Finding Injil

What Were the Sahih Hadith of the Messiah?



Aleph Funk

Albrecht Dürer, Saint Jerome in His Study (1514), engraving.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1919. Public domain.

ALEPH FUNK

Finding Injil

What Were the Sahih Hadith of the Messiah?

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

WARM READING EDITION

Version 0.23 · The Magi, the lost isnād and the powers of Rūḥ al-Qudus · 21 November 2026

Version 0.23 expands Chapter 17 with an explicit testable hypothesis that the speaking-infant report concerns a historical event subsequently transmitted and embellished in Christian infancy traditions, potentially through Persian Magi. It distinguishes Infancy Thomas from the Arabic Infancy Gospel, reviews Isaiah and Qur’anic/Imami grounds for considering Persian witnesses, and links Jesus’s miracles to Jaʿfarian accounts of Spirit-enabled capacity. The proposed Magi relay remains unverified, and textual chronology and source criticism remain mandatory. Chapter 16’s v0.22 expansion is preserved.

Complete literary reading edition of the original 0.18a research manuscript. This pass restores conversational prose, personal observations and investigative momentum across

the preface and numbered chapters while preserving the manuscript's critical source notes, witness controls, passages, tables and appendices.

About this edition

The research architecture remains that of the 0.18a consolidated manuscript: the Aḥmad–Paraclete thesis, the Jewish and Christian witness comparisons, the historical Jesus and Jerusalem movement, and the chapter-level source registers and appendices. Version 0.19 addresses the way those arguments are narrated. The authorial voice draws on the original Finding Injil fragment and on Who Are the Quranists?, including the author's admitted assumptions, affection for religious communities, and occasional irreverent aside.

The new prose is a literary revision for author review. Reports of ancient events, claims about manuscript relationships and theological hypotheses retain their original evidentiary status unless a change is explicitly documented. The full body of footnotes and the critical sayings and adversarial-audit material remain in place. A historian's reconstruction and a Qur'anic religious assessment are still different judgments, even when a passage invites both.

This edition retains all numbered and intercalated chapters present in 0.18a, the original fourteen pilot sayings in Appendix A, the separate Critical Sayings Collection FI-001–FI-066, Appendix F's QC commitments, and the bibliography. The original manuscript and its supporting research archive remain the reference for source-level disputes.

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.

Contents entries remain linked to their Word bookmarks; chapter and section headings use navigation styles. Edition v0.21 carries the authorial voice restoration through an additional full-manuscript literary pass. Its source-register access limits and specialist Greek, Syriac and Arabic collation tasks remain applicable.

Voice restoration from the 0.18a research master and the original authorial fragment. Research evidence preserved; separate editorial change ledger supplied.

Contents

Preface....7

PART I · SIZING UP THE SEARCH

1. Aḥmad and the Fourth Gospel....9
2. What Would Count as a Sahih Saying?....14

PART II · REOPENING JOHN

3. John 14 and the Competing Farewell....17
4. Aramaic John and the History of Redaction....26
4A. The Antichrists of John: Who Authorized the Test?....35
4B. Ibn Isḥāq: Antichrist Superstar....40
4C. The White Minaret: When Damascus Entered the Apocalypse....47
Source ledger and transmission audit....51
4D. When Translation Becomes Revelation: ExeJesus in the Hebrew Bible....55
5. What the Greek Lets Us Say....65
6. The Spirit, the Name and the Face of God....68

PART III · THE HEAVENS BEFORE THE GOSPELS

7. Isaiah, Daniel and the Messiah....71
8. Enoch and the Son of Man....75
9. The Ascension of Isaiah....78
10. The Persian Horizon....80

PART IV · JESUS AND THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

11. John the Baptist: The Prophet Before the Messiah....82
12. The Kingdom of God and the Davidic Restoration....88
13. Mark, Matthew and Luke....94
13A. The Gospel of Teshuvah: Luke and the Messiah Who Called the World to Repentance....99
14. The Lost Sayings Gospel: Q, Thomas and the Synoptic Problem....112
15. The Sermon on the Mount: The Law of the Messiah....118
16. Maryam and the Dispute over Conception....129
17. A Child's Testimony and the Magi....138

PART V · FAMILY, MEMORY AND SUCCESSION

18. James and the Jewish-Christian Gospels....144
19. The Jerusalem Church After James....147
20. The Epistle of James and the Practice of the Injil....154
21. The Gospel of Thomas and the Living Messiah....163
22. The Gospel According to the Hebrews....174
22A. To Cast the First Stone: The Woman, the Witnesses and the Law....181
23. The Didache and a Law for the Nations....188

PART VI · COMPETING LEGACIES

24. Paul and Those Writing in His Name....194
25. James's Judgment and Luke's Defense of Paul....214
26. After Paul: Ephesians, Assurance and the Uses of Grace....221
27. The Gospel of Marcion and the Formation of the Canon....227
27A. Irenaeus: The Imam al-Shāfiʿī of Christianity?....230
27B. The Gnostics Under Their Own Names: Justice, Revelation and the Heresy Hunters....238
27C. Celsus and Julian: The Critics Who Read the Christian Scriptures....249

PART VII · PASSION, RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

28. The Resurrection, the Empty Tomb and the Earliest Witnesses....257
29. The Gospel of Peter and the Other Passion Narratives....260
30. Revelation, the Lamb and the Judgment of the World....263
31. The Son of Man and the Return of the Messiah....275
32. Gospels and Apocalypses beyond the Canon....278

PART VIII · JESUS AND THE SPIRIT IN THE QUR'AN

33. From Nazarenes to Naṣārā: Christianity in Arabia....280
34. Maryam, the Word and the Disputed Birth....283
35. The Injil, the Signs and the Table from Heaven....289
36. They Did Not Kill Him: Death, Elevation and Witness....294
37. Messiah, Word and Spirit: The Qur'anic Limits of Exaltation....300
37A. Different Trinities under Qur'anic Judgment: Shirk, Kufr and Fisq....307
37B. The Gospel According to Ibn Masʿūd....316
38. Rūḥ al-Qudus and the Full Vocabulary of the Spirit....326
39. The Spirit of Jaʿfar: Prophetic Continuity and the Imams....342
40. Aḥmad, the Prophetic Covenant and Christian Obedience....348

PART IX · RECOVERING GUIDANCE

41. Christian Law and the Prophetic Sunnah....353
41A. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: The Augustine of Islam....364
41B. The Constantine of Islam: al-Mutawakkil and the Reversal of the Miḥna....368
42. The Judgment of the Nations: Salvation Beyond the Church....372
43. To kill and be killed....376
44. What Were the Ṣaḥīḥ Hadith of the Messiah?....411
Appendix A. A Pilot Collection of Sayings....415
Appendix B. Sources and Selected Bibliography....419
Appendix C. Editorial Record and Work Remaining....437
Appendix D. Jesus and the Spirit: A Passage Concordance....451
Appendix E. Shiʿi Comparisons and Source-Use Record....456
Appendix F. Adversarial Audit of Qur'anic Commitments....458

Preface

I came to Islam as a revert, which means I have spent a good deal of my religious life being told, with varying degrees of patience, which books a sensible Muslim is supposed to open and which ones are best left alone. The Qur'an made that advice difficult to follow when it spoke so warmly of Jesus, his mother, and the revelation God gave him, and then told the People of the Gospel to judge by what Allah revealed within it. I have Christian family and friends whom I love, and their understanding of Jesus is neither a cartoon to be disposed of in a polemic nor a theological problem I can simply wish away. If we are asked to honor this messenger, surely we ought to be curious about what he taught, how his teachings reached us, and why the people who love him now disagree so spectacularly about what his words mean.[1]

In Who Are the Quranists? I spent a rather unreasonable amount of time asking why Muslims will argue through hundreds of transmitters and legal schools to determine what Muhammad, alayhi salaam, said, while treating the religious literature surrounding earlier prophets as if it were radioactive. We have a serious science, however imperfectly practiced, for examining reports in our own tradition, and we apply it because a claim about what a messenger said ought to deserve more scrutiny than a political speech or a celebrity interview. Jesus was also a messenger. If the Qur'an asks us to acknowledge him, why should our scholarly curiosity stop at the cover of the New Testament?

The question that gave this book its title is a little cheeky, I admit: what were the sahih hadith of the Messiah? We usually reserve that vocabulary for sayings attributed to Muhammad, while the Christian Gospels mix remembered teaching with narrative, theology, and sometimes an author's explanation of a scene. Yet the analogy is useful precisely because it makes us separate these things. When Jesus speaks in a Gospel, we may ask whether the wording has good witnesses and whether it fits what we can recover of his historical world; when a narrator or a disciple declares something about him, we have a different kind of testimony. A pious reader can honor both without pretending they came from the same mouth.

I started the project with an embarrassingly neat ranking of the Gospels. Mark seemed the likeliest place to find the older sayings, Matthew and Luke were useful but needed checking, and John, with its soaring Logos language and its reputation in Trinitarian arguments, belonged at the bottom of my little pile. It was the kind of assumption that makes a research plan feel pleasantly organized right up until the evidence ruins it. My attempt to understand the Qur'an's announcement of Aḥmad kept dragging me back to John, particularly to the farewell discourses and the promised speaker who would come after Jesus. Suddenly the Gospel I had meant to distrust was demanding the most attention.

The Qur'an says in 61:6 that Jesus announced a messenger to follow him, named Aḥmad, and John 16 preserves a speech in which Jesus prepares his companions for a coming guide

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).

who will speak from what he hears. I take the possible connection seriously enough to test it against the Greek manuscripts, the history of the Gospel's composition, and the people who first understood the promise in very different ways. This means following the argument into the very book Christians most often place before a Muslim to establish Jesus's divinity. There is a certain irony in being led into the Fourth Gospel by a Qur'anic verse, and I rather like it when the sources refuse to stay in their assigned sectarian compartments.

Once I began following that trail, the search spilled out of the Gospels and into the older worlds that supplied their vocabulary. What did Messiah imply to a reader of Daniel, and why does the figure in the Enochic literature look so much more exalted than a modern reader might expect of an ordinary prophet? What are we to make of Isaiah's divine messenger, the Beloved who descends through the heavens, or the strange place occupied by James after Jesus's departure? The answer requires us to visit Jewish, Christian, and Muslim texts in conversation with one another, while remembering that a resemblance between two texts is the beginning of an inquiry rather than the end of one.

The earthly community matters just as much as the cosmic imagery. James, Paul, the people called Ebionites and Nazoraeans, the writers who collected sayings and the councils that argued over doctrine all participated, in their different centuries, in deciding which memory of Jesus would be carried forward. The Qur'anic portrait of Maryam adds another problem: how do we weigh the remarkable story of the infant speaking in her defense against the other infancy traditions that survive? I am interested in what those communities thought they were preserving, and in the moments when the work of preserving a tradition began to change what the tradition meant.

By the end of the exercise I would like us to have something more useful than an argument about whether the entire Bible is corrupt or the entire Bible is inspired, a debate whose participants sometimes manage to trade slogans without opening either book. We need a collection of sayings with honest grades, a better understanding of the law and moral instruction Jesus taught, and some way of asking what his prophetic Sunnah means for people living now. A Muslim should be willing to test his own preferred reconstruction, particularly when the result might place an inconvenient obligation upon him. There is little point recovering a commandment merely to declare that it applies exclusively to somebody else.

My commitments are Qur'an-centered, which will surprise approximately nobody who read the previous book. They motivate the questions and guide my religious judgments, but the history must be allowed to answer in its own way. A passage can fit my theology beautifully and still have poor historical attestation; another can arrive through excellent witnesses and remain difficult for me to interpret. I will tell you when a conclusion is a textual observation, when it is an inference, and when it is a wager I am making about a lost stage of transmission. The labels may save us both a fair amount of confusion, insha'Allah.

Peace and blessings upon Jesus, upon Muhammad, and upon all the messengers of Allah. I'll let that blessing stand for the many pages that follow, sparing the reader a small forest of repeated abbreviations. The sleeves of my hoodie are literally rolled up as this is typed.

PART I · SIZING UP THE SEARCH

1. Aḥmad and the Fourth Gospel

Let me begin with the verse that sent my carefully arranged Gospel rankings into disarray. In Qur'an 61:6, Jesus announces a messenger after him whose name will be Aḥmad; in John 16, Jesus speaks of a guide who will come after his departure, whose words are received rather than invented on his own authority. These are not identical sentences, and the proposed identification has a long history of arguments, including some very good objections, but the resemblance has enough substance to deserve something better than an apologetics video trading Greek vocabulary at high speed. My working thesis is that the Johannine farewell preserves an element of the prophetic expectation to which the Qur'an directs us.[2]

Here is the difficulty, and it is one I brought upon myself. John is also the Gospel most often recruited to prove that the Messiah is divine, so the Muslim who finds a prophecy of Aḥmad in its farewell discourse has effectively volunteered to revisit some of the New Testament's most difficult Christological passages. I cannot praise its witness in chapter 16 and announce that everything else is an obvious forgery whenever a verse becomes inconvenient. We need to ask what sort of book John is, how its discourses were arranged, and which voices belong to Jesus, to the narrator, or to the generations of readers who interpreted them afterward.

Ali Ataie and the Johannine Injil

Ali J. Ataie offered a rather daring way of taking John's Gospel seriously as a Muslim, which is useful for a project like mine because it refuses to let the most uncomfortable Gospel off the hook. His 2016 dissertation, Authenticating the Johannine Injil, identifies the Fourth Gospel with the Injil affirmed by the Qur'an through what he calls a Sunnite “polemirenic” reading, drawing on al-Junayd, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn ʿArabī as well as the Gospel's historical setting. In the dissertation's abstract, the Johannine Jesus emerges as a sanctified agent of God within a rigorously monotheistic theology. Readers who know John's role in the development of Christian doctrine will appreciate how much theological real estate that interpretation proposes to reclaim (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

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.

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.

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 also have to let the rest of the promise speak. In John 16:14–15 the coming guide glorifies Jesus and receives what belongs to him, while 15:26 already calls the figure the Spirit of Truth. Those details have been used against the Aḥmad identification, and they belong squarely in my case rather than in a box marked 'objections' at the back. If a Muslim reading is going to claim this as a promise of another messenger, it needs to explain the Messiah-centered language that the received Gospel has actually preserved.

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]

Sean Anthony's challenge belongs in the open, since an early Muslim interpretation of John and an original prophecy spoken by Jesus are two different historical achievements. 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

Three words have been circling this argument, and they are close enough to tempt an ingenious apologist into declaring victory before the manuscript has even been opened. John's Greek gives us paraklētos, with its legal and representative associations; Greek also has periklytos, a word for someone renowned or celebrated, while the Qur'an names Aḥmad through the Arabic root of praise. The Greek terms differ in their vowels and histories even though a consonantal shorthand can bring their letters remarkably close. Richard Worthington's 2020 discussion makes the resulting question worth pursuing: would a Semitic intermediary, a Greek retelling of a prior title, or bilingual interpretation in a Jewish-Christian setting provide a plausible path from one form to another? Without some historical pathway, similarity remains an invitation to research and a very poor substitute for research.[4]

---

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.

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 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

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.

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]

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 conjectured graft is a claim about the chapter's present position in the Gospel as much as it is about its wording. 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 call the two farewell accounts "competing" because they appear to place different terms upon the authority of the promised speaker. 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.

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).

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?

Suppose we actually tried to give Jesus's sayings the treatment Muslims give a disputed hadith. Where would we begin? Our Gospels arrive as literary books rather than neat collections of named transmitters, and a Christian manuscript copied in the fourth century can preserve a saying much older than its parchment without handing us a complete list of the people who carried it there. The word sahih in my title therefore commits me to the discipline of weighing testimony, even where the Christian evidence makes the familiar Islamic machinery impossible to reproduce exactly. We can compare witnesses, ask when a saying first appears, distinguish an evangelist's composition from attributed speech, and tell the reader how far each judgment reaches.[9]

One small example explains why the distinction matters. The majestic opening of John, 'In the beginning was the Word,' is written by the evangelist; Thomas's confession in John 20:28 belongs to a disciple within the story; and John 10:30 gives us words explicitly placed on Jesus's lips. All three passages matter to Christian theology, but a collection claiming to recover the teaching of the Messiah has to keep the speakers straight. It would be a curious form of hadith science to give the narrator and the Messenger the same chain simply because both appear between the covers of the same Gospel.

The several histories of a passage

It helps to imagine a saying taking two journeys at once. One takes it from whoever first uttered or invented the words into the composition of a Gospel; the other takes the completed book through scribes and manuscripts until a copy reaches us. The oldest surviving manuscript gives us a firm foothold on that second journey, while the first may stretch back much farther through traditions we can only partially recover. Confusing the dates is an excellent way to make a late copy look like a late saying, or an early saying look as if we possessed its autograph.

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.

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.

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 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.

A Gospel is a book with a literary argument, but the sayings inside it need to be judged one at a time, which means my original impulse to arrange Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John in a reassuring hierarchy was never going to survive serious investigation. A report in Mark may have several reasons to be treated as early and credible, while its neighbor raises a different problem entirely; meanwhile John, whose theology first made me suspicious, may preserve a saying in which Jesus speaks of dependence upon his Father. The unit I need to grade is the transmitted passage, along with the history by which it arrived in the book we possess. The title on the cover cannot do that work for us.

Sources carried by opponents

Some of our best surviving Jewish-Christian Gospel fragments were preserved by men who regarded their original readers as heretics, an archival arrangement worth remembering whenever a quotation looks too convenient. 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.

Modern restorationists deserve the same scrutiny I have been demanding of the ancient writers, however much I enjoy their willingness to reopen an old case. 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

There is a little stage-direction problem in John's farewell speech that has bothered readers for centuries. Jesus tells the disciples at 14:31 to get up and leave, but the discourse continues for another three chapters before anybody finally goes anywhere at 18:1. Perhaps an ancient audience would have heard a dramatic pause where we see an editorial seam, and the different explanations deserve consideration. My reconstruction takes the awkwardness as evidence that a farewell placed in chapter 14 now precedes material that once followed a different arrangement, with the result that the reader encounters one interpretation of the coming guide before hearing the later promise in chapter 16.[10]

The placement matters even if we keep the entire hypothesis under examination. A reader naturally lets the earlier chapter teach him how to understand the later one, so a speech that comes first in the received Gospel can exercise remarkable authority over a promise that may have had its own history. It would also explain the oddity of Jesus announcing a departure and then continuing to talk at length. A useful reconstruction ought to account for both features, while making room for the alternative view that the evangelist intentionally arranged a single extended farewell. At this point we have a question worth pursuing through the witnesses, rather than a lost manuscript conveniently recovered in my imagination.

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.

---

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.

Put the teaching passages side by side and the shift in their emphasis becomes difficult to overlook. 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.

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

---

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.

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 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

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.

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]

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]

---

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, 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.

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 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]

---

https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/world/the-gospel-of-john/26

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.

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 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 trouble with ancient manuscripts is that they have the irritating habit of surviving unevenly. A shorter expression in the Sinaitic Syriac gives us evidence for variation in the transmission, and I am perfectly happy to put it beside the Greek and ask what the difference might mean, but a passage missing because the parchment is gone has not thereby offered an argument for my preferred reconstruction. To move from a Syriac form toward a lost Greek ancestor, I need to know how the translator usually worked and what the Greek witnesses permit us to infer. The direct comparison with images of the Old Syriac wording remains unfinished, which is precisely the sort of unfinished task that ought to stay visible in a book proposing to recover somebody else's revelation.

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

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.

continues to rest on the Old Syriac Sinaitic witness itself, not on an imagined reading in the newly identified leaves.[21]

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

---

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 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.

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 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's discussion also moves into the small but consequential changes in the Father's role and the sender named 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.

---

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.

I come away from these passages with a specific reconstruction, and with some parts of it far more secure than others. The received John 14 sits before the promise in 15–17 and supplies a framework for understanding the promised guide; I propose that it acquired this governing place after an older farewell tradition was already in circulation. The manuscripts and literary relationships must test that proposed direction, while the further identification with Aḥmad demands its own evidence. If the two inquiries eventually reach different conclusions, the manuscript has the right to disappoint me.

4. Aramaic John and the History of Redaction

Whenever someone announces that John was 'originally in Aramaic,' I want to ask which John he means. The words Jesus might have spoken among his disciples, a written collection of sayings, a complete Gospel first composed in another language, and a much later Syriac translation are four quite different things, although one hears them treated as interchangeable in an energetic discussion online. This project needs a narrower vocabulary. The linguistic trail is fascinating enough without asking a single Semitic-sounding turn of phrase to certify an entire lost book.[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 approached John's Greek as a language that might be giving away the shape of an earlier Aramaic sentence, a possibility with rather more substance than announcing that Jesus spoke Aramaic and therefore every Greek passage one dislikes must be corrupt. They identified constructions they thought easier to explain as translations. Their work gives us individual claims to inspect: where is the difficulty in the Greek, what Aramaic expression would have produced it, and would a translator plausibly have arrived at the wording in our manuscripts? That is the sort of experiment a reader can follow even while remaining agnostic about an Aramaic original for the entire book.

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]

I want to keep several Aramaic possibilities alive because they answer different questions. A saying of Jesus may have traveled orally in Aramaic even if the evangelist wrote his

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.

finished book in Greek, and a Palestinian tradition can be recognized through its setting without proving that the whole Fourth Gospel once existed in a Semitic original. The stronger theory deserves a test, of course, but it cannot borrow certainty from the more modest possibility merely because both appear under the attractive heading 'Aramaic John.'

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 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.

The manuscript apparatus is where an exciting idea becomes an investigation that other people can repeat. Greek wording, a Syriac translator's choice, and a modern scholar's reconstruction of imagined Aramaic all have their places, but they come from very different centuries and possess very different powers to tell us what Jesus said. I want the reader to be able to see the difference on the page, including the rather eloquent blank where a witness has vanished. Filling that space with a plausible sentence might make the book prettier; it would also turn my own conjecture into the evidence I was hoping to discover.

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

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.

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, 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

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.

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).

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 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]

An article from 2018 helps me trace how Muslims argued over the Paraclete, although its chronology of the Greek substitution conjecture needs an earlier stop at Marracci. 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

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.

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.

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]

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.

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).

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.

Redaction and the age of a saying

Redaction criticism is an unromantic name for a surprisingly lively question: who put these scenes and sayings in this particular order, and what did the arrangement allow readers to understand? Brown and Urban C. von Wahlde have proposed different histories for the development of John, with multi-edition models helping to explain the Gospel's returning themes and sometimes awkward transitions. Assigning a verse to a proposed edition takes more than noticing that it sounds slightly different from its neighbor. John Breck's discussion of the Paraclete sayings as units with possible histories of their own also belongs in my reading program, especially because the promise is what drew me into John in the first place.[36]

My proposed sequence leaves room for all sorts of inconvenient complexity, which ancient writers were under no obligation to arrange for the convenience of our modern theories. A sentence in John 14 might be older than the chapter's final placement, and a passage in 15–17 could have been revised after that placement. Dating the words and dating the arrangement are separate jobs; even an expression that looks Semitic could have arrived through a Greek writer deeply familiar with Jewish scripture. The point is to recover a plausible history of editorial work, not to invent a single moment when somebody rewrote everything.

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 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.

---

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.

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.

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 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

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.

of the BFBS Peshitta. A reader can check the forms without first choosing a theory of Johannine authorship.[41]

The feminine forms in Sinaitic Syriac offer a small linguistic puzzle whose answer depends on the syntax of that particular text. 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 earlier Christian material: which text was translated, what function did its wording serve, and how securely can its date be assigned?

A late copy can occasionally keep a very old wording alive, which makes its pedigree something to investigate rather than a reason to dismiss it on sight. 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

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.

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 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

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.

Old Syriac and CPA apparatus, together with direct audits of the outstanding commentaries, remains necessary for the historical reconstruction.[47]

What would change my mind? A dated witness or a compelling account of literary dependence favoring the earlier placement of John 14 would do serious damage to my proposed sequence, while evidence for a named human successor in the underlying tradition would strengthen a more ambitious reconstruction. The surviving arrangement already shows that chapter 14 shapes a reader's first encounter with the promise. I have recorded the additional claims separately so that a critic can tell me exactly where the argument fails, rather than needing to declare the whole enterprise heretical and move on.

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

My father puts an angel on trial

My father and I got into an argument about John, as fathers and sons are occasionally inclined to do, and he sent me an accusation with a long Christian pedigree: the visitor in the cave who confronted Muhammad had been an evil spirit. After all, the reports describe a terrifying encounter, Paul warns that Satan can present himself as an angel of light, and the First Epistle of John tells believers to test the spirits. It is quite a prosecution, especially when the documents supplying the rules were written centuries before the accused was born. But then I began asking a question that makes the problem rather more interesting: who was John's author addressing when he warned that the antichrists had already appeared, and what had they said about Jesus?

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* 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

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.

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.

First John speaks of water and blood in a way that leads the reader straight into its argument over 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 supplies the names of Gospel authors as he understood them, which is useful testimony from an early Christian writer with a formidable stake in the answer. 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 is one of the harder verses for my own position: Jesus asks for the glory he shared 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.

There is a temptation, when a violent story has been repeated often enough, to treat every lurid detail as if it enjoyed the same pedigree as the event itself. I want each assertion assigned to its earliest reachable transmitter: the occurrence of the raid, the count of the dead, the claim of prophetic approval, and the particular acts attributed to the people involved. A later narrator may have inherited an old account and embroidered it with a conversation nobody could verify. One reasonably attested episode must not be allowed to authenticate all the drama stitched around it.

The language of a Greek manuscript also matters, even when the story it carries began in an Arabic-speaking or Aramaic-speaking environment. 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 about Abū ʿAfak and ʿAṣmāʾ bint Marwān are exactly where my sympathy for the Prophet makes careful source criticism an obligation. 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

The story of Banū Qurayẓa is a good illustration of how quickly a quarrel over one historian can become a quarrel about the moral character of an entire religion. Qurʾān 33:26–27 describes the defeat of a group from the People of the Book and the taking of captives; separate hadith strands attribute a judgment to Saʿd ibn Muʿādh. Ibn Isḥāq gives us a much more expansive narrative of executions, with the number of men commonly repeated as somewhere between six hundred and nine hundred. Those are different witnesses with different claims, which is why the number deserves investigation before anyone turns it into a slogan.

We are dealing here with several allegations that are easily bundled into one sensational retelling. 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.

Captivity is already a grave claim about another human being; a later report about what happened to a particular woman requires its own evidence. 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.

Five books spread across a table can give a rather satisfying impression of five independent testimonies, which is one reason religious polemics are so fond of enumerating collections. If all five books follow the same transmitter, their agreement tells us something valuable about that transmitter's route and about how widely his account was copied, while the extra bindings on the table add rather less to the case for what happened earlier. To push the story back through time, I need an older branch, an independent witness, or a clear link beyond that common ancestor. This is particularly important when the story is so dreadful that people feel compelled either to repeat it with certainty or to make it disappear.

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.

I wish every religious tradition would subject its favorite inherited stories to this kind of audit, especially the ones repeated to make an opponent look monstrous. 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 tower in Damascus is a fine example of how an ancient expectation can gradually acquire an address, though we ought to be careful about which came first. A medieval structure could not have supplied the original wording of a hadith already recorded in Muslim's collection, and the earlier appearance of the hadith does not settle whether Muhammad spoke every detail in the version that reached the compiler. What the documents show is a religious geography being built out of words, memories, and buildings, while the chains of transmission offer possible routes through which the words traveled. The questions are different, which makes following both of them more interesting.

Whose antichrist?

My father can read the warning about antichrists in First John and take it as an accusation against Muhammad. 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. Kaʿb. 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).

12. **Umm Qirfa:** al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, Ibn Ḥumayd/Salama/Ibn Isḥāq branch; Arabic: https://books.islam-db.com/book/1269/تاريخ_الطبري_تاريخ_الرسل_والملوك_وصله_تاريخ_الطبري . Muslim 1755 provides a different Fazāra-raid account, not corroboration of camel mutilation.

13. **Early Christian witnesses:** 1 John 2:18–23; 4:1–3; 5:1; 2 John 7; John 1:1–14; 14–17; Polycarp, *Philippians* 7, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0136.htm ; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.16, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103316.htm .

14. **Johannine authorship:** Hugo Méndez, *The Epistles of John: Origins, Authorship, Purpose* (Cambridge, 2026), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009689519 ; compare Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John* (1982).

15. **Antichrist and Dajjāl:** *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*, "Antichrist" and "2 Thessalonians," https://www.cdamm.org/articles/antichrist ; https://www.cdamm.org/articles/2-thessalonians .

16. **The white minaret:** Muslim 2937a; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-ʿIlal* no. 2771, https://dorar.net/h/xBZHPkgE?osoul=1 ; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, vol. 1, around pp. 224–228, https://lib.rafed.net/view.php?b_id=1760&page=224&type=c_fbook ; Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Minaret* (1989; repr. 2013), https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748637256.001.0001 .

17. **Maʿmar before Mālik:** ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 9719 (5:321–324), Maʿmar → al-Zuhrī → ʿUrwa → ʿĀʾisha; Arabic: https://test.dorar.net/h/YxNpmuiB?osoul=1 . The wording explicitly places the suicide material within *fīmā balaghanā*. Görke and Schoeler, *The Earliest Writings on the Life of Muḥammad* (2024), Chapter 2, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/earliest-writings-on-the-life-of-muhammad/2D4419CF178C7984D24ECD92806C73F0/listing .

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.

21. **Johannine attribution debate:** Hugo Méndez, *The Epistles of John: Origins, Authorship, Purpose* (2026), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009689519 ; M. David Litwa's September 2026 review, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flag076 ; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.16, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103316.htm .

22. **Textual variant of 1 John 4:3:** *NET Bible* text-critical discussion and biblical commentary at https://bible.org/book/export/html/2073 ; compare the SBLGNT and 1 John 4:2–3.

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 → Kaʿb'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 Kaʿb al-Aḥbār from other individuals named Kaʿb; 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 seen Muslims greet someone with a small bow, a perfectly ordinary gesture of courtesy that would puzzle anybody determined to interpret every inclination of the spine as an act of worship. Nobody present thinks the visitor has become a god. Yet when Abraham bows before three strangers in Genesis 18:2, the scene enters centuries of argument over whether he has encountered the Trinity, a group of angels, or divine authority conveyed through a messenger. Before we invite a gesture to carry an entire metaphysics, it is worth remembering how ordinary people behave when somebody important comes through the door.

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 call the habit ExeJesus, which is a joke with a fairly serious target. The interpreter begins with the Christology he has already decided is true and then finds a fully developed version of it hiding inside a Hebrew passage written centuries earlier, perhaps with a translator lending a helpful hand. Sometimes the New Testament authors really are making ambitious theological readings of earlier scripture, and we should examine those as arguments in their own right. Deliberate mistranslation is another claim, requiring its own witnesses and evidence. Putting the two together may be convenient for a polemic, but convenience is what got us into this investigation in the first place.

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 Christian reader might still recognize the three visitors as a manifestation of the Trinity. 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 also tells a story of an extraordinary conception, which deserves to be read on its own terms before the genealogies are reconciled. 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]

John's use of Isaiah makes a serious theological claim, and we should hear that claim before deciding how much of Isaiah's original language it carries. 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]

Here an ancient piece of scriptural interpretation comes into view almost as the interpreter is doing it. 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.

1. Genesis 18–19; Rashi on Genesis 18:3, https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Genesis.18.3 ; Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Metzia* 86b, https://www.sefaria.org/Bava_Metzia.86b ; Jean-Louis Ska, “YHWH Visits Abraham and Sarah at Home: A Theophany Left Unspoken” (2026), https://www.thetorah.com/article/yhwh-visits-abraham-and-sarah-at-home-a-theophany-left-unspoken . The Samaritan priority proposal remains contested.

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 .

3. Genesis 3:15: comparative Hebrew, Septuagint, and Latin witnesses, https://adfonteslibrary.org/genesis-3 ; “Resisting Wirkungsgeschichte: Bible Translators as Agents ...” (2024), https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/jbr-2023-0021/html .

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 .

5. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 56–62, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01285.htm ; his reading explicitly distinguishes one principal divine agent and two angels.

6. Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18: From Theophany to Trinitarian Symbolism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23 (2015): 245–272, https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2015.0020 .

7. Genesis 22:8, Hebrew and Greek lexical notes, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Gen&chapter=22&theme=false&verse=8 ; UBS translation commentary, https://tips.translation.bible/story/translation-commentary-on-genesis-228/ .

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 a theological argument reaches us in English, the translator has already made several decisions on our behalf, sometimes while appearing to do nothing more interesting than choosing an article or capitalizing a noun. Was the claim 'God,' 'a god,' or something like 'divine'? Does a sentence speak of unity of purpose or identity of essence? Greek gives us grammatical details the English debate can conceal, which is why I want to read the passages recruited for Jesus's divinity with the same care we would give a contested legal hadith. The resulting Unitarian readings may persuade us to different degrees; their job here is to widen the field of honest interpretation.[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 narrator has Thomas address Jesus directly, a detail easy to lose when the verse is quoted in isolation. 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.

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.

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.

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]

An ancient reader had already noticed the grammatical problem that modern Unitarian interpreters keep raising. Origen's wider theology must still be read on its own terms. His

---

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.

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.

A change in the order of argument

I find the Greek most interesting where it allows an interpreter to recognize 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.

The same Greek construction can enter an argument over doctrine while telling us much less about the precise words Jesus spoke. 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

When Philip asks Jesus to show him the Father, John 14 has Jesus answer that seeing him is seeing the Father, a statement which has powered an extraordinary amount of theology and an equal amount of controversy. Read a little further, though, and Jesus describes his words and works as coming from the Father dwelling in him. I am interested in that combination because divine guidance might be made visible through a servant whose authority depends entirely upon Allah, while a later reader could build a larger metaphysical claim upon the same scene. The question is how the Gospel itself handles representation, presence, and dependence.[51]

When I say theophanic, I mean the appearance of divine presence through an appointed 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 offers an odd sort of messenger, entrusted with God's Name and with enough authority that disobeying him has consequences more serious than ignoring an ordinary courier. The figure receives his commission from God, and yet other biblical scenes can move almost seamlessly from the appearance of an angel to speech attributed to God Himself. A reader encountering divine words on the lips of an agent therefore has some ancient precedent for the difficulty we are studying in John: how far does representation go, and what exactly is being claimed about the one who represents?

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.

I began this discussion wondering how a Qur'an that resists Christian theological excess could give the Spirit so much religious work to do. 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.

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.

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 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 tawḥīd rule I am using throughout the book begins with the sovereignty and uncreated existence of 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.

With that rule in hand, John's language becomes a set of passages we can test rather than a theological verdict already delivered. 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

Why does the Qur'an call Jesus al-Masīḥ? It could have named him simply as a prophet and messenger, yet it preserves a title loaded with the hopes, disappointments, and political memories of ancient Israel. The first task, then, is to follow that word back into Isaiah and Daniel, where an anointed person may be a king, a chosen agent, or a figure associated with the restoration of God's people. The traditions are more varied than the English word 'Messiah' allows us to see at a glance, and their variety is precisely what makes the Qur'anic choice interesting.[56]

Isaiah is a rather crowded name for a book that took shape across a long history. We have the eighth-century prophet ben Amoz, exilic material often discussed under the heading Deutero-Isaiah, and later passages concerned with restoration, and even the earlier chapters pose questions about how their present arrangement came together. This matters when somebody quotes a passage as a window into the world of Jesus or of the first Christians, because the date of the words and the date of the book that eventually contained them need their own consideration. A revelation can be cherished as one book by its community while giving the historian several centuries of work to do.

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]

---

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.

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.

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 question of theophany becomes especially interesting when the Messiah is described as an appointed bearer of Allah's glory. 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 would have made a rather troublesome visitor to any institution convinced that possessing the right sanctuary and the approved vocabulary guaranteed God's favor. In the temple sermon, his test is painfully practical: protect the stranger, orphan, and widow,

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.

refuse innocent bloodshed, and cease trusting the sacred building as if its walls could absolve its occupants (Jeremiah 7:5–10, 22–23). He places obedience before sacrifice, which is the sort of distinction that threatens a thriving religious bureaucracy. Whatever title a later teacher possesses, the temple cannot turn murder into fidelity.

Jeremiah's accusation grows more painful when he asks whether worshipers can treat the sanctuary as protection for their wrongdoing. 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 religious conclusion here is simple enough to say plainly. 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 Enochic literature is one of those places where an innocent-looking footnote can lead a person into a completely different conception of the heavens. There are works called 1, 2, and 3 Enoch, but those tidy numbers were assigned to texts with different languages, dates, and religious worlds; one should be careful about putting them together as though a single author were delivering three consecutive volumes. I am following them because they preserve ways of speaking about heavenly agents, an Elect One and a Son of Man, that make the later arguments about Jesus look considerably less sudden.[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.

Mark's title Son of Man acquires a considerably richer history once these earlier Jewish materials are on the table. 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.

Animal metamorphosis and Qurʾānic judgment

The Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 85–90) offers another kind of Enochic comparison. Its dream makes the patriarchs cattle, Israel sheep, and oppressive nations predatory animals and birds. At the close, the creatures gather before the Lord of the Sheep and their generations become white cattle (90:33–38). Animal identity here carries a theological judgment upon human history, with transformation expressing the restoration envisioned at its end. This symbolism gives a useful Jewish apocalyptic setting for reading the Qurʾān’s command to Sabbath transgressors, “Be apes, despised” (2:65; 7:166). The Qurʾānic episode concerns punishment for a particular transgression; Enoch’s animals symbolize successive peoples throughout history. The comparison establishes a shared possibility within

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.

scriptural language, without asserting literary borrowing or an Enochic account of the Sabbath punishment.

The interpretive choice appears within early Muslim exegesis. Al-Ṭabarī records two reports from Mujāhid that understand the apes figuratively: their hearts were transformed, and the image is a parable comparable to the donkey bearing books (Qurʾān 62:5). Al-Ṭabarī rejects that explanation in favor of a bodily transformation. Both positions therefore belong in the reception history. The question for this book is how divine judgment can be spoken through animal forms, and whether a specific scriptural passage requires a physical metamorphosis. The Enochic comparison clarifies the symbolic vocabulary while leaving the Qurʾānic case to be decided by its own context.

Textual controls: 1 Enoch 85–90, especially 90:33–38; Qurʾān 2:65, 7:166 and 62:5; al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on 2:65 (reports 1143–1144 and the ensuing objection); Elena L. Dugan, The Apocalypse of the Birds (2023), for the date and composition of the Animal Apocalypse. This paragraph preserves the addition in the 2 November PDF.

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.

This reading matters because exaltation is the problem we have been following from Daniel through the Gospel of John. 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.

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]

Enoch gives us another way to hear the extraordinary statement about seeing the Father in John 14:9. An exalted messenger may carry glory that comes from God, so that encountering the messenger is also encountering something God has made visible through

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.

him. That does a great deal of work for a theory of representation without requiring the visionary to become identical with the source of the glory. We should keep the distinction available when Christian interpreters start arguing about how much metaphysics can be placed inside the verb 'see.'

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.

Aḥer's strange appearance in this tradition shows how early interpreters sometimes placed a limit around even the most exalted heavenly figure. 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.

Isaiah is about to take us on a journey through the heavens, where the same problem comes back in explicitly Christian clothing.

9. The Ascension of Isaiah

Isaiah's journey through the heavens takes us into a world where glory has ranks, angels act as guides, and a figure called the Beloved receives a commission that carries him down toward the earth. The work we call the Ascension of Isaiah also contains a martyrdom story, and its surviving versions do not always include the same material, so its history must be traced rather than smoothed into one ancient book. For my inquiry, the attraction lies in the strange combination of a preexistent heavenly figure and his evident dependence on the Most High, a combination that deserves attention before we decide what later Christian exaltation language must mean.[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

In the Ascension of Isaiah, the prophet does what most of us can only do in an elaborate thought experiment: he travels upward through increasingly glorious heavens with an angel explaining what he sees. His own appearance changes as he rises, while the beings around him occupy ordered stations of worship and authority. The visionary world is not an undifferentiated blaze of divinity; its inhabitants have relationships and ranks, which matters when we ask whether a radiant heavenly agent is being worshiped as God or honored within the order God established.

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]

---

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 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.

The resemblance to John lies in this ordered system of heavenly authority and delegated speech. 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 can study this heavenly drama with some fascination without making its entire cosmology my own 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 takes us back from the visionary heavens to Jesus's earthly life and its family traditions. 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 Ascension gives the investigation two additional pieces of evidence, though it cannot settle what Jesus himself taught. 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 has already given us a wonderful example of how religious language can move into imperial history: Cyrus, a Persian king, is called God's anointed in 45:1. He is hardly the person a later Christian reader would choose as the prototype of an incarnate deity, which is precisely why the verse is so useful. It places the vocabulary of divine appointment in the world of rulers, exiles, and people hoping to go home. The Iranian material that follows raises the possibility of further contact between religious worlds, but the Cyrus passage provides a starting point whose words we can examine without inventing a secret conference of Magi behind every Jewish prophecy.[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

I am fond of discovering an apparent Persian echo in a Christian story, but a resemblance between two myths is a rather cheap ticket to a grand theory of cultural transmission. People facing death, judgment, good and evil, or the mystery of heavenly messengers can invent parallel solutions while living far apart; borrowing becomes a stronger explanation when we can locate contact, arrange the witnesses in time, and identify details peculiar enough to suggest a recognizable route. That gives the Persian horizon its proper interest. We are looking for places where people and texts could have met, which is a much more satisfying discovery than drawing arrows between whichever cosmologies happen to resemble each other.

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]

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.

Before inviting Persia into every corner of Christian theology, we should see what the Iranian texts actually say and when they were composed. 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 stories offer a more tangible meeting place between these traditions than a free-floating resemblance in cosmology. 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 extraordinary infancy event could have helped carry a tradition through that setting. Its status remains a proposed route of testimony.

Under the broad heading of a Persian horizon, two quite different lines of inquiry now come into focus. 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 submitting to the baptism preached by another prophet, which is a rather unusual way for a book to introduce someone whom later generations would describe as the eternal Son. John the Baptist already had disciples, a program of repentance, and enough public importance to draw attention from the authorities; Jesus walks into a movement with a history before his own ministry begins. If we hope to recover the teaching of Jesus, we ought to know something about the prophet who received him and the expectations surrounding them both.[66]

John the Baptist deserves better than the role of a theological signpost pointing toward someone more important. The Qur'an praises Yaḥyā in his own right, with a prophetic character and righteousness that belong to Allah's guidance, and the historical sources give him a following and a moral program before Jesus enters the story. If the Messiah learned within or alongside that movement, the setting may illuminate his preaching; even where the relation remains disputed, the Baptist's independent witness deserves to be heard.

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]

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.

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]

---

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

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.

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 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]

A priestly pedigree and a Davidic hope can turn a small movement into a political concern, but they leave the question of resistance unsettled. 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

---

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.

Qumran a missing school at which every later prophet must have studied. No source 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.

The Qumran library tells us that Jewish hopes of restoration had considerable variety before the emergence of Christianity. 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 is an accommodating word: it may refer to possessions, teaching, office, or something more complicated 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]

---

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]

When I bring the Prophet's household into the comparison, Jesus's family begins to look like a historical question of its own. A relative may preserve teaching, receive a recognized responsibility, lead during persecution, or later be said to possess a formal appointment, and each possibility has a different history to recover. James Tabor is right to make the family visible again, but an attractive genealogy will not tell us by itself which office, if any, was conferred. Shiʿi debates give me a useful language for asking about designation and learning, provided I remember that the Christian witnesses still have to answer for themselves.

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]

---

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.

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 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

When Jesus promises his disciples thrones from which they will judge the tribes of Israel, I begin wondering what sort of kingdom everyone thought they were preparing for. Matthew 19:28 preserves the image, while Luke places related material beside a warning that leadership among his followers should be understood through service. Those sayings take us into the political imagination of a people under imperial rule, longing for restoration and arguing over who would have authority when God acted. The first Christians were having a succession debate before later theologians had settled what kind of being the Messiah was.[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.

---

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 gives us an early piece of the Davidic puzzle when Romans 1 describes Jesus as descended from David according to the flesh and associates his status with the Spirit of holiness and the resurrection. The combination is fascinating for anyone trying to reconstruct a Jewish messianic expectation before later Christian theology has completed its work, because ancestry and exaltation appear together in a text earlier than our surviving Gospel manuscripts. We possess Paul's formulation, or perhaps a formula he inherited; we have no family registry with which to inspect every link in the genealogy.[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

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 Shiʿi word naṣṣ has a particular attraction here, since it asks whether an office comes from a deliberate designation rather than from a convenient family connection. A story that Jesus appointed somebody has to be dated and transmitted, and we must still ask what authority Jesus could have conferred within his community. James's relationship to him makes a claim of succession intelligible, but it does not supply the missing transcript. If it did, every historian of religious inheritance could retire on the spot.

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 cites earlier compilations, including *al-Iqbāl* and *Maʿānī al-akhbār*. Their complete chains

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.

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]

A religious movement may distribute authority among teachers, relatives, prophets, and recognized leaders without pretending those roles are identical. 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]

Once a family is understood as a privileged source of teaching, the household hypothesis becomes more than a matter of ancestry. 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]

Such a model also makes the strange business of the swords at Jesus's arrest more interesting. 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]

A promised restored kingdom ought to be judged partly by the law its claimants wish to 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.

---

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

Mark, Matthew, and Luke can look like three witnesses arriving at a police station with accounts of the same incident, except that two of them may have read some of the same paperwork and the third has his own habits of telling the story. That is where the Synoptic problem becomes useful for our little experiment in hadith criticism. Similar wording can be evidence of an older common tradition, and it can also be evidence that one writer copied another; we need to work out which sort of agreement we are looking at before deciding that several Gospels provide several independent witnesses to a saying.[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]

When his own people came to restrain him

Mark 3:20–21 gives us a scene that modern readers often pass over too quickly. The crowd gathers so densely that Jesus and his companions cannot eat. When those described as hoi par' autou, his own people, hear what is happening, they go out to seize or restrain him, kratēsai auton, for they say exestē: he has lost his senses. The narrator puts the accusation

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.

in the mouths of people close to Jesus. The phrase neither names Maryam nor quotes her personal verdict. Mark resumes the household scene in 3:31–35, where his mother and brothers stand outside and call for him. The framing makes the identification of the earlier group with his family compelling, while the exact responsibility for the allegation remains unspecified.[103]

Between these scenes, the scribes accuse Jesus of operating by Beelzebul. Mark places the family's attempt to restrain him around the controversy with religious authorities, an arrangement in which each party has trouble recognizing the force at work in his mission. Some Western witnesses to 3:21 replace "his own" with scribes and others. This variant relocates an embarrassing accusation onto recognized opponents of Jesus. The manuscript evidence makes the received family reading the better starting point; the variant matters as evidence that later readers felt the difficulty.[104]

Matthew 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21 retain the mother and brothers waiting outside, along with Jesus' declaration that doing God's will defines kinship. Their accounts omit the preceding charge of madness and the attempt to take custody. On the usual account of Markan priority, the omissions suggest that the later evangelists transmitted the family encounter in a gentler shape. Luke still preserves an instructive failure of understanding: Mary and Joseph cannot grasp the twelve-year-old Jesus' explanation in 2:48–50. John 7:5 is more explicit about the brothers' unbelief, while Acts 1:14 places Mary and Jesus' brothers among the praying disciples. The separate witnesses allow for a history of misunderstanding and eventual association without requiring Mary to have spoken Mark's accusation.[105]

For a Muslim, the unease lies in the dignity with which the Qurʾān clothes Maryam. She is elected and purified in 3:42, receives an announcement in 3:45–47, and emerges from the accusation of her people in 19:27–33 through the speech of her child. Yet the Qurʾān repeatedly depicts revelation arriving among relatives who resist or misunderstand: Ibrāhīm faces his father in 19:41–48; Nūḥ pleads concerning a son in 11:42–46; Yūsuf is opposed by his brothers before their eventual reconciliation. These examples provide a

---

103Mark 3:20–35. The Greek hoi par' autou is explained as family/relatives in the NET Bible textual notes to Mark 3:21; the narrative explicitly names his mother and brothers at 3:31–32. See NET Bible, Mark 3:21, https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=Mar&chapter=3&verse=21.

104Mark 3:21, textual apparatus; Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd ed. (1994), 70, on the Western D/W/Old Latin displacement of the criticism toward scribes and others; NET Bible, Mark 3:21, textual note. Treat the variant as evidence of reception, not proof of any particular evangelist's motive.

105Mark 3:20–35; Matthew 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21 and 2:48–50; John 7:5; Acts 1:14. The inference of editorial softening presupposes Markan priority. For an intercalation reading see "An Examination of Jesus's View of Women through Three Intercalations in the Gospel of Mark," Priscilla Papers, https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/examination-jesuss-view-women-through-three-intercalations/.

prophetic grammar for family conflict. They supply a comparison rather than a Qurʾānic report of Maryam doubting her son.

The sharpest juxtaposition may be the reversal of who must be defended. Mark's relatives come to retrieve Jesus from a public mission they cannot understand. In Sūrat Maryam, her own people confront Maryam with a disgrace they believe has befallen the household, and the infant Jesus supplies the testimony that vindicates her. Luke and Matthew move toward a mother already equipped with extraordinary knowledge; the Qurʾānic narrative independently affirms her election and the miraculous beginning of her son's life. I want to allow these accounts to disagree where they disagree. Confirming the Injīl requires examination of the Messiah's teaching and the traditions carrying it; it does not oblige a historian to attribute every Synoptic narrator's judgment to God.

The accusation that a copyist moved

The people said to have come for Jesus at Mark 3:21 give us a small textual problem with large implications for the story of his family. Most Greek witnesses read hoi par' autou, "those belonging to him," and narrate their departure to restrain Jesus. The following verb, exestē, conveys the allegation that he is beside himself. A Western variant found in witnesses including D, W and Old Latin material instead introduces scribes and others in place of Jesus' own people. The alternate construction redirects the accusation toward acknowledged opponents. In the vocabulary of textual criticism, this is a particularly plausible example of a troublesome reading being softened in transmission. Its value is the presence of a real textual variant and a plausible motive; a claim about the private intentions of any particular scribe would exceed the evidence.

Mark's narrative is also carefully framed: the relatives at 3:20–21 and the named mother and brothers at 3:31–35 surround the scribes' accusation of demonic power in 3:22–30. That arrangement gives the family episode its force. Maryam is named only in the returning scene. Her precise words and intentions remain beyond our surviving account. The version that presents her as personally announcing that Jesus had gone mad is a reading of Mark's arrangement, and should be labeled as such.

Primary and textual apparatus: Mark 3:20–35; NET Bible notes on Mark 3:21, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+3%3A21&version=NET; compare Matthew 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21. Western witness notation and reconstruction should be rechecked against a printed critical apparatus before publication.

The mother and brothers at John's baptism

A fragment attributed to a Gospel used among Jewish Christians places Jesus' mother and brothers at the beginning of his relation to John the Baptist. Jerome quotes it in Against the Pelagians 3.2: the family proposes going to John for baptism and remission of sins; Jesus asks what sin he has committed that would make such baptism necessary, then qualifies his own assertion by entertaining an error of ignorance. The family is promoting a recognized act of repentance, and Jesus is thinking through the meaning of sin and spiritual authority. The scene creates a worthwhile comparison with Mark's more troubling portrayal of familial restraint, though the literary documents and their histories differ.

This fragment also matters to the claim that Jesus' mother knew every dimension of his vocation from the beginning. Here she recommends an action whose theological appropriateness Jesus questions. The fragment admits a family dialogue over religion while leaving Mary within the movement that honors John. The real historical problem is whether Jerome's quotation can be traced to an early Jewish-Christian witness and whether it can be assigned to the same gospel from which Origen quoted the Holy Spirit as Jesus' mother. Those identification questions remain contested.

Jerome, Adversus Pelagianos 3.2, trans. at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/30113.htm; NASSCAL e-Clavis, Gospel of the Nazarenes and Gospel of the Hebrews; compare Andrew S. Jacobs, "The Ways that Parted in the Library," Journal of Ecclesiastical History (2022), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-ecclesiastical-history/article/ways-that-parted-in-the-library-the-gospels-according-to-matthew-and-according-to-the-hebrews-in-late-ancient-heresiology/23139EB6EB94C0AEDC262D62FC071A87.

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.

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.

A few words at Matthew 19:17 show how a theological reading can emerge from a textual variant. 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.[106]

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

106 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.

well as with Matthew. The differences create distinct historical questions about sources and literary aims.

Luke keeps returning to the vulnerable and the socially despised, which is one reason his Gospel has become important to my reading of the Messiah's law. 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.

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

Q is an odd item to encounter in a history of the Messiah's sayings, since its modern name has acquired such familiarity that one can forget we possess no manuscript bearing it. Scholars proposed this lost source to account for material Matthew and Luke share under one model of their relationship, while the Farrer alternatives and arguments concerning Luke and Marcion's Gospel rearrange the possible lines of borrowing. Every model changes how many independent witnesses we think a particular saying has. I am interested in the consequences for Jesus's teaching, rather than in awarding the most elegant diagram the status of an ancient book.

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 so-called Islamic dilemma is often presented as a rather neat trap. The Qur'an confirms the Gospel, the Gospel as bound in a modern Bible is read as teaching the theology of the later councils, and the Muslim must therefore choose between his scripture and the Christians' received interpretation of theirs. I have never found it satisfactory to let those identifications slide past without opening the books. Luke, with its repeated insistence on repentance and the mercy owed to people who have gone badly astray, gives us an opportunity to ask which Gospel teachings the Qur'an may be affirming and how Christian law might look if we began with them.

John has occupied an unexpectedly large share of this project, and I am glad I followed the promise of the Paraclete into its difficult theology. But when the Qur'an tells the People of the Gospel to judge by what Allah revealed in it, the object of our search is the guidance given to Jesus, whose moral content can be discussed even before we have solved every dispute about the Word and the Trinity. A fourth-century creed may be a valuable witness to what later Christians believed; it is hardly a magic label that tells us what an audience in Galilee heard. Luke offers another route into the question, through repentance and the Kingdom of God.

What did Jesus ask his listeners to do when they had wronged someone? Who could hope to be forgiven, and what kind of person would be welcomed into the Kingdom? Luke keeps placing those questions in front of us through people whom respectable society has already decided are beyond the pale. I want to give that Gospel a much longer hearing, because the investigation of the Messiah's message should occasionally sound like a message somebody might have wanted to hear.

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.

Zacchaeus gives us a very practical definition of repentance: a man who has taken money from others must reckon with the people whose money he still holds. 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.

Acts lets Paul deliver speeches that fit Luke's account of the missionary adventure, and those speeches tell us a great deal about how Luke wanted his readers to understand Paul. They are precious evidence for the author's portrayal, even where we have no independent transcript of the words Paul delivered on that occasion. The distinction matters whenever a smooth story in Acts threatens to settle a disagreement that Paul's own letters preserve in a more uncomfortable form.

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.

Luke and Acts can speak in sympathy with Paul's mission while sustaining a religious argument of their own. 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.

Luke has brought us back to a problem James would recognize immediately: the Messiah's religion must amount to something in the life of the person who professes it. We have been examining divine titles and redactional seams, but the people addressed by these texts also had money to spend, strangers to receive, prayers to offer, and authority to exercise over one another. Questions about circumcision and fellowship belonged to the early church's actual disputes and must be reconstructed from their sources, while Luke has already offered a remarkably substantial account of what repentance and righteous living might look like. A theology that leaves those obligations behind has misplaced a good part of the Gospel we came looking for.

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.

Luke seems particularly interested in the people who have made a mess of their lives and are offered the chance to return. A son goes home expecting humiliation and meets a father running toward him; a tax collector cannot boast of virtue and asks for mercy; Zacchaeus opens his accounts and begins making restitution, which is a more demanding form of repentance than simply developing better opinions about money. Even the witnesses to the Messiah's execution are made to confront the enormity of what has happened. The Gospel ends by sending repentance and forgiveness out to the nations in Jesus's name (Luke 24:46–47), and I find that emphasis difficult to reconcile with any version of salvation in which the conduct of the forgiven person is an afterthought.

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

We have reached the point at which counting witnesses becomes dangerous. Matthew and Luke both preserve the warning about trying to serve God and wealth, and Thomas offers a related saying, which sounds at first like three votes for its authenticity. Yet Matthew and Luke may share literary material, while Thomas has its own disputed relation to the Synoptic tradition, so three printed texts need not represent three independent paths back to Jesus. The hypothetical sayings collection called Q is an attempt to explain part of that puzzle, and it deserves the same tough-minded examination as any lost manuscript which scholars have found useful enough to give a name.[107]

A dispute among scholars about whether Matthew borrowed from Mark can sound remote from the ordinary life of a person trying to follow Jesus, until the disputed words concern marriage, debts, or the treatment of enemies. If Matthew and Luke are repeating one inherited source, we have a different sort of testimony from the case in which each received a saying through an independent route; a narrator may also place the same teaching in a setting that sharpens its meaning. Those differences can affect how confidently I attribute a command to the Messiah and how I understand its intended audience. The Synoptic Problem is therefore a question about the evidence behind Christian law, even if its scholarly name sounds like a dispute over filing cabinets.

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.[108]

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

---

107 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.

108 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.

an earlier common source. Under the second, it can show how Luke preserved or revised Matthew. Mark Goodacre's case makes this difference central.[109]

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

Sometimes a copyist or author appears to have begun rewriting a story and then, absorbed in the business of telling it, slipped back into the language of his source. Goodacre's example comes from the death of John the Baptist: Matthew first calls Herod a tetrarch and later calls him king, while Mark sticks with the royal title. That change of course has been called editorial fatigue. It is a small piece of evidence, and I like it for precisely that reason, since anyone can examine the wording without pledging allegiance to an entire theory of Gospel composition.[110]

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.[111]

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.

---

109 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.

110 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.

111 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.

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 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.[112]

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.[113]

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.[114]

---

112 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.

113 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.

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 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.[115]

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.[116]

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.[117]

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

---

114 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.

115 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.

116 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.

117 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.

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.

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.[118]

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.

A report about ʿAlī's special knowledge is most useful to my James comparison when we ask how that knowledge was supposed to have been acquired. 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.[119]

A Qur'an-centered Christian source criticism has to keep two judgments on the table, even when one of them is inconvenient to my preferred theology. 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.

---

118 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.

119 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.

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.

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 Shiʿi parallels deserve the same discipline, since a saying attributed to an Imam and a modern theory about James occupy different places in the historical record. 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.[120]

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.[121]

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.

---

120 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.

121 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

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us the image of two houses confronted by the same storm, whose different outcomes depend on whether the hearer has acted upon what was taught. I cannot think of a better point of entry into the question of Christian law, since the image turns salvation from a contest over slogans into the much less comfortable business of what a person does with an instruction. The sermon certainly contains theological and textual puzzles, but the poor, the angry, the merciful, and the frightened are never far from its field of view.[122]

Calling this Christian sharia will make some readers smile and others reach for a doctrinal disclaimer, but it is a straightforward question: what does a community owe to God and neighbor if it accepts the Messiah's teaching? The sermon is full of obligations whose consequences can be tested in ordinary lives. We still need to distinguish Jesus's reported instruction from the way a later church administered it, just as we must give each saying an honest historical grade. Yet a saying whose original audience remains uncertain can still tell us what a community believed faithful practice required.

A collected discourse with a Jewish argument

Matthew gives us the great mountain sermon of chapters 5–7, while Luke arranges related teaching on level ground in a shorter discourse that includes blessings and woes. Anyone trying to recover Jesus's own words has to resist the temptation to stage a single imaginary afternoon in which every sentence now found in either Gospel was spoken in its present sequence. These are literary compositions, carrying sayings with histories that may reach behind their current arrangement. Their overlap invites comparison, though it does not by itself hand us two independent eyewitness transcripts.[123]

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.[124]

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

122 Matthew 7:24–27, ebible.org. The application to obedience and Christian law is the author’s analysis of the closing image.

123 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.

124 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.[125]

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.[126]

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.[127]

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.

Jesus tells the worshiper to make peace with his brother before presenting a gift, a demand whose moral order seems clear enough even though he gives us no complete manual for hearing testimony or resolving every dispute. An actual community will have to create procedures, choose people capable of judging fairly, and deal with the occasions when one party insists that no reconciliation is possible. Yet the missing administrative details cannot drain the saying of its force. The instruction makes the other person's grievance a religious concern before the worshiper is allowed to congratulate himself on the beauty of his offering.

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.[128]

---

125 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.

126 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.

127 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.

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.[129]

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.[130]

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.[131]

---

128 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.

129 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.

130 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.

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.[132]

Desire and the authority to deepen a command

The metaphor of smoke is helpful because an inward temptation can have moral significance without becoming an outward action. 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.

A report attributed to Jaʿfar can illuminate the Sermon's reception, but its resemblance to a Gospel saying is only the beginning of the inquiry into authority. 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.[133]

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

131 James 5:12, ebible.org; Matthew 5:33–37. The Imami parallel is a later reception witness whose independence must be assessed separately.

132 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.

133 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.[134]

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.[135]

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?[136]

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.[137]

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.[138]

---

134 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.

135 Qur'an 2:229–232 and 65:1–7. The treatment of legal separation and continuing duties supplies a distinct normative comparison.

136 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.

137 Didache 8, primary translation at newadvent.org. The communal schedule and the prayer it uses have different source-critical roles.

138 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.[139]

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.[140]

Jesus's warning against performing piety for an audience is easily turned into a fashionable complaint about public religion, which misses much of the point. The problem in Matthew, as in the Qur'anic warnings about display, concerns the motive and the conduct surrounding the act, not the mere fact that somebody else can see you pray. God is the witness of what people conceal, so a person may need to ask about the treatment of a neighbor before congratulating himself on having found the perfect place to perform a discreet devotion.

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

139 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.

140 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.[141]

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.[142]

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.[143]

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.[144]

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

141 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/).

142 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.

143 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.

144 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.

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.[145]

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.[146]

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. 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

145 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.

146 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.

become an institutional practice of accountability, although each source has its own date and history.[147]

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.[148]

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.[149]

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 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

147 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.

148 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.

149 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.

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.[150]

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.[151]

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.[152]

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

150 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).

151 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.

152 Luke 6:27–36. The relation of generosity, reciprocity and enemies is assessed from Luke's formulation, alongside Matthew 5:38–48.

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.[153]

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?[154]

Even a political reconstruction of the Messiah has to make room for the Sermon's severe demands upon the treatment of enemies. 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?[155]

By this point the law of the Messiah looks less like an abstract code and more like the obligations of a recognizable community. Who may issue a command in God's name? What happens to a vulnerable person when that command is applied? And what does a believer owe the neighbor who has received an orthodox blessing but still has no supper? James, the Didache, and fragments of the Gospel according to the Hebrews will help us press those questions toward particular practices. The exercise should produce something more useful than a set of quotations mounted on the wall.

---

153 *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.

154 *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.

155 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

The Qur'an lingers over Maryam's encounter before Jesus is born, allowing us to hear her seek refuge when a visitor appears before her and then ask how she can bear a child. A Muslim reader can hardly miss the dignity given to her refusal to be treated casually by a stranger, nor the unusual shape of the announcement that follows. The Christian infancy traditions preserve other scenes that invite comparison, but they come through different witnesses and carry their own theological commitments. I want to listen closely to Maryam before allowing an ingenious reconstruction to tell her story for her.[156]

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.[157]

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.

Two modern attempts to recover Jewish-Christian beginnings helped shape my early notes, particularly those of 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.

The Nazarene center of gravity

The Qurʾānic center of this dispute lies closer to the virgin-conception tradition usually associated with the Christian and Nazarene account of Maryam. Qurʾān 3:47 places her question about a man's touch before the answer that God creates what He wills. In 19:20 she again denies both a man's touch and sexual wrongdoing. The emphatic account of divine decision gives the Nazarene-style reading the greater explanatory force within the

156 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.

157 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.

Qurʾān itself. It also leaves a reason to investigate the beliefs of Jewish-Christian hearers who had been taught a human genealogy through Joseph.

Our historical labels cannot do the work of an ancient witness. In Panarion 29.7.6, Epiphanius candidly says he cannot tell whether the Nazoraeans regard Jesus as an ordinary man or affirm that he was born of Mary through the Holy Spirit. Origen had already described Ebionites who differed over the virgin birth. A single pair of tidy sectarian columns would therefore misreport our evidence. The book may describe the dominant Qurʾānic reading as Nazarene in its narrative affinities, provided the classification of a particular fourth-century Nazoraean community remains an open historical question.[158]

Why the sectarian labels remain unstable

Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.21.1, supplies an early, hostile witness to people called Ebionites who understood Jesus as begotten by Joseph. Origen, Against Celsus 5.61, a century later describes two forms of Ebionite belief, one affirming and the other denying the virgin birth. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.27, similarly knows a group that retained the virgin birth despite rejecting a high doctrine of the divine Word. These writers establish diversity within the historical category, and they do not preserve an unbroken census of self-identifying communities.

Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.6, expressly acknowledges ignorance of whether Nazoraeans affirmed birth from Mary through the Holy Spirit. Jerome later describes Nazarenes as holding a virgin-conception faith. Both notices deserve to be reported by witness, author and date. The titles Gospel of the Ebionites and Gospel of the Nazarenes are in considerable part modern scholarly conventions for arranging fragmentary citations. The ancient use of the title Gospel according to the Hebrews overlaps these collections and allows rival reconstructions. That bibliographic uncertainty changes how confidently I can assign any passage to a named sect.

Irenaeus, Haer. 3.21.1, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103321.htm; Origen, Cels. 5.61, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm; Epiphanius, Pan. 29.7.6 (Greek and translation), https://sophiascriptura.com/fathers/epiphanius-panarion/28-7-1/; NASSCAL e-Clavis, Gospel of the Ebionites and Gospel of the Nazarenes; Jacobs (2022), “The Ways that Parted in the Library.”

Davidic ancestry and divine action

Matthew's genealogy through Joseph is an obvious place to begin because it confronts every theory of Jesus's conception with a question about descent. 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.

158Origen, Contra Celsum 5.61, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm; Epiphanius, Panarion 29.7.6, Greek text and translation at https://sophiascriptura.com/fathers/epiphanius-panarion/28-7-1/. Epiphanius explicitly withholds judgment on the Nazoraeans’ belief concerning Jesus’ virgin birth.

I read the announcement in Qur'an 19 most naturally as a virgin conception, and it would be artificial to hide that behind a cloud of scholarly alternatives. At the same time, people arriving with different expectations about ancestry might have heard the story differently, and the action of the Spirit invites an esoteric proposal about how a Joseph-related genealogy could be understood. That proposal deserves to be labeled as interpretation, so the reader can appreciate its imaginative possibilities without mistaking them for an independent witness to Maryam's circumstances.

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.

The manlike Spirit, Joseph and the baptismal descent

The detail in 19:17 deserves more attention than the usual gloss that an angel delivered a message. God sends rūḥanā, Our Spirit, and it appears to Maryam as basharan sawiyyan, a well-formed human being. Her immediate appeal to the Merciful for protection belongs to a scene whose danger she experiences in embodied terms. The visitor then identifies himself as a messenger of her Lord. Verses 20–22 move from her declaration of chastity through the promise of divine action to pregnancy. The Qurʾān provides an exceptionally vivid human encounter while withholding the physical mechanics of conception.

This narrative openness is real, although its range has limits. Joseph never appears in the scene. Neither a human father nor sexual intercourse is supplied after the announcement. The parallel notices in 21:91 and 66:12 speak of breathing of the Spirit, and 3:47 again assigns creation to God’s will. The comparison with Adam in 3:59 supplies a scriptural way of describing extraordinary origin. Consequently, a Joseph-mediated interpretation needs independent attestation and a coherent account of these constraints. The text gives a stronger affirmative case for Maryam conceiving without a human father than for any later sexual act involving Joseph.

An Ebionite analogy has to locate the Spirit in the right part of Jesus’ biography. Origen reports an Ebionite position in which Jesus is begotten in the ordinary human way. The Gospel fragment quoted in Epiphanius, Panarion 30.13.7–8, describes the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove and entering Jesus at baptism, where a heavenly voice speaks of his sonship. That is a story of spiritual commissioning and identity at baptism. It does not attest that the Spirit entered Joseph at conception. The distinction is essential if we hope to recover a historical Jewish-Christian position rather than manufacture a harmonized one.[159]

159Origen, Contra Celsum 5.61; Epiphanius, Panarion 30.13.7–8, https://sophiascriptura.com/fathers/epiphanius-panarion/30-4-1/; Michael J. Kok, “The Utility of Adoptionism as a Heuristic Category: The Baptism Narrative in the Gospel of the Ebionites as a Test Case,” Scottish Journal of Theology 76, no. 2 (May 2023): 153–163, doi:10.1017/S0036930622000965. The fragment depicts the Spirit entering Jesus at baptism, without mentioning Joseph as its recipient.

There is a theological reconstruction worth testing in which Joseph is the biological father and the Spirit supplies an extraordinary divine act, but its proposed historical witnesses remain to be found. Such a synthesis would have to specify whether it means inspiration of a parent, the election of an already conceived child, or a wholly different account of miraculous conception. The extant Ebionite baptism narrative supports the second kind of event. Our proposed model of spiritual agency through Joseph presently has the status of a new comparison, and that status should travel with it wherever the argument recurs.

Matthew's genealogy through Joseph adds another control, because a father's legal recognition can establish household and dynastic identity independently of biological generation. The infancy narrative attributes pregnancy to the Holy Spirit and gives Joseph the naming role (Matthew 1:18–25). A reading of Qurʾān 19 intended to reconcile Joseph's genealogy with the Spirit can therefore start by asking what descent and legal paternity meant in those communities. It should resist treating an alternative biological father as the only explanation of a Davidic genealogy.[160]

A descent at baptism and a mother who is Spirit

The Gospel fragment preserved in Epiphanius, Panarion 30.13.7, says the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and entered Jesus at his baptism. Its accompanying heavenly proclamation includes the line from Psalm 2:7 about a son begotten "today." This is evidence for a spiritual transformation or public manifestation in an adult life. Irenaeus's description of the Ebionites' Joseph-based account belongs beside it, although the later Gospel fragment and the earlier heresiological summary cannot automatically be fused into a single stable doctrine. I find no early witness in this dossier affirming that the Holy Spirit entered Joseph and thereby caused Maryam's conception.

A different Jewish-Christian gospel fragment, quoted by Origen in Commentary on John 2.12 and by Jerome in several commentaries, describes the Holy Spirit as Jesus' mother. The Spirit carries Jesus to a high mountain, called Tabor in Origen's citation. Jerome explains the maternal language partly by the feminine gender of the word for Spirit in Hebrew. This tradition contributes something more unusual than a disagreement over whether Joseph supplied a biological father: it allows the role of mother to be applied to spiritual agency. Origen compares it with the pronouncement that the one doing God's will becomes Jesus' mother. A biological mother, a spiritual mother, and the family created by obedience may all be spoken of without those relationships having identical meanings.

Jerome also quotes a baptismal passage in which the entire fountain of the Spirit rests upon Jesus and speaks to him as its son, recalling that it had awaited him in the prophets. These witnesses show the density of Jewish-Christian speculation about the descent, habitation and kinship of Spirit. The chronological location of the Spirit remains the crucial difference: the Qurʾān frames Jesus' miraculous conception and prophetic status from

160Matthew 1:1–25. See Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, "Infancy Narrative Commentaries," section on Joseph's naming and legal paternity, https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/stm/sites/crossroads/resources/mini-course/birth-of-jesus/infancy-narrative.html.

infancy, while the baptismal fragments describe an extraordinary descent upon a mature Jesus.

Epiphanius, Pan. 30.13.7–8, Greek quoted at https://www.sophiascriptura.com/fathers/epiphanius-panarion/30-4-1/; Origen, Commentary on John 2.12, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101502.htm; Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah 11.2, text at https://www.uecf.net/books/commentary-on-isaiah-jerome/chapter7.html; NASSCAL, Gospel of the Hebrews, https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/gospel-of-the-hebrews/.

Who grants the child?

The smallest change in an Arabic verb can redirect our attention toward a rather large question about agency. At Qur'an 19:19, the readings li-ahaba and li-yahaba allow the announcement of a child to be expressed in terms of “I may grant” or “He may grant.” The messenger is speaking, God is the giver, and the grammar helps us ask how the text presents their relationship. It is worth attending to that little verbal turn before building a grand account of what the Spirit must be.[161]

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 transmitted readings of 19:19 sharpen this question without settling a theory of human paternity. In the li-ahaba reading the messenger speaks of bestowing the child; in li-yahaba the verb attributes the granting to Him. Both belong to an encounter in which the visitor acts under the Lord’s commission, and neither names Joseph. The shift of grammatical person concerns the attribution of a gift. It offers a legitimate point of contact with the book’s wider inquiry into divine agency while leaving the biological hypothesis awaiting evidence.[162]

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.

The mother named alone: an argument inside the sūra

The immediate literary comparison in Sūrat Maryam supplies a test that sectarian hypotheses too easily miss. John is described in 19:14 as dutiful to his parents, barran bi-wālidayhi. Jesus declares in 19:32 that God has made him dutiful to his mother, barran bi-wālidatī. The two passages belong to unusually close narrative portraits of precocious prophets and use visibly parallel formulas. The single change from two parents to one

161 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.

162Qurʾān 19:19, li-ahaba / li-yahaba readings. See Quran.com, “Qiraʾāt: Maryam 19:19,” https://quran.com/maryam/19/qiraat; compare Qurʾān 3:47, 19:20–22, 21:91, 66:12. The variant is about grammatical agency and is not evidence for human paternity.

mother gives the absence of a human father literary weight. Al-Qurṭubī records a report attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās that notices precisely this wording.

This provides an important control upon the suggestion of ordinary biological paternity through Joseph. The father is absent from the conception scene and from the infant's own account of his obligations. The Qurʾān may have intelligible points of contact with traditions of spiritual election, human descent and Joseph's legal household; its repeated narrative choice is to name Maryam as the relevant parent. The witness supplied by this sūra favors fatherless conception and a prophetic identity bestowed before John's baptism.

The two readings of Qur'an 19:19 make the messenger's agency more interesting without supplying a human father for Jesus. Li-ahaba gives the messenger a first-person expression of bestowing the child under divine commission; li-yahaba makes the bestower third person. Both readings belong to the history of Qurʾānic recitation. The proper theological question concerns the relation of messenger and Lord in effecting the promised gift. It provides no textual warrant for replacing the messenger with Joseph.

Qurʾān 19:12–15, 19:17–22, 19:30–33, 3:47 and 3:59. Al-Qurṭubī, tafsīr 19:32, https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura19-aya32.html. Comparative recitation data for 19:19, https://quran.com/maryam/19/qiraat. Al-Ṭabarī, tafsīr on 19:17 and 19:22, https://www.atilawa.com/ar/tafsir/tabari/19.

A table set for the vanished

There is a strange difficulty with this invitation. By the time the Qur'an was proclaimed, the people whom Christian heresiologists called Ebionites and Nazoraeans had largely disappeared from the historical record. A few churchmen still knew their names. Some remembered the Gospel fragments they used, usually in the course of explaining what was wrong with them. The people who heard those Gospels are much harder to find. We should be careful about turning a gap in our surviving records into proof that every such community had died out. Still, the gap is substantial. Why would a seventh-century revelation speak so closely to a quarrel we can now reconstruct only with difficulty?

My answer is that the scene in Maryam might have been written with a wider audience in mind. Imagine a believer whose picture of the Messiah depends upon Joseph's Davidic ancestry. He understands the Spirit's presence through an extraordinary election or through an account of conception in which divine agency works alongside human parentage. Beside him stands another believer, convinced that Maryam conceived as a virgin. The second man has the stronger reading of the Qur'anic text, especially once we hear Maryam's denial of a man's touch and Jesus's reference to his mother alone. Yet the first man may hear enough of his inherited language of Spirit, descent and divine calling to keep listening.

That is what I mean by a big-tent invitation. The disputants can come toward the same God and His Messiah before they have worked out everything that separates their explanations. This is a conjecture about rhetoric and reception, and it leaves the historical question of their actual presence in Muhammad's Arabia open.

And if they insist on turning the question into a contest over who deserves damnation, the Qur'an has an unnerving scene for that too. In 3:61, after the dispute concerning Jesus, the parties are invited to bring their sons, their women and themselves, then to implore God to

put His curse upon whichever side is lying. The procedure is called mubāhala. I read the challenge here as an extraordinary exposure of what it means to claim certainty before God. Would our confident polemicists be so eager to recruit their families into the quarrel?

The hadith warning about calling one's brother a kāfir has a similar moral bite. In the report preserved by al-Bukhārī, the accusation falls upon one of the two men. Its immediate setting concerns Muslims accusing other Muslims, and the legal discussions surrounding takfīr require their own care. I am borrowing its warning against the habit of making condemnation a substitute for understanding. When the subject is the Messiah and our knowledge is fragmentary, a little reluctance to damn one's neighbor seems an especially fitting religious discipline.

Gabriel Said Reynolds gives this reading an unexpected ally. In a 2014 article on Christianity in the Qur'an, he criticized the habit of assigning each peculiar Qur'anic statement to an obscure heretical Christian community supposedly living nearby. The Qur'an, he argued, has its own rhetorical intelligence. A passage can engage a Christian idea without serving as a field report on the local population of a vanished sect. His later book, Christianity and the Qur'an, develops a much larger picture of Islam arising in conversation with a substantially Christian culture. That reconstruction may give Christianity too large a share of the stage, but his earlier caution is valuable here.

I can borrow Reynolds's rhetorical insight and take it in a direction he would hardly have been obliged to follow. If a text can address an argument without requiring the old sect to be standing in the room, a divine text might speak to readers who have yet to be born. What appears to the historian as a remembered controversy may appear to the believer as an invitation left for a later generation. There are people today recovering Jewish-Christian writings, studying the Nazarenes, calling themselves neo-Ebionites, or arriving at the Qur'an after a long search through the Gospels. A revelation intended for them could have left a few Easter eggs along the way.

That is an article of theological imagination until we find better witnesses. It also makes a testable literary proposal: does Surah Maryam preserve enough room for different Jewish-Christian hearers to approach the text, while steadily directing them toward its own account of Maryam and the Messiah? The question deserves to be asked because the invitation is larger than any reconstruction of Joseph's biology.

Qur'an 3:59–61 and 19:16–33; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6103–6104, https://sunnah.com/bukhari/78/130-131; Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Presentation of Christianity in the Qurʾān and the Many Aspects of Qurʾanic Rhetoric," al-Bayān 12 (2014): 42–54, doi:10.1163/22321969-12340003; Reynolds, Christianity and the Qur'an: The Rise of Islam in Christian Arabia (Yale University Press, 2025), https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300286069/christianity-and-the-quran/. The proposed future audience and deliberate invitation are the author's theological interpretation, not conclusions established by these historical sources.

The Spirit, a human teacher and the author of a revelation

There is another Qur'anic passage that makes the question of agency difficult in a rather fruitful way. In Sūrat al-Naḥl, the objection comes from people who accuse Muhammad of inventing verses whenever the wording of revelation changes. The response in 16:102 names the rūḥ al-qudus, the Holy Spirit, as the one who has brought the revelation down from his Lord. The next verse acknowledges another accusation: a human being is teaching

him. The Qur’an answers by pointing to the foreign tongue of the person they have in mind and the unmistakable Arabic of the revelation.

I find the placement arresting. The Holy Spirit carries a divine message, and almost in the same breath the hearers are arguing over whether some man supplied it. That gives us a second version of the question raised by Maryam’s visitor. What does it mean for God to act through an agent? And what follows if the agent appears as a person, speaks a language, or can be encountered in ordinary history?

The old commentators knew different names for the alleged instructor. Al-Ṭabarī records reports about a Christian servant called Jabr, others about Yasar or Balʿām, and still others about two scripture-reading servants. A report from al-Ḍaḥḥāk names Salmān al-Fārisī. Ibn Kathīr rejects that identification on chronological grounds: the verse belongs to the Meccan setting, whereas Salmān’s place in the Muslim community comes later, in Medina. This is a useful warning. Salmān is a fascinating figure, but we have no warrant for putting him into the scene of 16:103 as an established historical fact.

The Salmān association becomes stranger when we cross into Shiʿi esoteric traditions. In certain Nuṣayrī or Alawite accounts, Salmān is the bāb, the gate, in a symbolic arrangement involving ʿAlī and Muhammad. Some presentations even identify him with the Holy Spirit, although the identification is contested within the surviving descriptions of that tradition. These are later theological constructions whose authors and dates matter. They can hardly be made into an eyewitness account of revelation in Mecca. Still, the coincidence of titles puts the question of mediation back on the table.

Other Shiʿi reports speak of the Holy Spirit as an aid through which the Prophet and the Imams receive guidance. The more familiar interpretation of 16:102 identifies the Spirit with Gabriel. This gives us several different theological languages for speaking of an agent carrying knowledge from God. It would be a mistake to mash them into one early doctrine, yet it would be equally wasteful to miss the conceptual question they all ask.

Suppose Muhammad heard accounts of earlier prophets from people he met. Suppose some knowledge came without any recognizable human conversation, or that both kinds of encounter belonged to his preparation. For a believer who takes revelation seriously, divine authorship cannot be decided merely by counting the human voices a prophet heard. God could teach through a messenger, a remembered account, a direct inspiration, or an encounter whose ordinary surface concealed more than the witnesses understood. The accusation rejected in 16:103 is that a foreign-speaking human source explains the Qur’an as a fabrication. The text assigns its revelatory authority to God and its descent to the Holy Spirit. The actual history of conversations remains a historical question worth investigating.

The analogy has limits worth enjoying rather than hiding. John speaks of the Word becoming flesh; the Qur’an calls Jesus a word from God and speaks of the Spirit bringing down its own recitation. Those formulations differ in theology and literary setting. Yet both invite an inquiry into how an act that begins with God reaches human beings through a mediating presence. In Maryam, a human-shaped messenger announces a child. In al-Naḥl, a holy Spirit conveys an Arabic revelation amid allegations of human instruction. A text

that can work through agents may also reach audiences across time, including readers who only now have the tools to recognize the old Christian quarrel it addresses.

Qur’an 3:45, 4:171, 16:101–105, 19:17–22 and 26:192–195; al-Ṭabarī, tafsīr 16:103, https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura16-aya103.html; Ibn Kathīr, tafsīr 16:103, https://quran.com/fa/16%3A103/tafsirs/ar-tafsir-ibn-kathir; al-Mīzān, circumstances of revelation for Sūrat al-Naḥl, https://almizan.org/chapter-16-al-nahl/circumstances-of-revelation; study of Nuṣayrī/Alawite descriptions, https://www.academia.edu/4086477/Nusayri_Alawi_early_Turkish_Republic_Ozdil_BRISMES; Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt, traditions on the Holy Spirit and the Imams, https://shialibrary.com/book/basair-darajat/chapter/575902. The Salmān identification is transmitted as a weak claim in the exegetical discussion; the esoteric associations belong to later contested traditions.

17. A Child’s Testimony and the Magi

In the Qur'an, the infant Jesus speaks at the very moment his mother needs a witness, announcing himself as Allah's servant and putting an accusation against her in an entirely different light. The scene is so extraordinary that it is tempting either to leave it entirely within the realm of miracle or to grab the first infancy Gospel that contains a talking baby and declare the question settled. I am going to take the more laborious route and ask how the story might have circulated, whether the Magi tradition offers any human line of transmission, and what the surviving texts actually permit us to say about their relationship.

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.[163]

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.[164]

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 surviving infancy account traces the report of the cradle speech through Caiaphas, a detail that complicates the romantic picture of the Magi carrying it from place to place. 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

163 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.

164 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.

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.

The infancy stories are a place where the imagination of religious communities could become magnificently productive. One tradition recruits Magi and Zoroaster into recognition of a divine Son, while the Qur'an gives Maryam's child a startling first declaration centered on servanthood and prophecy. I suspect the latter may answer a repertoire of Christian claims already circulating in several forms, but the surviving documents leave us the harder question of what was known, to whom, and through which language or community. I would rather follow that trail than announce that the Qur'anic speaker had a particular manuscript open beside him.

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.

The oldest question: did the infant speak?

I want to make a more adventurous claim about the event itself. When Maryam presents her child and he speaks in her defense, I suspect the Qur'an is reporting something that happened. The historical archive makes that conviction difficult to demonstrate, which is exactly why it belongs in this investigation. We have a miracle reported in a seventh-century revelation, later Christian manuscripts containing a related cradle story, and an expanse of missing transmission between the supposed witnesses and the texts we can actually examine. I would like to know whether that gap conceals an isnād we have yet to recover.

The rival explanation deserves its own hearing. Perhaps a community produced a charming or fantastic story, passed it from one language into another, and the Qur'an addressed a legend already familiar to its audience. The story of Dhū al-Qarnayn supplies a suggestive comparison: when asked about a famous figure, Muhammad is instructed in 18:83 to recite a remembrance of him. The Qur'an can take a story people already know and direct their attention toward what God wishes them to learn. Whether the older story is history, embellished memory, or literary construction remains a question about the particular case. I think the speaking infant deserves more than an automatic assignment to folklore.

There is also a reason for the Qur'an's very different presentation of the speech. The child speaks at the moment when Maryam needs a witness. He identifies himself as Allah's servant and announces a prophetic life. This is a defense of his mother, an account of his mission, and a claim about divine agency compressed into a few sentences. An apocryphal infancy tale could preserve the memory of a child speaking while putting quite different

theology into his mouth. The challenge is to locate the shared event beneath the changing words, if such an event can be recovered at all.[165]

Who carried the news east?

The visitors known as the Magi present my candidate for the missing relay. Matthew's Gospel remembers eastern visitors who recognized the newborn Messiah and returned to their country. The Arabic Infancy Gospel expands that Persian horizon with a prophecy attributed to Zoroaster, a visit by the Magi, and the tale of a swaddling cloth surviving a fire. Its Sike form also preserves the cradle speech through an attribution to a book of the high priest Caiaphas. The Magi and the speaking child thus inhabit the same later narrative world. We still need a document saying that those visitors heard the child speak, or carried his words home. The present evidence gives the proposed witnesses a possible itinerary, rather than a demonstrated chain.

Why would Persians have any place in the story of God's Messiah? Isaiah calls Cyrus the Lord's anointed and the shepherd through whom God accomplishes a purpose for Israel. Here a Persian ruler enters Israel's sacred history as an instrument of the Most High. A ruler bearing such a title need not have been a prophet, and Isaiah supplies no certificate for every belief subsequently practiced by Zoroastrians. Yet the precedent is striking for a reader tempted to imagine divine concern as stopping at the borders of a later religious community.

The Qur'an names the Majūs among the communities whom Allah will judge in 22:17. The verse gives them a place in its map of religious history and leaves judgment with God; the better-known promises in 2:62 and 5:69 name other communities and supply conditions that must be read carefully. Imami material goes a step further. A report preserved in discussions of the Magians speaks of a prophet sent to them and a book they destroyed. Another account attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq says that a messenger with scripture was sent to that nation, while treating the identity of Zoroaster as a separate question. Such reports deserve scrutiny of their chains and textual dates. Together they give me grounds to take Persian religious memory seriously when asking who might have preserved a report from the childhood of Jesus.[166]

---

165 Qur'an 19:29–33; 5:110; 18:83. Dhū al-Qarnayn is introduced in 18:83 as a report to be recited. The comparison is rhetorical, and carries no conclusion about the historicity of either narrative.

166 Matthew 2:1–12; Tony Burke, 'Arabic Infancy Gospel,' NASSCAL e-Clavis, https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/arabic-infancy-gospel/; Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; Qur'an 22:17; 2:62; 5:69; 'The Life of Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq,' Questions 42–44, https://al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/46773. An account of a Magian prophet and lost scripture is also collected in material cited at https://shialibrary.com/book/qisas-anbiya/chapter/120124. None establishes a Magi eyewitness chain for the cradle speech.

The child in Thomas and the child in Maryam

There is a complication in the popular claim that the Qur'an borrowed its infant Jesus from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. That title belongs to a collection principally about the boy Jesus from approximately five to twelve years old. The Arabic Infancy Gospel is the more direct literary comparison for the speaking child. Manuscripts of the Arabic work incorporate some Thomas material, which helps explain why the stories are so easily collapsed into one book. Their sources and recensions have to be separated before any theory of borrowing or lost testimony can be tested.

Infancy Thomas contains some remarkably ugly scenes. Jesus curses a child who bumps into him; in certain textual forms a teacher who strikes him falls dead and is later restored. The boy is shown exercising alarming power, and the teachers are humbled by his knowledge. The familiar clay-birds miracle belongs to this childhood repertoire too. I can imagine an authentic memory of extraordinary signs traveling through generations of storytellers until the boy has become a figure upon whom each reteller can hang a marvelous or terrifying episode. This is a hypothesis about the corruption and expansion of tradition, and I am especially unwilling to attribute those killings to the historical Messiah on the authority of this literary collection.

The Qur'an's own account of clay birds and healing is instructive. Jesus forms a bird from clay and breathes into it, heals the blind and the leper, and brings forth the dead, repeatedly with the permission of Allah. Surah 5:110 places the speech from the cradle in the same catalogue as the Spirit's support, teaching, and signs. The powers are substantial, and their origin is specified. One could explain this as a skilled religious author correcting the theology of circulating tales; my proposal is that revelation also preserves a genuine memory while refusing the imaginative excesses accumulated around it. Historical demonstration would require a sequence of witnesses, manuscripts, or independent traditions capable of separating an older event from later decoration.[167]

A Spirit that gives more than words

This brings us back to the distinction between a message delivered to a prophet and the capacities by which a prophet acts. In 16:102 the Holy Spirit brings down the Qur'an, while 5:110 describes Jesus supported by that Spirit as he speaks and performs extraordinary signs. The same theological vocabulary touches revelation, instruction, and action. If the infant Jesus spoke as the Qur'an reports, I am proposing that the Spirit empowered the child himself to perform a sign. The infant would have possessed a capacity beyond the ordinary development of speech, exercised under God's permission.

---

167 Tony Burke, 'Infancy Gospel of Thomas,' NASSCAL e-Clavis, https://www.nasscal.com/e-clavis-christian-apocrypha/infancy-gospel-of-thomas/; Burke, 'Arabic Infancy Gospel,' NASSCAL; 'The Second Teacher's Story in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas,' New Testament Studies (2023), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-testament-studies/article/second-teachers-story-in-the-infancy-gospel-of-thomas-a-contribution-to-the-recent-discussion-on-the-developmental-interpretation/495AC0B0EE989779C0695CF9074EACBA; Qur'an 3:49; 5:110. Different recensions preserve different sequences and outcomes.

Jaʿfarian traditions give the proposal a curious vocabulary. Reports collected in al-Kāfī and Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt distinguish the spirit of life, the spirit of strength, the spirit of faith, the spirit of desire, and Rūḥ al-Qudus. In a report attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the Holy Spirit is the means by which the Prophet bears prophethood and by which extraordinary knowledge or guidance continues to the Imam. Other transmissions connect the Spirit with the knowledge of prophets and appointed successors. I discuss their provenance more fully in Chapter 39, where different formulations, their narrators, and their theological limits receive a separate examination. For the present argument, they show that revelation can be conceived as an endowment of capacity as well as the reception of words.

Such an account also bears upon the suspicion in 16:103 that some human teacher supplied Muhammad's stories. If the giver of revelation is God, the encounter with a knowledgeable human being cannot settle the authorship of what follows; it would establish a possible occasion or channel whose exact role still needs investigation. We encountered that problem with Salman and the stories attributed to him. In the case of Maryam, I am asking whether God furnished the child with an ability and whether witnesses carried the event away. The Qur'an's repeated qualification, bi-idhni, by My permission, keeps the entire proposal within a theology of dependent miraculous agency.[168]

What the missing isnād would have to explain

A beautiful theory can survive indefinitely by hiding its evidence in a lost manuscript, and I would prefer mine to take some risks. We should compare the earliest recoverable versions of the cradle declaration, the order in which the Magi visit, the Zoroaster prophecy, and the reports attributed to Caiaphas. We should look for Persian, East Syriac, and Arabic witnesses whose textual relationships can be demonstrated, and test whether the alleged eastern relay explains anything that simpler Christian transmission fails to explain. The origin of the speech, the later addition of titles such as Logos or Son of God, and the arrival of the violent childhood miracles are distinct questions with potentially different answers.

The missing isnād is therefore a research proposal, and my conviction that the event occurred is a theological claim. The story has already yielded something valuable for Finding Injil: an infant speaks, his mother is vindicated, and his power belongs to the God who sent him. The historical search begins where those assertions meet an archive that remembers some wonders, invents others, and has misplaced the names of people who might once have told the difference.[169]

---

168 Qur'an 16:102–103; 5:110; al-Kāfī 1.4.55.3, https://shialibrary.com/book/kafi/chapter/526552; al-Ṣaffār, Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt, on the five spirits, https://shialibrary.com/book/basair-darajat/chapter/575901. See Finding Injil Chapter 39 for isnād and doctrinal distinctions. These Shiʿi reports are later interpretive testimony, not independent proof of the first-century miracle.

169 Burke, NASSCAL e-Clavis, "Arabic Infancy Gospel" and "Infancy Gospel of Thomas"; Matthew 2; Qur'an 19:29–33 and 5:110. A Magi-to-cradle-speech chain remains conjectural.

Keeping the infancy sources distinct

A child working wonders is a popular subject in early Christian narrative, and the infancy texts share interests while traveling through different manuscripts. 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.

The next task is to line up the published recensions against Qur’an 3:46, 5:110, and 19:29–33, separating the speaking infant from the boyhood miracles in Thomas and dating the Caiaphas attribution, the Magi journey, and the Zoroaster prophecy individually. Establishing when these motifs first traveled together would be the first step toward testing a proposed Persian relay. The reconstructed chain remains missing; the theological hypothesis has been stated clearly enough for the archive to challenge it.

PART V · FAMILY, MEMORY AND SUCCESSION

18. James and the Jewish-Christian Gospels

I began this project expecting Paul to be everywhere, because the history of Christianity I had inherited seems to keep him permanently in the foreground. Then James, the brother of Jesus, started showing up in some surprisingly consequential places. Paul calls him one of the pillars in Jerusalem, Acts remembers him as a leader, and the Gospel of Thomas preserves a scene in which Jesus directs the disciples to him after his departure. For a Muslim accustomed to debates about who was authorized to lead the community after a messenger, this is familiar territory, although the documents are considerably less obliging than either side of an easy succession argument might wish.[170]

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.

From family incomprehension to the leadership of James

The family scene in Mark 3 creates a difficult beginning for any effortless genealogy of apostolic authority. Mark's mother-and-brothers episode follows his report that Jesus' own people sought to restrain him, while John 7:5 reports disbelief among his brothers. Paul's references to James as the Lord's brother and as a pillar in Jerusalem give us a later, independent description of James' authority (Galatians 1:19; 2:9). Paul also transmits a tradition of an appearance to James in 1 Corinthians 15:7. The surviving texts may be read as stages in a family's changing relation to the movement, although we lack a continuous first-person history of James' conversion.

Acts 1:14 includes Mary and Jesus' brothers among the praying community. That placement is valuable as a witness to how a later author remembered the family after Jesus' ministry. It does not make every earlier scene vanish. In Qurʾānic terms, kinship becomes religiously consequential through recognition and fidelity, a point already evident in the trials of Nūḥ's household and the story of Yūsuf. James' eventual leadership can therefore be studied alongside the possibility of earlier incomprehension rather than treated as proof that the entire family understood every stage of Jesus' mission from its beginning.[171]

170 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."

171Mark 3:20–35; John 7:5; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19 and 2:9; Acts 1:14. These are different authors and literary settings. A continuous narrative of James' changing convictions remains an inference rather than a self-report.

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 Shiʿi 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.

Two later texts also enter the discussion of James's appointment: the Recognitions and Eusebius's Church History. 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 concerning James's piety and death. Each account needs its own treatment before details are combined.[172]

The Pseudo-Clementines and the Gospel of the Hebrews fragments give us additional traces of Jewish-Christian memory. 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

Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of the Nazarenes, Gospel of the Ebionites: the titles have the reassuring appearance of books one could take from three shelves in an ancient library. In practice we are dealing largely with fragments quoted by later authors, and a passage in Jerome does not automatically belong to the same original work as a notice in Epiphanius. Scholars use these labels to organize a difficult body of testimony, while the underlying quotations retain their separate dates and polemical settings. The historical task begins by

172 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.

giving each fragment back its own provenance, however tempting a single lost Jewish-Christian Gospel may be.

Papias's tantalizing remark about Matthew's logia sends us back to the familiar problem of identifying a book from a fragmentary description. 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.

James keeps reappearing where an account centered entirely on Paul would rather leave him in the background, and that is reason enough to investigate a Jerusalem tradition that later tellings have treated unequally. I suspect some memory of his leadership continued in Jewish-Christian communities, but the labels applied to those communities and the Gospel fragments attributed to them come through much later witnesses. We can let the possible continuity shape the questions without quietly turning the entire family tree into a single institution that no document actually describes.

19. The Jerusalem Church After James

What happened to the Jerusalem movement after James died? The question sounds like a piece of ecclesiastical bookkeeping until we remember that a community's memory survives through teachers, houses, texts, and decisions about who gets to speak for the dead. Paul and Acts give us early anchors for James's standing, while later writers tell stories about the men who inherited his place. I want to see how far that chain can be followed, especially because any account of an authentically Jewish-Christian Injil has to explain what happened to the people in whose language and world Jesus first taught.

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.[173]

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.[174]

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.[175]

A community could understand apostolic selection as the recognition of a prior divine choice. That offers one theological reconciliation of the accounts. Historically, the

173 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.

174 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.

175 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.

reconciliation would itself need evidence. Another possibility is that writers gave different 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.[176]

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.[177]

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

176 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.

177 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.

emphasizes the harmlessness of those who bear it. Establishing what those 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.[178] 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.[179]

The traditions about communities leaving Jerusalem point toward a historical possibility with considerable consequences for this book. Did teachers associated with James carry their instruction into Transjordan, and can we identify any later community that inherited it? A destination on a map and a familiar religious label are merely the beginning. We would need teachers, successive witnesses, or features of a transmitted text that connect the stages, since moving a group of believers across the Jordan in a narrative is easier than following their books across two centuries.

Eusebius also tells the flight from Jerusalem in the language of divine judgment. 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.[180]

178 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.

179 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.

180 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.

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. 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.[181]

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.[182]

The Torah-observant followers of Jesus remain worth studying even where their family trees cannot be drawn back to James with confidence. A later Christian legal practice may resemble the discipline of the Jerusalem movement while resting on a very different account of why the practice binds. Historical continuity, theological resemblance, and claims about a complete Gospel must each carry their own evidence. Otherwise the lost church becomes a remarkably accommodating place into which every modern theory can be moved.

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.[183]

---

181 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.

182 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.

183 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

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 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.[184]

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.[185]

An analogy between James and ʿAlī becomes interesting when it directs us toward kinship, delegated responsibility, and the texts that claim to preserve an appointment. 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.

---

abstract consulted: [online source] . Full-article evaluation remains open.

184 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.

185 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.

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 analogy drawn from Isaiah 22. This is a documented contemporary Shiʿi argument about the Christian evidence.[186]

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.[187]

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.[188] 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

A family may preserve its teacher's memory after his death while its political claims succeed or fail for reasons far beyond that memory. Loss of political power cannot by itself decide whether a family retained religious knowledge. Survival as an imperial institution

186 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.

187 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.

188 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.

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.

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

A hungry visitor comes into the Epistle of James and receives a religiously impeccable blessing: may you be warm and well fed. The visitor then leaves hungry, and James has the audacity to ask what good the blessing accomplished. It is a scene I wish would make a little more trouble for people who think the main business of religion is finding the right language with which to disqualify their neighbors. In James 2:15–16, faith is pressed against a human need so immediate that a beautifully formulated creed begins to look rather thin if the believer cannot be bothered to help.[189]

James is the letter I would put in front of someone who believes Christianity began as a philosophical test about the nature of Jesus and only afterward discovered that the poor needed feeding. Its admonitions follow money into the employer's field, speech into the gathering, and authority into the conduct of teachers who will themselves face judgment. The letter shares enough moral vocabulary with the Gospel teachings to make the question of their relationship worth serious investigation. A religious title earns its holder very little protection from this writer, which may help explain why the letter has been both loved and inconvenient.

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.[190]

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

189 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.

190 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.[191]

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.[192]

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.[193]

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.

---

191 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.

192 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.

193 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 gives us something almost as valuable as another Gospel: a letter that seems to know the moral music of Jesus's teaching without stopping to narrate his whole life. When James warns against oaths in 5:12, the resemblance to Matthew 5:34–37 is difficult to miss, and his rebukes concerning wealth, judgment, and divided loyalty repeatedly send us back toward the Sermon on the Mount. Whether these are direct literary borrowings or traditions moving through the same early communities takes further work; either way, it is rather awkward for a history of Christianity that would put all the interesting religious instruction into Paul's hands.[194]

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 Epistle of James also makes endurance a religious virtue, which connects with the Gospel's teachings about the trials of discipleship. 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.[195]

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.

---

194 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.

195 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.

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 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.[196]

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.[197]

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

196 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.

197 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.

need unanswered. James's question about whether such faith can save is attached to this concrete failure of responsibility.[198]

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.

James turns to belief in one God with a pointed question about whether correct doctrine alone has produced righteousness. 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

Here is a curious disagreement between two men who both turn to exactly the same line about Abraham. Paul and James quote Genesis 15:6, where Abraham's faith is reckoned as righteousness, but James follows the story forward to the offering of Isaac and insists that faith acts through works, reaching its completion in them. Genesis itself places the offered son after the earlier declaration. That sequence matters if we are going to invoke Abraham as a universal exhibit in debates about salvation, because James seems determined that the story should be allowed to continue.[199]

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

198 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.

199 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.

dependence upon Paul. Each proposal has to explain both the verbal resemblance and the sharply different examples.[200]

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 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.[201]

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.

James uses familiar biblical episodes to press a point about faithful conduct, and I am happy to follow him there. That is different from giving every reader a license to reproduce every dramatic act appearing in the old stories. Religious people have occasionally shown great enthusiasm for the more alarming examples while overlooking the author's immediate instruction to be merciful, slow to anger, and honest. A Christian law

200 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.

201 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.

reconstructed from James should be especially careful about what, exactly, the example is meant to teach.

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.[202]

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.[203]

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.[204]

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

202 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.

203 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.

204 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.

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 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.[205]

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.[206]

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.[207]

---

205 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.

206 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.

207 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 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. The comparison helps us understand how an exalted servant might mediate divine help within a tawḥīdi account.[208]

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.[209]

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.

James's place in the Jerusalem movement survives more securely than many of the later stories that magnified his office. 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.

---

208 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.

209 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

The Gospel of Thomas begins by promising that the person who understands its sayings will escape death, which is a formidable offer from a book whose opening also describes its speaker as the living Jesus. Some of the sayings are familiar from the canonical Gospels, others are strange enough to make a reader wonder whether he has stepped into an entirely different religious universe, and a few force us to ask what their authors thought religious practice was for. I would rather follow that mixed company of texts than dismiss the whole collection with the convenient word 'Gnostic,' especially when one of its sayings places James directly in the succession story.[210]

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.

Thomas can be luminous one moment and disconcerting the next, and I am trying to resist the very human impulse to declare the luminous lines authentic while making the awkward ones somebody else's corruption. Certain sayings about light and perception invite comparison with Qur'anic language of guidance, whereas some of its attitudes toward religious practice sit uneasily beside duties a Muslim expects prophets to teach. That is the point at which the real work begins. I owe the unfriendly passages the same patient reading as the ones that would make a beautiful epigraph for a book I already wanted to write.

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.[211]

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.

---

210 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.

211 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.

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 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

In 2023 another small scrap of the ancient conversation arrived on scholars' desks: P.Oxy. 5575. The Greek fragment brings together material resembling sayings about worry, clothing, and a rich man with language about fasting from the world, themes that also appear in Matthew, Luke, and Thomas. A fragment cannot tell us every route those sayings traveled, but it is wonderfully inconvenient for the idea that they existed only in the tidy arrangements printed in modern Bibles. Somebody was putting together a different collection, and the surviving papyrus lets us inspect a piece of it.[212]

A papyrus fragment can make a theory about how sayings circulated much more concrete. 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

212 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.

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.[213]

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.[214]

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.

---

213 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.

214 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.

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 apostles. These are direct witnesses to an appointment tradition, although their surviving literary settings are substantially later than Jesus.[215]

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.[216]

Thomas gives James's authority a remarkably explicit blessing from Jesus, which makes the saying valuable for reconstructing later memories of the Jerusalem movement. Whether its precise wording can be traced to the first century is another matter. A community might have remembered an early appointment, or a later author might have put a known leader's prestige back into the mouth of the Messiah. Both routes deserve a hearing until the witnesses let us discriminate between them; I want the text to remain interesting even when it refuses to hand over a certificate of authenticity.

Thomas's appeals to hidden teaching give the Shiʿi analogy an especially tempting opening. 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 of Thomas almost reads like a scene about the danger of speaking too freely in a theological circle. The disciples compare Jesus to familiar figures, Thomas declines the comparison, and Jesus privately discloses something to him. When the others ask what was said, Thomas implies that repeating it could bring a very unpleasant response. The scene offers a model of religious authority in which the disciple knows what the rest have not been allowed to hear, a mechanism that should interest anyone studying the production of sacred secrets.[217]

---

215 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.

216 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.

217 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

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 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.[218]

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.[219]

---

demonstrated chronology of redaction.

218 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.

219 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

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, including self-knowledge and perception of what is already present. These teachings invite a spiritual account of the kingdom that reaches into present experience.[220]

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.[221]

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.

---

was consulted. It identifies Jewish mystical and Hermetic comparanda, purification and vision; the full monograph remains a research priority.

220 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.

221 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 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.

The harder claim in saying 77

Thomas 77 gives us a Jesus speaking in a register that will sound startlingly cosmic to anyone expecting only the wandering Jewish teacher of parables. He is described as light over all, the source and destination of the whole, and someone discoverable in wood and stone. The poetry invites mystical interpretation, certainly, but it also raises an ordinary historical question: who attributed such universal speech to Jesus, and how does that attribution relate to the other sayings we can place beside it?[222]

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.[223]

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.[224]

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.

---

222 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.

223 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.

224 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.

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 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.[225]

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.[226]

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

225 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.

226 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.

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.

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

Anyone determined to manufacture a thoroughly quietist Gospel of Thomas has a difficulty tucked away in the collection itself. Saying 16 introduces fire, sword, and conflict within families, while saying 98 compares the kingdom to a man preparing to kill a powerful opponent and then carrying out the act. What either saying meant in its first setting remains open to examination, but the rhetoric belongs in our later discussion of killing and being killed. A collection about secret knowledge and interior transformation can also preserve some alarmingly sharp blades.[227]

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.

Whether the disputed sayings preserve the historical politics of Jesus's movement is another question, and an intriguing one. 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.

227 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.

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.[228]

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.

Saying 114 is exactly the sort of passage that makes a modern editor reach for the brackets, particularly when its ending sits awkwardly beside the more inclusive sayings we may prefer. One can propose that it entered Thomas late, but that proposal becomes evidence only when a manuscript or a demonstrable textual relationship supports the claim. An editor's explanation of why the sentence ought to be secondary is valuable criticism; it is also a long way from finding an ancient copy in which it is missing.

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.[229]

---

228 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 114 is a later accretion must be labeled literary reconstruction rather than an attested omission from a complete early manuscript.

229 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.

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.

22. The Gospel According to the Hebrews

There is a fragment of a lost Gospel in which the risen Jesus gives bread to James, another in which the Holy Spirit is called his mother, and another about a rich man whose neighbors suffer while he boasts of keeping the law. They sound like scenes from a book I would very much like to read, except that the book itself is gone and the fragments survive through later authors who cited, summarized, or argued about it. We may call the material the Gospel according to the Hebrews, while remembering that this title can give an illusion of unity to pieces whose original relation is still in dispute.[230]

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.[231]

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.[232]

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

230 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.

231 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.

232 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.

arguments and can apply to different entries in the dossier. We therefore begin with the 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.[233]

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.[234]

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.[235]

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.

233 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.

234 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.

235 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.[236]

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.[237]

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.[238]

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.

---

236 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.

237 Ezekiel 8:3; Matthew 4:1–11. The comparison identifies shared prophetic-transport and mountain motifs without establishing a specific literary genealogy.

238 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.[239]

There is a temptation to recruit every noncanonical Jewish-Christian text into a reassuringly uncomplicated account of Jesus as a human prophet, especially when one is tired of being told that the Council of Nicaea settled all legitimate questions for the rest of us. Yet this fragment gives Jesus an exceptional place, and the text deserves to be heard even where its exalted language creates difficulties for my own view. A Unitarian may read it as the investiture of a created servant; another Christian may see a stronger claim about divine identity. Before either party carries the fragment off in triumph, we should identify what was actually quoted and how it reached us.

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.[240]

Jerome's baptism fragment offers a useful complication because it places the Spirit's expectation among the prophets who preceded Jesus. 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

239 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.

240 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.[241]

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 Gospel tradition quoted by Jerome even gives us the familiar problem of how many times to forgive a brother who returns in repentance, with Simon asking about the number. The difficulty is where the old Gospel ends and Jerome's surrounding argument begins, since his discussion turns toward the faults of human beings, including religious authorities. Editors cannot simply package the entire passage as though every sentence had come from Jesus. The boundary is part of the evidence, and a sentence about the prophets may change status depending on which side of it we place the quotation marks.[242]

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.

241 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.

242 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.

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 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.[243]

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.[244]

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.[245]

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.[246]

---

243 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.

244 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.

245 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.

246 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.

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 secure transcript of Jesus's speech. Its attribution and its spiritual value are different judgments, both of which the book can record.[247]

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.[248]

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.

I would love to open the complete Gospel of the Hebrews and discover what James, Maryam, and the Spirit had to say in its original order. The surviving archive is less obliging. It gives us fragments about recognition within the household, extraordinary divine support, poverty, and forgiveness, each reported by somebody with his own reason for quoting it. I can arrange those fragments into a useful dossier while keeping their provenance visible; the lost book itself has earned the right to remain lost until somebody finds it.

247 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.

248 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

An unnamed woman is brought before Jesus by men who want a legal answer to justify killing her, and the familiar story asks which accuser will throw the first stone. It has moved readers for centuries, including readers who have scarcely heard of textual criticism, and I understand why. Yet the passage has a famously complicated manuscript history, appearing in different locations and absent from important early witnesses. If I am going to make the Gospel's moral beauty part of an argument about what Jesus said, I owe the story the courtesy of examining how it reached the pages where we now find it.

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

The story of the woman threatened with stoning has an unusual habit for a supposedly fixed Gospel paragraph: it moves around. Papyrus 66 and Papyrus 75, commonly dated to about the third century, omit it, as do the fourth-century Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus; among surviving continuous Greek witnesses, fifth-century Codex Bezae is the earliest to carry the familiar episode at John 7:53–8:11. Other witnesses place it after John 7:36, John 21:25, or Luke 21:38, and a corrector even puts it after Luke 24:53. Some scribes mark it with critical signs. These manuscript facts are more interesting than pretending that one late placement settles the story's earlier life.

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.

Ancient books came from the labor of identifiable people, many of whom were secretaries, copyists, and other workers whom a polished ecclesiastical history barely mentions. Candida Moss has drawn attention to the roles played by enslaved and formerly enslaved people, while Jeremiah Coogan's 2025 collection places that labor within the wider Roman world. This opens a more realistic picture of who could have copied, arranged, and transmitted Christian writing. It does not license me to name a particular enslaved editor behind the story of the accused woman in John; the archive has yet to introduce that person to us.

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.

Qur'an 4:25 brings a more awkward legal question into view by describing the penalty in a specified case involving an enslaved woman who marries. 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.

The woman brought before Jesus in the Johannine episode and the women who appear in Islamic stoning reports deserve to be read as participants in their own stories rather than interchangeable illustrations of a legal principle. The first is accused by others, while some Islamic accounts concern women presenting confessions, and the Qur'anic passages occupy still different settings. What connects the texts is a question about the authority invoked over a vulnerable person and the procedures by which that authority is exercised. We gain little by pretending all the scenes happened to the same woman.

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.

What finally emerges is the history of a mercy story entering a Gospel book alongside a Qur'anic legal argument serious about both wrongdoing and the danger of an unjust 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

What does a person following Jesus actually do on an ordinary Tuesday? He has to eat, pray, deal with a difficult neighbor, and decide how to receive someone who turns up claiming to speak in the name of God. The Didache is attractive because it addresses precisely that sort of religious life, giving instructions to a community that existed long before our modern denominational labels and their elaborate statement-of-faith pages. I want to know how its practical rules compare with the sayings attributed to Jesus and with the moral demands the Qur'an still places upon believers.

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.[249]

The Didache gives us a rare glimpse of what follows the exciting moment when a community decides that a saying belongs to the Messiah. Somebody still has to organize prayer, settle a dispute, welcome a visitor, and ask whether a wandering teacher deserves trust. I use the term 'Christian sharia' for that practical problem of turning divine instruction into an accountable way of life, although the text itself speaks of the Way, commandments, and teaching. The unfamiliar label may help Muslim readers appreciate how much ordinary religious administration is hidden behind a collection of beautiful sayings.

Entering the way of life

The Didache opens with a command to love the God who made us and to care for the neighbor, then turns that affection into instructions nobody can discharge merely by agreeing with a creed. Its negative form of the reciprocal rule leads into anger, sexual conduct, possessions, and the treatment of enemies, much of it recalling things attributed to Jesus in Matthew and Luke. One can hear a shared repertoire of moral teaching here; identifying what the Didache borrowed from written Gospels, or what all these texts received from older instruction, requires us to follow the passages rather than assume the answer.[250]

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

249 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.

250 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.

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 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.[251]

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.

Even a short passage about fasting or prayer can tell us something important about how early communities understood their religious life. 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

251 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.

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.[252]

The Didache gives us prescribed prayer and a pattern of communal discipline, which is a useful discovery for anyone who has been assured that early Christianity consisted entirely of believing a formula about salvation. It stops short of supplying the full schedule, body positions, and detailed procedures one might like to compare with Muslim prayer. I can identify the resemblance without filling those gaps from later legal traditions. The Christians who followed this instruction had a religious life of their own, and reconstructing it deserves a little more respect than borrowing its vocabulary as an illustration for a law developed elsewhere.

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.[253]

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.[254]

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

252 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.

253 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.

254 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.

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?

A teacher who arrives claiming special spiritual authority should expect a community to ask practical questions about his conduct and what he requests from others. 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.

The table and the servant

The prayers in Didache 9 and 10 sound a little different from the later doctrinal formulas that dominate arguments about Christian worship. They address the Father and give thanks for knowledge and life disclosed through Jesus, while applying the Greek pais to David and Jesus in related expressions. Since pais can mean servant or child, David's appearance is an excellent reason to slow down before translating the same word as “Son” when Jesus appears. A translator can settle a theological dispute with a single English noun while looking as though he has merely completed a vocabulary exercise.[255]

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.[256]

255 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.

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 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.[257]

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.[258]

Once a practice has been located in an early Christian community, the historian's work has made a genuine advance; the theologian still has to decide what religious authority it ought to carry. That second judgment is where the Qur'anic criterion enters my inquiry. I need to explain why a practice belongs in the Christian law I propose, whom it binds, and what limits apply, since the antiquity of a custom is not itself a divine command. The same rule is uncomfortable when applied to Muslim precedents, which is one of the reasons I think it is worth applying.

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.[259]

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,

256 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.

257 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.

258 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.

259 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.

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.

PART VI · COMPETING LEGACIES

24. Paul and Those Writing in His Name

Paul is difficult to keep out of a book about recovering Jesus's own teachings, however much an investigator of the Jerusalem community might wish to begin with James and stay there. The man writes with great confidence about a commission to bring the nations into the Messiah's movement, and the letters preserved under his name became foundational texts for Christians who never met the apostles. Some of those letters are disputed, some are early and securely Pauline, and Acts tells the story from its own perspective. I want to distinguish those voices before declaring Paul either the great corrupter of Christianity or its misunderstood champion; both verdicts have enjoyed rather energetic fan clubs.

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.[260]

I will start with the seven letters that most scholars accept as Paul's and then take the more uncertain works under his name on their own terms. They give us a first-century argument that is still alive in modern churches, and a later history in which people could speak with Pauline authority whether or not Paul had written their particular sentences. The Qur'an remains my theological criterion, but the historical question of who wrote what must be settled by the witnesses rather than by how kindly a passage treats my preferred understanding of Jesus and James.

The collection and the author

Let us start with the letters that scholars most widely accept as Paul's own: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. That working list is useful, even if it lacks the glamour of an argument about who secretly wrote what, because it gives the project an early base of testimony. A letter might also combine earlier communications, and editors can have a hand in arranging material after an author dies. Having a reasonable answer to who wrote a letter still leaves a rather substantial question about how its paragraphs reached their present order.[261]

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

260 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.

261 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.

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 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.[262]

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.[263]

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.[264]

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?[265]

---

262 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.

263 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.

264 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.

265 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.

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, 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.[266]

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.[267]

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.[268]

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.[269]

---

266 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.

267 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.

268 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.

269 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

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 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.[270]

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.[271]

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.[272]

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

---

whole letter.

270 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.

271 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.

272 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.

evidence of pressure associated with Jerusalem without assigning an unrecorded speech to James.

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.[273]

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.[274]

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.[275]

---

273 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.

274 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.

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.[276]

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.[277]

Paul's own words give us a more useful argument than an attack upon the caricature that later critics have made of him. 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

275 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.

276 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.

277 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.[278]

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.[279]

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.[280]

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.[281]

278 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.

279 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.

280 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.

281 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.[282]

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.[283]

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.[284]

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 sacrificial participation and for his willingness to curb freedom for another's welfare. The

282 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.

283 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.

284 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.

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

Paul's message becomes especially consequential where it tells a person what he must believe or confess to be saved. Romans 10:9–13 binds salvation to confession of Jesus as Lord, belief in the resurrection, and calling upon the Lord, while Galatians 1:6–9 warns against accepting another gospel with a severity that ought to make anyone teaching a gospel think carefully. I want to set those demands beside Qur'an 5:69, with its emphasis on God, the Last Day, and righteous action, because the comparison concerns real human hope rather than a contest to see whose creed can exclude the larger number of people.[285]

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.[286]

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.[287]

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.

---

285 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.

286 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.

287 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.[288]

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.[289]

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.[290]

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 read alongside Daniel's figure who receives dominion and the heavenly Beloved

288 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.

289 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.

290 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.

commissioned in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Those comparisons illuminate a structure of bestowed authority. They do not establish that Paul borrowed either later composition.[291]

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.[292]

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.[293]

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 relates Christ's death to the law's curse. First Corinthians 15:3 presents death for sins as

291 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.

292 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.

293 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.

something Paul received and transmitted. The seven-letter corpus already contains soteriological interpretations of Jesus's death that this project must confront.[294]

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.[295]

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.[296]

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 agreement for a period. He explicitly says that marriage is compatible with faithful life,

294 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.

295 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.

296 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.

while expressing a preference for celibacy associated with his own gift and the community's circumstances.[297]

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.[298]

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.[299]

Here the record runs out more quickly than either side of a modern legal argument would like. James's canonical letter gives us no direct divorce rule, and the Jerusalem decision in Acts 15 is concerned with other obligations, so I cannot manufacture a permissive or prohibitive instruction in his name merely because it would suit an argument about Paul. The sayings Paul attributes to Jesus have to be judged through the witnesses we possess, while the precise practice of James's community remains a question for further research.

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.

---

297 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.

298 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.

299 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.[300]

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.[301]

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.[302]

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.[303]

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

300 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.

301 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.

302 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.

303 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.[304]

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.[305]

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.[306]

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.

When two religious movements remember a common founder differently, the overlap in their stories may tell us something about how institutions protect their own 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;

304 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.

305 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.

306 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.[307]

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.

Colossians brings food, calendars, ascetic discipline, and angels into the same dispute over what a believer ought to do. 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

Pauline authority quickly generated a problem familiar to anyone who has ever received a suspicious message from somebody claiming to be an important person. First Thessalonians consoles a community awaiting the Messiah while mourning its dead; Second Thessalonians 2:1–12 warns about frightening predictions and even a letter represented as Paul's own. At 3:17 the writer invokes a handwritten greeting as a mark of authenticity. The passages therefore belong in our investigation of forged or disputed religious correspondence, whatever judgment one eventually reaches about the authorship of Second Thessalonians itself.[308]

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.[309]

---

307 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.

308 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.

309 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.

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 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.[310]

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.[311]

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.[312]

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.

---

310 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.

311 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.

312 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.[313]

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.[314]

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

313 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.

314 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.[315]

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.[316]

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.[317]

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

315 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.

316 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.

317 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.[318]

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 stays in this book because the surviving letters sometimes tell us what he thought Jesus himself had commanded, and an investigator of sahih sayings would be foolish to throw away an early witness simply because he dislikes the witness's theology. At 1 Corinthians 7:10–11, 9:14 and 11:23–26, and at 1 Thessalonians 4:15, we find material on divorce, support for preachers, the supper, and the dead associated with a received command or tradition. Each example deserves its own entry in the pilot dossier, including the question Paul cannot answer for us automatically: from whom did he get it?[319]

James's presence in the surviving story has forced me to change the way I criticize Paul. Paul's opposition to idolatry, his care for the poor in Jerusalem, and his insistence upon love have a documentary footing that an honest account must acknowledge. The more difficult questions concern his claim to define what Gentile believers owed to the earlier covenant, the religious significance he gave to Jesus's death, and the relation between faith, deeds, and mercy. Those matters deserve a dispute with Paul on the strength of his actual letters rather than the considerably easier sport of arguing against an imaginary villain who never did a good thing in his life.

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.

---

318 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.

319 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

In Acts, the Jerusalem leaders face an awkward problem that communities have been fighting about ever since: what must an outsider do to belong? James speaks, Gentile believers are admitted without circumcision, and a letter sets out obligations to be carried into their churches. Later Christians turned the episode into a founding precedent for all sorts of arguments about law and grace. Before joining them, I want to reconstruct the decision as a meeting among identifiable people with differing responsibilities, then ask how Luke's story about Paul and the letters attributed to Paul relate to it.

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.[320]

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?[321]

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

320 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.

321 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.

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.

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.[322]

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.[323]

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,

322 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.

323 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.

although its literary date prevents treating it as a verbatim record of James's legal vocabulary.[324]

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.[325]

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?

James's sentence about Moses being read in the synagogues every Sabbath, Acts 15:21, is rather easy to race past after the council has announced its immediate requirements for Gentile believers. Yet a Sabbath-inclusive reading sees something consequential there: perhaps those first instructions were only a beginning, with converts expected to learn the rest of the law through the weekly reading. That interpretation deserves examination against the narrative and its setting, since it would give the famous Jerusalem decree a very different practical afterlife.[326]

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

---

324 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.

325 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.

326 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.

whom James describes. A theory of eventual full Torah obligation must account for that continuing distinction.[327]

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 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.[328]

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

327 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.

328 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.

conflict at Antioch. The accounts can preserve overlapping events while organizing their significance differently.[329]

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 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.[330]

Luke is doing the work of an advocate here, answering allegations that might damage the standing of 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.[331]

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

329 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.

330 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.

331 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.

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.

Literary dependence can be an intoxicating discovery. Once we see a voyage, a prison, or a farewell in two ancient narratives, it becomes tempting to put a little arrow between the texts and announce that one author borrowed from the other. The persuasive cases need something more distinctive: an unusual sequence, details shared in a recognizable pattern, access that could plausibly have occurred, and a reason the second writer changed the first. I want the proposal tested against biblical precedents and other literary traditions before an attractive parallel hardens into a historical claim.

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

Eutychus has the misfortune of falling from an upper place during one of Paul's exceptionally long meetings, after which the apostle's intervention restores him to the company. In Homer's story, Elpenor also falls from a height and requires attention from the leader with whom he has been traveling, although his fate is different. Dennis MacDonald has proposed a literary relationship between the scenes. The resemblance gives us something concrete to compare, while leaving the question of dependence to the details of wording, setting, and the author's wider habits.[332]

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

332 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.

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 protection and the protagonist's authority. Its detailed case requires inspection beyond the article abstract available for this draft.[333]

A ship battling adverse winds in the Mediterranean is doing something that ships quite often did, and a historian who treats every wave as proof of literary borrowing will quickly reconstruct an impressive but imaginary library. The voyage in Acts should be compared with other ancient travel accounts through sequences of distinctive incidents, not merely through the presence of cargo, storms, and desperate sailors. Where a cluster appears in the same order, we can ask whether Luke transformed a literary model and why his readers might have recognized it. Until then we have the rather ordinary possibility that seafaring was dangerous.

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.

Luke's defense of Paul deserves to be heard as testimony from an author with a position, and then examined for what it can support. 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 at Jerusalem gives the Gentile mission a recorded settlement to be tested against the surrounding accounts. 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.

333 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

Even if Paul had written nothing after his undisputed letters, later Christians would still have been left with the task of deciding what his message required in their own circumstances. The New Testament adds works under his name whose authorship remains disputed, including Ephesians, and those writings could exert Pauline authority regardless of who held the pen. That is an old religious trick in its innocent and less innocent varieties: an inherited name gives a later community a language in which to organize its convictions. We need to know which proposals belong to Paul, which belong to his interpreters, and how the language of grace changed as it traveled.

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.[334]

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

334 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.[335]

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 is sometimes recruited as though it had ended immediately after declaring that salvation is a gift. The author, however, goes on in chapter 5 to warn against sexual wrongdoing, impurity, and greed, saying that people characterized by such conduct have no inheritance in the kingdom, and then warns against comforting them with deceptive words. Whatever doctrine of grace we derive from the letter has to survive a reading of the rest of the letter. The apostolic pen, real or attributed, seems reluctant to sign an unlimited permission slip.[336]

Some Christians respond to the scandal of persistent misconduct by saying the person never possessed genuine faith. 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.

---

335 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.

336 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.

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 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.[337]

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.

Ephesians brings the question of Christian conduct back into the discussion at the very moment someone might be tempted to quote only its promise of grace. 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.[338]

337 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.

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 give us an increasingly organized religious household, with instructions about office and conduct that deserve comparison with the earlier mission. First Timothy 2:5 speaks of one God and a human mediator, a remarkable text to keep in view during arguments about tawḥīd, and the same chapter restricts women's teaching while linking salvation with childbearing and continued faith and moral conduct. These statements belong to the same document. A selective reader can find a congenial proof-text in almost any tradition, but reading the whole neighborhood of verses is considerably more demanding.[339]

Identifying a human intermediary is only the beginning of the theological problem raised by grace and salvation. 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

338 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.

339 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.

Thessalonians, whose authorship dispute differs from that of the Pastorals, gives divine judgment an equally prominent role and warns about falsely attributed communications.[340]

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.[341]

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.[342]

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

340 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.

341 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.

342 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 Muslim theory makes our community label a substitute for fidelity to God, it deserves the same scrutiny.

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.

A doctrine is sometimes easiest to understand by looking at what its admirers feel licensed to overlook. Mercy can be the extraordinary gift that allows someone to repent and begin again, while a theory that makes the resulting conduct irrelevant risks turning the same mercy into an exemption from change. If a later Pauline tradition appears to promise such an exemption, it has to be read beside the warnings about behavior preserved within its own canon. A believer's desire for assurance is understandable; so is the neighbor's desire that the assured believer stop behaving abominably.

We are now following two histories that have become entangled. One asks how Paul's name came to authorize later teaching, with its disputes about authorship and reception; the other asks what that teaching does to the obligations of believers and how it reads beside the Gospel and Qur'an. A text can be historically Pauline yet theologically difficult for me, or historically disputed yet ethically illuminating. The Qur'anic chapters that follow will have to reckon with that complexity rather than supplying a convenient final stamp for the entire Pauline shelf.

27. The Gospel of Marcion and the Formation of the Canon

Marcion might be described as the man who made the Christian canon problem impossible to ignore. His followers accepted a Gospel and a collection of Pauline letters, but arranged them within a story about God that many other Christians regarded as an outrageous rupture with Israel's scriptures. Later orthodox writers accused him of cutting passages from the Gospel, while scholars continue to debate the direction of those textual relationships. Whatever we conclude about individual verses, the case reminds us that a library is also an argument: decide which books belong together, and you have already begun deciding what the books are allowed to mean.

Reconstructing a book through its critics

Marcion's Gospel is a book we largely know because his enemies kept talking about it, an arrangement that ought to make every historian a little uneasy. Tertullian charges him with cutting material from a Gospel associated with Luke, but the charge by itself cannot establish exactly what stood in every disputed passage before Marcion encountered it. An opponent might quote accurately, paraphrase loosely, summarize, or complain about a missing passage for polemical effect. We need the accusations because they preserve evidence; we also need to grade the way the accusations were made.[343]

Reconstructing Marcion's Gospel requires the humility of someone repairing an old house whose original walls can be seen only through gaps in later plaster. An opponent's direct quotation is one kind of witness; a phrase inferred from an opponent's complaint is another; and the verse nobody mentions may simply have been irrelevant to the dispute. I want each line of a modern reconstruction labeled according to the kind of evidence behind it. Otherwise we can produce a handsome ancient Gospel from modern assumptions and then use that reconstruction as proof that our assumptions were right all along.

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. [344]

---

343 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.

344 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.

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 debate prevents the book from treating the traditional deletion account as the only question worth asking. [345]

The same forensic habits that help us compare Mark and Luke can be brought to the Gospel associated with Marcion. 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. [346]

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. [347]

Marcion's small library also raised an unavoidable question about which letters Christians believed Paul wrote. 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.

---

345 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.

346 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.

347 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.

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 collection in that form. It gives us a historical claim about how an influential Christian writer defended a boundary. [348]

By the time Athanasius issued his thirty-ninth Festal Letter, the fourth-century bishop could name the twenty-seven books that Christians today recognize as the New Testament, while placing works such as the Didache and Shepherd in a separate category of writings suitable for instruction. Here is an actual document marking a boundary, which is more helpful than the evergreen legend that the Council of Nicaea simply voted the Bible into existence. A text might be useful for forming Christians without receiving a place in the canon, and that difference is written plainly into the bishop's list.[349]

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. [350]

Marcion's library illustrates how a label placed upon a shelf can outlive the disputes of the people who chose which books belonged there. A Gospel excluded by a later canon may preserve old material; a book admitted into the canon still contains sayings whose historical provenance must be weighed individually. The history of which texts survived and who was empowered to interpret them belongs beside the analysis of their contents. Otherwise we simply let the winners of an old argument do our source criticism for us.

348 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.

349 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.

350 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?

When I read Irenaeus defending the authority of the churches and the inherited rule of faith, I keep hearing echoes of a much later Muslim jurist, al-Shāfiʿī, who also tried to explain why certain reports could bind a community already in possession of scripture. Irenaeus worked in the second-century Christian world and al-Shāfiʿī in the Abbasid milieu centuries afterward, with very different institutions and problems, but their efforts share an unsettling feature: somebody has to determine which memory of a messenger counts as authoritative. I am interested in the work by which a religious inheritance becomes a rule, and in what happens to the people whose memories are judged inadmissible.[351]

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.[352]

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.[353]

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 valuable for reconstructing what influential Christians argued in the second century. It is

351 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.

352 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.

353 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.

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.[354]

Four Gospels, neither more nor fewer

Irenaeus supplied what later readers would treat as a reassuring map of Gospel ancestry: Matthew among the Hebrews, Mark recording Peter's preaching, Luke conveying Paul's account, and John, the disciple said to have reclined beside Jesus, publishing at Ephesus. These are second-century assertions about how the four books reached the churches. They show us what Irenaeus wanted his readers to accept, and they give the historian named claims to investigate. The difficulty begins when we ask how much independent evidence survives for each link between a proposed witness and a Greek text written and transmitted through later generations.[355]

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.[356]

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.[357]

---

354 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.

355 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.

356 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.

357 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.[358]

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.[359]

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.[360]

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

358 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.

359 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.2–3.3, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103302.htm and https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103303.htm.

360 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.[361]

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.[362]

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.[363]

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.[364]

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 terms, when a Prophetic practice specifies its application, and when a report concerning

361 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.

362 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.

363 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.

364 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.

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.[365]

Al-Shāfiʿī often arrives in modern introductions carrying a tidy four-item kit labeled Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus, and analogy, as though his own Risāla had been written for a classroom slide. Joseph Lowry's reading makes that little picture rather harder to maintain. The treatise develops an account of bayān, explaining how Qur'an and Sunnah illuminate one another, and places consensus, inference, and legal knowledge within that argument. We ought to read his actual arrangement of authority, especially in a book asking when a transmitted statement becomes binding, rather than handing him a later textbook and calling it his.[366]

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.[367]

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.[368]

---

365 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.

366 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).

367 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.

368 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 read); El Shamsy, Canonization of Islamic Law (2013), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139649711 (publisher description read).

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.[369]

Several things can make a saying change hands, and each leaves a different sort of historical trace. 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.[370]

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. His notice should be compared with each later Ebionite report and each surviving Jewish-Christian Gospel fragment, without amalgamating them into one lost community.[371]

---

369 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.

370 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.

371 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.

Thomas, the Jewish-Christian fragments, and Marcion's Gospel have come down to us through rather different adventures in manuscript survival. 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.[372]

The Qur'anic test and the value of Irenaeus

Irenaeus is an awkward ally for a Qur'an-centered reader and therefore a useful one. His insistence that the God whom Jesus proclaimed created heaven and earth opposes Marcion's division between creator and redeemer, and it resonates with Qur'anic passages about the continuity of revelation to Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Q 3:3–4; 5:46–48; 42:13). Irenaeus also defends doctrines of Christ that the Qur'an contests (Q 4:171; 5:72–75; 112:1–4). I can value his testimony about the books circulating in second-century Christianity while arguing with his theology, which is precisely the sort of courtesy I would like my own critics to extend to me.

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 authority Irenaeus defended. His most useful contribution to this book is to make that architecture visible and historically testable.

When a genealogy becomes evidence against its maker

Litwa's 2024 study puts the historical limit on Irenaeus's genealogies into focus. Against Heresies 1.11.1 treats Valentinus as dependent on a supposedly prior "Gnostic heresy." The developed aeonology in 1.29 lacks securely dated evidence before Valentinus's lifetime

372 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.

ended. Irenaeus grouped material that may represent several different theological schools and then presented a direction of dependence that his sources cannot establish. This is a testable failure in his construction of intellectual ancestry rather than a reason to discard every detail he preserves.[373]

A different class of question concerns conduct. Irenaeus's accusations about Marcus's treatment of women are specific enough to demand sober examination; the source remains an adversarial narrative that makes other people's reported experience serve the moral purpose of its author. We should ask for corroboration without depriving alleged victims of a hearing. The same discipline applies when Irenaeus reports the ethics of Epiphanes or the crucifixion doctrine assigned to Basilides. Chapter 27B performs these tests through the alternative texts themselves.[374]

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.[375]

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

373 M. David Litwa, "Did 'The Gnostic Heresy' Influence Valentinus? An Investigation of Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.11.1 and 1.29," Vigiliae Christianae 78 (2024): 138–160, doi:10.1163/15700720-BJA10068. Open-access abstract and author's detailed summary: https://mdavidlitwa.com/2024/12/20/m-david-litwa-did-the-gnostic-heresy-influence-valentinus-an-investigation-of-irenaeus-against-heresies-1-11-1-and-1-29-vigiliae-christianae-78-2-%CA%BC24-1/. PDF text available; pagination-level manuscript review pending.

374 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.13.1–7 on Marcus, especially claims about women; https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103113.htm. The text reports allegations attributed to returned congregants but provides no independent sworn testimony; see scholarship on women's portrayal in heresiology and its narrative constraints.

375 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.

Against Heresies and the Risāla and audit the early fourfold-Gospel arguments against their complete publications.[376]

27B. The Gnostics Under Their Own Names: Justice, Revelation and the Heresy Hunters

The people commonly filed under 'Gnostics' have the misfortune of being introduced to us by some of their fiercest theological enemies, which is a little like allowing an angry rival to write the only surviving entry in your family history. Irenaeus recorded names, stories, and arguments that we could hardly replace, but he arranged them inside a project of identifying heresy, and modern scholars are still trying to work out how much of that arrangement comes from his opponents' own understanding of themselves. I want to meet these teachers in their surviving writings where possible, while keeping the useful portions of the heresiologists' testimony on the table.[377]

M. David Litwa's work is helpful here because it asks us to imagine the second-century Christian world before the heresiologists have finished arranging everyone into their preferred family tree. In Found Christianities, teachers often treated as marginal heretics belong to a crowded field of Christian experiments, while Early Christianity in Alexandria questions whether a single, already dominant church stood at the center with the others merely breaking away. We have fragmentary information about their relative numbers and organization, which is exactly why the modern tidy diagram can mislead. I want to recover the people before accepting the categories their enemies attached to them.[378][379]

I use “Gnostic” when an ancient source claims the word, or where a scholar has defined a particular family of texts by features that can actually be checked. The category itself

376 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.

377 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.preface, 1.8–11, 1.23–31; public-domain translation at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm. The report is a second-century witness to Irenaeus’s assertions; individual attributions require further corroboration.

378 M. David Litwa, Found Christianities: Remaking the World of the Second Century CE (T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2022), publisher description and contents directly checked: https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/found-christianities-9780567703873/. Full text not inspected in this pass. Compare Karen L. King, What Is Gnosticism? (Harvard, 2003) and Michael A. Williams, Rethinking “Gnosticism” (Princeton, 1996), here consulted through scholarly summaries.

379 M. David Litwa, Early Christianity in Alexandria: From Its Beginnings to the Late Second Century (Cambridge University Press, 2023/2024), introduction and chapter-6/conclusion publisher summaries: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/early-christianity-in-alexandria/B695C8A12BB62208D7B4528F8CFA39B9. Distinguish the publisher’s documented summary from full chapter access.

remains under dispute. Karen King and Michael Williams explain why the twentieth-century invention of a singular Gnosticism can reproduce the boundary-work of the ancient heresy hunters. Litwa sometimes retains the term as a practical descriptor for historical writers and movements. A category should help us find people in the sources; it ought to remain answerable to them.[380]

How Irenaeus manufactured an ancestry

Irenaeus did something quite powerful by arranging his opponents into a family tree of error. He begins with complicated Valentinian cosmology, moves through teachers and supposed deviations, and traces the whole troubling inheritance back toward Simon, giving readers an origin story for heresy before they have met the individual people on their own terms. The teachings do not all fit together comfortably, which makes the organizing genealogy itself an object of investigation. If you let a church father decide who everyone's spiritual ancestor was, you may inherit his judgments before you have heard the defense.[381]

Irenaeus also gave us evidence we could scarcely replace. He transmits names, reports books used by rival Christians, records variants of their doctrines, and preserves information about ceremonies and arguments. His insistence on a beneficent creator, the public character of revelation, and obligations that concern everyone presents a powerful internal Christian response to cosmological elitism. Those commitments explain his polemical urgency. They require the historian to distinguish a truthful objection from an accurate account of the people against whom it is directed.

The test is sharpest in Against Heresies 1.11.1 and 1.29. Irenaeus says that Valentinus adapted the principles of the so-called Gnostic heresy. Litwa's study published in Vigiliae Christianae examines the Greek expression, the separate aeonologies reported in these chapters, and their possible dates. He finds insufficient evidence for identifying a single earlier social group whose developed system Valentinus borrowed. The material of 1.29 cannot securely be placed before the death of Valentinus around the middle of the second century. Different teachers may have shaped one another in several directions during the decades that followed. The genealogy Irenaeus gives cannot be taken as a chronological fact.[382]

---

380 M. David Litwa, “What is Gnosticism?”, summarizing Karen L. King and her critique of orthodox/heretical taxonomies: https://mdavidlitwa.com/2025/04/03/what-is-gnosticism/. Litwa subsequently defends retaining a bounded, explicit modern use of “gnostic,” interview at https://robnorton.substack.com/p/an-interview-with-m-david-litwa-scholar.

381 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.preface, 1.8–11, 1.23–31; public-domain translation at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm. The report is a second-century witness to Irenaeus’s assertions; individual attributions require further corroboration.

382 M. David Litwa, “Did ‘The Gnostic Heresy’ Influence Valentinus? An Investigation of Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.11.1 and 1.29,” Vigiliae Christianae 78 (2024): 138–160, doi:10.1163/15700720-BJA10068. Open-access abstract and author’s detailed summary: https://mdavidlitwa.com/2024/12/20/m-david-litwa-did-the-gnostic-heresy-influence-

Another problem appears when he describes Marcus and women in his circle. Irenaeus alleges manipulative prophecy, love potions, and sexual exploitation, claiming that some women later confessed their experience upon returning to his community. That is a more concrete allegation than a generic statement about unrestrained sexuality, and it deserves to be recorded seriously. Its survival within a single adversarial work limits how far we can establish the events independently. A charitable view of alternative Christian theology must still leave room for victims and abuses where evidence establishes them.[383]

A heresiologist sometimes gives us the only surviving words of a teacher he despised, which creates the delightful difficulty of needing the witness while suspecting his intentions. If we discard everything he says, a remarkable portion of early Christianity disappears; if we accept his whole account, the people he attacked remain imprisoned inside his polemic. I have to keep one record of what he quotes and another of what he claims his opponents believed, then compare both wherever independent evidence survives. A historian can be grateful to a hostile archivist without taking up residence in the hostile archivist's head.

Marcion and the difficulty of divine goodness

The preceding chapter established the textual problem posed by Marcion's Gospel. His God of redeeming goodness also raises a moral question that Irenaeus cannot settle by an accusation of novelty. Litwa's The Evil Creator reconstructs the scriptural arguments by which dissident Christians judged the creator of Israel's scriptures: commands of violence, penalties upon children, vengeance, the jealousy attributed to God, and the distance between these scenes and the non-retaliatory teaching of Jesus. The interpretation grows from a controversy over scripture rather than a generalized contempt for everything Jewish.[384]

Marcion's ethical provocation deserves its best hearing. A religion claiming mercy should answer why its interpretation of God excuses actions it would condemn in a human magistrate. The Qurʾānic claim that God is just, merciful, and the Lord of both Moses and Jesus prevents me from dividing the problem between two competing gods. It requires an account of the acts and descriptions of the same sovereign without suppressing the

---

valentinus-an-investigation-of-irenaeus-against-heresies-1-11-1-and-1-29-vigiliae-christianae-78-2-%CA%BC24-1/. PDF text available; pagination-level manuscript review pending.

383 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.13.1–7 on Marcus, especially claims about women; https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103113.htm. The text reports allegations attributed to returned congregants but provides no independent sworn testimony; see scholarship on women’s portrayal in heresiology and its narrative constraints.

384 M. David Litwa, The Evil Creator: Origins of an Early Christian Idea (Oxford University Press, 2021), especially published abstracts for the introduction and chapters 1–7: https://academic.oup.com/book/39211; Litwa’s author summary: https://mdavidlitwa.com/2021/08/12/just-published-3/. Full chapters behind paywall, not independently read.

difficulty. The very objection that made Marcion intolerable to his opponents can improve a serious monotheist's reading of scripture.

A second difficulty belongs to Marcion's own proposal. Separating Christ's Father from the maker of the world threatens the unity of human history and the continuity of revelation. Litwa's later Marcion study challenges standard reports that Marcion mechanically deleted Luke, despised the world, or held every position assigned to him by opponents. Those disputes must be resolved text by text. The program of differentiating the creator from the highest god remains in substantial tension with Q 3:3–4, 5:44–48 and 42:13, in which revelation to Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad belongs to one divine source.[385]

Valentinus, Ptolemy and an argument about the Law

Valentinian Christianity deserves a more discriminating treatment than a single chart of aeons. A work such as the Gospel of Truth describes salvation from ignorance through the Father's gracious revelation. Its imagery of a shepherd recovering a lost sheep gives a recognizable ethical warmth to a theology that later readers sometimes encounter only as mathematical mythology. The tractate's relation to Valentinus personally is uncertain. Its language and ritual world nevertheless reveal a Christian community concerned with mercy, error, and restored knowledge.[386]

Ptolemy's Letter to Flora supplies a stronger legal example because it survives as a substantial text embedded in Epiphanius's attack. Ptolemy distinguishes divine command, Mosaic concession, and rulings ascribed to elders. He further parses the law associated with the just creator according to what Jesus fulfills, abolishes, or interprets symbolically. The scheme cannot simply be equated with the Qurʾān's judgment of the Torah. It does show an early Christian taking seriously the different kinds of command that later readers often flatten into a single discarded covenant.[387]

Ptolemy's question resembles the one developed in our Matthew and Christian law chapters. What is the force of Mosaic command after Jesus? What counts as God's order, and which concessions belong to a particular community and moment? A Qurʾānic

---

385 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.27–28 on Marcion and Encratites. M. David Litwa, Marcion: The Gospel of a Wholly Good God (Fortress, 2025), publisher description at https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.24873267; author’s wider conceptual study, The Evil Creator (OUP 2021). Litwa argues against treating common heresiological descriptions as established first-hand facts.

386 Gospel of Truth, Nag Hammadi Codex I,3 (with XII,2 fragment). Public-domain translation by Mark M. Mattison: https://thegnosticgospels.org/gospels/gospel-of-truth/. Attribution to Valentinus personally is debated.

387 Ptolemy, Letter to Flora, preserved by Epiphanius, Panarion 33.3–7. Modern scholarly introduction by Bradley K. Storin in The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings (Cambridge University Press): https://assets.cambridge.org/97811070/62030/excerpt/9781107062030_excerpt.pdf. Distinguish the original letter from Epiphanius’s enclosing polemic.

comparison must start with Q 3:50, where Jesus permits some things previously forbidden, and Q 5:48, where different communities are assigned law and way under one God. A theory that separates the just creator from the highest deity remains the decisive theological divergence.

Irenaeus reports Valentinian distinctions between spiritual, psychic and material people and accuses some disciples of treating good works as unnecessary for those assured of salvation. Certain Valentinian texts are less rigid than that summary implies. The objection remains ethically substantial wherever a community's doctrine turns spiritual rank into exemption from conduct, or explains a neighbor's failures as the expression of an inferior nature. Qurʾānic judgment by deeds and God's knowledge of the heart supplies a demanding external measure. One should assess a particular author rather than attribute the most damaging formulation to every Valentinian congregation.

Basilides, the crucifixion and the burden of a hostile source

Muslim polemicists sometimes cite Basilides as though we had found a confession signed by the man himself admitting that somebody else was crucified in Jesus's place. What survives immediately is Irenaeus, writing in Against Heresies 1.24.4, where he says that Jesus changed appearances with Simon of Cyrene, that Simon died on the cross, and that Jesus laughed at the deception. It is a definite late-second-century report of what a Christian opponent attributed to Basilides. The report deserves attention, especially in a discussion of Qur'an 4:157, and its hostile route of transmission has to travel with it.[388]

Litwa's Basilides: The Oldest Gnostic specifically attempts to separate surviving fragments of Basilides and Isidore from later heresiological portrayals. A careful investigator must read Clement's citations and other putatively direct fragments before assigning the Simon substitution story to the historical teacher. Similarity to Q 4:157 is a reason to investigate the report's reception, rather than proof that the Qurʾān took the story from Basilides. The Qurʾān mentions no Simon of Cyrene, no laughing heavenly double, and no doctrine that matter itself prevents the real savior from suffering.

The moral problem is worth naming. A story in which another innocent person is deliberately offered to execution in Jesus' place asks why the divine rescuer would engineer that injustice. Irenaeus's version displays a savior mocking the deceived persecutors. The Qurʾānic description of uncertainty among Jesus' opponents can be read without adding those details. Whatever one concludes about the historical crucifixion, the ethics of a proposed substitute require their own defense.

388 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103124.htm. For source-critical caution compare M. David Litwa, Basilides: The Oldest Gnostic (2025), author’s publication description at https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/; compare James A. Kelhoffer, “Basilides’s Gospel and Exegetica,” Vigiliae Christianae 59 (2005): 115–134, cited in contemporary scholarly discussion.

Carpocrates, Epiphanes and the justice of common goods

The most startling recovery comes through Epiphanes, the son of Carpocrates. Clement of Alexandria preserves a fragment of his treatise On Justice while attempting to condemn it. Epiphanes argues that God distributes light and the nourishment of the earth without reserving them to rich people, rulers, men, or free persons. He treats equality and common enjoyment as the measure of divine justice. This source allows a direct comparison with Qurʾānic commands for justice and with warnings against wealth circulating only among the affluent (Q 16:90; 49:13; 59:7).[389]

A theory about common property becomes considerably more complicated when somebody asks how it would govern marriage and the lives of women. Epiphanes criticizes human regulations that transform common gifts into exclusive possessions; Clement then associates followers of Carpocrates with communal wives. A declaration of equality can be emancipatory when it limits domination. It becomes its opposite when women are treated as goods available to men, or when the lack of exclusive property becomes a pretext to ignore personal consent. The fragment should be read for what it says, while the extrapolation to how followers behaved must be separately checked.

Litwa's study of Carpocrates, Marcellina and Epiphanes challenges the inherited image of an amoral libertine sect. According to Irenaeus 1.25, Carpocratian Jesus mastered his passions. The same report says some followers employed images of Jesus alongside images of philosophers; Marcellina led an assembly in Rome. Those details are far more concrete than a generalized assertion that every follower pursued every possible sin. Marcellina's religious leadership also complicates the notion that the surviving Christian record contains only male custodians of teaching.[390]

The strongest claim we can presently make concerns the ethical argument in the fragment itself. Epiphanes values distributive equality and criticizes conventions that create hoarding. That ideal merits evaluation independently of Irenaeus's verdict. Whether the community practiced equal sharing without coercion remains a historical question. Our own Qurʾānic framework should apply the same caution to any group that declares itself just while exercising power over others.

---

389 Clement of Alexandria, Stromata 3.2.5–10 (quotation from Epiphanes, On Justice); M. David Litwa, Carpocrates, Marcellina, and Epiphanes (Routledge, 2022); see author’s account https://ehrmanblog.org/an-early-christian-advocate-of-licentious-living-carpocrates-guest-post-by-dr-david-litwa/ and Daniel Vaucher, Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2023.02.09: https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2023/2023.02.09/. Full monograph not independently collated.

390 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.25.1–6 (Carpocrates, Marcellina, images), https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103125.htm; compare M. David Litwa, “Does Carpocrates mean ‘Fruit-grabber’?”, https://mdavidlitwa.com/2024/08/15/does-carpocrates-mean-fruit-grabber/. No independent report substantiating Irenaeus’s generalized accusations is established here.

The Secret Book of John and the politics of the creator

The text often called the Apocryphon or Secret Book of John offers a different account of Genesis. It describes supreme divinity above the world-forming rulers, a lower creator who mistakenly claims ultimate authority, and heavenly revelation that enables people to recognize their origin. Litwa's 2025 Cambridge volume examines the shorter version of this book, its Christian discourse and its complex relation to the Irenaean reports. Four Coptic manuscript witnesses preserve several versions. Treating it as a stable transcript of a single original doctrine would obscure that textual history.[391]

There is an ethical impulse in the myth. The ruler of the visible order claims divine supremacy while acting in ignorance. To resist him is to resist a false claim to absolute power. The emphasis on knowledge and a female figure of higher wisdom can open spaces for criticizing oppressive claims made in the name of heaven. The text's ascetic rejection of sex and its myth of cosmic error create other concerns. A theology that makes bodily life a prison risks devaluing the obligations of embodied care.

The Qurʾān's account of Iblīs and Adam can sound close in a few narrative positions: angels and other heavenly beings, an arrogant speaker, the temptation of humans, and a divine intervention that reveals hidden truth. The assignment of roles changes the story. In Q 7:11–18 Iblīs refuses God's command; God remains the just creator of Adam and the one who exposes rebellion. The maker of bodies has not become an ignorant tyrant. The Qurʾān praises the goodness and order of creation (Q 32:7; 39:62), making its Adam story an unusually severe obstacle to a full demiurgic reading.

Thomas, the living sayings and a difficult account of women

The Gospel of Thomas keeps turning up in parts of Christian history where people would prefer to file it under one settled label. M. David Litwa's Gnostic Thomas reads its knowledge, liberation, and transformation language as grounds for calling it gnostic; other scholars use the category differently or dispute its usefulness. My interest remains at the level of the sayings, some of which may have histories older than the collection that preserves them. Putting a date on the book is part of the work, and then comes the more delicate task of asking what we can say about each inherited utterance.[392]

Several Thomasine themes seem close to Qurʾānic concerns about hidden knowledge and the deceptive glamour of riches. Thomas 110 instructs the person who has become wealthy to renounce the world, while the Qurʾān measures wealth against generosity and

---

391 M. David Litwa, The Secret Book of John (Cambridge University Press, 2025), publisher description and introductory abstract, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/secret-book-of-john/secret-book-of-john/6E142C2C7FA35C06F64CCCA5D17CBF67; Brill, Coptic Gnostic Library Online (manuscript/codex catalogue), https://scholarlyeditions.brill.com/cglo/.

392 M. David Litwa, The Gnostic Thomas (2025), author’s book description: https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/. Gospel of Thomas logia 22, 114, textual comparison with Coptic editions. Litwa’s notice of Jacobsen Buckley’s alternative interpretation, https://mdavidlitwa.com/2025/07/02/i-will-make-her-male/.

accountability. Thomas 22 imagines restoration through overcoming divided categories. Neither observation yields a line of textual dependence. It puts two ways of treating the spirit and material life into conversation.

Thomas 114 presents an unmistakable moral and exegetical problem. Peter dismisses Mary's claim to life because she is a woman; Jesus replies with a promise to make her male so that she can become a living spirit. Some scholars read the saying through a ritual ideal of returning to primordial undivided humanity. The explicit hierarchy of female and male requires examination even on that symbolic account. Qurʾānic Maryam receives divine election as a woman. She does not require a male transformation before becoming the bearer of revelation (Q 3:42; 19:16–33). This is a sharp theological difference inside a wider set of shared ascetic and sapiential questions.

Judas, the rival apostles and the politics of secret revelation

The Gospel of Judas is often described as a vindication of the betrayer, although the recovered Coptic text and its damaged passages have generated divergent scholarly readings. David Brakke's modern edition and Jonathan Cahana's analysis caution against allowing the first publicity surrounding the manuscript to determine Judas's role. Some interpreters see the character as implicated in the corruption the text attacks; others trace a more complicated, ambiguous relation to Jesus.[393]

Beneath these labels lies an actual struggle over who spoke for the disciples and what the death of Jesus meant. A secret revelation can challenge the monopoly of an established apostolic circle. It can also assign salvation to a privileged knower, creating the very hierarchy it disputes. The Qurʾānic standard should ask how the claim treats justice, deception, responsibility and the integrity of prophetic teaching. The dramatic reversal of familiar characters supplies no independent moral proof.

Ascetics, Manichaeans and the danger of an expanding category

The ascetic groups present a religious argument that can be lost when heresiologists are busy sorting everyone by metaphysics. Their restraint, refusal of indulgence, and seriousness about desire can be attractive to a reader who values chastity and devotion. An insistence that marriage or ordinary food is intrinsically impure invites the Qurʾānic objection to forbidding what God has made lawful (Q 5:87; compare 57:27). The early sources must determine which group held the stronger condemnation.

Mani's third-century religion belongs to a later Persian and Mesopotamian world with its own scriptures, religious hierarchy and ascetic organization. Its claims about light,

393 The Gospel of Judas, Codex Tchacos; David Brakke, The Gospel of Judas: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Yale, 2022), publication record https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv28bqm69; Jonathan Cahana, “Salvific Dissolution,” New Testament Studies 63 (2017), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/new-testament-studies/article/salvific-dissolution-the-mystery-of-the-betrayal-between-the-new-testament-and-the-gospel-of-judas/12548771ABEFB74333335EC12859B7A1. Judas’s role remains disputed.

darkness, cosmic mixture and Jesus cannot simply be folded into the religious worlds of Valentinus or Basilides. Its chronology makes exchange with late-antique communities historically conceivable; no specific line into a Qurʾānic verse is proved by that general possibility. Dualism on the level of ultimate divine realities conflicts with the Qurʾān's account of one creator and moral governor.[394]

Comparative moral register: texts, promises and dangers

These judgments concern what the identified documents teach and what named opponents allege. They are not grades assigned to whole communities. Where the evidence is only hostile, the table records that limitation explicitly.[395]

Movement or text	Ethical promise	Possible harm / evidence problem	Witness and Qurʾānic test
Valentinian / Ptolemy	Moral reasoning about parts of the Law; restoration through knowledge	Esoteric cosmology risks spiritual hierarchy; the group's conduct cannot be inferred	Letter to Flora; Gospel of Truth. Q 5:44–48 has a different account of revealed law
Marcionite	A challenge to attributing cruelty to the highest God; emphasis on mercy	Repudiation of the Jewish scriptures and their God conflicts with Q 2:136 and 5:44	Marcion's own works lost; arguments largely through Tertullian and Epiphanius
Basilidean	Attention to providence and freedom in fragments attributed to Basilides	Simon-of-Cyrene substitute and docetic claims rest mainly on hostile attribution	Irenaeus 1.24.4; Q 4:157 leaves its apparent event unexplained
Carpocratian / Epiphanes	Creation's common goods; arguments against exclusion by wealth and status	Sexual-license accusations unverified; proposals about possession and marriage require a consent audit	Clement, Stromata 3.2; Q 16:90 and 49:13 are comparisons of moral claims
Sethian / Secret Book of John	Resistance to an arrogant claimant to absolute divine authority	Hostile material cosmology and elite knowledge may demean embodied life	Several manuscript recensions; Q 39:62 affirms God as creator of all things
Thomasine	Sayings of self-examination and spiritual understanding	Logion 114's male-making language invites scrutiny of	Coptic Thomas 22, 114; proverbial resemblance

394 S. N. C. Lieu, "Manichaeism," in Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies (2009), pp. 221–236, publisher abstract at https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/publications/manichaeism/. Mani belongs to the third-century Persian context, temporally distinct from second-century teachers.

395 M. David Litwa, "What is Gnosticism?", summarizing Karen L. King and her critique of orthodox/heretical taxonomies: https://mdavidlitwa.com/2025/04/03/what-is-gnosticism/. Litwa subsequently defends retaining a bounded, explicit modern use of "gnostic," interview at https://robnorton.substack.com/p/an-interview-with-m-david-litwa-scholar.

Movement or text	Ethical promise	Possible harm / evidence problem	Witness and Qurʾānic test
		gender hierarchy	establishes no direct dependence
Gospel of Judas	A sharp critique of public apostolic prestige and religious sacrifice	The depiction of Judas and the saving act remains disputed	Codex Tchacos; compare Q 5:111 without equating apostles and disciples
Manichaean	Ascetic discipline and a stated concern for avoiding harm	Strong dualism can make bodies and ordinary family relations spiritually suspect	Third-century Persian movement; Q 4:171 and creation passages resist cosmic dualism

A Qurʾānic map of the actual agreements

The crucifixion is the strongest verbal temptation. Irenaeus's report about Basilides, the Second Treatise of the Great Seth and the Coptic Apocalypse of Peter offer versions in which the heavenly savior escapes the treatment suffered by a visible figure. In the Second Treatise, Jesus speaks of apparent death and distinguishes his own identity from those who bear the cross or receive blows. These accounts share a conceptual problem with Q 4:157: the persecutors believe that they have mastered Jesus, while their understanding is false. Their explanations of the scene differ, and the latter texts also attack Moses and the prophetic inheritance that the Qurʾān honors.[396]

The Qurʾān says that the opponents neither killed nor crucified him and that the event was made ambiguous to them; Q 4:158 speaks of divine raising. It leaves the mechanism unstated. Historical scholarship commonly treats Roman execution of Jesus as a well-supported event, and some interpreters read Q 4:157 as rejecting the opponents' claim to agency rather than every form of crucifixion. The predominant classical Muslim reading denies the crucifixion. Our book should present those differences openly, while resisting the urge to identify a substitute for whom the verse gives no name.[397]

The clay birds offer a closer narrative correspondence at the level of a memorable episode. Jesus brings birds made of clay to life in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and in Q 3:49 and 5:110, where the Qurʾān repeatedly qualifies the miracle as occurring by God's permission. A historical argument can compare the story's circulation across Greek, Syriac and other

396 Second Treatise of the Great Seth (Nag Hammadi VII,2), public translation at https://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/2seth.html; Coptic Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3); compare Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4. Texts differ about the visible victim and Christ's relation to suffering. No historical channel into Q 4:157 has been established.

397 Qur'an 4:157–158, 3:55, 19:33; 21:91; 3:49; 5:110; 19:29–33; 5:44–48; 4:171; 16:90; 49:13; 59:7; 7:11–18; 32:7; 39:62. Arabic and standard English translations must govern any proposed intertextual correspondence. On debates about 4:157 see Louay Fatoohi, "The Non-Crucifixion Verse," AJIS 40 (2023), https://www.ajis.org/index.php/ajiss/article/view/3143.

linguistic settings. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas has its own manuscript tradition; its title and later associations do not make it an inherently Gnostic book. The infant speaking from the cradle in Q 19:29–33 belongs to another developing body of infancy traditions. A composite "Gnostic infancy gospel" invented from these separate materials would make the evidence look simpler than it is.[398][399]

The Qurʾān's Word and Spirit language gives another comparison worth pursuing in Chapter 38. A reader familiar with Jewish-Christian Spirit traditions, Valentinian accounts of a divine Word, and the Secret Book of John's revelations may recognize overlapping questions about how God acts through messengers and revelation. Q 4:171 nevertheless names Jesus God's word and a spirit from Him while forbidding the theological conclusion that God is one member of a plurality. Q 19:17 depicts God's Spirit appearing in human form; the text supplies no list of aeons and no second creator. The shared vocabulary is evidence of a late-antique field of discussion rather than a complete common creed.

The strongest theological boundary is the identity of the God of Israel. The Qurʾān authorizes the Torah, celebrates Moses, praises the creation of humanity, and identifies the divine source of Jesus' mission with the single Lord of all. That places it in direct conflict with movements that teach the creator to be evil, ignorant or an enemy of Christ. Other ethical themes, including light, repentance, the dignity of outsiders, resistance to hoarding and the authority of spiritual knowledge, can produce substantial conversation even where cosmology diverges.

I can affirm a text's insight without importing the entire system to which its author belonged. That is a recognizable Qurʾānic activity: the scripture speaks to communities already holding overlapping revelations and stories and evaluates their claims under its own theological authority. The historical study of literary relationship still asks separate questions. When and where was a parallel first attested? Which languages carried it? Can a chain of intermediaries be identified? Is a distinctive sequence of details reproduced? Could two texts be drawing on older oral or written material? A resemblance becomes evidence of direct transmission only as those questions receive answers.

Source grades and the discipline of an adversarial reading

I will use four working grades in this inquiry. A self-authored or community-produced surviving text is direct evidence for its own teachings, with uncertainties about authorship and dating recorded. An extended quotation preserved by an opponent gives access to

---

398 Infancy Gospel of Thomas, clay birds tradition, and Qur'an 3:49; 5:110. Mary Dzon, "Jesus and the Birds in Medieval Abrahamic Traditions," Traditio 70 (2015/2016), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/traditio/article/abs/jesus-and-the-birds-in-medieval-abrahamic-traditions/5E661EDAD003E5DE16F865874298F912. This infancy work is not automatically a "Gnostic Gospel."

399 Early infancy narratives and the Qur'an: Qur'an 19:16–33, 3:42–49; Infancy Gospel of Thomas and later infancy compilations. A shared motif can precede the extant manuscript of either account, so dates of surviving witnesses and hypothetical compositions must be kept separate.

words that can be checked, while its framing remains contested. A description by an opponent without quotation is evidence that the accusation circulated. A proposed Qurʾānic dependence is a modern inference requiring chronological and linguistic support. The ranking concerns kinds of evidence, and says nothing about a person's worth.

Litwa offers an important method rather than an alternative magisterium. His reconstructions correct old habits of repeating heresiology as history, although his proposals themselves require scrutiny. The review literature sometimes finds his rehabilitation of particular teachers too generous. I should welcome that challenge as part of the same method. The only reliable procedure is to return to the ancient text, record the closest available witness, then examine the moral claim without requiring the opponent to be either saint or monster.[400][401]

27C. Celsus and Julian: The Critics Who Read the Christian Scriptures

A hostile author can be a surprisingly generous archivist. We know much of what Celsus said against Christianity because Origen answered him, and much of Julian's attack survives because Cyril of Alexandria went to the trouble of refuting it. That is convenient for historians and rather inconvenient for anyone hoping to hear the critics entirely in their own voices. I want to reconstruct their charges with careful attention to who quoted what, because an opponent's selection of your worst sentences can tell future generations a

400 Clement of Alexandria, Stromata 3.2.5–10 (quotation from Epiphanes, On Justice); M. David Litwa, Carpocrates, Marcellina, and Epiphanes (Routledge, 2022); see author’s account https://ehrmanblog.org/an-early-christian-advocate-of-licentious-living-carpocrates-guest-post-by-dr-david-litwa/ and Daniel Vaucher, Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2023.02.09: https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2023/2023.02.09/. Full monograph not independently collated.

401 Source-status ledger, 2 November 2026: directly read public translations of key ancient passages and modern journal articles/abstracts; publisher descriptions and author summaries for full Litwa monographs; no full-book access for Found Christianities, Basilides, Secret Book of John, Marcion, the 2025 Julian translation or 2026 Critics of Christianity. Subsequent scholarly revision should collate the complete volumes and original-language texts.

great deal about the controversy and considerably less about the book you originally wrote.[402][403]

Celsus belongs to the later second century, close to the world of Valentinus, Marcion and Irenaeus. Julian wrote during the final years of his reign, around 362–363, when the church had acquired imperial power and fourth-century controversies had elaborated its accounts of Jesus. A continuity of argumentative questions connects them across nearly two centuries. The institution being criticized had changed profoundly.

Celsus's Jewish speaker and the honor of Maryam

Celsus managed to place an ugly accusation against Maryam in circulation by giving it to a Jewish speaker in a polemical dialogue. We know the charge because Origen quotes and answers it in Against Celsus 1.28 and 1.32: the story alleges adultery, names a soldier called Panthera as Jesus's father, and associates the miracles with techniques supposedly learned in Egypt. These passages show that such attacks were being made and answered in antiquity. They tell us something important about the controversy that surrounded Jesus's origins, while providing no independent proof of the accusation against his mother.[404]

The literary device complicates provenance. Origen considers the Jewish speaker a rhetorical invention, while Egge Tijsseling's recent reconstruction, discussed by Litwa, hypothesizes that Celsus drew upon an earlier Jewish written account. That proposal needs separate testing. Even proof of an earlier Jewish source would establish the antiquity of an accusation, rather than the factual truth of its charge.[405]

---

402 Origen, Contra Celsum 1.28–32 (Celsus's Jewish persona and Panthera allegation), 5.61 (competing Christian accounts of Israel's God), 8.73 (citizenship and military service); public translation: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04168.htm. These are Origen's quotations and framing of a lost opponent.

403 Julian, Against the Galileans §§253–262 (Moses and monotheism), §§327–340 (John's exaltation of Jesus, tomb devotion), translated by Wilmer Cave Wright, Loeb Classical Library (1923), https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate_galileans_1_text.htm. Preserved principally through Cyril of Alexandria, Contra Julianum; reconstruction and transmission limitations apply.

404 Origen, Contra Celsum 1.28–32 (Celsus's Jewish persona and Panthera allegation), 5.61 (competing Christian accounts of Israel's God), 8.73 (citizenship and military service); public translation: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04168.htm. These are Origen's quotations and framing of a lost opponent.

405 M. David Litwa, Celsus in His Own Words: A Translation of The True Teaching, author's description https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/. Litwa, "The Sources of Celsus" (March 11, 2026), discusses Egge Tijsseling's reconstruction of a possible Jewish source;

Sūrat Maryam deserves to stand beside the Christian accusations about Jesus's origins because it gives Maryam and her infant a voice in the very kind of dispute that made maternal honor and legitimate descent so important in antiquity. Her neighbors see a scandal, and the child answers as God's servant and prophet (Q 19:27–33); elsewhere Maryam is chosen and purified, and she denies sexual contact and unchastity (Q 3:42; 19:20). I can hear the Qur'an responding to a world in which ugly allegations about Jesus's mother circulated, although that does not tell me that Celsus's particular book was known to the speaker. We have an intellectual and religious environment to study before we can identify a route of transmission.

A philosopher's criticism of miracles and revelation

Celsus was prepared to grant the reports of miracles and then ask why a miracle should establish Jesus's unique divinity. He can admit reports that marvels occurred and still ask why anyone should attribute them to the action of the highest God. That question has force against an argument that proceeds from a wonder to ontological equality with God. It also has a simple reply available within the Qurʾān: Jesus performs signs by God's permission (Q 3:49; 5:110). The marvel is a mark of commission, and the distinction between divine source and human messenger remains explicit.

Celsus's critique has its own blind spots. He assumes substantial authority for inherited civic religion and for the philosophical status of elite Greek culture. His account of what respectable people should believe sometimes treats outsiders, the poor or the untrained as evidence against a movement's truth. The moral worth of a teaching cannot be inferred from the social standing of its adherents. The Qurʾān's recurrent attention to the vulnerable and to human accountability offers a measure that can be applied to the philosopher as readily as to the Christian preacher.

He does, however, grasp a problem that ecclesiastical defenses often minimize. In Against Celsus 5.61, Origen reproduces Celsus's observation that some Christians affirm the God of Israel and others place Jesus' Father in opposition to that God. Origen concedes the existence of those disagreements and argues that the diversity of philosophy and medicine offers a parallel. The response establishes that Christians were debating the identity of God inside their own movement. It does not settle the arguments by counting the parties.[406]

The discussion also yields one of our best witnesses for Ebionite disagreement. In answering Celsus, Origen names two varieties of Ebionites, one accepting Jesus' virgin birth and another treating him as begotten in the usual human manner. That places a check on

---

https://mdavidlitwa.com/2026/03/11/the-sources-of-celsus/. Such source reconstruction is contested.

406 Origen, Contra Celsum 1.28–32 (Celsus’s Jewish persona and Panthera allegation), 5.61 (competing Christian accounts of Israel’s God), 8.73 (citizenship and military service); public translation: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04168.htm. These are Origen’s quotations and framing of a lost opponent.

the habit of defining every Ebionite by one birth doctrine. It intersects with Chapter 16, where the Qurʾānic narrative of Maryam must be read in relation to specific ancient positions.

Celsus and political service

At the end of the surviving controversy Celsus urges Christians to support imperial order, including military service and leadership if the emperor needs it. Origen responds by describing religious people who serve the commonwealth through prayer, seeking to keep their hands from blood as some pagan priests did. He does not deny that public safety matters. He offers another way to fulfill a duty toward the polity.[407]

This exchange is an ethical diagnostic for our wider project. One critic gives heavy weight to political order and defense. His respondent gives weight to religious conscience and abstention from killing. Neither premise alone settles when force is justified. The Qurʾānic passages on fighting and restraint demand their own examination in Chapter 43. A consistent approach should resist reading the emperor's demand for armies as proof of virtue simply because it appeals to civic duty.

Porphyry between the two critics

Porphyry is the next major critic in the trail between Celsus and Julian, and he has the reputation of a man prepared to read the Christian texts closely enough to ask irritating questions about prophecy and the date of Daniel. Unfortunately his Against the Christians survives in scattered, contested fragments, so even deciding which criticism belongs to him has become an exercise in source reconstruction. Litwa's 2025 work gives that task a fresh route, while the material associated with Macarius Magnes and sometimes Hierocles needs especially careful attribution. We must first recover the critic before confidently declaring what he said.[408]

For this chapter, Porphyry clarifies the development of an outside method. Christian claims could be challenged by examining the date, literary form and consistency of the writings offered in their support. We should apply the same method to the reconstruction of Porphyry himself. It would be inconsistent to condemn an ecclesiastical compiler for

---

407 Origen, Contra Celsum 1.28–32 (Celsus’s Jewish persona and Panthera allegation), 5.61 (competing Christian accounts of Israel’s God), 8.73 (citizenship and military service); public translation: https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04168.htm. These are Origen’s quotations and framing of a lost opponent.

408 For Porphyry as intermediary, see M. David Litwa, A Reconstruction of Against the Christians by Porphyry of Tyre (Gnosis, 2025), author’s publication list https://mdavidlitwa.com/about/; his caution about attribution via Macarius Magnes and Hierocles at https://mdavidlitwa.com/2025/08/14/the-work-of-porphyry-against-the-christians/. Fragment identification remains contested.

selective quotation and then quote a modern reconstruction of a pagan critic as though its recovered sentences had uniform provenance.

Julian's apostasy from an inherited Christian education

Julian had been educated within Christianity before embracing Hellenic religion. His Against the Galileans is accordingly an attack informed by the scriptural habits and theological disputes of his age. The surviving sections of the work derive largely from Cyril's later refutation. Modern editions use those Christian excerpts, together with additional fragments and testimonia, to attempt a reconstruction. Litwa's Emperor Julian Against the Apostates (2025) offers a newer translation and commentary. Its critical text needs to be compared with the older Wilmer Cave Wright edition used for the passages discussed here.[409]

Julian's treatment of the Jewish scriptures begins with a challenge to Christian inheritance. If Moses commands exclusive devotion to one God, how can Christians claim that the Mosaic revelation itself authorizes worship of Jesus as a second divine person? In the surviving §253–262 sequence, he searches the Torah for an explicit warrant and accuses his opponents of introducing additional divinity. The question is sharpened by his willingness to praise some Jewish practices while maintaining Hellenic ideas of divine government over nations.[410]

Julian's universal religious theory complicates his critique. He can recognize Jewish obedience and the integrity of ancestral ritual while regarding the God of the Hebrew people as particular to them. The Qurʾānic Lord of Moses is Lord of all worlds. Q 42:13 and 5:46–48 construct a continuity that includes a universal source of revelation, with different laws and communities in history. Julian's attack therefore identifies an important Christian tension while leaving an independent question about his own theology of the divine unanswered.

Julian on John: the most consequential ancient critique for this book

The surviving passage at Against the Galileans 327A–335A deserves close attention. Julian claims that Mark, Matthew, Luke and Paul refrain from giving Jesus the decisive divine designation which John applies to him. He then reads the beginning of John's Gospel as an

---

409 M. David Litwa, The Emperor Julian Against the Apostates (Gnosis, 2025), and Critics of Christianity: Celsus, Porphyry, and the Emperor Julian (Gnosis, 2026), publications listed on author’s site https://mdavidlitwa.com/about/ and https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/. Full text not inspected for this draft. His 2025 notice of David Hunt, “Julian versus Jesus,” https://mdavidlitwa.com/2025/11/11/julian-versus-jesus/, underscores fourth-century Christological controversies.

410 Julian, Against the Galileans §§253–262 (Moses and monotheism), §§327–340 (John’s exaltation of Jesus, tomb devotion), translated by Wilmer Cave Wright, Loeb Classical Library (1923), https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate_galileans_1_text.htm. Preserved principally through Cyril of Alexandria, Contra Julianum; reconstruction and transmission limitations apply.

engineered transition from the Word with God to the Word associated with the historical Jesus. Julian also mocks the further amplification of Christian devotional practices around saints and tombs.[411]

The broad chronology he proposes is plausible as a question: the Gospel of John presents Jesus through a more explicit Logos theology than many early Synoptic scenes. Yet his formulation oversimplifies the wider evidence. Paul 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Philippians 2:6–11 already provide unusually elevated Christology, regardless of how one settles its interpretation; other early Christian texts and hymns further complicate a linear narrative from humble Jesus to Johannine God. Julian's dating and motive claims about the evangelist remain polemical conjectures. A historical argument should ask which features of John can be shown to be literary development, without granting the emperor access to the author's intentions.

Julian's argument belongs beside our inquiry into John's farewell because he, too, noticed that Gospel accounts did not always fit together as easily as their defenders claimed. His fourth-century criticism gives us a dated witness to the existence of such questions, and his surviving fragments deserve to be read through the writers who preserved them. It would be too convenient to make him a secret witness to a lost first-century draft of John 14. The literary layers I propose have to be argued from the Gospel and its transmission, with Julian supplying a sharp ancient question rather than the missing manuscript.

Julian and charity under the imperial purple

Julian, the emperor who attacked Christian credulity, left correspondence that makes him more interesting than a stock villain in a church history. Writing to Arsacius, a pagan high priest, he acknowledges the help Christians gave strangers and the poor, including people outside their own religion, and calls for traditional cults to develop a comparable charitable network. Elsewhere he urges priests to assist the needy and prisoners. These are striking concessions from an opponent, and they give us one of the more useful sorts of witness: a critic who inadvertently tells us what his rivals were doing well.[412]

Julian's educational measures in 362 expose a difficulty that a tidy story of pagan opposition to Christianity can miss. Julian pressed the idea that teachers of Homer and the classics should be believers in the gods about whom they taught. Modern historians debate the exact legal and practical scope of the initiative. It constrained Christian participation in

---

411 Julian, Against the Galileans §§253–262 (Moses and monotheism), §§327–340 (John’s exaltation of Jesus, tomb devotion), translated by Wilmer Cave Wright, Loeb Classical Library (1923), https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate_galileans_1_text.htm. Preserved principally through Cyril of Alexandria, Contra Julianum; reconstruction and transmission limitations apply.

412 Julian, Letter to Arsacius, High Priest of Galatia, letter 22 (Wright edition), plus fragment to a priest; https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate_letters_1_trans.htm; https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate_letter_to_a_priest.htm. On education measures: Neil McLynn, “Julian and the Christian Professors,” in Being Christian in Late Antiquity (OUP, 2014), https://academic.oup.com/book/8434/chapter-abstract/154204845.

classical teaching and shows how an argument about intellectual sincerity can become a rule backed by imperial authority. His praise of generosity and his religious gatekeeping have to be assessed as parts of one political life.

A Christian critic who once complained about imperial force was now addressing a church newly accustomed to imperial sponsorship, which makes the comparison particularly interesting. An account that praises the church solely for its public charity would miss the growing capacity of bishops and emperors to govern who could teach, worship, or inherit institutional trust. The moral question cannot be answered by awarding one tradition ownership of compassion. We have direct evidence that Julian recognized charity as a public good, even while criticizing the people who modeled it for him.

Which of their objections survive a Qurʾānic reading?

Celsus's alternative paternity narrative about Maryam is an accusation that the Qurʾān directly contests through its account of her honor and Jesus' miraculous origin. His doubt that miracles entail divinity is compatible with the Qurʾān's repeated insistence that prophetic wonders happen by God's permission. His argument that Christianity harbored incompatible conceptions of God remains valuable evidence for the second century, though theological disagreement by itself proves neither alternative correct.

Julian's objection to worshiping Jesus on the basis of Mosaic monotheism has an unusually close analogue in Q 4:171 and 5:72–75, even while he approaches religion through a Hellenic and polytheistic framework. His literary claim about Johannine exaltation is a serious question for this book, while the survival of elevated pre-Johannine Christology limits any simple story of the invention of divinity in John. His complaint that Christians abandoned parts of the Jewish law must be compared with the Qurʾānic claim that Jesus permitted some former prohibitions and that God assigned different legal orders to communities (Q 3:50; 5:48).[413]

I owe the Qur'an the same seriousness I ask Christians to give their inherited books. It confirms earlier revelations while offering an account of Jesus's infancy and fate that differs from passages many Christians take as central, and a historian ought to ask how those claims engage the religious world around Muhammad. My theological conviction that the Qur'an is revelation does not relieve me of explaining its intertextual relationships when I make a historical argument. If I demand witnesses from Matthew and Luke, then the Muslim comparison deserves clearly stated sources and inferences of its own.

A source-critical judgment

Celsus gives particularly early testimony to the diversity of Christian belief. His critique of the miraculous birth deserves attention as evidence of controversy, with its defamatory specifics treated as allegations. His philosopher's confidence in civic religion limits the moral reach of his criticism of marginalized worshipers. Julian knows a more developed

413 Qur’an 5:46–48, 3:50, 3:3–4, 42:13, 4:171, 5:72–75, 9:111, 57:27, 5:87, 4:135. Juxtaposition with Celsus and Julian is a comparison of questions and answers, not evidence of direct influence.

Christian canon and can engage the internal tension between Israelite monotheism and fourth-century worship of Christ. He also offers testimony about Christian charity and a revealing example of the coercive power an educated emperor could exercise over public teaching.

Neither author's book survives in the form it was written. We must audit each sentence through Origen or Cyril and refrain from converting a hostile quotation into a witness of neutral intent. The Qurʾān enters the conversation after both critics and supplies its own account of Mary's honor, prophetic signs, divine oneness and law. It joins a known history of arguments while making claims that cannot be reduced to those of either Greek writer.[414]

414 Source-status ledger, 2 November 2026: directly read public translations of key ancient passages and modern journal articles/abstracts; publisher descriptions and author summaries for full Litwa monographs; no full-book access for Found Christianities, Basilides, Secret Book of John, Marcion, the 2025 Julian translation or 2026 Critics of Christianity. Subsequent scholarly revision should collate the complete volumes and original-language texts.

PART VII · PASSION, RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

28. The Resurrection, the Empty Tomb and the Earliest Witnesses

A proclamation of resurrection is an extraordinary claim about an event, and the documents behind it deserve to be treated as testimony rather than merged into a single Easter tableau. Paul reports appearances to Cephas, the Twelve, James, and himself; the Gospels describe women, a tomb, and encounters whose details vary from account to account. We ought to ask what each witness says people experienced and when that account first appears, particularly because an early confession of faith and a later narrative about an empty grave are different historical objects even when a believer understands them as parts of the same divine act.

The tradition Paul says he received

Paul tells the Corinthians that he received a proclamation about Jesus's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances, and in 1 Corinthians 15 he names Cephas, the Twelve, James, and finally himself in its sequence. That is early evidence for what was being proclaimed, and for Paul's claim that those people had been witnesses. It would be wonderfully convenient if naming five hundred people produced five hundred independently surviving depositions. We still possess Paul's letter, so the number of people mentioned and the number of reports available to cross-examine are two different quantities.[415]

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. [416]

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

415 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.

416 1 Corinthians 15:35–54. This discussion concerns Paul’s expressed model; it does not establish the metaphysical truth of the transformation he describes.

instructions. The historical problem is the development of the ending and the relationship between announcement and encounter. A claim that the shorter ending has no resurrection would misdescribe the surviving words. [417]

The women at Mark's tomb are frightened and silent, which is part of the way his story works before we turn it into a disputed historical report. 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.

Mark's endings offer a caution: later Christians sometimes supplied the very confident conclusion a modern reader expects the earliest manuscript to have. 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. [418]

When historians reconstruct the early Jesus movement through James and the brothers, Mary Magdalene can quietly disappear from the story, which is an odd fate for someone the surviving Gospel narratives place so near the resurrection proclamation. Kinship and the later office of leadership matter, but the reports also attribute recognition and testimony to people outside the family. I want to know how those two kinds of authority were understood and how the stories changed as communities organized themselves. To give James his due, we need not take away Mary Magdalene's place in the evidence.

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. [419]

---

417 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.

418 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.

419 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.

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 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. [420]

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. [421]

Modern retellings sometimes gather every appearance, empty tomb, and report of exaltation into one seamless narrative, as though the authors all stood in the same room comparing notes. A historian has to let each witness say what happened and how he knows, while a believer may reach a further conclusion about the divine event behind the reports. The questions remain useful whether we accept the possibility of miracles or bracket it for the immediate task of comparing texts; a careful history ought to make its evidence visible to readers on either side of that question.

The next historical judgment

Paul's early proclamation of resurrection is a substantial historical fact about what Christians were saying, long before we settle what produced the belief. 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.

---

420 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.

421 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

If one wants a dramatic account of the Passion, the fragment called the Gospel of Peter has material that makes the familiar canonical scenes seem almost restrained. Its vivid descriptions attracted attention precisely because they differ from the versions Christians grew accustomed to hearing, and that can tempt a heterodox reader into treating the more unusual Gospel as the more authentic one. I have to resist that temptation just as firmly as I resist the assumption that a passage is trustworthy merely because it reached the canonical shelf. What matters is when the telling took shape and which witnesses support it.

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. [422]

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. [423]

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 its contents and associations. It also shows that a prestigious apostolic name did not end the inquiry for this Christian reader. [424]

---

422 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.

423 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.

Serapion's changing response to the Gospel of Peter gives us an early bishop doing something that looks rather like hadith criticism, although his standards and concerns belonged to his own Christian world. He weighed a text with an impressive attribution and considered whether its teaching fit what he accepted as true. That decision is a historical fact about reception, and his theological criterion needs to be recorded alongside it. An ancient bishop's approval is evidence that somebody approved, just as his rejection tells us who objected; the historian still has to inspect the passage itself.

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. [425]

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. [426]

A Gospel writer can arrange a narrative to look like a courtroom inquiry, even when the investigator and the verdict belong to the literary work itself. It can name officials, describe

---

424 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.

425 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.

426 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.

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.

Barnabas arrived far later in this history, and its popularity among modern Muslim readers cannot move its composition backward through the centuries. 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

A community can keep an unjust death alive for centuries by remembering who stood with the victim, what the rulers did, and what obligations the event imposes on those born long afterward. Shiʿi readers already know something of that work through Karbalāʾ. The comparison helps explain the moral force of Christian Passion narratives and the way their audiences understand loyalty, betrayal, and power. The metaphysics of the deaths may differ, and each tradition deserves to be heard in its own language before a resemblance becomes an argument.

A reader who understands Jesus's death as an offering that transforms the conditions of forgiveness will read the Passion differently from one who sees a murdered prophet exposing human injustice and calling his followers back to fidelity. Both lines of Christian interpretation have internal varieties and early textual witnesses, and my own sympathies do not dissolve the words a particular text uses. The martyr's moral appeal also cannot make every story about his enemies true, much less excuse whatever later people choose to do in his name. The useful comparison is the work each account asks the death of Jesus to perform, with the witnesses kept in view.

The Passion Gospels matter to my sayings catalogue mainly because they show how a remembered death was narrated, revised, and interpreted. 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 announces its own chain of communication, from God through Jesus and an angel to John, which makes the book particularly interesting for someone attempting a hadith-style inquiry into early Christianity. The language is visionary, the imagery extravagant, and the surviving tradition includes a long history of Christians arguing over whether it belonged in the canon at all. Before we borrow its lambs, beasts, and thrones to complete our theory of the Messiah, I want to know what sort of prophetic message its first readers thought they had received and what obligations it placed upon them.[427]

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.[428]

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.[429]

---

427 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.

428 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.

429 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.[430]

The Apocalypse and the disputed canon

Origen counts Revelation with the writings of John. In his Commentary on John, Book V, he attributes a Gospel, the Apocalypse, and at least one epistle to the disciple, while acknowledging questions about the shorter Johannine letters. His testimony gives us a clear early witness to Revelation's reception, centuries before Athanasius enumerated the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.[431]

The disagreement becomes explicit in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History 3.25. Eusebius tentatively places the Apocalypse among acknowledged writings, then records that other Christians rejected it. In Book 7.25 he preserves Dionysius of Alexandria's account of critics who attributed Revelation to Cerinthus; Dionysius himself esteemed the work while arguing from its language and style that its author differed from the writer of the Fourth Gospel. The dispute concerned both the identity of John and the authority claimed for the vision.[432]

Cyril of Jerusalem's Catechetical Lecture 4.36, delivered in the mid-fourth century, lists the four Gospels, Acts, seven Catholic Epistles and fourteen letters attributed to Paul, leaving Revelation outside the twenty-six books he names. He urges his hearers to avoid books that the churches do not read. Gregory of Nazianzus also omits Revelation from his poetic catalogue of scripture, although scholars dispute how far that omission determines his personal judgment of the book. Athanasius includes Revelation in the twenty-seven-book list of his Festal Letter 39 (367). These different enumerations document continued disagreement among influential Christian teachers in the fourth century.[433]

The road by which Revelation reached the New Testament is part of its story. Origen endorsed it, Dionysius raised questions about its literary character, Cyril omitted it from an

430 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.

431 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.

432 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.

433 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.

important list, and Athanasius included it among canonical writings. Each is a dated human judgment about a book that claimed to carry a message from heaven. I want to know what the message says and which witnesses preserve it, while remembering that later recognition by a bishop is an event in the history of the canon rather than proof of every visionary sentence's original attribution.

Daniel’s beasts in a Roman world

The book of Revelation borrows its nightmares and its hopes from Israel's older Scriptures, then rearranges them in a Roman world. Daniel 7 stands behind the beasts and the humanlike heavenly figure, Exodus contributes plagues and deliverance, and the prophets supply the language of a restored Jerusalem. The imagery was already carrying history when John set it to work against the empire he inhabited. Following those borrowings helps us understand why an apparently extravagant vision could serve as a sharp political reading of the author's own time.[434]

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.[435]

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 naturally attracts an anti-Pauline interpretation. It is an important hypothesis for a project examining how the Jerusalem tradition survived alongside Paul’s mission.[436]

---

434 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.

435 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.

436 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.

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.[437]

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.[438]

Idol food provides the stronger comparison

The letters to Pergamum and Thyatira become much more concrete when we notice what their writer says the disputed teachers were doing. He invokes Balaam and a figure named Jezebel in connection with idol food and sexual immorality, using infamous names from older Scripture to characterize people in his own communities. Those labels tell us how the author wanted the conflict understood. They cannot by themselves serve as reliable biographies of the people he was attacking, whom we have largely lost behind the insults.[439]

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

437 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.

438 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.

439 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.

receive different treatment. Revelation's denunciations sound far less accommodating toward the disputed conduct.[440]

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.[441]

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.[442]

A fierce dispute with particular communities should never be made into a judgment upon Jewish people as a whole. 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 book has forced me to develop a small rule for reading the enemies of a religious community: when an author tells us how awful his opponents were, we have first learned what he wished his audience to think. Sometimes he preserves an accurate quotation and sometimes he gives us a caricature, which means his book can be invaluable and misleading in the same paragraph. The rule applies to the Christians who denounced the Ebionites as well as to Muslim polemicists describing rival believers. It applies to me, too,

440 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.

441 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.

442 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.

whenever I find a historical villain suspiciously well suited to the argument I was hoping to make.

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.[443]

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.[444]

Revelation speaks of a people acquired through the Lamb's blood, and that is a passage I have no business wishing away because a political interpretation of the book appeals to me more. We have to ask what purchase and ransom are doing in this vision, whom the redeemed belong to, and how the author connects the image with divine judgment. A later theory of penal substitution makes additional claims that need their own witnesses, but it cannot be answered by pretending the earlier blood language is absent. The book grows more interesting when its inconvenient passages are permitted to remain inconvenient.

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.[445]

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

443 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.

444 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.

445 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.

his own participation in the Father's throne. Sharing royal authority can therefore extend to created servants in the book's conceptual world.[446]

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

On two occasions John is so overwhelmed by his heavenly guide that he attempts to bow before him, and the angel stops him, identifying himself as a fellow servant and directing worship to God. I find that a remarkable correction to have preserved inside an apocalypse crowded with glorious beings. The text itself anticipates the temptation to confuse the bearer of revelation with the source of revelation, a problem which has been visiting us in one form or another since the first pages of this book.[447]

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.[448]

---

446 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.

447 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.

448 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

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.

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.[449]

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.[450]

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.[451]

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 argument about swords; the final Greek apparatus remains unfinished.

449 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.

450 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.

451 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.

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 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.[452]

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

Revelation 18 gives us an imperial economy mourning the loss of its finest customers. The merchants recite their merchandise as though a luxury catalog could become a funeral liturgy, until the list finally reaches human bodies and lives. The prosperity of Babylon includes transactions in people, and the men whose businesses depend on it lament the collapse of the market. The prophet's vision remembers, amid all that expensive grief, the blood shed under the city's power. This is a theological denunciation that understands perfectly well what commerce has been doing.[453]

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.

One striking passage about emancipation belongs in the record, though it would be anachronistic to turn it into an ancient universal program of abolition. Its indictment of a slave-trading imperial economy is explicit enough that we cannot confine its concern to

452 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.

453 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.

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 likewise requires care where it associates their purity with freedom from defilement with women.[454]

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.[455]

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

Revelation does something that later readers with very long timetables can find awkward: it keeps telling its audience that the time is close. Its final instruction is to leave the prophecy unsealed because the events are near, whereas Daniel had been told to seal a book for a later horizon. That expectation belongs to the people who first heard the work read aloud, and any reconstruction of its meaning has to give their urgency a serious place before relocating every fulfillment to a century of our choosing.[456]

---

454 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.

455 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.

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.

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.[457]

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 occupies a curious place in a project devoted to the sayings of Jesus, since its writer claims visionary speech from God and the exalted Messiah rather than offering us another set of remembered conversations from the Galilean ministry. We have to investigate that kind of authority on its own terms. The chain being asserted, the author's account of what he saw, and the commands delivered to his communities all deserve scrutiny, even when the book shares imagery and moral concerns with sayings that appear elsewhere.

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

456 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.

457 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.

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.

31. The Son of Man and the Return of the Messiah

Daniel's humanlike figure approaches the Ancient of Days and receives dominion in a scene that has sustained an astonishing number of arguments about the Messiah. The interpretation also speaks of the holy people, which means the vision can be read through questions of Israel's vindication as well as through an exalted individual agent. We have already met versions of that figure in Enoch and in the teachings attributed to Jesus; now the issue is what a community expected when it prayed for God to restore justice, and how those expectations became a promise of a returning Messiah.[458]

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. [459]

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. [460]

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. [461]

---

458 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.

459 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.

460 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.

461 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.

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.

Muslim traditions concerning the end of the world need the same attention to the age and transmission of their witnesses. 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. [462]

Shiʿi traditions about the Imam's restoration of justice open a further comparison with Jesus's mission and return. 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. [463]

A scholarly link between the Paraclete and the Alid Messiah

Mohammad-Ali Amir-Moezzi has proposed one of the more arresting connections between the Christian language we have been studying and early Shiʿi expectations. His article "Muḥammad the Paraclete and ʿAlī the Messiah" explores an apocalyptic setting in which some followers may have understood ʿAlī through the figure of the returning Christ, a thesis closely related to theophany and the emerging language of the Imamate. The

462 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.

463 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.

published abstract states that reconstruction; establishing its historical reach requires inspection of the reports, their dates, and the communities that passed them down.[464]

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 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.

A shared apocalyptic image is a poor substitute for the history of how a story crossed from one community into another. 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. [465]

The expectation that Jesus will return has attracted a great many eager interpreters, some of whom have been inclined to treat a future divine victory as a present-day permission slip. The texts about delegated authority and final judgment do not make that easy. A promise that God will restore justice is one thing; a human ruler's claim to be carrying out the promised restoration today requires evidence of his teaching, conduct, and right to command. The same problem haunts our earlier attempt to reconstruct a Jewish messianic movement around Jesus. A messianic name does not render the deeds performed beneath it exempt from judgment.

464 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.

465 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.

32. Gospels and Apocalypses beyond the Canon

The word apocrypha has become an unusually efficient way of telling readers that a library contains books they are allowed to ignore. In reality it gathers infancy stories, sayings collections, visions of heaven, and other works whose claims differ enormously. Some preserve early traditions, some reveal later imaginations at work, and most are worth understanding on their own terms before we recruit them for the familiar game of proving one church right. I include them because the history of Jesus's teaching was shaped by the writings readers embraced and by the ones other readers tried to keep out.[466]

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

Revelation places its angelic chain of communication, the Lamb's authority, and moral judgment into a single extravagant vision. 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.

Several other apocalypses remain on the table, awaiting the close reading their names deserve. 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

Heavenly journeys and postmortem punishments attracted considerably more writers than the compiler of the New Testament canon eventually admitted. The Apocalypse of Peter

466 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.

and Apocalypse of Paul are central witnesses for the history of punishment and salvation, with the Apocalypse of Thomas and other Christian works extending the field. Jewish texts such as 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Abraham supply related settings. Anyone who wants to discover what early readers imagined the next world to be like has a substantial library to examine before declaring that one familiar apocalypse exhausts the subject.

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.

The duration and purpose of punishment became another unexpected problem as this research developed. 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.[467]

This inventory is an invitation to a further investigation, since an apparent parallel needs to be checked in its own passage and historical setting. 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.

467 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.

PART VIII · JESUS AND THE SPIRIT IN THE QUR'AN

33. From Nazarenes to Naṣārā: Christianity in Arabia

Between James in Jerusalem and the Christian communities addressed by the Qur'an lies a long stretch of history whose gaps are tempting to fill with a single line of faithful descendants. I would love the archive to give us a tidy route, perhaps one that runs straight from the Nazoraeans to the people called Naṣārā in Arabia, but similar names and overlapping beliefs cannot do all that work. We have to follow actual people, places, inscriptions, and texts through late antiquity, because the Qur'an entered a world of Christians whose traditions were richer than any single modern theory of their origins.

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. [468]

The evidence carries us a certain distance toward a Jewish-Christian environment in Arabia, and then the sources become thinner. 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. [469]

468 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.

Reading the passages as an intertextual conversation becomes more useful once we identify what each surviving witness can say. 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. [470]

What a community name can establish

The Qur'an calls Christians Naṣārā, a word whose resemblance to earlier names for followers of Jesus is tempting enough to launch an entire historical genealogy. A family resemblance between labels is a lead, though, and the communities we are trying to identify have to exist somewhere in history and geography. A term can outlive a sect's exact doctrines or spread beyond the people first described by it. The question is which Christians the word reached in the Qur'anic setting, and that answer requires evidence about actual people as well as their names.

The Ebionite and Nazoraean dossiers gave us reports of belief and practice that now need to be tested against the Arabian evidence. 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. [471]

---

469 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.

470 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.

471 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:

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 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. [472]

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. [473]

Between the first followers of Jesus and the Qur'an lie centuries of communities, manuscripts, traveling teachers, and arguments that crossed several languages, which offers the historian an abundance of possible routes and the occasional frustration of finding only fragments of them. I want to know what Christians in Arabia could have heard, what books or stories circulated, and which groups claimed a connection to Jesus's family. The evidence justifies taking Arabian Christianity seriously, while a continuous line of succession from Jerusalem into every later group remains considerably harder to establish. The Qur'anic passages deserve to be read against the differentiated world we can document rather than a single imagined lost church.

---

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.

472 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.

473 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 and Christian–Muslim Relations 18.4 (2007): 509–538, doi:10.1080/09596410701577332. Abstract and bibliographic material consulted; full argument outstanding.

34. Maryam, the Word and the Disputed Birth

Before we ask what the Qur'an teaches about the Messiah, we should collect what it actually says rather than assembling a portrait from whichever verses are most useful to our argument. The name ʿĪsā, the title al-Masīḥ, and the noun rūḥ appear in different contexts, alongside narratives and pronouns that also matter to interpretation. I have set up the next chapters as a careful reading of that vocabulary, with attention to grammar and transmission where a textual variant changes what can be said. It may sound a little like counting beads, but the discipline saves us from building a grand Christology on an incomplete concordance.[474]

I want to read the Christian infancy traditions as historical witnesses before deciding which parts they can illuminate in the Qur'an. 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.[475]

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.[476]

---

474 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.

475 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.

476 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

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.[477]

The annunciation in two settings

In Qur'an 3:42–47, the announcement to Maryam is told with a dignity that can disappear when readers rush straight to arguments about the mechanics of the birth. The angels tell her of her election and of a Word from God, the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, honored in this world and the next and among those brought near. Maryam asks how she can bear a child when no man has touched her, and the response places the gift within God's creative power. Before extracting a theory from the scene, I want us to hear the question that the woman herself asks.[478]

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.[479]

At Qur'an 19:19 a slight variation in the recited verb changes how the promise of a child is expressed. 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 mother defended by her child

Sūrat Maryam’s family drama culminates in 19:27–33. The people accuse Maryam by appealing to the honorable reputation of her father and mother. The newborn Messiah answers with an account of servanthood, scripture, prophecy and duty toward his mother.

---

sexual mechanism of conception.

477 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.

478 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.

479 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.

This is a striking counterpoint to the Markan scene discussed in Chapter 13. In Mark, Jesus' own people are unable to make sense of his mission, and his mother and brothers wait outside. In the Qurʾān, Maryam's people are unable to make sense of her miraculous birth, and her child supplies the defense. Both narratives stage the problem of how a household recognizes divine action. The moral standing of Maryam in the Qurʾān emerges unmistakably from the exchange.

Luke 1 portrays Mary as accepting the annunciation and pondering the unfolding revelation. Luke 2:50 nevertheless says that the parents did not understand the boy's words in the temple. The Qurʾān's Maryam has her own dialogue with the Spirit and bears public suspicion before vindication. The texts distinguish divine selection from complete foreknowledge of a prophet's unfolding mission. Mark 3:21 leaves unnamed which relatives voiced the charge that Jesus was out of his mind, and the Qurʾān supplies no corresponding accusation against him by Maryam. The comparison belongs to source criticism because it exposes different narrative placements of doubt and knowledge without requiring an invented historical reconciliation.

The infant's answer and the adult family's fear

Sūrat Maryam gives Jesus an extraordinary testimony before he can ordinarily speak. He calls himself God's servant, announces the gift of scripture and prophecy, and declares his duty to his mother (19:30–32). In Mark 3, the already active teacher is regarded by his own people as needing restraint. The resulting contrast asks how different communities narrated the recognition of holiness across a lifetime. For the Qurʾān, Maryam's public vindication and the identity of her son are joined at the beginning. For Mark, the problem of recognition remains present during the mission.

The charge of familial incomprehension need not entail that Maryam despised her son or ultimately opposed his teaching. Mark specifies a collective group whose precise speech is unassigned. Luke 2:50 preserves genuine parental noncomprehension, and Acts 1:14 remembers Mary and the brothers praying among the disciples. The question worth putting in the book is how prophetic selection intersects with ordinary human knowledge over time. The same sūra that names Maryam's honor also narrates her fear, isolation, public accusation and reliance upon her child's testimony.

Qurʾān 19:16–34, Mark 3:20–35, Luke 2:48–51, Acts 1:14; compare the related Synoptic paragraphs in Chapter 13.

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 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.[480]

480 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.

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.[481]

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

The Qur'an's descriptions of the Spirit being breathed in connection with Maryam, at 21:91 and 66:12, send interpreters into some surprisingly technical debates over pronouns and their antecedents. Those details deserve attention, especially where grammatical gender differs between passages. A pronoun alone will hardly supply us with a medical account of conception, and the language used elsewhere for the breathing of Spirit into Adam belongs beside it. The Qur'an is making a theological claim through its own vocabulary, which ought to be understood before we supply an anatomical diagram.

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.

481 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.

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.[482]

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.[483]

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.[484]

My Magi-as-isnād idea is one of those hypotheses I found too interesting to leave in my notebook, though the archive has so far declined to reward the enthusiasm with a chain of named witnesses. The surviving infancy story attributes the cradle speech through a different route, and the Magi's appearance in the surrounding narrative cannot do the missing transmission work by itself. What we do have is an opportunity to compare extraordinary infancy testimony carrying rather different claims about Jesus. The Qur'anic child speaks of servanthood and worship, a fact whose theological weight does not depend on the fate of my imaginative suggestion.

---

482 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.

483 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.

484 Qur'an 3:49, 59; 5:110; Genesis 2:7. The creative act and the permission clause both belong to the wording under assessment.

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 Qur'an makes the parallel between Maryam's child and Yaḥyā strikingly concrete through its blessings of peace at birth, death, and resurrection. 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.

35. The Injil, the Signs and the Table from Heaven

The Qur'anic Jesus is a messenger entrusted with teaching and signs, whose miracles repeatedly occur by Allah's permission and whose mission calls his listeners back to worship of God. That portrait is sometimes lost when our debates are reduced to which verses can be quoted against an opponent's creed. I want to linger over the practical work of the messenger, including the table from heaven, the obligations he taught, and the people who were asked to respond, before deciding which later doctrinal categories provide the best account of him.

The Qur'an's own positive picture of Jesus has been waiting patiently while we argued about Greek manuscripts, and in 3:48–53, 5:46–48, 5:110–115, and 43:63–65 it finally receives sustained attention. These passages tell us what the messenger teaches, which signs accompany him, and how his hearers are addressed. The overlaps with Gospel stories may be illuminating, but each proposed connection must still be traced through the witnesses. We ought to give the Qur'anic Injil a portrait drawn from the Qur'an before deciding how much of a later Christian narrative can be fitted around it.

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.[485]

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.

---

485 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.

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 that sentence. We have grounds to investigate a lawful change, but we have not been given a ready-made list of abolished rules.[486]

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.

Jesus's summons to worship God at 3:51 and 43:64 gives the legal and religious argument a firm center. 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.[487]

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.[488]

---

486 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.

487 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.

488 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.

A small difference in the wording can change how we understand the speaker, and sometimes the whole theology of a passage with him. 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.[489]

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.[490]

489 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.

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.

Acts presents the Spirit as active in the community and involved in decisions about who may be admitted, which makes it a useful comparison for the Qur'an's recognition of people responding to divine guidance. Both traditions understand the life of a believing community as more than the private thoughts of isolated individuals, though their explanations of authority travel in different directions. The resemblance cannot resolve the question of whose judgment should bind everybody else. That is precisely the sort of problem that made the first generations of religious communities argue so intensely.

The request for a table

The disciples' request for a table sent down from heaven, in Qur'an 5:112, has generated an argument over something as small as who is able to ask whom. One transmitted reading makes their question concern the Lord's ability to send the table; another places the emphasis upon Jesus's ability to petition his Lord. Al-Ṭabarī records both and the concerns they prompted. The difference changes the grammar of the request and potentially the tone of the scene, so it deserves a place in our apparatus rather than being flattened into one convenient English paraphrase.[491]

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.[492]

The infancy parallels become useful when we resist making every shared detail evidence for the same relationship between texts. 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

490 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.

491 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.

492 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.

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.

A mission recalled at judgment

In Qur'an 5:110, Allah recalls the signs Jesus performed and the help he received, placing the whole extraordinary career inside a repeated acknowledgment of divine permission. The same account remembers opponents who saw those signs and called them sorcery. Here the conflict over a miracle has survived inside the revelation itself: the act, the power that permitted it, and the charge made against it are all present. Anyone trying to reconstruct what the Messiah was supposed to be doing has to reckon with that arrangement.

We can now follow that concern into the next chapter's discussion of law and judgment. 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

The Qur'an's statement that they did not kill or crucify Jesus has become the starting gun for arguments that race immediately toward a theory of substitution, a celestial double, or a miraculous escape. Those possibilities deserve to be tested against the wording, but first we should remember that the passage belongs inside a longer address to the People of the Book and their claims about prophetic history. I want to read the sequence from 4:153 onward, because the moral accusation and the historical referent cannot be separated simply by choosing the interpretation that most annoys a Christian apologist.

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.[493]

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)

493 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.

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 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.[494]

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.[495]

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

When the infant Jesus in Qur'an 19:33 invokes peace upon his birth, death, and raising to life, he speaks in a form that recalls the neighboring description of Yaḥyā in 19:15. Both lives are placed within God's care, reaching beyond the moment of childhood into death and the future. The verses carry an eschatological promise whose precise chronology remains disputed. They leave us to examine the crucifixion allegation, Jesus's elevation,

494 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.

495 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.

and the expectation of a return without forcing all those events into a timeline the words themselves have yet to supply.

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.[496]

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.

Before offering a confident reading of the Arabic, the apparatus needs the grammatical alternatives and named exegetes on the same page. 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.[497]

The Ascension of Isaiah supplies a Christian heavenly journey that deserves to join this comparison. 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.

---

496 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.

497 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.

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."[498]

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 Son of Man traditions belong beside the Qur'anic judgment material, provided we respect the work each text actually assigns to its figure. 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 encounter between Allah and Jesus in Qur'an 5:116–118 reads like an interrogation about what happens to a prophet's reputation after his followers have had centuries to speak on his behalf. Did Jesus tell people to worship him and his mother alongside God? He denies issuing such a command and recalls telling them to worship his Lord and theirs. Then he draws attention to the period when he was among them and the subsequent history from which he was absent. That distinction ought to trouble every institution confident that it owns the voice of somebody who can no longer walk into the room.[499]

Religion is also a question of conduct and of the authority people invoke to justify what they do. 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

498 Todd Lawson, The Crucifixion and the Qur'an, chapter summaries and introduction; compare Fatoohi, 'The Non-Crucifixion Verse' (2023), abstract and text.

499 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103124.htm. For source-critical caution compare M. David Litwa, Basilides: The Oldest Gnostic (2025), author's publication description at https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/; compare James A. Kelhoffer, "Basilides's Gospel and Exegetica," Vigiliae Christianae 59 (2005): 115–134, cited in contemporary scholarly discussion.

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.

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.[500]

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.[501]

The substitution claim and its earliest recoverable witnesses

The familiar Muslim claim that Basilides taught a crucifixion substitution rests first on Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4. That passage names Simon of Cyrene and describes Jesus laughing at the execution. The surviving writings and fragments attributable to Basilides do not independently establish that full story. Litwa's work on Basilides requires this distinction between his own extant thought and hostile reports about the school. In the Coptic Second Treatise of the Great Seth another savior speech also distinguishes appearance, suffering and the cross, yet its account condemns Moses in terms foreign to the Qurʾān.[502][503]

Q 4:157 specifies that Jesus' opponents did not kill or crucify him and that the event appeared ambiguous to them. Its account of divine raising in 4:158 supplies the theological frame. The verse names neither Simon nor another substitute, and it does not present a

---

500 Second Treatise of the Great Seth (Nag Hammadi VII,2), public translation at https://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/2seth.html; Coptic Apocalypse of Peter (NHC VII,3); compare Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4. Texts differ about the visible victim and Christ’s relation to suffering. No historical channel into Q 4:157 has been established.

501 Qur’an 4:157–158, 3:55, 19:33; 21:91; 3:49; 5:110; 19:29–33; 5:44–48; 4:171; 16:90; 49:13; 59:7; 7:11–18; 32:7; 39:62. Arabic and standard English translations must govern any proposed intertextual correspondence. On debates about 4:157 see Louay Fatoohi, “The Non-Crucifixion Verse,” AJIS 40 (2023), https://www.ajis.org/index.php/ajiss/article/view/3143.

502 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.

503 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.

cosmology in which matter is intrinsically hostile to the highest God. The comparison is thus strongest at the level of the opponents' mistaken knowledge. A distinct investigation of the historical crucifixion remains necessary, because the question of what the Qurʾān affirms and the question of what happened under Roman rule use different kinds of evidence.[504]

504 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.

37. Messiah, Word and Spirit: The Qur’anic Limits of Exaltation

We spend so much time reminding Christians that the Qur'an rejects particular claims about Jesus that it becomes easy to miss how extraordinary the titles it gives him already are. He is the Messiah, God's Word conveyed to Maryam, and a spirit from Him, each expression carrying a history and a theological weight that deserve more than a quick translation into the safest available formula. I want to know how a thoroughly human servant can receive such exalted language within the Qur'an, and what that tells us about divine guidance, prophetic authority, and the temptation to turn an honored messenger into a second object of worship.

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.[505]

Messiah and appointment

Al-Masīḥ is an astonishing title to have survived in the Qur'an's account of Jesus. At 3:45 it appears in the annunciation, together with honor and nearness to God; it returns in the opponents' boast at 4:157 and again at 4:171 amid language of messengership, Word, and Spirit. The Qur'an keeps the title even where the surrounding passage corrects excess about the one who bears it. If the Messiah's designation mattered enough to preserve, I think the historical reader owes it more attention than simply translating it and moving on.

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.

James Tabor's reconstruction gives us a concrete way to ask what restoration meant to the family and followers of Jesus. 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.

505 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.

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 connected with Jesus in the immediate narrative. The identification in the latter verse is interpretive, since the sentence does not repeat Jesus’s name.[506]

It is easy to hear the Qur'an call Jesus a Word from God and immediately import whichever philosophical account of the Logos one already prefers. John, Philo, and Origen give us different ways of connecting divine speech with creation and an exalted agent, and the range helps explain why the phrase has drawn such elaborate interpretations. Those writings are valuable comparators, but each comes with its own argument about agency and divine nature. The Qur'anic kalima deserves to be read first in its own setting before we assign it the full metaphysics of a later Christian system.

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.[507]

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

506 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.

507 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.

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 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.[508]

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.[509]

A Christian theologian can answer these verses by distinguishing the humanity of Christ from the divinity he understands Christ to possess. 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 food an ordinary believer shares with a neighbor can reveal more about religious authority than some magnificent debate over divine natures. A person who receives nourishment belongs to a world of created dependency. Sacred status does not sever that

508 Qur'an 5:116; 43:59. The distinction between formal creed and devotional practice is necessary before identifying the historical targets of the criticism.

509 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.

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 direction to worship his Lord and theirs. The exact historical configuration of the interlocutors' theology remains a research question.[510]

A theological formula can look different in the formal language of a council, in a parishioner's explanation, and in the way people actually pray. A fair Qur'anic comparison must attend to all of those witnesses. Christian defenders of the Trinity explicitly deny worshiping three independent creators, while the Qur'an's warning against saying three remains part of the text Muslims must interpret. We can examine the formulas, ordinary understandings, and devotional practices without pretending that a label settles every person's belief.

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.

The Qur'an gives me strong reasons to regard shirk as a grave error, and it has also taught me to be more careful about announcing the final standing of another person before Allah. The book can identify a claim that contradicts tawḥīd or an act that looks like misplaced worship, then ask what the relevant passages actually condemn. A verdict upon the complete account of an individual, including knowledge, intention, conduct, and mercy received or shown, is a much larger undertaking. It would be a strange ending to a book about the dangers of unauthorized religious judgment if I appointed myself to perform it.

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.[511]

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

510 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.

511 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.

exaltation: appointment, favor, and exemplary significance. It leaves room for a profound religious role while fixing the direction in which authority flows.

Having spent so long with Jesus, it would be easy to treat rūḥ as a technical term invented for Christian arguments and to ignore the rest of the Qur'an. The word also appears in contexts involving creation, revelation, believers, and the heavenly order, which means any serious theory has to account for uses that have no obvious Christological purpose. I am going to follow the vocabulary wherever it occurs before deciding whether the Spirit is always the same agent or sometimes a different kind of divine gift.

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 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.[512]

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.[513]

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.[514]

---

512 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.

513 Al-Ṭabarī on Qur’an 19:24, conclusion after discussion of the speaker, as well as the distinct reading through ʿAlqama.

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.[515]

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 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.[516]

Two genuinely attributable variants in neighboring Jesus passages

A little pronoun at Qur'an 4:159 carries an unusually heavy burden for people arranging a chronology of Jesus's death and possible return. The received wording says that people will believe before "his death," leaving interpreters to ask whose death is intended; Ibn Kathīr also reports a reading attributed to Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, qabla mawtihim, "before their death," which makes a plural antecedent explicit. That report is associated with Ubayy. It is tempting, when building a dossier on Ibn Masʿūd, to collect every interesting early variant under the nearest famous Companion, but we would be doing precisely the kind of transmission mischief this book is supposed to correct.[517]

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?[518]

514 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.

515 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.

516 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.

517 Qur'an 4:171; 3:45; 3:59. Compare Arabic exegesis and early readings; avoid inferring an unattested variant from a disputed theological conclusion.

518 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.

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.[519]

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 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.[520]

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.[521]

519 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.

520 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.

521 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.

37A. Different Trinities under Qur’anic Judgment: Shirk, Kufr and Fisq

When the Qur'an warns Christians against saying 'three,' which Christians is it addressing, and what exactly are they being warned about? The communities of late antiquity could speak of Father, Son, and Spirit through doctrinal frameworks that differed considerably, even while they claimed to share one faith. For a Muslim, that variety raises a question worth treating carefully: are we evaluating one particular account of divine plurality, an act of worship, or a verbal formula whose meaning its speakers themselves dispute? I want to put the claims beside the Qur'anic wording and let each judgment emerge from the actual case.[522]

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.[523]

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.[524]

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

522 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.

523 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.

524 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.

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.[525]

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.[526]

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.[527]

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 consequences far beyond minor moral lapses. One person’s conduct can instantiate more than one of these descriptions.[528]

---

525 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.

526 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-Qurʾān, 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.

527 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.

528 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 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.[529]

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.[530]

The Trinity of the councils in its strongest available formulation

Before asking whether the Nicene Trinity can survive Qur'anic scrutiny, we owe its defenders an accurate account of what they mean. The Catholic Catechism §253 confesses one God in three persons and explicitly rejects the proposition that there are three gods; §§254–255 distinguish the persons by relations while affirming their possession of one divinity. The vocabulary of ousia and hypostasis attempts to explain that claim, with all the metaphysical difficulties it brings into view. I may ultimately judge that account irreconcilable with tawḥīd, but inventing three independent creator deities and assigning them to Christian theologians would make the argument easier only by changing its subject.[531]

A careful Muslim critique has to give the Christian theologian his strongest position before beginning the argument. Classical Trinitarianism professes one divine essence and identifies the incarnate Jesus with the Son, so calling it simple numerical tritheism would miss the actual claim. Yet the doctrine still attributes uncreated divinity to the Messiah, and

529 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.

530 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.

531 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.

Qur'an 5:72 speaks sharply against identifying God with him. A Christian may distinguish God the Son from any assertion that the whole divine essence is exhausted by Jesus's human life; the Qur'anic objection still has to be faced. The question concerns the meaning and religious consequence of that predication, which is why I want the different Christian accounts examined on their own terms.[532]

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.[533]

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.[534]

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 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

532 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.

533 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.

534 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.

concern the precise predications, their claimed logical consequences, and worship that follows them.[535]

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.[536]

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 statue's presence or a kneeling body alone cannot establish a confession of an independent goddess.[537]

---

535 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.

536 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.

537 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.

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.[538]

Priests, legislation and the problem of ordinary fisq

A believer can confess one God in impeccable language and still allow a religious institution to exercise the kind of authority Qur'an 9:31 condemns when it speaks of taking scholars and monks as lords. Imagine a Christian who sincerely rejects three creator gods yet treats a priest's permission as sufficient to cancel an instruction believed to come from revelation. The issue now concerns obedience and the right to legislate. Qur'an 5:47 calls the People of the Injīl to judge by what Allah revealed and uses the category al-fāsiqūn for failure, which is why fisq belongs in this investigation. We still have to recover what can be attributed to Jesus before turning a later codex into an automatic list of his legally binding commands.[539]

Muslim communities have their own reasons to be careful about turning a theologian's explanation into a condition of salvation. 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.

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.

538 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.

539 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.

Case A · Multiple independent recipients of divine worship

Where a text plainly confers independent divinity upon several beings, I see the Qur'an's warning against shirk applying with considerable force. 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

The Qur'anic argument finds more common ground with a Christian doctrine that worships the one uncreated God and treats the Messiah's powers as bestowed upon him. 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

A prayer addressed to Maryam, a saint, or a figure pictured in an icon needs to be examined for what the worshiper asks and what power he attributes to the recipient. 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.[540]

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.[541]

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 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

540 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.

541 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.

worship to another sovereign present different evidence for culpability, even where a theologian judges their propositions mistaken.[542]

Requirements for a publishable comparison

If I am going to tell a Christian that the Qur'an condemns his doctrine, the least I can do is identify the doctrine he actually holds and the Qur'anic words I think address it. At 5:72 that requires comparing the Arabic claim with writers such as Philoxenus; at 5:73 we must examine how numerical plurality relates to the one-essence, three-person account defended by the councils. The question about Maryam at 5:116 takes us into worship and intercession, while 9:31 asks what power a religious authority has assumed. Each inquiry needs a dated Christian witness and a stated argument connecting it to the Qur'anic phrase. It would be a strange sort of reform to replace inherited labels with new accusations whose evidence we never bothered to inspect.

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.[543]

542 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.

543Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, commentary on Qurʾān 16:103, reporting a claim attributed to al-Ḍaḥḥāk that the alleged teacher was Salmān, along with rival identifications: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura16-aya103.html. Compare Qurʾān 16:102–103. The cited report is an account of an accusation and presents a chronological difficulty if the verse is dated before Salmān’s documented Medinan association.

37B. The Gospel According to Ibn Masʿūd

An unlikely Gospel

Ibn Masʿūd's reported reading of Qur'an 19:34 brings us to one of those places where a grammatical choice can change the light falling on an entire theological argument. The received text identifies Jesus as the word of truth in a form that scholars have parsed in different ways, while reports of a noncanonical reading supply another possible expression. A Muslim may find a reading congenial to his understanding of Jesus as God's Word, but the surviving witnesses still have to be graded. My larger question is what the Qur'an permits us to say about the Messiah's exaltation while continuing to insist that he is Allah's servant.

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.

At Qur'an 19:34, a change of case ending opens an argument that most English readers will never know took place. The reading familiar from Ḥafṣ has qawla al-ḥaqq in the accusative, while other canonical reciters have qawlu al-ḥaqq in the nominative. The construction can certify the preceding account as truthful, and the nominative may also be read as predicating the utterance of Jesus himself. One reading directs our attention to God's true account about the child; another possibility invites the question of how the child is described. It is a great deal of theological excitement to arise from a final vowel, which is precisely why the vowel deserves our attention.

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)

Before a reader reaches the grammatical puzzle in Maryam 19:34, the infant Jesus has already delivered a strikingly ordinary moral curriculum for someone born under extraordinary circumstances. He speaks of blessing, prayer, almsgiving, kindness to his mother, the day of his birth, and the days of death and resurrection. The Word associated with him belongs to a servant who announces worship and charity. That arrangement deserves to remain visible when later theologians begin their arguments about cosmic

agency, because the Qur'anic scene has already told us what kind of life the child is commissioned to lead.

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.

John makes a considerably more elaborate claim about the Logos than the words of Maryam 19:34 could bear on their own. Its prologue places the Word in the beginning, with God, and within divine predication, then declares in 1:14 that the Word became flesh. A Christian defending incarnation has serious textual material to work with, which deserves examination at its full strength. I would rather argue with John's actual account of preexistence and creative agency than win an easy victory over some imaginary mistranslation of a 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.

The manuscripts give us exactly the kind of small variation that can carry a large theological consequence. 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 puts a fine edge on a much larger disagreement about the Qur'anic description of the Messiah. 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.

The Qur'an can lavish astonishing honors upon an elected servant while insisting that the honor comes from Allah and does not make the recipient an independent deity. What follows for a person's judgment is a more delicate question, since someone may repeat an inherited doctrinal formula without understanding its implications, while another persists after recognizing what a command requires. The truth of a proposition and Allah's judgment of an individual who holds it belong to different levels of the account. I would rather leave the final accounting to God than pretend my manuscript gives me a list of everybody else's destinations.

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 gives the word antichrist a specific and rather heated local history. Its writer rebukes people who reject the confession of Jesus Christ coming in flesh, identifies Jesus as Son, and treats denial of his messianic identity as a boundary of the community. Some opponents seem to have departed from the author's own circle. Scholars have proposed docetic or separationist accounts of their beliefs, with uncertainty about exactly which rivals the letter confronts. This is the evidence we should carry into later Muslim-Christian arguments over who has allegedly denied the Messiah.

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.

An accusation made in the first or second century cannot acquire a new Muslim defendant centuries later merely because a modern reader prefers that target. Their application is an interpretive act. The Christian who makes that act should be prepared to explain its authority.

A Muslim who reduces the Christianity of millions of people to a one-word charge of idolatry owes the same degree of care that he expects from Christians discussing Islam. 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

At the beginning of this project I was inclined to treat the Spirit as a delivery service for revelation: Gabriel brings the message, the prophet receives it, and the theologian explains the arrangement afterward. The Qur'an's vocabulary is richer and rather less cooperative. It speaks of the Spirit in passages about Jesus, Maryam, believers, and the unseen world, sometimes alongside acts of divine support that are not exhausted by the image of a courier. Before constructing a theory from a few favorite verses, I have to count the actual occurrences and ask what each one is doing in its own sentence.

Before proposing a theory of the Holy Spirit, I had better do the tedious job of counting the Arabic words, because a root can offer a deceptive impression of how often a concept appears. The noun rūḥ occurs twenty-one times in twenty Qur'anic verses, appearing twice in 17:85, while the exact expression Rūḥ al-Qudus occurs at 2:87, 2:253, 5:110, and 16:102. The wider root includes terms for wind, relief, and related meanings. Counting all those forms as identical theological references would make an impressive concordance and a very questionable argument.[544]

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.[545]

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.

544Encyclopaedia Iranica, “Noṣayris,” on the maʿnā–ism–bāb triad and Salmān as bāb: https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nosayris/; Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky, The Nuṣayrī-ʿAlawī Religion: An Enquiry into Its Theology and Liturgy (2002). An explicit Nuṣayrī taʾwīl equating Salmān with the Spirit of Qurʾān 16:102 has not been established in this dossier.

545 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.

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 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.

The Spirit's names need to be read alongside the things the Spirit is described as doing. Sometimes different expressions may point toward the same agent; elsewhere the verse may concern revelation as a gift, the content of a message, or support given to a person. It is tempting to identify everything with the one supernatural being whose role seems easiest to picture, but the Qur'an is under no obligation to use our preferred chart of heavenly personnel. We have to establish a relationship in each passage before assembling the larger theory.

Salmān, the human teacher and the gate of interpretation

The juxtaposition in Sūrat al-Naḥl is remarkable. Verse 16:102 says that Rūḥ al-Qudus has brought the revelation down from the Lord in truth. The next verse answers opponents who allege that a human being teaches Muḥammad and points to the foreign language of the supposed source. Al-Ṭabarī preserves several identifications of the alleged teacher. One report ascribed to al-Ḍaḥḥāk names Salmān al-Fārisī; other reports name different people. The claim appears in the tafsīr as an allegation, not as the Qurʾān's own account of its provenance. The commonplace chronology in which Salmān joins the Prophet in Medina makes that identification especially difficult to apply to a Meccan revelation.[546]

A different tradition gives Salmān a role that makes the comparison worth asking. In the Nuṣayrī accounts of the ʿAlī–Muḥammad–Salmān triad, ʿAlī is the maʿnā, Muḥammad the ism, and Salmān the bāb, the gate through which hidden knowledge is mediated. Scholarly descriptions of these texts place the system within a particular esoteric Shiʿi history, whose dates and cosmological claims require their own discussion. This is a documented image of a named human as a privileged channel of esoteric knowledge, although I have not identified a Nuṣayrī commentary that explicitly derives Salmān's rank from Qurʾān 16:102–103.[547]

546 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.

547 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.

The analogy to the proposed Joseph reading can now be stated with greater precision. One pattern joins human parentage to a later descent of Spirit upon Jesus in the Ebionite baptism fragment. The other places a human transmitter or gate within a model of divine disclosure. Neither establishes that the Holy Spirit entered Joseph, and neither turns the allegation in 16:103 into a statement endorsed by the Qurʾān. Their point of contact is the religious imagination of an extraordinary mission conveyed through a human bearer. They remain different histories with different source dates.

This distinction matters to a Qurʾān-centered inquiry into inspiration. The grammatical agent of 16:102 is Rūḥ al-Qudus; the alleged teacher in 16:103 is designated bashar, a human being, whose proposed role is rebutted. An esoteric reader might explore how revelation, interpretation and human instruction are related. To assign that reader the name of a particular early authority, or to claim that Qurʾān 16 itself identifies Salmān as the Spirit, requires a text that says so. The documentary search remains open; the comparison has been entered here as a labeled hypothesis.

What al-Kāfī adds to the Salmān analogy

A documented Imāmī tradition provides a more useful bridge between divine Spirit and a living recipient than the attempt to identify Salmān himself with the Spirit in Q 16:102. In al-Kāfī, volume 1, Book of Divine Authority, chapter 56, report 3, Abū Baṣīr asks Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq about Q 17:85. The reply describes the Spirit as a created being greater than Gabriel and Michael, present with the Prophet and then with the Imams. A related report describes it as giving them guidance. Chapter 55, report 2, transmits a scheme of five spirits belonging to prophets and legatees, in which the Holy Spirit gives exceptional knowledge. The chains and later grading differ among these reports; the chapter 55 report is graded weak in the modern presentation consulted here, while the chapter 56 report 3 is graded sound by the cited Majlisī assessment.

The Shiʿi material gives us a developed account of extraordinary spiritual help accompanying human bearers of guidance. It also reveals real variation over what rūḥ names: some exegesis of Q 16:102 identifies Rūḥ al-Qudus with Gabriel, including a report attributed to al-Bāqir, whereas the al-Kāfī report on 17:85 treats a Spirit as higher than Gabriel. These verses and source traditions can be brought into conversation while keeping their terms and objects distinct. A passage about the Spirit's relation to Imams is not automatically commentary on Maryam's conception.

The later Nuṣayrī triad provides a further esoteric analogy. In its seventh, Muḥammadan cycle, ʿAlī is represented as maʿnā, Muḥammad as ism or ḥijāb, and Salmān as bāb, the gate. Encyclopaedia Iranica traces this doctrinal architecture to the tenth century and quotes the Kitāb al-Majmūʿ describing Salmān as bearer of the Book. This supplies a distinctive model of human mediation. The early Qurʾānic allegation in Q 16:103 concerns a foreign-speaking person supposedly instructing Muḥammad. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk's Salmān identification is preserved in tafsīr and faces a chronology problem discussed even by al-Mīzān. That accusation, the Imāmī reports about Spirit, and the Nuṣayrī mystical system form three documentary strata, each requiring its own source control.

The Joseph analogy therefore becomes more precise when phrased as a question about how a supernatural commission can accompany a human recipient. The Ebionite fragment places a descending Spirit in Jesus at baptism. Al-Kāfī presents a Spirit that guides divinely appointed teachers. The later Salmān-as-gate doctrine illustrates human access to esoteric knowledge. The Qurʾānic conception narrative locates the decisive announcement around Maryam herself. These sources establish a history of several models of mediation. A model in which Joseph biologically fathers Jesus through a prior Spirit infusion remains a proposed synthesis awaiting a textual witness.

Al-Kāfī 1, Book 4, ch. 56, reports 3–4, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/3 and https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/4; ch. 55, report 2, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/55/2. For 16:102, Abu al-Jārūd/al-Bāqir citation in tafsīr compilations, https://analyzetafsir.com/en/surah/16-an-nahl/verse/102; al-Mīzān commentary on 16:90–105, https://almizan.org/chapter-16-al-nahl/verses-90-105; Meir Bar-Asher, Encyclopaedia Iranica “Noṣayris,” https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nosayris/ (the Kitāb al-Majmūʿ is known through complicated manuscript and modern editorial channels).

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.[548]

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.[549]

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.

548 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.

549 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 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.[550]

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.

550 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.

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.[551]

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.[552]

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.

---

551 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.

552 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).

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 the named prophets. It does not make every feeling claimed by every believer a divine communication.[553]

The possibility that God supports a person spiritually after a prophet's earthly life presents a beautiful and dangerous idea at once. It can encourage people to seek wisdom and righteous conduct while remembering that guidance belongs to Allah, and it can also tempt a charismatic interpreter to treat his latest judgment as if it arrived with the authority of revelation. The historical claims need to be traced through their witnesses; the religious claims must answer to scripture and to the limits placed on human power. That is a difficulty worth facing rather than a reason to remove the Spirit from the conversation.

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

John gives the identification of the Paraclete with the Holy Spirit more explicitly than some Muslim apologetic treatments like to acknowledge. In 14:16 Jesus promises another Paraclete, 14:17 calls him the Spirit of Truth and describes the disciples as already knowing him, and 14:26 speaks of the Holy Spirit sent by the Father in Jesus's name to teach and remind them of his words. The present and future language sit together, while 16:7 makes departure the condition for a future coming. I am interested in what change of mission or relationship those tenses might describe, but any theory identifying the promised figure with a later human messenger must first reckon with the Gospel's received wording rather than quietly removing the inconvenient apposition.

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

553 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.

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 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.[554]

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

554 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.

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 historical Jesus's final speech; an early formula can be genuinely triadic without yet containing the metaphysical determinations reached by fourth-century councils.[555]

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.[556]

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.[557]

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

555 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 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.

556 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.

557 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).

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.[558]

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.[559]

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.[560]

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.[561]

---

558 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).

559 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.

560 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.

561 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.

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 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.[562]

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.[563]

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.[564]

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

562 Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5; Didache 7; comparison of literary descriptions of ritual with a manual prescribing its performance.

563 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.

564 Qur'an 2:87, 2:253, 5:110, 16:102; Matthew 28:19; John 14:26 and 16:7–15.

records the distinctive authority under which baptism occurs, rather than every word pronounced over the candidate. We should compare the literary aims of Acts with the concrete instructions of the Didache.[565]

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.[566]

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

565 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.

566 Al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/1; al-Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt, section on the Spirit, https://usul.ai/ar/t/basair-darajat/474.

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.[567]

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.[568]

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

567 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.

568 Qur'an 2:97, 16:102, 26:192–194, 42:51–52; al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1 and .3.

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

Angelic delivery and continuing spiritual empowerment may describe different kinds of divine assistance, and the texts should tell us whether that division holds. 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.

It may be better to begin with what Allah does: reveals, creates, supports, guides, and gives life, with different recipients and agents appearing in those accounts. Identifying every such relation with a single named being is an additional hypothesis that must answer for each verse. A theology of the Spirit ought to make the Qur'an's language more intelligible, rather than forcing the entire vocabulary into the neatest available diagram.

After all this vocabulary of the Spirit, John has a way of turning up at the center of the argument again. 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

A report attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq describes a Spirit greater than Gabriel and Michael that accompanied Muhammad and now supports the Imams. For a book about recovering the voice of Jesus, that may seem a sudden excursion into Shiʿi metaphysics, but the comparison raises a question I have been carrying since John: how does a community describe divine guidance continuing through an authorized human being? The report's attribution and later interpretation require their own scrutiny, and its cosmology is not

identical to the Christian material. Still, the parallel is worth examining before we dismiss either tradition as a collection of disconnected supernatural curiosities.[569]

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.[570]

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.[571]

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.[572]

---

569 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.

570 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.

571 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).

572 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.

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?[573]

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.[574]

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.[575]

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 the author of John or a first-century Jewish-Christian school used these exact names for the Messiah's capacities.[576]

---

573 John 5:19–30, 7:16, 12:49, 14:10; Qur'an 3:49 and 5:110; al-Kāfī 1.4.55.1.

574 al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1, https://thaqalayn.com/hadith/1/4/56/1; Qur'an 42:52.

575 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.

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.[577]

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.[578]

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.[579]

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 does the community claim continuing assistance from God? That question reappears in the

576 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.

577 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.

578 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.

579 John 14:16–17 and 26, 15:26, 16:7–15; al-Kāfī 1.4.56.1; Qur'an 61:6.

debate over the Imams, where family relationship, a recognized commission, and extraordinary knowledge become competing grounds of legitimacy.[580]

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.[581]

The Paraclete and the continuation of the mission

John's Paraclete teaches, reminds, testifies, and conveys what is heard from another, and the Jaʿfarian Spirit tradition also imagines guidance carried to human authorities after a messenger is no longer present. The resemblance interests me because both communities had to ask how divine instruction remains accessible when the original messenger is absent. We are dealing with traditions separated by centuries and developed under different theological pressures, so likeness gives us a reason to compare rather than a proof of borrowing. It may nevertheless help us understand a prophetic promise without granting the agent who carries it independent, uncreated divinity.[582]

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.[583]

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 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

580 Qur'an 16:102, 26:193–194, 61:6; John 14–16; compare Qur'an 2:97 for Gabriel's explicit role in revelation.

581 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.

582 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.

583 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.

of God's Name and Word. In both books, the strongest claim concerns authority granted from above. Allah remains the uncreated source of revelation.[584]

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.[585]

584 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.

585 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.

40. Aḥmad, the Prophetic Covenant and Christian Obedience

What do followers of Jesus owe to the wider prophetic history invoked by their own Scriptures and by the Qur'an? The Aḥmad announcement brings the issue of succession back after our long excursion through Gospel manuscripts and heavenly visions, because a prediction of another messenger would matter most if it entailed some responsibility toward that messenger. The historical question remains what Jesus's earliest hearers were taught, while the theological question concerns how later Christians and Muslims should evaluate the claim that his mission pointed beyond itself. I want those inquiries to remain in conversation without pretending that one settles the other.

The covenant passages also help finish the concordance for the name ʿĪsā, which sometimes occurs inside a list of messengers rather than in a scene with a speaking child or a heavenly sign. Those brief appearances can look dull after an apocryphal ascent through seven heavens, but a list tells us whom the Qur'an places together under a particular obligation. The quiet grammatical relations of such passages may matter more to the argument than another colorful story about a miracle.

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.[586]

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.

586 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.

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 mission. Their relation to Jesus involves action and loyalty, which cannot be reduced to an abstract opinion about his nature.[587]

We should be wary of a history in which all of Israel or all Christians have been cast as one 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.[588]

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

587 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.

588 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.

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.[589]

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 Didache is valuable partly because it shows what happens after a community has agreed upon a religious goal and must decide how to live together. 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.[590]

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

589 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.

590 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.

exegetical history. These passages make the moral and devotional response of actual persons relevant to the argument.[591]

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.

That habit of asking what a command actually requires returns when the subject is food, marriage, or 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.

A fresh Qur'anic allusion is worth registering only when its text and evidence can be shown to another reader. A newly proposed allusion can be added with its evidence rather

591 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.

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.

We are almost ready to do something with the argument. Once the Qur'anic premises and the different Gospel witnesses have been set beside one another, we can ask which obligations can responsibly be attributed to Jesus, whom they address, and how a Christian community might act upon them. The legal inquiry will be most useful where the reader can see a particular saying, the quality of its transmission, and the human consequences of taking it seriously.

PART IX · RECOVERING GUIDANCE

41. Christian Law and the Prophetic Sunnah

After all these manuscripts, visions, and arguments about the grammar of divinity, we arrive at a refreshingly ordinary question: what is a person following the Messiah supposed to do? Qur'an 5:47 directs the People of the Gospel toward what Allah revealed within it, and I read that as having practical force for conduct, not simply as a ceremonial compliment to an ancient book. If the Gospel contains guidance that can still be recovered, its teachings about mercy, wealth, prayer, and responsibility deserve to be examined as the possible basis of a lived Christian law. A religion that cannot say what it asks of people on Monday morning has left rather a lot of the job unfinished.[592]

We have traveled a long way through manuscripts, rival authors, and contested visions to ask what a follower of Jesus should do after getting out of bed in the morning. The Sermon on the Mount contains instructions about conduct; Acts 15 remembers a Jerusalem decision concerning Gentile believers; the Didache tells a community how to pray and treat a neighbor; and Paul's letters bring us into actual disagreements about practice. Their relationships must be reconstructed before we announce a single Christian sharia. Still, here are the documents from which such a reconstruction can begin.

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.

Noahide law might offer a comparison, but it brings its own history and cannot be quietly projected backward into the Gospel period. 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

Qur'an 5:47 turns out to be a useful place for a very small grammar lesson with large implications for the people who claim to follow the Gospel. In the reading of Ḥafṣ, wa-l-

592 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.

yaḥkum ahl al-injīl bi-mā anzala Allāhu fīhi uses the lām of command with a jussive verb: let the People of the Injīl judge by what Allah revealed within it. The reading transmitted by Ḥamzah has wa-li-yaḥkuma, expressing purpose and continuing the earlier clause about God granting Jesus the Injīl so its people would judge by it. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī discuss the distinction and treat the senses as closely related. Either way, the guidance given to Jesus carries practical obligations beyond winning a doctrinal argument (Al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī on Q 5:47; Quran.com, Qirāʾāt 5:47).

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 … ⲟⲩⲙⲛⲛⲁⲗ ⲱⲙⲱⲉ ϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ 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 witnesses to Thomas's sayings can now be placed closely enough to see when a supposed independent confirmation comes from the same textual route. 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

At this point the source comparison can offer something a believer might use in ordinary life. We can trace teachings concerning fidelity to God amid money, care for people in need, prayer, restraint in divorce, and mercy in lending through actual Gospel or community witnesses. The companion assigns H-B to probable teaching nuclei, with weaker assessments where the exact phrasing or later legal machinery exceeds the historical case. These are provisional grades, and none of the five has yet been promoted to H-A. Keeping textual attestation, independence, historical attribution, and Qur'anic consonance separate is a small inconvenience compared with claiming that Jesus issued rules we have not established he said.

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.)

A synod's condemnation tells us that an ecclesiastical authority publicly adopted a rule, while a question sent to a catholicos shows that somebody sought an answer whose content may still need to be recovered. Neither becomes an eyewitness statement by Jesus merely because the topic is religious law. When I speak of historical Injil practice, I mean the way communities claimed to apply inherited instruction. Recovering an actual line back to the Messiah requires the Greek, Syriac, and Coptic witnesses to be graded as carefully as the more dramatic Gospel sayings.

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 language Christians actually spoke in seventh-century Arabia matters at least as much as the language of the texts we wish they had possessed. 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.[593]

A Christian or Muslim whose theology I believe contains errors still has a life before God that deserves serious consideration. The judgment of a person involves the person's deeds

593 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).

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 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

Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Augustine of Hippo lived in different religious worlds, but each became so important to later people arguing about authority that his name could stand for an entire style of orthodoxy. I am interested in their functional resemblance rather than in the fantasy that one was secretly copying the other. Both were remembered through struggles over doctrine and the religious institutions that survived those struggles, and both came to serve as reference points for communities deciding what had to be believed and who could say so. The analogy is an invitation to compare processes of authority, with the dates and differences left plainly on the page.[594]

Two careers from different worlds

Augustine lived between 354 and 430 and entered a Christian world whose scriptures, councils, and episcopal offices already had substantial histories, before writing works that would shape Latin debates about grace and the church for centuries. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, born in 164 AH / 780 CE and dying in 241 AH / 855 CE, worked in Abbasid Baghdad among hadith transmitters, jurists, and theologians arguing over what fidelity to Muhammad required; his refusal to yield under caliphal interrogation became a defining memory for later traditionalists. It is a curious comparison across very different religious offices, and I want to keep it at the level of how later communities made authoritative ancestors of these men, with the differences in their lives kept in view.

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.[595]

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 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

594 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.

595 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.

state's attempted assertion of authority over doctrine, as well as in the opposition represented by particular scholars.[596]

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

Jesus comes back into focus precisely because the dispute about his words is what made this comparison worth pursuing. 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.[597]

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 helped make the refusal to translate revelation into speculative systems a positive religious ideal. Later Hanbalism, however, still required interpretation, selectivity, analogy, and

596 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.

597 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.

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.[598]

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.[599]

Augustine and Ahmad are easy to turn into mascots for everything later Christians or Muslims came to believe, especially when the institutions carrying their names have had centuries to make their lives into instructive stories. Augustine worked with a received Christian canon and composed arguments about its meaning; Ahmad inherited traditions about the Prophet and became a model for a particular way of defending them. Neither man wrote every later proposition attributed to his school, and the bravery of a scholar who resists a ruler does not authenticate every report his admirers eventually embrace. Those are different kinds of authority, as our book has had some occasion to discover.

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,

598 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.

599 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.

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.[600]

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?

The resemblance between Augustine and Ahmad has limits that ought to become visible as we follow their institutions. 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.

600 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.

41B. The Constantine of Islam: al-Mutawakkil and the Reversal of the Miḥna

A caliph can fail to invent an orthodoxy and still accomplish something politically formidable by deciding which already existing scholars will receive his favor. Al-Mutawakkil's reversal of the miḥna changed the conditions under which Muslim theologians argued about the createdness of the Qur'an, even as his government imposed policies against the ʿAlids and protected non-Muslims. Calling him the Constantine of Islam is meant to provoke a comparison about imperial patronage, not to conjure a Muslim version of Nicaea out of thin air. The moral question is what happens when a ruler's declaration of orthodoxy becomes entangled with the lives and liberties of people who disagree.

The policy al-Mutawakkil inherited

The miḥna began with al-Maʾmūn's letters in 833, when an argument about whether the Qur'an was created became a question a government could put to scholars with the machinery of punishment behind it. Al-Muʿtaṣim (833–842) and al-Wāthiq (842–847) continued the examination with varying enforcement, and prominent men were dismissed, imprisoned, flogged, or killed. Ahmad ibn Hanbal became the remembered exemplar of refusal. By the time al-Mutawakkil took power, that reputation had political value, although reconstructing popular support from accounts written later remains a separate historical problem. The episode should give anyone enthusiastic about enforcing correct theology a little discomfort.[601]

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.[602]

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

601 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.

602 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.

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 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.[603]

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.[604]

Constantine and al-Mutawakkil were ruling very different religious worlds, and the differences sharpen the comparison. 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

603 "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.

604 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.

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.

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.[605]

Even when a chronicler offers a complete and moving story, its separate actions and motives deserve separate scrutiny. 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.[606]

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.

---

605 Matthew 7:21–27. Compare James 2:14–26 and Revelation 20:12–13, whose separate settings also connect judgment and conduct.

606 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.

Caliphal authority versus the authority of transmission

The miḥna brings back the question that followed us through Irenaeus, al-Shāfiʿī, and the men preserving Gospel sayings: who is entitled to tell a community what its revelation requires? Al-Maʾmūn tried to make a government examination decisive, Ahmad's refusal placed a limit upon that claim, and al-Mutawakkil altered the government's preferred answer. The underlying problem outlived the decree. A later political victory cannot determine the historical truth of every report favored by its beneficiaries, any more than Nicaea could have certified that every sentence later placed under John's name was uttered by Jesus.

A ruler can influence a religious library without ever opening a manuscript, simply by deciding who receives patronage, whose students find employment, and which teachers can work in safety. A flourishing school leaves more copies behind; a defeated one may survive in the fragments its critics quote. That historical inequality matters when we study Marcion, Irenaeus, the Abbasid theologians, or traditions associated with the Prophet's family, since the surviving books did not fall from heaven onto an evenly stocked shelf. It remains possible to study the uneven survival without treating popularity as proof of truth or political defeat as proof of falsehood.

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.

The winner of a theological controversy does not thereby become the person entitled to authenticate every report uttered in God's name. 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

If a Christian feeds the hungry and shelters a stranger while holding a theology I consider mistaken, what am I to say about the value of that mercy? And if a Muslim can recite a perfectly respectable formula of faith while abusing the weak, how much comfort should the formula give him? The scriptures place these uncomfortable cases before us, which is why the search for the Injil has always been concerned with the kind of judgment God makes of human lives, and with the danger of mistaking our own theological sorting procedures for access to Allah's verdict on somebody else's soul.

Those who did not recognize the encounter

Matthew 25 imagines a judgment in which people learn that the person they fed, visited, or welcomed mattered in ways they had scarcely understood. The king identifies himself with those he calls his brothers, and the hearers discover that their treatment of vulnerable people has become part of their account before him. There is a scholarly dispute about the extent of “these brothers”: the immediate disciples and their mission may be in view, giving the scene a narrower setting than the familiar universal paraphrase. The argument about the referent deserves attention, particularly because the moral force of the story has traveled far beyond that first audience.[607]

The hearers in Matthew 25 discover at judgment that their encounter with another person meant more than they knew. 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. [608]

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

607 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.

608 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.

argument as a whole. If our reading makes one passage erase the other, we still owe the reader an explanation. [609]

A covenantal account of divine judgment gives us a way to take differences in religious law seriously while admitting that human beings outside our community may be living under obligations they understand to have come from God. That possibility is attractive for interfaith relations, certainly, but its real force depends on what the scriptures say about mercy, justice, and accountability. The lives of Christians can carry moral and religious significance even where their practice differs from ours, and the case has to be made through sources rather than a polite wish to make everybody comfortable.

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. [610]

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. [611]

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. [612]

---

609 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.

610 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.

611 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.

612 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.

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 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.

An honest account of mercy should leave room for someone to be blameworthy for refusing what he understood. 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. [613]

The long controversy about faith and works has returned me to a fairly ordinary moral question: what does a person's allegiance to a revered teacher require him to do when nobody is watching? Confession can begin a life of fidelity, and mercy may offer a person a new beginning, but a theory that allows someone to remain cruel while displaying the correct religious label requires a demanding explanation of its own. The temptation to hide behind a sacred name is older than the Christian dispute about Paul's letters. James and the teachings of Jesus keep asking us what happens to the neighbor after the believer has finished explaining his theology.

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. [614]

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

613 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.

614 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.

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.

43. To kill and be killed

The promise in the Gospel

Sūrat al-Tawbah gives us a promise that becomes dangerous the moment it is turned into a slogan. Allah purchases the believers' lives and possessions for paradise, and the verse speaks of fighting in His way, killing and being killed; later readers have joined those words to debates about Christian sacrifice, martyrdom, and holy war. I want to know what the Arabic commits us to and what the neighboring verses make of the transaction, because an interpretation that stays pleasantly abstract for the scholar can become a very concrete instruction for someone holding a weapon.[615]

The swords in the arrest narratives have become difficult for me to ignore. Somebody accompanying Jesus draws a blade and wounds the high priest's servant, while Luke also preserves a saying about acquiring a sword, all within a tradition that repeatedly tells us to love our enemies. I want to know how the Evangelists understood those details, especially where one writer adds an explanation or a restraint that another omits. The scene is too complicated to be settled by a slogan about either total pacifism or the secret military program of the Messiah.

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?[616]

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

615 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, Miʾāt 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.

616 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.

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.

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

Qur'an 9:111 uses unmistakable language for killing and being killed in the course of fighting in Allah's way, which means an interpretation must reckon with taking life as well as risking it. The plural description concerns a community engaged in conflict and does not require every individual to have killed a person before receiving the promise. Al-Qurṭubī records canonical readings that reverse the order of the active and passive verbs; the basic encounter with lethal violence remains in view. That much grammatical clarity is a useful starting point for the harder question of what God could authorize.[617]

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.[618]

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

617 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.

618 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.

Alid reception of the passage in which the promised reward depends upon more than the occurrence of a battle.

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.[619]

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 promise in Qur'an 9:111 is a formidable test for anyone proposing to recover the Injīl, because Allah speaks of purchasing the believers' lives and possessions for paradise, describes their fighting, and then attaches the confirmed waʿdan ḥaqqan to the Torah, Injīl, and Qur'an. Does the reference to earlier scripture include the whole military depiction, or the covenant of divine recompense within which a community's fighting is described here? Both readings have defenders. The grammar makes the fighting verbs impossible to ignore, while their relation to the promise is precisely what the inquiry must determine (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.

---

619 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/.

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.[620]

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.[621]

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

620 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.

621 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.

questions that are easily obscured when the kingdom is treated exclusively as an inward religious experience.[622]

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.[623]

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.[624]

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,

622 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.

623 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.

624 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.

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.[625]

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

625 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.

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.[626]

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 example also limits how far a manuscript analogy can carry the historical 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.

Luke and the editorial selection of Isaiah

Luke's Nazareth sermon offers us the kind of editorial choice we can put under a magnifying glass. At 4:18–19, the account draws on Isaiah 61's proclamation of liberty and divine favor, stopping before the language of vengeance that follows in the prophetic book, while also incorporating material from Isaiah 58:6. The selection is visible when the

626 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.

passages are placed beside one another. It gives a concrete case of how a Gospel author presented inherited scripture, although a single omission cannot serve as a universal explanation for every gentler formulation elsewhere in Luke (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."[627]

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.

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.

627 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.

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 is valuable here because an actual manuscript can put a welcome limit upon an exciting theory of what Jesus originally said in Aramaic. British Library Add MS 14451, the fifth-century Curetonian witness, preserves late Luke, subject to folio-level verification, while its surviving John ends in chapter 14 and cannot testify to John 18:36. The Old Syriac Sinaitic and Curetonian witnesses, the Peshitta, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic Gospel materials have their own dates and coverage. Put them all into a single imaginary lost Gospel and we would have manufactured the evidence our hypothesis was supposed to be testing (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.[628]

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.[629]

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.[630]

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.[631]

The kingdom language is easy to misuse in both directions. Make it an entirely otherworldly destination and its political implications disappear; turn it into a straightforward earthly state and we lose the emphasis on an authority whose source is divine. Jesus's reference to how his servants behave in the arrest scene tells us something important about the immediate situation, but it cannot determine every conceivable case of defending somebody else's life. The verse must be allowed its own context before we ask it to write an entire philosophy of legitimate force.

---

628 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.

629 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.

630 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. 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.

631 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.

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 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.[632]

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.[633]

632 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.

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.[634]

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.[635]

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. A standing plan for armed revolution, or a command from Jesus to attack Roman forces,

633 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.

634 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.

635 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.

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.[636]

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.[637]

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.[638]

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

636 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.

637 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.

638 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.

popular religious leader as perceived by a ruler, alongside accounts of movements with more explicit ambitions.[639]

Jesus's execution poses a similar danger to the interpreter who hopes that one tidy reconstruction will answer every question. 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.[640]

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 Jesus's voluntary submission as a neutral military report. The scene includes the arresting

639 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.

640 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.

party falling back when Jesus identifies himself, a detail whose theological role is unmistakable.[641]

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.[642]

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.

One need not identify Jesus with Josephus's Egyptian prophet in order to wonder whether a later account of Jesus absorbed imagery known from another movement. Literary influence is a more modest proposal than an identity claim, yet it also needs evidence: distinctive language, an intelligible sequence of borrowing, and a reason to think the material traveled in the proposed direction. A third possibility is that both movements drew upon a shared repertoire of scriptural expectations. The historian should be willing to leave these doors open until a manuscript or a stronger comparison tells us which one leads anywhere.

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 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.[643]

---

641 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.

642 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.

643 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

An apocalyptic text from a later or different setting cannot become a transcript of what Jesus privately planned with his followers, however much it resembles the atmosphere in which they lived. It can, however, tell us what sorts of intervention Jewish communities imagined possible. People expecting God to reverse their fortunes through heavenly power might calculate their responsibilities differently from an ordinary army weighing men and weapons. A tiny earthly movement could understand its hopes through the forces it believed would arrive.

Martin's proposal becomes easier to understand once we have followed how these stories were arranged and retold. 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.[644]

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.[645]

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

---

asserting direct literary dependence upon Enoch or the Gospels.

644 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.

645 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.

figure may be committed to the defeat of evil while taking a path through suffering that forbids his companions to intervene on one occasion.[646]

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.[647]

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.[648]

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

---

646 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.

647 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 militant Christian devotion. Sinai reports the Macarius panegyric through Gaddis; original-language collation of the panegyric remains open.

648 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.

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.

I can approach the covenant in Tawbah without pretending that an identical command to fight must have stood in an otherwise lost Gospel. Religious traditions may preserve a promise of costly fidelity through very different forms of service, including witness under persecution. The Qur'an's explicit reference to fighting still needs a justification in its own context, however, and the Christian parallels cannot supply that justification by themselves. What they provide is a history in which danger, sacrifice, and the hope of divine vindication were already part of the religious imagination.

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.[649]

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

649 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.

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.[650]

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).[651]

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).[652]

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.[653]

---

650 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, discussing Theophanes's retrospective report of Heraclius. Tesei's full chronology and Greek textual apparatus remain to be independently collated.

651 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.

652 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.

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 household of ʿAlī offers another way to ask when a religious leader ought to take up arms and when restraint itself becomes an obligation of justice. Karbala and the sayings later collected in Nahj al-Balāgha have enormous moral force for believers, although the particular reports still need their chains inspected. In the Christian story, political expectation and suffering also coexist, which makes the analogy fruitful for a Muslim reader. My synthesis of rightful guidance, legitimate defense, and sacrificial restraint is a theological proposal that must be argued from each tradition's witnesses; it would be charmingly convenient to call it a newly discovered first-century isnād, and entirely irresponsible.

653 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.

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.[654]

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.[655]

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 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

654 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.

655 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.

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.[656]

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 functions of political authority. Whether that distinction was justified, or became available for abuse by rulers, is a separate question.[657]

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

656 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.

657 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.

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?

The political reconstruction eventually reaches a question I would rather nobody answered in haste: what could make killing another human being an act in the way of Allah? Even an accurate history of Jesus's plans would leave an ethical question, because followers can misunderstand a prophet and later writers can excuse conduct he would have condemned. The Qur'anic phrase supplies a standard for justified commitment; a religious flag or inherited title cannot manufacture that justification by itself.

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.[658]

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 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.[659]

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.

---

658 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.

659 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.

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

Christians inherit texts that modern believers often wish had been left out of the Bible's moral argument. Deuteronomy 20:16–18 orders the destruction of living beings among named peoples in the land, and 1 Samuel 15:3 includes women, children, and infants in the command against Amalek. These are canonical passages, even though neither is a saying of Jesus. A Christian can read them as ancient, unrepeatable judgments within a history that culminates elsewhere; the interpretation deserves engagement. It also obliges us to face what the received texts plainly say (S29–S30), especially when a later religious army finds an old command useful.

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 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-Qurazī'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 Qurʾān, 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 Qurʾān'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 Qurʾānic 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 ʿĀʾisha'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 Qurʾān'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 is where this theological argument acquires a terrible human setting. Raymond of Aguilers describes killings after the capture and interprets the bloodshed through divine judgment, giving the violence a religious significance his army could carry home as vindication. His extravagant language is evidence of how he justified the event, while its imagery supplies no trustworthy count of the dead or measurement of blood. I am interested in the move from conquest to sacred approval: a city is taken, people are killed, and a witness presents the slaughter as part of God's business (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.[660]

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 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

660 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.

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.[661]

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

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

661 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.

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?

We have finally arrived at the question I wrote on the cover: what were the sahih hadith of the Messiah? I have dragged the reader through Greek verbs, lost Gospels, contested prophets, quarrelsome bishops, ancient Jewish expectations, and a fair amount of Islamic theology, and perhaps we can now be more precise about what all that wandering was for. Some sayings survive through several early witnesses; others are striking but belong to narrow or late traditions. The grading has to remain passage by passage, and I would be doing the reader no favor by stamping a single certificate of authenticity on an entire Gospel, especially after spending so much time objecting to that very habit in another religion's scholarship.

The claim attached to a grade

Before I stamp sahih, hasan, or daʿif beside a saying of Jesus, I owe the reader an explanation of what the grade is supposed to mean. The words in a surviving manuscript might be stable even when their attribution to the historical Jesus remains uncertain, while a saying consonant with the Qur'an may still have a history we cannot recover. An early report can also be misunderstood by the people who turn it into a rule. I have spent the book making those distinctions because the point of borrowing hadith criticism is to examine the evidence, rather than to decorate whichever conclusion I wanted at the beginning with an impressive Arabic label.

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. [662]

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. [663]

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

662 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.

663 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.

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 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. [664]

After all the effort spent recovering sayings, the question of Christian law has brought me back to the ordinary behavior of people who thought Jesus had taught them something worth obeying. They prayed and fasted, arranged meals, gave money, and developed ways of deciding whether a teacher was trustworthy. Their practices can be reconstructed from early documents without assuming that every community rule originated as an exact utterance from the Messiah. I want a final legal account in which a saying of Jesus is identified as such, and a later interpretation is allowed to be useful without disguising its later birth.

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. [665]

---

664 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.

665 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.

The comparison with the Prophet's household has been worth pursuing precisely because the sources resist turning it into a perfect diagram. James may hold a place in one reconstruction of early Christian succession while Imami reports name Simon, and some modern Ismaʿili readings organize the comparison differently again. Kinship, appointment, and the work of guiding a community have histories that overlap without collapsing into one another. The disagreement sends us back to the original testimonies, which is where a serious investigation ought to find itself at the end.

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.[666]

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.[667]

Even the Greek and Arabic grammar has opened doors I did not expect when the project began. 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 material about ʿAlī and his descendants has reminded me that a religious trust can survive the loss of political rule, and that the language of rightful leadership never removes

666 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.

667 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.

the obligations of the people who claim to follow it. James and the Sermon on the Mount tell a similarly inconvenient story: one may honor the guide and still fail to feed the hungry person standing beside him. These comparisons belong in *Finding Injil* because the point of recovering the Messiah's words is ultimately to learn what living people should do with them. An inherited office or a beautiful genealogy can help us ask who was trusted to teach, while the teaching itself continues to demand an answer.

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 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.

Roloff, Jürgen. “Der johanneische ‘Lieblingsjünger’ und der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit.” New Testament Studies 15.1 (1968): 129–151. DOI: 10.1017/S0028688500018981. Cambridge Core’s displayed p. 148 n. 3 directly checked in John Pass 03. Full-body reading remains open.

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.

Version 0.18 source ledger: Litwa and the alternative Christianities

Litwa, M. David. Found Christianities: Remaking the World of the Second Century CE. T&T Clark/Bloomsbury, 2022. Contents and publisher description inspected; full volume not read. https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/found-christianities-9780567703873/.

Litwa, M. David. Early Christianity in Alexandria: From Its Beginnings to the Late Second Century. Cambridge University Press, online 2023, print 2024. Introduction and chapter-level Cambridge abstracts consulted. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/early-christianity-in-alexandria/B695C8A12BB62208D7B4528F8CFA39B9.

Litwa, M. David. “Did ‘The Gnostic Heresy’ Influence Valentinus? An Investigation of Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.11.1 and 1.29.” Vigiliae Christianae 78 (2024): 138–160. DOI 10.1163/15700720-BJA10068. Author's extensive précis and openly indexed article text consulted; PDF image inspection was inaccessible through the browsing service.

Litwa, M. David. The Evil Creator: Origins of an Early Christian Idea. Oxford University Press, 2021. Publisher chapter abstracts and author summary consulted; full text access pending. https://academic.oup.com/book/39211.

Litwa, M. David. Carpocrates, Marcellina, and Epiphanes: Three Early Christian Teachers of Alexandria and Rome. Routledge, 2022. Publisher summary, published review and excerpts of Epiphanes's On Justice consulted; full volume pending. https://www.routledge.com/Carpocrates-Marcellina-and-Epiphanes-Three-Early-Christian-Teachers/Litwa/p/book/9781032285368.

Litwa, M. David. Basilides: The Oldest Gnostic. Melbourne: Gnosis, 2025. Author's bibliography and book description consulted; all 19 fragments to be independently collated. https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/.

Litwa, M. David. The Secret Book of John. Cambridge University Press, 2025. Publisher text and introduction description consulted; compare Nag Hammadi Codices II, III, IV and Berlin Codex 8502. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/secret-book-of-john/secret-book-of-john/6E142C2C7FA35C06F64CCCA5D17CBF67.

Litwa, M. David. Marcion: The Gospel of a Wholly Good God. Fortress Press, 2025. Publisher summary consulted; full monograph and reconstructed Evangelion to be checked. https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.24873267.

Litwa, M. David. The Gnostic Thomas. Melbourne: Gnosis, 2025. Author's summary consulted; Thomasine sayings and gender interpretations require further original-language and codicological work. https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/.

Litwa, M. David. Celsus in His Own Words: A Translation of The True Teaching. Melbourne: Gnosis. Author's description checked, full translation pending. https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/.

Litwa, M. David. The Emperor Julian Against the Apostates. Melbourne: Gnosis, 2025. Publication identity and author description consulted; compare Wilmer Cave Wright (1923) and later editions of Cyril's Contra Julianum. https://mdavidlitwa.com/books/.

Litwa, M. David. Critics of Christianity: Celsus, Porphyry, and the Emperor Julian. Melbourne: Gnosis, 2026. Publication listed by author; contents and full text pending. https://mdavidlitwa.com/about/.

Irenaeus. Against Heresies 1.8–13, 1.23–31 and 3.1–4. Public English version consulted, with original-language critical collation pending. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm.

Clement of Alexandria. Stromata 3.2, quoting Epiphanes, On Justice. Ancient text and Litwa's account of the surviving fragments consulted; further Greek collation pending.

Ptolemy. Letter to Flora, preserved in Epiphanius, Panarion 33.3–7. Bradley K. Storin's modern introductory commentary read in Cambridge excerpt; compare the transmitted Greek.

Origen. Contra Celsum 1.28–32, 5.61, 8.73. Public English translation consulted; Celsus's speech is mediated through Origen's apologetic framing. https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm.

Julian. Against the Galileans, reconstructed fragments §§253–262 and 327–340; and letters to Arsacius and priests. Wright's public English translation consulted. https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate_galileans_1_text.htm.

Modern controls: Karen L. King, What Is Gnosticism? (Harvard, 2003); Michael A. Williams, Rethinking “Gnosticism” (Princeton, 1996); David Brakke, The Gospel of Judas (Yale, 2022); Jonathan Cahana, “Salvific Dissolution” (2017); Mary Dzon, “Jesus and the Birds in Medieval Abrahamic Traditions” (2016); Neil McLynn, “Julian and the Christian Professors” (2014). Full texts or abstracts as specified in footnotes.

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.

Version 0.17q: Mark’s household, Maryam and the human intermediary

2 November 2026. Added a source-critical reading of Mark 3:20–35 and its Synoptic reworkings in Chapter 13; family recognition and James in Chapter 18; the Qurʾānic reversal in which the infant defends Maryam in Chapter 34; and the Nazarene/Ebionite conception debate in Chapter 16. Chapter 38 now compares the contested alleged teacher of Q 16:103, the Holy Spirit in 16:102 and Salmān’s later Nuṣayrī bāb role, without identifying the latter as an attested early commentary on the Qurʾānic passage. The 2 November Animal Apocalypse and animal-judgment material is merged into Chapter 8 from the latest PDF. This edition preserves the established FI and QC registries and the earlier source grades.

Version 0.17r: Jewish-Christian Spirit and kinship dossier

2 November 2026. Deepened the source-critical arguments in chapters 13, 16, 34 and 38. New material examines the Western family-accusation variant in Mark 3:21, Jerome’s fragment about Mary and Jesus’ baptism, the disputed number and titles of Jewish-Christian Gospels, the Spirit as mother, the inner-sūra parent/mother contrast in Qurʾān 19:14 and 19:32, qirāʾāt of 19:19, al-Kāfī’s Spirit reports, and the later Salmān-as-gate conception. Named ancient witnesses and source grades are preserved and separated. Original FI and QC registries remain unchanged.

Version 0.18: Litwa, the Gnostic movements, Celsus and Julian

2 November 2026. Added Chapters 27B and 27C as separate source-critical studies. Chapter 27B treats the heresiological construction of “Gnosticism,” Litwa's challenge to Irenaeus's intellectual genealogy, moral and theological differences across the identified movements, and graded Qurʾānic intertexts. Chapter 27C compares Celsus and Julian, with Porphyry as a controlled bridge, through scriptural criticism, Marian polemic, law, divinity, charity and political coercion. Chapter 27A now cross-references the critique of Irenaeus and Chapter 36 distinguishes the Basilidean report from the actual wording of Q 4:157. A source-status ledger records where modern monographs were consulted only through published descriptions or abstracts. Existing FI-001–FI-066 and QC-001–QC-178 remain unchanged.

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.[668]

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

668 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.

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 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.[669]

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.[670]

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.[671]

669 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.

670 Qur'an 4:157–158; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4. Distinguish the dating of the report from compatibility with Qur'anic tawḥīd.

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.[672]

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.[673]

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 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.[674]

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

671 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.

672 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.

673 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.

674 Al-Ṭabarī on Qur'an 4:157, particularly his discussion following reports 10779–10789. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4.

generated divergent explanations. Translating the clause as the detailed exchange of one man for another supplies information that the verse itself leaves unsaid.[675]

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.[676]

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.[677]

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 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.[678]

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

675 Mark 14:43–52; 15:21; Matthew 26:47–56; Luke 23:26; John 18:1–12; al-Ṭabarī, 4:157.

676 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/ .

677 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.

678 Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.24.4; Gospel of Barnabas 215–220; Joosten (2010).

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.[679]

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.[680]

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.[681]

---

679 Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book V, §3, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/101505.htm. Origen expressly attributes the Apocalypse to John while recording doubts about the second and third Johannine epistles.

680 Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.25.2–4, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm; 7.25.1–7, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm. Eusebius reports divergent canonical judgments, and Dionysius distinguishes the evangelist from the apocalyptist.

681 Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture 4.36, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310104.htm; Gregory of Nazianzus, Verses on the Genuine Books of Scripture, NPNF 2.14, https://patristica.app/works/npnf-works/gregory-nazianzen-verses-on-the-canon; Frank Thielman, "The Place of the Apocalypse in the Canon of St. Gregory Nazianzen," Tyndale Bulletin 49 (1998), https://www.tyndalebulletin.org/article/30331-the-place-of-the-apocalypse-in-the-canon-of-st-gregory-nazianzen; Athanasius, Festal Letter 39 (367), §§5–7, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2806039.htm. Omission from Gregory's list is secure; his broader attitude requires care.

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 ʿĪsā 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 Ishoʿyahb 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.