing farewell placed before the older tradition preserved in John 15–17. John 16 supplies successor, received-speech and guidance motifs; the proposed prefatory graft supplies an interpretation of their bearer, including the Holy Spirit identification at 14:26. No currently known Greek Johannine manuscript reads periklytos for paraklētos. The Qur'anic claim is the starting proposition; the Johannine reconstruction is its proposed explanatory bridge and must bear its own textual burden.

Required test: seek evidence of a recoverable successor prediction across dated Greek, Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic material; track Ibn Isḥāq and earlier reception, and identify what text Q 7:157's audience possessed. FI-003's H-D rating concerns verbatim John 16:7–15, while its Q+ assesses functional consonance. Neither rating is a grade on Q 61:6 as revelation. A failed Paraclete equation would require revising this book's identification, not concealing the Qur'anic named prophecy. OPEN.

4. Maryam, ʿImrān and the "sister of Aaron" · Q 3:35–36; 19:28; 66:12

The book's leading reading is Aaronide or Levitical kinship: "sister of Aaron" locates Maryam within a priestly family identity rather than making her the literal sibling of Moses. Luke 1:5 calls Elizabeth a descendant of Aaron, while Luke 1:36 makes her a relative of Mary; the degree of kinship and Mary's own tribal assignment are unstated. Q 3:35–37 puts Maryam within a sanctuary-oriented household under Zechariah's care. Qumran 1QS 9:11 gives a first-century Jewish control for Aaronide and priestly messianic identity, though it cannot identify Mary as an Essene. The adversarial issue is the resemblance between the names ʿImrān/Aaron/Maryam and the older biblical Amram/Aaron/Miriam in Exodus 15:20 and Numbers 26:59. Mere matching names do not establish that the Qur'an places Jesus in Moses's lifetime.

Required test: compare the force of ukht and prophetic-family epithets in early Arabic with Luke 1:5, 36, the Protevangelium's sanctuary narrative, and the report of al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2135); evaluate Suleiman Mourad's Aaronide reading and Nicolai Sinai's priestly/sanctuary analysis. Preserve an explicit distinction between direct Levitical descent, a genealogical association through Elizabeth, sanctuary affiliation and an Essene institutional link. The first is a thesis, the second textual evidence, the third a historical context, and the fourth requires independent proof. Chapter 34 is responsible. OPEN.

5. Jesus and Maryam as deities · Q 5:116–118; 4:171; 5:73

Q 5:116 asks Jesus whether he instructed people to take him and his mother as gods besides God; the passage condemns the religious elevation at issue. Actual Christian devotional behavior belongs in the evidence. Catholic worshippers recite petitions directly addressed to Mary, kneel before Marian images, and ask her for help and intercession; the Vatican Catechism expressly approves prayer with and to Mary (2677–2679) while distinguishing the devotion from adoration (971). This is a real practice with a theological distinction to evaluate. The Qur'anic wording does not recite a Father–Son–Mary formula as the church's official Trinity, so that familiar apologetic rejoinder answers a different claim. Historical relevance requires antecedent practice: Epiphanius reports the Collyridian offerings, and Jacob of Serugh's early sixth-century appeal to Christ through Mary's intercession offers an earlier Syriac comparator.

Required test: collect actual pre-Islamic Marian liturgy, prayers, image practices and critical descriptions by opponents, assigned independent dates. Compare the Qur'anic categories of worship and invocation with participants' latria/dulia/hyperdulia distinctions. Contemporary statues and rosaries demonstrate the kind of practice in dispute but do not supply direct seventh-century witnesses. Chapters 34 and 37 are responsible. OPEN.

5A. The West Syriac / Jacobite Christological target · Q 5:72–75

Q 5:72 condemns the confession that God is the Messiah, son of Maryam, and quotes the Messiah calling Israel to worship his Lord and theirs. The objection that this describes no historical Christian theology is weakened by the actual language of late antique Syriac Miaphysites. In translated primary texts Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 523) defends the position that God the Word took flesh of the Virgin and was born and suffered, and affirms Christ as God. His letters to Zeno and to the monks of Beth-Gaugal document the precise kind of incarnational predication the Qur'an disputes. Philoxenus precedes Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578), whose network gives the later West Syriac communion its Jacobite designation. The polemical Qur'anic wording can describe the consequence of this theology without reproducing a verbatim Christian creedal sentence. Comparable incarnation claims occur among Chalcedonians as well, so exclusivity to the Jacobites would overstate the evidence.

Required test: align Q 5:72, 5:73 and 5:75 in Arabic; consult Philoxenus's original Syriac and Vaschalde's translation in Three Letters of Philoxenus (1902), especially Letter to Zeno pp. 118–121 and Letter to the Monks of Beth-Gaugal; compare sixth-century West Syriac reception, Severus of Antioch and Jacob Baradaeus. A historically real incarnational claim is established; whether the Qur'anic polemic characterizes each Christian position fairly is a distinct interpretive inquiry. Chapter 37 and Chapter 33 are responsible. OPEN.

6. Confirmation of Torah and alteration of law · Q 3:50; 5:46; 61:6

The text commits to Jesus confirming Torah and permitting some things previously forbidden. These obligations cannot be collapsed into absolute preservation of every legal rule, or into an abolition of law. Matthew 5:17–20, Luke 16:17, Mark 7 and Pauline debates transmit different configurations of legal continuity. The Qur'an's claim about permissions is historically specific enough to demand a coherent account of the practices changed and their authority.

Required test: isolate the first-century Jewish law disputes, evaluate redaction in each Gospel and test a permissible-change account against the full Qur'anic wording. FI-002 gives the Matthean composite H-C and the Torah-affirming nucleus H-B. OPEN.

7. The Spirit's identity and agency · Q 19:17; 2:87, 2:97; 4:171; 16:102; 26:193

The Qur'an describes a Spirit appearing to Maryam, supporting Jesus, bringing revelation, and a spirit from God applied to Jesus himself. Gabriel is expressly named in 2:97, while the other verses use titles and syntactic functions. A unified Spirit model may be attractive to a Jaʿfarian reading; that attraction cannot make every occurrence co-referential. Conversely,

insisting upon a single Christian hypostasis across all these descriptions supplies an interpretation not independently entailed by the Arabic.

Required test: complete a verse-level grammar ledger, assess the four rūḥ al-qudus occurrences, compare Qur'anic agency metaphors and follow the dated reception of Gabriel/Spirit identifications. Chapters 38–39 contain extensive material. The ontology remains OPEN.

8. Miracles, infancy traditions and the heavenly table · Q 3:49; 5:110–115; 19:30–32

The Qur'an attributes clay-bird animation, healing, raising the dead and knowledge of hidden household stores to Jesus; the infancy speech and heavenly-table exchange add more distinctive scenes. Gospel and apocryphal parallels differ in date and transmission. Evidence that an episode existed in a later infancy text does not show that it happened, just as its absence from Mark does not by itself show that it did not. In 5:115, God promises to send the table and threatens punishment; the verse should not be silently upgraded to an independently narrated completed meal.

Required test: dated inventories of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, later Syriac and Arabic traditions, and relevant canonical material; disaggregate the announced miracle, the external parallel and the historian's confidence. Chapters 34–35 own the dossier. OPEN.

9. Return, death, and witness · Q 3:55; 4:159; 5:117; 19:33; 43:61

These passages discuss God taking and raising Jesus, a future witness, Jesus's speech about dying and being raised, and a disputed association with the Hour. Traditions of bodily return are influential in later hadith and tafsīr. The Qur'an's particular wording is more complex: tawaffā appears in different contexts, the pronoun in 4:159 has competing referents, and 43:61 has an interpretive and reading history. A theological timeline assembled from later reports must be labeled a synthesis.

Required test: align every verb and pronoun in Arabic; compare early Qur'an commentaries and qirā'āt; document precisely which claims require a pre-Parousia return and which assert only divine elevation and future testimony. Chapters 31 and 36–37 are responsible. OPEN.

10. The communities that inherited Jesus · Q 3:55; 5:69, 5:82–85; 57:27; 61:14

The Qur'an describes Jesus's followers as recipients of compassion, mercy and divine help; it also criticizes innovations and failures in observance. Some Christian-identified hearers receive explicit praise. An account in which Christianity becomes universally and instantly illegitimate after Jesus is in tension with these propositions. More favorable interpretations cannot simply erase the strong condemnations of certain Christological claims elsewhere in the same book.

Required test: map the audience and grammar of each passage, keep the historical identity of Christian groups separate from the salvation conditions the Qur'an states, and test rival chronologies of monasticism and Christian predominance. Chapters 33, 37 and 41–42 own the dossier. OPEN.

F.4. Atomic commitment register

Every QC identifier below is stable. “D” indicates the direct assertion or reported speech of the Qur’anic passage; “I” indicates a contested reading or cross-verse inference. The second letter names the verification domain. “Owner” assigns responsibility inside the master manuscript; Appendix D supplies verse-level lexical cross-reference. Entries are deliberately unresolved at the adversarial standard.

MAR: Maryam: election, family, conception, birth and conduct

31 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 34, 36, 38.

QC-MAR-001 · Q 3:35 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. The wife of ʿImrān vows her unborn child for dedicated service. **Adversarial test.** Identify the temple/service institution plausibly intended; Greek infancy accounts are later comparators, not confirmations.

QC-MAR-002 · Q 3:36 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. The child born to the wife of ʿImrān is a daughter named Maryam. **Adversarial test.** The biblical ʿAmram/Miriam sequence poses a chronological challenge; establish the story's referents before inferring identity.

QC-MAR-003 · Q 3:36 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam’s mother asks God to protect Maryam and her descendants from Satan. **Adversarial test.** This records a supplication; a claim that a measurable immunity followed requires another premise.

QC-MAR-004 · Q 3:37 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. God accepts Maryam’s dedication and causes her to grow well. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish the narrative's theological assessment from independently testable details of childhood.

QC-MAR-005 · Q 3:37 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Zakariyyā is entrusted with Maryam’s care. **Adversarial test.** Compare known priestly guardianship customs and the Protevangelium's accounts without presuming direct borrowing.

QC-MAR-006 · Q 3:37 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Zakariyyā encounters provisions with Maryam, which she attributes to God. **Adversarial test.** A supernatural provenance is asserted within the report; investigate parallels, while separating absence of corroboration from disproof.

QC-MAR-007 · Q 3:42 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Angels announce that God has chosen and purified Maryam. **Adversarial test.** Determine whether purification includes miraculous sinlessness; that stronger doctrine is interpretive.

QC-MAR-008 · Q 3:42 · I/L · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is chosen above the women of the worlds. **Adversarial test.** Test the scope of 'worlds' and whether it requires a timeless ranking rather than election for a mission.

QC-MAR-009 · Q 3:43 · D/N · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is instructed to worship, prostrate and bow with worshippers. **Adversarial test.** Compare Second Temple worship language; do not impose later Islamic ritual forms without textual warrant.

QC-MAR-010 · Q 3:44 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. The guardians cast lots over who will care for Maryam. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish the Qur'anic lot-casting scene from selection motifs in later Christian infancy narratives.

QC-MAR-011 · Q 3:45 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Angels foretell Maryam a Word from God named the Messiah, Jesus son of Maryam. **Adversarial test.** The announced titles are explicit; competing accounts of Mary's historical annunciation demand their own evidence.

QC-MAR-012 · Q 3:47 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam denies that a man has touched her and asks how she can have a child. **Adversarial test.** Decide whether the verse implies a virgin conception as ordinarily read, and evaluate sources that challenge its historicity.

QC-MAR-013 · Q 3:47 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. God creates as He wills through His command. **Adversarial test.** The described creative agency is theological; a specific biological reconstruction is additional interpretation.

QC-MAR-014 · Q 19:16–17 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam withdraws to an eastern place and establishes a screen from her family. **Adversarial test.** The direction and screen are asserted narrative details; locate plausible referents without inventing a town.

QC-MAR-015 · Q 19:17 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. God sends His Spirit to Maryam in the form of a well-proportioned man. **Adversarial test.** The figure's identification as Gabriel is an interpretive step requiring comparison with 2:97 and 16:102.

QC-MAR-016 · Q 19:18–19 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam seeks refuge in the Merciful, and the visitor declares himself the Lord's messenger. **Adversarial test.** The scene claims a messenger's commission; angelic ontology and literal embodiment must be argued separately.

QC-MAR-017 · Q 19:19 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. The messenger announces a pure boy to Maryam. **Adversarial test.** Whether 'pure' entails an all-life sinlessness doctrine is separate from the announced child.

QC-MAR-018 · Q 19:20 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam says that no man has touched her and she has not been unchaste. **Adversarial test.** An alternative ordinary paternity is in tension with the narrative; evaluate the meaning of both clauses.

QC-MAR-019 · Q 19:21 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. The child is announced as a sign to humanity and mercy from God. **Adversarial test.** The theological purpose may be affirmed independently of the event's external historical recoverability.

QC-MAR-020 · Q 19:22–23 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam conceives, withdraws to a distant place, and suffers labor by a palm trunk. **Adversarial test.** Compare Luke/Matthew and later infancy traditions with explicit chronology; disagreement demands explanation.

QC-MAR-021 · Q 19:24 · I/L · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. A voice calls from beneath Maryam and tells her not to grieve. **Adversarial test.** Identify the grammatical speaker only after weighing competing early readings; 'infant Jesus spoke here' is not a settled base claim.

QC-MAR-022 · Q 19:24–25 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is told of a stream below her and to shake the palm for dates. **Adversarial test.** The stream and dates are historical narrative claims; later palm-miracle parallels must be dated before dependence is asserted.

QC-MAR-023 · Q 19:26 · D/N · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is told to eat, drink, rejoice and undertake a vow of silence. **Adversarial test.** Compare forms of abstention in earlier traditions; distinguish what God ordered from subsequent ritual rules.

QC-MAR-024 · Q 19:27 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam returns carrying the child and encounters a hostile accusation. **Adversarial test.** The accusation's content and social context need comparison with ancient birth-polemics, rather than later anecdotes.

QC-MAR-025 · Q 19:28 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is addressed as 'sister of Aaron' and her parents are described as honorable. **Adversarial test.** Positive test: Luke 1:5 describes Elizabeth as Aaronide and 1:36 calls her Mary's relative; assess Aaronide/Levitical kinship with the priestly Qumran context. The biblical Miriam/Amram namesakes require historical differentiation.

QC-MAR-026 · Q 4:156 · D/P · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. A grave slander against Maryam is charged against opponents. **Adversarial test.** Identify the slander's content and earliest recoverable polemical witnesses, while respecting its Qur'anic narrative setting.

QC-MAR-027 · Q 21:91 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam's chastity and the divine breathing make her and her son a sign. **Adversarial test.** Track pronoun reference and agency; the verse does not specify an ordinary biological mechanism.

QC-MAR-028 · Q 23:50 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam and her son are made a sign and given refuge in an elevated place with a resting place and water. **Adversarial test.** Geographical identification and the timing of refuge are unproven additional claims; compare geography without forcing Bethlehem or Egypt.

QC-MAR-029 · Q 5:75 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is called truthful, and she and Jesus are said to eat food. **Adversarial test.** The bodily-dependence argument is explicit; evaluate what theological position it rebuts.

QC-MAR-030 · Q 66:12 · D/H · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam is designated daughter of ʿImrān, characterized as chaste, and associated with divine breathing. **Adversarial test.** Test whether this denotes a named later ancestor or a lineage convention; Luke's Elizabeth link and the sanctuary narrative support the priestly-family proposal without independently proving Mary's precise tribal descent.

QC-MAR-031 · Q 66:12 · D/T · Owner: 34, 36, 38
Commitment. Maryam affirms God's words and scriptures and is counted among the devout. **Adversarial test.** The portrayal of belief is a positive religious commitment; the precise books available to her are unstated.

JES: Jesus: identity, mission, teaching and personal obligations

28 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40.

QC-JES-001 · Q 3:45 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. The promised child is named the Messiah ʿĪsā, son of Maryam. **Adversarial test.** Explain 'Messiah' in its Second Temple linguistic setting; an exact birth-name identification is narrower than a theological title.

QC-JES-002 · Q 3:45 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus is honored in this world and the next and belongs among those brought near. **Adversarial test.** This divine appraisal is not independently measured by worldly rank or ecclesiastical doctrine.

QC-JES-003 · Q 3:46; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus speaks to humanity in the cradle and again as a mature man. **Adversarial test.** Cradle speech lacks support in earliest canonical infancy accounts; compare later traditions without declaring independent verification.

QC-JES-004 · Q 3:46; 6:85 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus is among the righteous. **Adversarial test.** Moral predicates require defining their Qur'anic sense before claims of sinlessness are inferred.

QC-JES-005 · Q 3:48; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. God teaches Jesus scripture/writing, wisdom, Torah and Injīl. **Adversarial test.** The narrative says God teaches him; the ages and modes of acquisition are not given.

QC-JES-006 · Q 3:49; 61:6 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus is commissioned as a messenger to the Children of Israel. **Adversarial test.** Test whether the mission's intended audience precludes Gentile encounters or a later Gentile movement.

QC-JES-007 · Q 3:50; 5:46; 61:6 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus confirms the Torah that precedes him. **Adversarial test.** Compare Mark/Matthew and actual Second Temple halakhic disputes rather than assuming full legal identity with any surviving codex.

QC-JES-008 · Q 3:50 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus is commissioned to permit some things previously forbidden to his audience. **Adversarial test.** A historical claim of legal change must answer which prohibitions, by whose authority and whether earlier texts preserve it.

QC-JES-009 · Q 3:50 · D/N · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus asks his hearers to fear God and obey him. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish obedience to a commissioned messenger from independent divine authority.

QC-JES-010 · Q 3:51; 5:72; 19:36; 43:64 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus directs people to worship the one God, his Lord and theirs. **Adversarial test.** Compare the earliest Christian witnesses with Johannine Christology; avoid importing their later doctrinal synthesis into the reported utterance.

QC-JES-011 · Q 3:59 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus is compared with Adam, whom God created by commanding 'Be.' **Adversarial test.** Assess the comparison's purpose; it does not assert that Jesus and Adam had identical reproductive histories.

QC-JES-012 · Q 4:171 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus is God's messenger, His Word conveyed to Maryam, and a spirit from Him. **Adversarial test.** The relationships among 'word,' 'spirit' and a created person remain interpretively contested; cite the Arabic before importing Logos metaphysics.

QC-JES-013 · Q 4:172; 43:59 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. The Messiah is a servant of God, favored and made an example for Israel. **Adversarial test.** A historicizing claim about Jesus's self-understanding requires independent early evidence.

QC-JES-014 · Q 19:30 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. The infant identifies himself as God's servant. **Adversarial test.** This is direct reported speech in the Qur'an; early extraneous texts offer analogies, not a first-century transcript.

QC-JES-015 · Q 19:30 · I/L · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus says God has given him scripture and made him a prophet. **Adversarial test.** The infancy-time formulation may be prophetic prolepsis; distinguish tense from chronological possession of a bound book.

QC-JES-016 · Q 19:31 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus says God has made him blessed wherever he is. **Adversarial test.** This is an overarching theological claim; location-specific miracles are not entailed.

QC-JES-017 · Q 19:31 · D/N · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus says he is enjoined to prayer as long as he lives. **Adversarial test.** Investigate Jewish liturgical practice of his lifetime; no exact later ṣalāt procedure follows from this verse.

QC-JES-018 · Q 19:31 · D/N · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus says he is enjoined to zakāt as long as he lives. **Adversarial test.** Test the relationship to charity and Jewish poor relief; later juristic zakāt rates cannot be retrojected by name alone.

QC-JES-019 · Q 19:32 · D/N · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus says he is dutiful to his mother. **Adversarial test.** Compare historical and Gospel ethical material; Maryam's moral claim matters beyond the birth story.

QC-JES-020 · Q 19:32 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus denies being made arrogant and wretched. **Adversarial test.** The ethical self-description has a clear textual basis; it is not a complete biographical account.

QC-JES-021 · Q 19:33 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus pronounces peace on his birth, death and resurrection. **Adversarial test.** Compare 3:55, 4:157–159 and 5:117; determine temporal and grammatical implications without silently assuming an earlier death.

QC-JES-022 · Q 19:34 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. The Qur'an identifies this figure as Jesus son of Maryam and calls this the word of truth. **Adversarial test.** The contextual assertion does not settle every disputed textual reading of the preceding episode.

QC-JES-023 · Q 33:7; 42:13 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus belongs among covenantal prophets entrusted with the charge to establish religion. **Adversarial test.** Determine the scope of shared law and covenant; do not infer identical ritual codes for all prophets.

QC-JES-024 · Q 2:136; 3:84; 4:163 · D/N · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Believers must acknowledge revelation connected with Jesus among other messengers. **Adversarial test.** The injunction concerns recognition of revelation; it does not authenticate every Christian writing bearing his name.

QC-JES-025 · Q 2:253 · D/T · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus received clear signs and divinely provided support within a differentiated company of messengers. **Adversarial test.** The description of differences in prophetic rank cannot resolve the precise Spirit's identity alone.

QC-JES-026 · Q 43:63 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus arrives with clear proofs and wisdom and clarifies some matters of disagreement. **Adversarial test.** Identify legal disputes and potential historical parallels; do not presume every later church quarrel was anticipated.

QC-JES-027 · Q 5:78–79 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Unbelief and wrongdoing among some Children of Israel are condemned through the tongues of David and Jesus. **Adversarial test.** Find the closest recoverable Jesus tradition and delimit whom the polemic includes; the charge does not apply to every Jew.

QC-JES-028 · Q 61:6 · D/H · Owner: 1–2, 12–15, 34–40
Commitment. Jesus announces a later messenger named Aḥmad. **Adversarial test.** This is a core commitment of the book; recover the announced prophecy and test its witnesses. An uncertain Johannine identification leaves the named Qur'anic claim and its burden intact.

MIR: Signs and extraordinary works attributed to Jesus

15 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 15, 34–36, 38.

QC-MIR-001 · Q 3:49; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus shapes something resembling a bird from clay. **Adversarial test.** Compare the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and versions of the clay-bird episode using dated textual witnesses.

QC-MIR-002 · Q 3:49; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. The shaped bird receives life through his breath by God's permission. **Adversarial test.** The verse itself makes agency derivative; absence from earliest canonical Gospels bears on attestation, not automatic disproof.

QC-MIR-003 · Q 3:49; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus cures a person blind from birth. **Adversarial test.** Check whether the Qur'anic term entails congenital blindness and compare John 9's narrated event.

QC-MIR-004 · Q 3:49; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus cures a person with leprosy. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish the ancient disease-category from modern Hansen's disease when weighing Gospel parallels.

QC-MIR-005 · Q 3:49; 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus brings the dead to life by divine permission. **Adversarial test.** Evaluate Gospel raising narratives, their literary relationships and independent evidence for a miracle.

QC-MIR-006 · Q 3:49 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus tells people what they eat and what they store in their homes. **Adversarial test.** This reported knowledge is more specific than generic prophecy; identify early parallels and test dependence.

QC-MIR-007 · Q 3:49 · D/T · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus's works function as signs to believers. **Adversarial test.** Their religious interpretation can be distinguished from physical historicity or an inferred divine ontology.

QC-MIR-008 · Q 5:110 · I/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. God restrains some of the Children of Israel from Jesus when he brings proofs. **Adversarial test.** Ascertain whether this describes hostile arrest attempts and whether it excludes a later successful execution.

QC-MIR-009 · Q 5:110 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Some opponents denounce Jesus's proofs as obvious magic. **Adversarial test.** A polemical reaction is asserted; identify historical accusations against Jesus and their dates.

QC-MIR-010 · Q 5:111 · D/T · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. God inspires Jesus's disciples to believe in God and His messenger. **Adversarial test.** Do not equate Qur'anic 'inspiration' automatically with the exact mechanism claimed in any post-Gospel account.

QC-MIR-011 · Q 5:112 · I/L · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Disciples ask whether the Lord can send a table from heaven; Jesus tells them to fear God. **Adversarial test.** Arabic readings about divine ability versus polite request require qirāʾāt analysis before asserting the disciples doubted omnipotence.

QC-MIR-012 · Q 5:113 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. The disciples say the meal will reassure them and make them witnesses to truth. **Adversarial test.** The motive is narrated; the claim does not identify these followers with a named canonical apostle list.

QC-MIR-013 · Q 5:114 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus asks God for a heavenly table as a festival and sign. **Adversarial test.** Compare biblical manna, feeding and Eucharistic traditions without collapsing separate episodes into one.

QC-MIR-014 · Q 5:115 · D/T · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. God promises to send the table and warns of exceptional punishment for subsequent disbelief. **Adversarial test.** The future promise is explicit; a detailed story that the meal has already descended requires additional evidence.

QC-MIR-015 · Q 43:63 · D/H · Owner: 15, 34–36, 38
Commitment. Jesus's mission includes resolving some disputes by wisdom. **Adversarial test.** Which particular matters were resolved is unstated; compare the Synoptic law discussions cautiously.

DIS: Disciples, Jewish-Christian communities and reception

20 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 18–27A, 33, 39–42.

QC-DIS-001 · Q 3:52 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Jesus perceives unbelief and calls for helpers in God's cause. **Adversarial test.** Compare mission and rejection scenes in the earliest Gospel strata; the Qur'an leaves the helpers unnamed.

QC-DIS-002 · Q 3:52–53 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. The disciples declare themselves God's helpers and affirm submission and belief. **Adversarial test.** A later Islamic legal identity is not entailed by the word muslimūn in this reported setting.

QC-DIS-003 · Q 3:53 · D/N · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. The followers ask to be enrolled among witnesses. **Adversarial test.** The prayer is explicit; an exact apostolic roster or ecclesiastical office is additional.

QC-DIS-004 · Q 5:111 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Disciples are told to believe in God and Jesus as messenger and affirm their submission. **Adversarial test.** The sources available for individual disciples' beliefs differ in date and dependence; test them rather than treating Acts as first-person stenography.

QC-DIS-005 · Q 5:112–115 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. The disciples participate in the heavenly-table exchange. **Adversarial test.** The Qur'an's scene is distinctive; ask what its earliest external literary relatives genuinely attest.

QC-DIS-006 · Q 61:14 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Jesus asks his disciples to be God's helpers and they agree. **Adversarial test.** Compare 3:52 and distinct Gospel commissioning scenes; repeated Qur'anic tellings are one witness line.

QC-DIS-007 · Q 61:14 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Among the Children of Israel one faction believes and another rejects Jesus's message. **Adversarial test.** A historical opposition is plausible; identify which actors and epochs the verse actually asserts.

QC-DIS-008 · Q 61:14 · I/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. God strengthens Jesus's believing faction against opponents so they become prevailing. **Adversarial test.** The nature and time of predominance are contested; Christian imperial history must not be assumed to be its single referent.

QC-DIS-009 · Q 3:55 · I/L · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. God places Jesus's followers above his disbelieving opponents until the Resurrection. **Adversarial test.** Who qualifies as a follower, and what kind of precedence is meant, need Arabic and historical analysis.

QC-DIS-010 · Q 19:37; 43:65 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Subsequent factions dispute the truth about Jesus. **Adversarial test.** Map the named disagreements to datable Christian groups only with documentary grounds.

QC-DIS-011 · Q 5:14 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Those identifying as Christians are associated with a covenant and forgetting a portion of what they were reminded of. **Adversarial test.** Identify whether the omitted portion concerns teaching, memory or text; claims of universal manuscript corruption exceed the verse.

QC-DIS-012 · Q 5:14 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Discord and enmity appear among the addressed Christian groups. **Adversarial test.** Compare documented internal disputes while respecting the Qur'an's polemical setting.

QC-DIS-013 · Q 5:66 · D/P · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Some People of the Book constitute a moderate or upright community. **Adversarial test.** The affirmation cannot be erased by treating all Christian or Jewish recipients as a uniform adversary.

QC-DIS-014 · Q 5:82 · D/P · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Among those called Christians are priests and monks associated with humility and sympathy for believers. **Adversarial test.** Describe which encounters and communities the verse indicates; a sweeping claim about all Christians is unsound.

QC-DIS-015 · Q 5:83–85 · D/P · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Some Christians hear the Qur'an, recognize truth, profess belief and receive divine reward. **Adversarial test.** Historical identification of a specific delegation needs evidence; the normative positive appraisal is explicit.

QC-DIS-016 · Q 57:27 · D/T · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. God places compassion and mercy in the hearts of Jesus's followers. **Adversarial test.** This is a positive historical-theological characterization; test the group scope against documented practices.

QC-DIS-017 · Q 57:27 · D/H · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Followers introduce monasticism themselves; they were not commanded to adopt it as a requirement. **Adversarial test.** Examine the verse's exception-clause syntax and chronology of ascetic institutions before claiming a literal founding date.

QC-DIS-018 · Q 57:27 · D/P · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Some adherents fail to observe monasticism properly, whereas faithful followers are rewarded. **Adversarial test.** The verse distinguishes groups; its moral assessment cannot support an undifferentiated condemnation.

QC-DIS-019 · Q 3:113–115; 3:199 · D/N · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Among the People of the Book are upright worshippers who believe and do good. **Adversarial test.** Identify conditions and chronology of inclusion before proposing a blanket salvific status for all confessions.

QC-DIS-020 · Q 2:62; 5:69 · I/N · Owner: 18–27A, 33, 39–42
Commitment. Salvation assurances are framed by belief in God, the Last Day and righteous action for named communities. **Adversarial test.** Compare 5:72–73 and 3:85 using historical context, rhetoric and later exegesis without silently nullifying either.

PAS: Passion, taking, elevation, eschatology and final testimony

20 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 28–31, 36–37, 40.

QC-PAS-001 · Q 4:157 · D/P · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. The passage reports the opponents' boast, 'we killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Maryam.' Adversarial test. The nominated discourse subject ahl al-kitāb (4:153) is narrowed by the accusations and alladhīna hādū (4:160); test the identity and exact period of the boastful speakers. Preserve the difference between reported rhetoric and an attested literal quotation.

QC-PAS-002 · Q 4:157 · D/H · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. The Qur'an denies that those opponents killed Jesus. Adversarial test. The resumed wa-mā qatalūhu keeps the masculine plural subject and Jesus as object; distinguish direct execution, procurement of a Roman execution and retrospective collective responsibility before asserting the full extent of the denied agency.

QC-PAS-003 · Q 4:157 · D/H · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. The Qur'an denies that those opponents crucified Jesus. Adversarial test. Audit ṣalaba against Qur'anic usage and the hanging vocabulary of Sanhedrin 43a; Roman punishment under Pilate remains a separate historical claim unless a universal scope is established from the verse.

QC-PAS-004 · Q 4:157 · I/L · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Something was made to seem so to the opponents (shubbiha lahum). Adversarial test. The passive supplies no agent, surrogate body or explicit object such as 'agency'; test interpretation through the whole discourse and preserve the rival mistaken-identity account as a reconstruction.

QC-PAS-005 · Q 4:157 · I/L · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Those disputing the affair are described as uncertain. Adversarial test. Alladhīna ikhtalafū is an explicit new subject; test whether it includes further parties rather than automatically restricting it to the original boastful speakers.

QC-PAS-006 · Q 4:157 · D/H · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. The denial of the boastful speakers' killing of Jesus is emphatically repeated. Adversarial test. Read yaqīnan with its Qur'anic iʿrāb as an emphatic qualification of the negated killing, retaining the plural subject and the problem of indirect causation.

QC-PAS-007 · Q 4:158 · I/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. God raises Jesus to Himself. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish elevation in rank, bodily ascent and postmortem exaltation as interpretations of rafaʿa and its context.

QC-PAS-008 · Q 3:55 · I/L · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. God says He will take Jesus (mutawaffīka) and raise him. **Adversarial test.** The sequencing and semantic range of tawaffā require analysis alongside 5:117 and 19:33; a deathless translation is not axiomatic.

QC-PAS-009 · Q 3:55 · D/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. God says He will purify or deliver Jesus from disbelieving opponents. **Adversarial test.** Show how the claimed deliverance relates to the Gospel Passion narratives and to 4:157.

QC-PAS-010 · Q 3:55 · I/H · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. God promises precedence to those who follow Jesus until the Resurrection. **Adversarial test.** The original audience, identity of the followers and kind of precedence need historical bounding.

QC-PAS-011 · Q 4:159 · I/L · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. People of the Book are said to believe in Jesus before 'his death.' **Adversarial test.** The pronoun can be read with different antecedents; the register must preserve readings about Jesus's death and each scriptural person's death.

QC-PAS-012 · Q 4:159 · D/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus will be a witness against or concerning them on Resurrection Day. **Adversarial test.** A forensic eschatological assertion cannot be tested by today's historical records, although its referents can be studied.

QC-PAS-013 · Q 5:117 · D/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus says he watched over his people while among them. **Adversarial test.** The statement establishes a distinction between earthly presence and subsequent divine oversight; it does not date a second coming.

QC-PAS-014 · Q 5:117 · I/L · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus says God took him (tawaffaytanī) and afterward alone watched over them. **Adversarial test.** Compare verb use and time reference with 3:55; inconsistent resolutions across these verses are not permitted.

QC-PAS-015 · Q 19:33 · I/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus invokes peace on the day he dies and is raised alive. **Adversarial test.** The text places death in Jesus's destiny; determine whether it identifies an event already passed when the Qur'an speaks.

QC-PAS-016 · Q 43:61 · I/L · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. The passage associates Jesus or the preceding referent with knowledge/a sign of the Hour. **Adversarial test.** Check canonical readings (ʿilm/ʿalam), pronominal antecedent and whether the verse explicitly predicts a physical return.

QC-PAS-017 · Q 5:116 · D/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. God asks Jesus on the Day of Judgment whether he ordered people to treat him and Maryam as gods. **Adversarial test.** The question targets an act of religious elevation; investigate historically attested Marian-directed prayer and practice (e.g. Epiphanius) alongside the Trinity's official formula.

QC-PAS-018 · Q 5:116 · D/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus denies commanding his own or his mother's worship and affirms God's knowledge. **Adversarial test.** A report of future disavowal differs from a historic transcript of the earthly preaching of Jesus.

QC-PAS-019 · Q 5:117 · D/H · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus says his actual injunction was to worship God, his Lord and theirs. **Adversarial test.** This is a specific content claim about his original message; compare monotheistic Jesus traditions without rewriting the quotation.

QC-PAS-020 · Q 5:118 · D/T · Owner: 28–31, 36–37, 40
Commitment. Jesus entrusts any judgment of the community to God's will and wisdom. **Adversarial test.** The petition and its grammar should be examined before assuming Jesus pronounces universal forgiveness or condemnation.

RUH: Rūḥ al-Qudus, revelation, divine breathing and other Spirit language

23 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 6, 34, 37–39.

QC-RUH-001 · Q 2:87; 2:253; 5:110 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Jesus is supported by Rūḥ al-Qudus on multiple occasions. **Adversarial test.** These three Qur'anic attestations are recurring within one book; their repetition does not create three independent historical witnesses.

QC-RUH-002 · Q 16:102 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Rūḥ al-Qudus brings down revelation from the Lord in truth. **Adversarial test.** Identify the messenger's function and compare 2:97; the equation with Gabriel is plausible interpretation, not an explicit proper name here.

QC-RUH-003 · Q 2:97 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Gabriel is named as bringing revelation to the Prophet's heart by God's permission. **Adversarial test.** The verse identifies Gabriel in its own context; prove any universal identification with all other rūḥ passages separately.

QC-RUH-004 · Q 26:193–194 · I/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Al-rūḥ al-amīn brings revelation to the Prophet's heart. **Adversarial test.** The epithet 'trustworthy' links roles; same-person identification with Gabriel remains a comparative inference.

QC-RUH-005 · Q 19:17 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. The Spirit sent to Maryam appears in human form. **Adversarial test.** A created angel, special divine agent and anthropomorphic literary presentation are rival ontological readings.

QC-RUH-006 · Q 19:19 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Maryam's visitor speaks as her Lord's messenger. **Adversarial test.** A claim that this establishes the Spirit's independence from God needs additional theological premises.

QC-RUH-007 · Q 21:91 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. God breathes 'of Our spirit' in the Maryam sign narrative. **Adversarial test.** Track the person and pronoun receiving the breath; avoid identifying divine spirit-language with biological procreation.

QC-RUH-008 · Q 66:12 · I/L · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Maryam's chastity and divine breathing recur with distinct pronominal grammar. **Adversarial test.** The referent of fīhi and its relation to 21:91 warrant grammatical scrutiny before harmonizing accounts.

QC-RUH-009 · Q 4:171 · I/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Jesus is called 'a spirit from Him.' **Adversarial test.** The phrase's relation to the promised messenger Spirit, Adamic breathing and Johannine Spirit is a disputed ontology.

QC-RUH-010 · Q 15:29 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. God breathes from His spirit into the fashioned human. **Adversarial test.** Read within the Adamic creation account; it does not imply that every human is an incarnation of divinity.

QC-RUH-011 · Q 38:72 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. The breathing formula recurs before angelic prostration in the Adam story. **Adversarial test.** Compare 15:29 rather than counting a second independent metaphysical doctrine.

QC-RUH-012 · Q 32:9 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Human formation includes divine breathing and the gift of hearing, sight and hearts. **Adversarial test.** The shared phrase links divine creation and endowment; sameness with Jesus's Spirit title must be demonstrated.

QC-RUH-013 · Q 16:2 · I/L · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Angels descend 'with the Spirit' by God's command upon selected servants. **Adversarial test.** Resolve whether the text names a distinct being or the content of revelation; grammar underdetermines identity.

QC-RUH-014 · Q 40:15 · I/L · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. God casts a Spirit from His command upon chosen servants to warn of meeting Him. **Adversarial test.** The Spirit could denote message, agency or empowering gift; evaluate the immediate warning context.

QC-RUH-015 · Q 42:52 · I/L · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. A spirit from God's command is revealed to Muhammad and called guiding light. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish the revealed message from its heavenly messenger and the receiver.

QC-RUH-016 · Q 17:85 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. The Prophet is asked about the Spirit and directed to its relation to the Lord's command and limited human knowledge. **Adversarial test.** The answer restricts speculation; it does not positively identify the spirit as Gabriel.

QC-RUH-017 · Q 58:22 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. God supports faithful believers with a Spirit from Him. **Adversarial test.** This group gift must be considered alongside individual prophetic-Spirit traditions without assuming identical referents.

QC-RUH-018 · Q 70:4 · I/L · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Angels and the Spirit ascend in a scene of divine temporality. **Adversarial test.** Determine whether coordinated nouns refer to distinct entities; the scene alone does not supply a personal name.

QC-RUH-019 · Q 78:38 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. The Spirit and angels stand in ranks and speak only with permission. **Adversarial test.** The divine permission structure is explicit; the Spirit's ontology requires more than grammatical juxtaposition.

QC-RUH-020 · Q 97:4 · D/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Angels and the Spirit descend by the Lord's permission. **Adversarial test.** A relation to Gabriel and a relation to 16:102 should be tested, not treated as a settled lexical equivalence.

QC-RUH-021 · Q 16:102; 26:193; 2:97 · I/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Revelation is portrayed as dependent on divine commission through named or titled agents. **Adversarial test.** A proposed transhistorical agent common to all three passages is a synthesis, not a separately explicit verse.

QC-RUH-022 · Q 4:171; 21:91; 66:12 · I/L · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Spirit language concerning Jesus and Maryam does not in itself say the Messiah is the Spirit's source. **Adversarial test.** Any model linking Spirit-from-God, an emissary to Maryam, and Jesus's support needs to preserve the grammar of all loci.

QC-RUH-023 · Q 2:253; 42:13 · I/T · Owner: 6, 34, 37–39
Commitment. Prophets share divine mission while differing in ranks and gifts. **Adversarial test.** A universal Imami or Trinitarian theory of Spirit continuity is a reception proposal, requiring its own dating and transmission record.

INJ: The Injīl, Torah, surviving writings and obligations of Scripture

21 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43.

QC-INJ-001 · Q 3:3–4 · D/T · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. God sends down the Torah and Injīl before the Qur'an as guidance. **Adversarial test.** Specify whether 'Injīl' refers to Jesus's original revelation, a first-century teaching tradition, or texts read by later Christians; the verse by itself does not identify a four-book codex.

QC-INJ-002 · Q 5:46 · D/H · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. God grants Jesus the Injīl. **Adversarial test.** Any theory that Jesus received precisely the extant four Greek narratives must account for their later third-person composition.

QC-INJ-003 · Q 5:46 · D/T · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. The Injīl contains guidance and light. **Adversarial test.** Identify what usable divine guidance is asserted even where later textual transmission or interpretation is contested.

QC-INJ-004 · Q 5:46 · D/T · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. The Injīl confirms the earlier Torah. **Adversarial test.** Describe the scope of confirmation before drawing conclusions about the full permanence of every individual legal rule.

QC-INJ-005 · Q 5:47 · D/N · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. The People of the Injīl are ordered to judge by what God revealed in it. **Adversarial test.** Identify a usable core of genuine Injīl teaching as reconstructed by the FI grades, and specify what the Qur'an's instruction required of its seventh-century addressees.

QC-INJ-006 · Q 5:47 · D/N · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Failure to judge by God's revelation is condemned. **Adversarial test.** Assess the judgment's addressees and time; a generalized claim that every Gospel passage remains original is not entailed.

Pass 07 qirāʾāt annotation, 25 October 2026: preserve QC-INJ-005 as the original imperative-reading claim unit. The Ḥamzah reading wa-li-yaḥkuma is purposive, subordinate to Q 5:46, and should be recorded as an additional valid textual realization. The shared norm is the operative purpose of revealed guidance. QC-INJ-006 retains the second-half warning under both recitations. This annotation changes the stated grammar of the full witness set and does not claim an independently verified list of seventh-century Christian laws.

QC-INJ-007 · Q 5:48 · I/L · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. The Qur'an confirms earlier scripture and stands as a guardian or criterion over it. **Adversarial test.** Study muhaymin and the nature of confirmation; neither 'everything in prior codices is authentic' nor 'all earlier texts are worthless' follows automatically.

QC-INJ-008 · Q 5:48 · D/N · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Different communities receive law and a way, while all are tested in their responsibilities. **Adversarial test.** This legal differentiation needs consistency with 3:50, 5:47 and 5:68.

QC-INJ-009 · Q 5:66 · D/N · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. The People of the Book are urged to uphold their Torah, Injīl and what God reveals. **Adversarial test.** An operative command demands an account of recognizable material and how it could be followed in the Qur'anic period.

QC-INJ-010 · Q 5:68 · D/N · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. The People of the Book are told they have no standing until they uphold Torah, Injīl and new revelation. **Adversarial test.** The book scopes the obligation to recognizable divine guidance in the available corpus under Q 5:48, with historical authenticity assessed in the FI sayings register; demonstrate that scope by examples.

QC-INJ-011 · Q 7:157 · D/H · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. An unlettered messenger is described as found written 'with them' in Torah and Injīl. **Adversarial test.** Specify the claimed text, audience and language; an absent identifiable match would remain a major unclosed evidentiary burden.

QC-INJ-012 · Q 61:6 · D/H · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Jesus himself announces a messenger after him whose name is Aḥmad. **Adversarial test.** The named Aḥmad promise remains a central Qur'anic historical commitment; the book's proposed John/Paraclete bridge must independently meet historical-critical proof conditions.

QC-INJ-013 · Q 3:50 · D/H · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Jesus makes some former prohibitions lawful, despite confirming Torah. **Adversarial test.** Any rule for preserving commands must accommodate authorized legal modification; both assertions are commitments.

QC-INJ-014 · Q 5:14 · D/P · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Christian-identified recipients forget a portion of an earlier reminder or covenant. **Adversarial test.** Forgetting teaching is not equivalent to wholesale corruption of every manuscript; define the object of loss.

QC-INJ-015 · Q 5:15 · D/P · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. A messenger exposes much that the People of the Book had concealed. **Adversarial test.** The text makes an allegation of concealment; the exact passages and concealers require evidence.

QC-INJ-016 · Q 2:75 · D/P · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. A group hearing God's words is accused of consciously distorting them. **Adversarial test.** The specific audience and act must be established before attributing a universal fourth-Gospel textual conspiracy.

QC-INJ-017 · Q 2:79 · D/P · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. A group is condemned for writing a text and saying it comes from God. **Adversarial test.** The action is explicit; what documents were produced and whether this implicates canonical Gospel manuscripts is not specified.

QC-INJ-018 · Q 3:78 · D/P · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. A faction manipulates recitation so listeners think its words are from Scripture. **Adversarial test.** The verse can describe oral misrepresentation; total corruption of every written Gospel requires more evidence.

QC-INJ-019 · Q 4:46; 5:13; 5:41 · D/P · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Various adversaries are accused of distorting words from their places. **Adversarial test.** Separate diction, interpretation, recitation and physical codex alteration according to each verse's syntax and audience.

QC-INJ-020 · Q 10:94 · I/N · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. Muhammad receives a conditional instruction involving those who read earlier Scripture. **Adversarial test.** The rhetorical conditional does not entail that he personally doubted; it does make earlier scripture readers part of the discourse.

QC-INJ-021 · Q 6:115; 18:27 · I/T · Owner: 1–5, 14–15, 22–27A, 35, 40–43
Commitment. God's words are described as unchangeable. **Adversarial test.** Explain whether the claim concerns decrees, truth or textual copies; neither manuscript immunity nor total corruption follows automatically.

CHR: Christological disputes, judgments and interreligious ethics

20 claim units · primary chapter responsibility: 23–27A, 33, 37, 40–43.

QC-CHR-001 · Q 4:171 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The People of the Book are warned against excess concerning Jesus and against saying 'three.' **Adversarial test.** Determine the historical doctrines addressed, and give Nicene theology its strongest formulation before evaluating the rebuke.

QC-CHR-002 · Q 4:171 · D/T · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. God is one and is exalted above having a child. **Adversarial test.** Distinguish biological begetting, eternal generation and metaphorical sonship in Christian-language comparison.

QC-CHR-003 · Q 5:17 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The statement 'God is the Messiah, son of Maryam' is condemned. **Adversarial test.** Which ancient confession is quoted matters; 'the Word became flesh' and a simple identity claim differ philosophically.

QC-CHR-004 · Q 5:17 · D/T · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. God's power over Jesus, Maryam and all on earth is invoked against divine identity. **Adversarial test.** Test how divine omnipotence and incarnational two-natures arguments respond to the intended dependence claim.

QC-CHR-005 · Q 5:72 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Some who say God is the Messiah are criticized, and Jesus is quoted telling Israel to worship his Lord and theirs. **Adversarial test.** Compare the late-antique West Syriac incarnational assertions of Philoxenus of Mabbug and the later Jacobite tradition as real historical target language; assess literal wording and broader Chalcedonian parallels separately.

QC-CHR-006 · Q 5:73 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The claim that God is 'third of three' is condemned. **Adversarial test.** Read the formula as a Qur'anic polemic with its own referents; compare sixth-century Miaphysite and Chalcedonian Trinity claims without assuming either is its sole target.

QC-CHR-007 · Q 5:75 · D/T · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Jesus is called a messenger preceded by messengers, while Jesus and Maryam eat food. **Adversarial test.** The food/dependence reasoning must be analyzed against classical divine-human Christology, not caricatures of it.

QC-CHR-008 · Q 5:76–77 · D/N · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Those who worship what can neither benefit nor harm are rebuked, and the People of the Book are cautioned against religious excess. **Adversarial test.** The referent and scope of the rebuke should be kept local to the rhetoric.

QC-CHR-009 · Q 5:116 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. God asks Jesus whether he ordered the worship of Jesus and Maryam as two deities besides God. **Adversarial test.** The specific charge warrants evidence of devotion addressed to Mary, early liturgy and actual behavior; the formal Catholic doctrine and the Qur'anic critique have different predicates.

QC-CHR-010 · Q 5:116–117 · D/H · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Jesus denies authorizing worship of himself or his mother. **Adversarial test.** Investigate Epiphanius's Collyridians and dated Syriac Marian intercession, alongside officially approved prayer to Mary and the doctrinal distinction from divine adoration.

QC-CHR-011 · Q 9:30 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The Qur'an attributes 'the Messiah is God's son' to Christians. **Adversarial test.** The statement corresponds to known sonship language; the polemical scope and intended meaning demand distinction.

QC-CHR-012 · Q 9:31 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Some People of the Book are faulted for taking scholars, monks and the Messiah as lords besides God. **Adversarial test.** Examine authoritative obedience and worship without asserting every priest is literally treated as a deity.

QC-CHR-013 · Q 9:34 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Many clerics are accused of wrongly consuming wealth and barring God's path. **Adversarial test.** The word 'many' limits the charge; historical examples require independent documentation.

QC-CHR-014 · Q 3:64 · D/N · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The People of the Book are invited to shared worship of the one God without partners. **Adversarial test.** The common-word proposal belongs to the Qur'anic theological argument, not to a proof of historical verbal agreement among confessions.

QC-CHR-015 · Q 3:61 · D/H · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Following dispute about Jesus, the Prophet is instructed to invite the other party to mutual invocation of God's curse on liars. **Adversarial test.** Reconstruct the addressees and relation to later mubahala reports without imposing a precise event absent early evidence.

QC-CHR-016 · Q 5:82–85 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The Qur'an praises some sympathetic, humble Christians who respond to revelation. **Adversarial test.** Preserve this affirmative commitment when explaining other passages criticizing Christian beliefs.

QC-CHR-017 · Q 5:69; 2:62 · I/N · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. The text offers conditional reassurance to believers from several religious communities. **Adversarial test.** The logic must be read alongside 3:85, 5:72–73 and 4:171 rather than dissolved by selective quotation.

QC-CHR-018 · Q 57:27 · D/T · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Faithful followers of Jesus are rewarded despite the account's criticism of unsuccessful monastic observance. **Adversarial test.** Avoid presenting every post-Jesus Christian as an apostate when the verse recognizes a faithful subset.

QC-CHR-019 · Q 19:35–36 · I/T · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43
Commitment. Divine sonship is rejected and Jesus's command to worship God is reiterated. **Adversarial test.** Analyze whether the passage disputes bodily begetting, metaphysical origin, or all forms of Christian sonship.

QC-CHR-020 · Q 43:57–65 · D/P · Owner: 23–27A, 33, 37/37A, 40–43

Commitment. Jesus becomes the subject of argument, is described as favored servant, and teaches God-conscious obedience. **Adversarial test.** Keep the rhetorical debate's actual referents separate from speculative identification of the disputants.

F.5. Verse-anchor closure check

The register was assembled against Appendix D's explicit-reference list and its companion narrative blocks. The following reference families are the audit perimeter. A verse can generate several claims, and several verses can support one claim. This is a closed working list for the stated subject matter, not a proof that every possible downstream theological implication has been isolated.

Named ʿĪsā (25 occurrences in 25 verses). 2:87, 2:136, 2:253; 3:45, 3:52, 3:55, 3:59, 3:84; 4:157, 4:163, 4:171; 5:46, 5:78, 5:110, 5:112, 5:114, 5:116; 6:85; 19:34; 33:7; 42:13; 43:63; 57:27; 61:6, 61:14.

Al-Masīḥ (11 tokens in nine verses). 3:45; 4:157, 4:171, 4:172; 5:17 [twice], 5:72 [twice], 5:75; 9:30, 9:31.

Rūḥ (21 tokens in 20 verses). 2:87, 2:253; 4:171; 5:110; 15:29; 16:2, 16:102; 17:85 [twice]; 19:17; 21:91; 26:193; 32:9; 38:72; 40:15; 42:52; 58:22; 66:12; 70:4; 78:38; 97:4.

Additional Maryam/Jesus narrative blocks. 3:33–64; 4:155–159; 5:109–120; 19:16–40; 21:91; 23:50; 43:57–65; 57:26–29; 61:6–14; 66:12.

Scripture, law and social-religious interlocutors. 2:62, 2:75, 2:79, 2:97; 3:3–4, 3:61, 3:64, 3:78, 3:113–115, 3:199; 4:46; 5:13–15, 5:46–48, 5:66–85; 6:115; 7:157; 9:30–34; 10:94; 18:27; 57:27; 61:6.

Register totals: 178 atomic entries in 8 families. Claim force: 146 D and 32 I. Verification domain: H 59; L 18; T 60; N 19; P 22. These counts describe editorial classification and do not assign probabilities or verdicts.

Disclosure of incompleteness. The lexeme sets above are covered through Appendix D and this register. Absence of a direct Jesus or Spirit word in a verse can still leave relevant implications; arguments from later tafsīr, Christian polemic, or regional history may identify further propositions. Such additions receive new QC identifiers and do not alter earlier numbering. A future publication-grade claim of full coverage requires a second independent Arabic-source audit, including direct Qur'anic discourse, quotations, qirāʾāt and scope of negations.

F.6. Priority docket and adjudication protocol

Open questions are indexed by their consequences for the book's claims. "First" below specifies which source question should be answered first; it does not mean that a critic has already established falsification.

P0-A · Q 4:153–158. AUTHORIAL READING FIXED: the wa-qawlihim chain identifies the Jewish boast and the third-person plural negation rebuts those speakers. Source-only task: date and contextualize the judicial counter-narrative preserved in Sanhedrin 43a. Its precise seventh-century transmission is OPEN. The broad substitution debate belongs to Appendix C reception history. The current active publication priority is P0-B, actionable Injīl under 5:47.

P0-B · Q 5:47, 5:68. Preserve the usable-command register under Qur'an 5:47: FI-001, FI-005, FI-006, FI-007, FI-012, FI-015 and FI-017 are currently worked exemplars with claim-unit and historical-grade limits. Investigate original addressees, seventh-century Gospel transmission and the meaning of public judgment under the conditional warning.

Pass 06 source result, 24 October 2026: Q 5:47 wal-yaḥkum is a jussive command whose expressed subject is ahl al-injīl. The working FI obligations now include a material-text control at P75 Luke 11:2–4, a Greek Didache 8 prayer-and-schedule comparison, and bounded Thomas 47/95 Coptic source records. Griffith (2013) documents oral Arabic scripture in the pre-Islamic milieu and later surviving Arabic translations; the identities and practical capacity of specific seventh-century audiences remain OPEN. This update concerns textual attestation and audience plausibility, with the 178 QC IDs and original claim units unchanged.

Pass 07 result: the Q 5:47 variation between imperative and purposive lām has been confirmed from transmitted recitation inventories and al-Ṭabarī's Arabic exegesis. An archive of legal reception should keep Ḥamzah distinct from Warsh's cross-word phonetic realization. The immediate next research task is a source-indexed legal reconstruction rather than a renewed Passion exegesis.

Pass 08 next sources: original Syriac of the 585 questions concerning oaths and usury and the 676 Beth Qaṭrāyē canon 6 on Christian jurisdiction; early Najrān Syriac liturgical evidence; seventh-century community diversity. Keep the theological argument for 5:47 centered on discernible revelation and claims of practice, with FI attribution grades independent. The authorial reading of 4:153–158 remains unchanged.

P0-C · Q 61:6 and 7:157. Keep the named Aḥmad prophecy as a core Qur'anic commitment, test the book's Johannine recovery thesis independently, and inventory the written prediction claimed in 7:157.

P0-D · Q 19:28, 66:12. Test Aaronide/Levitical descent using Luke 1:5, 36 and early Semitic kinship language, while separating the Qumran priestly context from a speculative Maryam–Essene genealogy.

P1-A · Q 5:116. Test actual Marian-directed supplication and ritual in dated sources, including Epiphanius and Jacob of Serugh, and compare their practices with official theological definitions.

P1-B · Q 3:50. Specify the legal relaxations compatible with confirmation of Torah and test their earliest Gospel attestation.

P1-C · Q 5:112–115. Distinguish a request and divine promise from a narrated completed descent and evaluate the meal traditions.

P1-D · Q 19:30–32. Investigate the religious practices described for Jesus: scripture, prayer, zakāt and obedience to Maryam.

P1-E · Q 3:55, 4:159, 5:117, 43:61. Align death, divine taking, witnessing and Hour references before constructing a return chronology.

P1-F · Q 57:27; 3:55; 61:14. Reconstruct the chronology of Jesus-following communities without collapsing praise, division and criticism into one historical verdict.

P1-G · Q 5:72–75. Compare the actual incarnational language of Philoxenus of Mabbug and later Jacobite/West Syriac teachers with the Qur'anic critique; separate real target from exclusive sect attribution.

Revision ledger. A proposal to change an entry must retain the old wording, cite the exact Arabic or independently available witness responsible, date the proposed change and state

whether the shift changes the Qur'an's logical entailment, the historical evidence, or the author's interpretation. The FI catalogue remains the separate grading system for the historical attribution of sayings to Jesus; QC identifiers never become extra Gospel witnesses.

F.7. Primary texts, critical comparators and source-access limits

PRIMARY · The Qur'an. Principal Arabic verse locators and translation comparisons: Quranic Arabic Corpus, https://corpus.quran.com/; Qur'an.com, https://quran.com/; legacy.quran.com for verse-level Sahih International translations. Lexeme-coverage baseline: master Appendix D. These sources permit verse lookup and morphology; this appendix does not claim a fresh critical edition of every qirāʾa.

PRIMARY · Hebrew Bible and New Testament: Exodus 15:20; Numbers 26:59; Luke 1–2; Matthew 1–2, 5:17–20, 26–28; Mark 14–16; John 9, 14–16; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8; Galatians 3:1. Biblical critical apparatus and the dependence map require renewed collation wherever an external historical conclusion is proposed.

PRIMARY · Early Christian accounts for comparative purposes: Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Protoevangelium of James; later Syriac and Arabic infancy compilations; and the patristic material already cited in chapters 27A and 36. Texts must be assigned their own manuscript dates, redaction history and independence status. No uninspected copy is claimed to attest a Qur'anic episode verbatim.

PRIMARY · Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 18.63–64, with its transmission controversy; Tacitus, Annals 15.44; and early Christian letters. These offer historical controls for claims about Jesus's execution, with the provenance and textual disputes explicitly acknowledged.

SECONDARY · Todd Lawson, The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought (Oneworld, 2009). A comparative guide to interpretation of 4:157; new page-level verification of its full argument remains to be done.

SECONDARY · Sean W. Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menaḥem, and the Paraclete," BSOAS 79.2 (2016):255–278, DOI 10.1017/S0041977X16000458. Consulted earlier through the v0.13 Paraclete dossier; review full passages against the new QC-Aḥmad obligations.

SECONDARY · Zahra Mohagheghian, "Mariolatry in the Qur'an: A Critical Review of the Book Mary in the Qur'an," Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 34.2 (2024):257–277, DOI 10.2143/SID.34.2.3293939. Published abstract inspected; not represented as a full-text reading.

PRIMARY · Luke 1:5 and 1:36, Aaronide descent and Mary's kinship to Elizabeth. The original Greek syngenis establishes a relationship while leaving its degree and Mary's direct tribal status open; https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%201%3A5%2C36

SECONDARY · Nicolai Sinai, "The Christian Elephant in the Meccan Room: Dye, Tesei, and Shoemaker on the Source Criticism of the Qur'an," Journal of the International Qur'anic Studies Association 9.1 (2024):57–118, esp. treatment of Q 19:28. Public article text consulted: https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/jiqsa-2023-0013/html. Sinai develops an Aaronide priestly/sanctuary reading while registering the contemporaneity problem for metaphorical sibling labels.

SECONDARY · John J. Collins and James Nati, The Rule of the Association and Related Texts (Oxford University Press, 2024), chapter 5 on 1QS 8:1–9:11, DOI 10.1093/oso/9780198845744.003.0005. Publisher abstract consulted; supports a distinct priestly Messiah of Aaron contextual comparison, not a Maryam–Essene genealogy.

PRIMARY · Epiphanius, Panarion 79, account of the Collyridians and Marian offerings, read through the Catholic Encyclopedia's cited primary locus, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15459a.htm; independent inspection of a complete critical Panarion edition remains pending.

PRIMARY · Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2135, al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba reports the Najrān Christians questioning "sister of Aaron"; the Prophet's reply mentions naming people after earlier prophets and pious predecessors. https://sunnah.com/muslim/38/13. It is a later preserved hadith report and an independent interpretive option, not direct proof that Maryam had a Levite genealogy.

SECONDARY · Cornelia B. Horn, "Ancient Syriac Sources on Mary's Role as Intercessor," in Presbeia Theothokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century), Austrian Academy of Sciences Press (2015), 153–176, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv8pzdqp.13. Published excerpts and the JSTOR article record consulted; this source locates Jacob of Serugh's On the Death and Burial of the Virgin Mother of God and distinguishes a prayer to Christ invoking Mary's intercession from direct prayer addressed to Mary.

PRIMARY · Vatican Catechism of the Catholic Church §§971 and 2677–2679: explicit approved prayer with and to Mary and explicit theological distinction from adoration; https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_four/section_one/chapter_two/article_2.html and https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_two/chapter_three/article_9/paragraph_6_mary_-_mother_of_christ%2C_mother_of_the_church.html. Modern practice is comparative evidence, not a direct early-medieval witness.

PRIMARY · Philoxenus of Mabbug, Three Letters, trans. A. A. Vaschalde (1902), Letter to Emperor Zeno, especially printed pp. 118–121, and Letter to the Monks of Beth-Gaugal, translated text consulted at https://catholiclibrary.org/library/view?chunk.id=000003&docId=Fathers-EN%2F418.philoxenus_three_06_letter_to_zeno.html and https://catholiclibrary.org/library/view?chunk.id=000003&docId=%2FFathers-EN%2F417.philoxenus_three_05_1st_letter.html. Primary translated witness for early West Syriac Miaphysite incarnational claims; original Syriac verification pending.

SECONDARY · Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578), organizer of the subsequently called Jacobite communion; J. W. Childers, “Baradeus, Jacob,” Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Ancient History, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670606.wbecc0121. Publisher summary consulted. Philoxenus’s dates and his role as a predecessor are distinguished from the later Jacobite title.

SECONDARY · Gabriel Said Reynolds, The Qur’an and the Bible: Text and Commentary (Yale University Press, 2018). Comparative bibliography; passage-specific claims require direct text consultation.

EARLIER DOSSIERS · Finding Injil master v0.14, chapters 3–4, 15, 27A, 34–40 and 41–42; Finding Injil: Critical Sayings, Vol. I v1.3, FI-001 to FI-003 and FI-006. Earlier source-access limitations remain in force.

Editorial note, 22 October 2026. This is the first adversarial coverage register. Its decisive claims remain open for primary-language verification and engagement with the strongest well-sourced opposing interpretations. An entry is never declared resolved because it is difficult to falsify, because a parallel is absent, or because it is consonant with the author’s theology.