

Does the Bible Predict the Coming of Muhammad?

TONY COSTA

Tony Costa teaches apologetics at the Toronto Baptist Seminary, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and also serves as adjunct professor with Heritage College and Seminary, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada, and Providence Theological Seminary in Franklin, Tennessee. He earned his PhD in theology and New Testament studies from Radboud University in the Netherlands. He also holds a BA and MA in religious, biblical, and philosophical studies from the University of Toronto.

In Islamic apologetics one inevitably comes across Muslims who, in their interaction with Jews and with Christians in particular, argue that the Bible mentions and prophesied the Islamic prophet Muhammad. This argument usually comes as a surprise to Christians and Jews, and those who are familiar with their Scriptures who will often reply that they have never seen any such references to Muhammad. Many prominent Muslim apologists have written and argued for the biblical support of Muhammad, most notably was the Muslim apologist Ahmed Deedat. Deedat's work has a wide influence on many aspiring Muslim apologists. One of Deedat's books argued that Muhammad was prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments.¹

Christians need to be aware of some of the texts Muslims cite in support of the claim that Muhammad is prophesied in the Bible.² What is the justification for the claim that Muhammad is found in the Bible?

TEXTS IN THE QUR'AN

The claim itself comes from the Qur'an³ which asserts that Muhammad's coming is described in the Scriptures of the *ahl al-kitab*, i.e., the People of the Book, a title given to Jews and Christians in the Qur'an. This claim

appears in at least two significant passages, “Those who follow the messenger [Muhammad], the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find *described in the Torah and the Gospel* (which are) with them” (Q7:157; italics mine). In the Qur’an, Jesus actually predicts the coming of Muhammad,

And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: “O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of an Apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad⁴ (Yusuf Ali translation).

The first important thing to note is that the Qur’an claims in 7:157 that the Torah and the Gospel are “with them,” i.e., the Scriptures of the Jews and the Christians are intact and with them. Why would Allah (the title used for the deity in the Qur’an) claim Muhammad is mentioned in the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians unless their texts were reliable? Would Muhammad appear in unreliable corrupted texts? This obviously poses a problem. This also runs counter to the common claim today made by Muslims that the present Bible has been corrupted and therefore is untrustworthy.⁵ An inconsistency immediately emerges at this point when the Bible is brought into the discussion by Islam. Many Muslims charge that the Bible is: (1) corrupted and unreliable; (2) some parts of it are true; (3) some parts of it are false.

If (1) is true, then the argument that Muhammad is predicted in the Bible is moot and irrelevant because the Bible cannot be trusted. In that case, the Qur’an cannot be trusted because it directs Jews and Christians to find Muhammad in their Scriptures. If Muhammad is indeed mentioned in their Scriptures, then the Qur’an is true. If Muhammad is not found in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures then the Qur’an would necessarily be false. Both (2) and (3) essentially amount to saying the same thing and most Muslims opt for either (2) or (3). The reason for doing so however is not based on any consistent criterion but rather an *ad hoc* approach, the methodology is contrived from the start. How do Muslims argue what parts of the Bible are true and reliable, and which ones are not? They do so by using the Qur’an as their reference guide. Then the Bible agrees with the Qur’an, it is correct, when it does not, it is in error.⁶ In order for the Muslim to claim that the Bible predicts Muhammad’s coming he / she must hold to point (2) or (3) above.

In the second passage (Q 61:6) Jesus is quoted as predicting Muhammad's advent. We immediately see that Jesus is not presented as the final fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets as we see in the New Testament (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46; Rom 3:21), but rather as a herald, a forerunner who points forward to the advent of Muhammad. Jesus is the Islamic version of John the Baptist who points forward to one greater than him. Thus the Qur'an is not Christocentric, but is centered and culminates with Muhammad. This is a very important point in terms of the Islamic worldview. The centrality of Muhammad is also seen in the fact that Allah entered into a covenant with all the prophets in which they agreed to believe in and aid Muhammad (Q 3:81). Abraham also predicts the coming of Muhammad (Q 2:129), although not by name as Jesus does in Q 61:6. This passage of the Qur'an will become a central text in interpreting a key section in the New Testament which we will examine below. Islamic apologists as we noted above charged Jews and Christians with corruption of the Scriptures. The reason for this is due to the fact that they believed that Muhammad was mentioned by name in the Bible. Islamic apologists even went as far as blaming the Jews for actually removing the name "Muhammad" from their Torah.⁷

BIBLICAL TEXTS CITED BY MUSLIMS

Muslim apologists cite Biblical texts in support for the claim that the Bible prophesied the coming of Muhammad. The most commonly cited texts include Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Song of Solomon 5:16, and several texts from the "Farewell Discourse" in John's Gospel (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Although these texts are not the only ones cited for this claim, they are the main passages to which Islamic apologists appeal.⁸ We will examine each of these passages and see whether or not they substantiate the Muslim claim that Muhammad is predicted in these texts.⁹

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'

And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’

Muslim apologists reason that that Muhammad is the “prophet” spoken of here and argue that the expression “your” and “their brothers” refers to the Ishmaelites who were half-brothers of the Israelites by virtue of the fact that they were both descended from Abraham via Ishmael. The reason Muslims point this out is because Ishmael was also a son of Abraham and thus a half-brother of Isaac, the forefather of the Jewish nation. Ishmael, it is argued is the father of the Arab nation, and since Muhammad was an Arab, he would be a descendant of Ishmael, and thus a son of Abraham, and hence relationally be a Semitic “brother” to the Jews. We point out however that if the Ishmaelites or descendants of Ishmael are “brothers” of the Israelites, why could not the Edomites also be their “brothers” spoken of here? The Edomites were descended from Esau (Gen 36:9), who was the brother of Jacob from the same father Isaac making Esau a full brother.

Furthermore, Esau was a direct grandson of Abraham (Gen 25:19, 24-26). If this is the case, would not the Edomites better qualify as full “brothers” of Israel rather than the Ishmaelites who were half-brothers? The claim that Muhammad and the Arabs are descendants of Ishmael is necessary as a polemic to buttress the Islamic connection to Abraham. However, the evidence seems to indicate that this particular belief that Ismael is the father of the Arabs emerged later in Islam and is suspect. There is compelling evidence that Ishmael was not the ancestor of the Arabs or Muhammad.¹⁰ The Qur’an in fact never makes this claim. It emerges centuries later in the biography (*Sira*) of Muhammad and the Hadith which are records of Muhammad’s sayings and deeds. Ishmael was *not* the father of the Arabs, and hence not the father of Muhammad. There is no record or mention in pre-Islamic sources that Ishmael was the father of the Arabs. The evidence rather indicates that the Arabs as a people already pre-existed Ishmael, hence it is impossible for Ishmael to be the progenitor of the Arab peoples.

It is the immediate context however that concerns us here. From the context of the passage and that which precedes it, it is clear that the term “their brothers” is a reference to the Israelites exclusively and no one else. Note Deuteronomy 18:1-2, “The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel ... They shall have no inheritance *among their brothers*” (italics mine). It is clear from these verses that the “they” refers to the Levites and that “their brothers” refers to the remaining eleven tribes of Israel. In the preceding chapter, Deuteronomy 17:15 which predicts the emergence of the monarchy within Israel and the identity of the rightful monarch who would rule over the people, this point is further made crystal clear: “you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One *from among your brothers* you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, *who is not your brother*” (italics mine).

One need only read the lists of the kings who ruled over the Israelites in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles to verify the fact that they were all without exception, Israelites. Throughout the Old Testament, one finds the expression “their brothers” consistently referring to the tribes of Israel (Judges 20:13; 2 Sam 2:26; 2 Kings 23:9; Neh 5:1). Who, then, is this prophet like Moses? Jews and Christians have consistently recognized this passage as referring to a prophet who would arise out of the people of Israel and not from any another ethnic group. The Bible which contains this prophecy of the coming prophet also provides us with the fulfillment of this same prophecy. The New Testament reveals that this prophet is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. Jesus meets the qualifications which is outlined in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. Jesus came from the nation of Israel, he was of the tribe of Judah, and therefore as a Jew or Israelite, he was one of “their brothers” (see John 4:9, 20-22; Rom 9:4-5; Heb 7:14). Jesus himself claimed to be the One whom Moses prophesied. Jesus said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, *for he wrote about me*” (John 5:46; italics mine). When did Moses write about Jesus? While the Messiah is found throughout the Pentateuch in its types and shadows, the specific places where Moses would have written about the Messiah would have been Genesis 3:15 (the prophecy of the seed of the woman crushing the head of the seed of the serpent) and Deuteronomy 18:15-19. The early disciples of Jesus were also aware of Moses writing about the Messiah. They believed Jesus to be “him of *whom Moses in the Law* and also the prophets *wrote*” (John 1:45; italics

mine). After the resurrection, when Jesus sent the apostles to preach the Gospel to the world, the apostle Peter appealed specifically to Deuteronomy 18:18 in his preaching as a prophecy which was fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah (Acts 3:19-26).¹¹ Even Stephen, the first Christian martyr, when he stood before the Sanhedrin, also quoted Deuteronomy 18:18 as fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah, because Moses was one who also predicted “the coming of the Righteous One” (Acts 7:52; cf. 7:37). This demonstrates that the idea of the promised prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 was understood by the earliest Christian community to be fulfilled in Jesus. They were not expecting another prophet to come after Jesus who would fulfill this prophecy. The prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18-19 thus cannot be Muhammad, contextually, culturally or historically. He was not a Jew or Israelite, and not a member of any tribe within Israel as Jesus was.

This prophet who is prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is to be a prophet like Moses. What kind of a prophet was Moses? Deuteronomy 34:10-11 states regarding Moses,

And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land.

Two things are said about Moses here. First, God knew Moses “face to face,” and secondly, Moses was known for all “the signs and the wonders” that were done in Egypt. The prophesied prophet to come would be like Moses. Can these things be said about Muhammad? Did Allah know or speak “face to face” with Muhammad? No he did not. Allah revealed his messages to Muhammad via the angel Gabriel. Did Muhammad perform signs? The Qur’an states Muhammad did not perform any signs or miracles even when asked by his contemporaries, but was only a warner (Q 13:7). Jesus on the other hand did know God “face to face” and in fact was in an eternal “face to face” relationship with the Father (John 1:1), and shared his glory before the creation of the world (John 17:5). Jesus was known for his signs and wonders which he performed during his earthly ministry. The gospel of Matthew shows a close parallel between Jesus and Moses even showing Jesus as the new lawgiver (Matt 5-7). This prophet whom Moses

spoke of is clearly Jesus himself as the people of his day testified, “This really is the Prophet” (John 7:40). After witnessing Jesus perform a sign such as the multiplication of the loaves the people said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:14). Note the co-relation between the sign Jesus performed and the statement that Jesus is the “Prophet” who was to come. This ties in with the character description of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:10-11 and the prophecy of a prophet like Moses who was to come. Not only did the disciples of Jesus affirm this fact, so did Jesus (Luke 24:44).¹² The textual support for Deuteronomy 18:15-19 is well attested and shows the reliability of this text contrary to Islamic charges of corruption and allegations that Jews removed Muhammad’s name from the Torah.¹³

Song of Solomon 5:16

If there was ever a text that has been so brutally contorted beyond the limits by Islamic apologists, it is Song of Solomon 5:16. The unsound reasoning in the Muslim interpretation of this text is an example of the phonetic fallacy, confusing the sound of one word for another and assuming they are the same. If I were to say the words “sun” and “son,” or “blew” and “blue” even though they both sound the same, they are by no means the same by definition and context.¹⁴

Song of Solomon 5:16 reads, “His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” Muslim apologists point out that the phrase “altogether desirable” in Hebrew is the word *machmadim*. This Hebrew word *machmadim* is a masculine plural noun and it comes from the root noun *machmad* which means “desire,” “desirable thing.”¹⁵ They argue that the Hebrew word *machmad* actually refers to Muhammad! The first problem with this line of reasoning is that the word *machmad* is not a proper name like John, Tom, or even Muhammad. It rather functions in this case as a description of the lover in the Song of Solomon. It describes in the context of the Song of Solomon the love and desire that the Shulamite woman, in this case the wife, feels for her husband.

The Song of Solomon is a poetic literary love text addressing the delights of marital love between a husband and his wife. The context is explicitly clear on this point. The plural intensive form *machmadim* in Song of Solomon 5:16 is grammatically intended to heighten the sense of the word. Hebrew scholars refer to this as the “plural of intensity.” In other words, this passage

has to do with the description of the lover in the poem as being “altogether lovely” or “very desirable.” Muslims in this case engage in a form of eisegesis where they read into the text a foreign concept that was never part of the context. The word *machmad* appears fourteen other times in the Hebrew Bible and again it denotes the idea of something precious and desirable. Those passages would be awkward and nonsensical if we inserted the name “Muhamad” where *machmad* appears in the text.¹⁶ Islamic apologists are inconsistent in this case.

Another problem and inconsistency with the concept that Muhammad is referred to in Song of Solomon 5:16 is the passage in Song of Solomon 5:1 where the husband or lover speaks the following words, “I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine.” The problem here is the fact that the drinking of wine is strictly forbidden in Islam, “O you who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divine arrows are only an infamy of Satan’s handiwork. Leave it aside that you may succeed” (Q5:90). If the lover in this poem is Muhammad this poses some serious problems. The idea that Muhammad as a prophet would consume wine would be inconceivable as the drinking of wine is *haram*, forbidden in Islam. In the Qur’an, Muhammad is said to be the ideal role model that Allah commands humanity to emulate if they wish to be pleasing to Allah (Q33:21) and he is said to have an exalted moral character (Q68:4). Thus, whatever Muhammad forbids (such as drinking wine and other alcoholic beverages) is to be unquestionable obeyed. However, drinking wine in Hebrew culture was wholly acceptable. What is surprising from an Islamic point of view, is that while wine is forbidden here on earth, it will be permitted in abundance in paradise, “A similitude of the Garden which those who keep their duty (to Allah) are promised: Therein are rivers of water unpolluted ... and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers” (Q47:15). Another mitigating factor here is that according to the context of the Song of Solomon, this wedding takes place in Jerusalem, and not in Mecca or Medina. Jerusalem appears eight times in the Song of Solomon (1:5; 2:7; 3:5, 10; 5:8, 16; 6:4; 8:4) and this song is said to be Solomon’s own (1:1). All of these points considered, grammatical, cultural, and historical militate against the inconsistent interpretation that Muslim apologists impose on this text. This text says nothing about Muhammad at all.

John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7

We now move to the New Testament. The other principal passages to which Muslims appeal are from the Gospel of John. It is ironic that the Gospel of John is cited favorably in support of Muhammad's place in the Bible because it typically receives scathing attacks from Muslim apologists due to its emphasis on the deity of Jesus and his identity as the Son of God. The high Christology in John has been dismissed by Muslim apologists as a later development. Here again the inconsistent methodology used by Muslim apologists becomes apparent. Here we recall points (2) and (3) above on how Muslims view the Bible. Where they feel the gospel of John can be used to support the Qur'an, it is right, where it does not, it is wrong. Once again, the Qur'an becomes the measuring rod. In short, the reader will note that there is no concern for the biblical texts themselves or whether they can stand on their own merit. They are arbitrarily and selectively used by Muslim apologists to suit the Qur'an. This would be the same as Christians using the Qur'an to prove the Bible whenever it agrees with it, and rejecting it when it does not. Our Muslim friends would be quick to charge us with inconsistency and they would be justified in doing so. Nevertheless, a double standard emerges here where there is one rule for the Bible and another one for the Qur'an. Unfortunately, this futile exercise is almost always practiced in Islamic dialogues with Christians. It should always be remembered that an inconsistent methodology and argument, are always signs of a failed argument because in the end they are contrived.

Turning to the Gospel of John let us examine the passages that are employed by Muslim apologists to support their contention that Muhammad is prophesied:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17; NIV).

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:26; NIV).

When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me (John 15:26; NIV).

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John 16:7; NIV).

The primary basis for using these passages in John is the prediction of Jesus in the Qur'an where he is reputed to have predicted the advent of Muhammad even to the point of using his name, or at least, one of the names by which he is known, Ahmad (Q 61:6) as we saw above. The word "Counselor" in these passages in John comes from the Greek word *parakletos* and literally means "called to one's side." Thus one who is called to one's side provides counsel, comfort, aid, help and thus this word has also been translated as "Comforter," "Helper," "Intercessor," and "Advocate" as well as "Counselor" in other Bible translations, but they all convey the same idea. What is interesting is the Muslim claim that the "Counselor" or "Comforter" mentioned in these passages in John's Gospel is really in fact Muhammad. Moreover, they make the claim that the original Greek word here is not *parakletos* but *periklutos* which means the "praised one," and is the Greek equivalent of the Arabic name Ahmad, which as noted, Muslim apologists claim is the short form of the name Muhammad. Since Jesus predicted Muhammad's coming, Muslims allege that the record of that prediction is found in John 14-16.

Again this is the selective methodology that we see in Muslim apologetics. The Bible is corrupted, except when they can use it to buttress Islam. The major problem with this approach is that *all* of the Greek manuscripts we have of John's Gospel contain the word *parakletos*, which as we saw means "Counselor" or "Comforter." No Greek manuscript of John has the reading *periklutos*. There are over 5,800 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament at present. Of the many thousands we possess, not one of them differs on this reading and use of *parakletos* in John 14-16. It should be noted that scores of these ancient manuscripts pre-date Islam by centuries. Kenneth Cragg comments,

There is not the slightest textual reason for reading [*periklutos*] instead of [*parakletos*] in the New Testament ... This charge and the Muslim alteration have no basis exegetically. Nor does the sense of the passage bear the Muslim rendering.

But it is well to remember that the interpretation arises, in the end, *not from exegesis but from presupposition*.¹⁷

Yet notwithstanding this overwhelming textual evidence, Muslims accuse Christians, as they did the Jews with the Torah,¹⁸ of deliberately altering the word originally from *periklutos* to *parakletos* with no evidence to substantiate such a charge!¹⁹ It should also be remembered that *parakletos* is a noun whereas *periklutos* is an adjective, thus grammatically they are different words altogether. The Comforter Jesus spoke of is not a human being, but as the text clearly states, it is the Holy Spirit.²⁰ In Islam, the term “Holy Spirit” is usually associated with the angel Gabriel,²¹ although the Qur’an does not explicitly identify Gabriel as the Holy Spirit. The standard lexicon on the New Testament *BDAG* clearly states that, “It is only the Holy Spirit that is expressly called [*parakletos*] = *Helper* in the Fourth [Gospel]: [John] 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.”²² “Counselor,” “Holy Spirit,” and “Spirit of truth” are interchangeable terms speaking of the same Person.

The fact that Jesus uses the masculine pronouns “he” and “his” in reference to the Comforter, does not mean he is speaking of a human being. God is also spoken of in the Bible and Qur’an in the masculine gender, and yet God is Spirit (John 4:24). Similarly, Jesus speaks of the Comforter or Counselor as a Spirit, not as a man. The text logically bears this out. The irony in the Muslim use of John 14-16 is that these chapters are also heavily Trinitarian in nature. Islam categorically denies the Trinity. These texts in John speak of the economical Trinity and how the persons of the Godhead function and relate to one another. For instance, the Father sends the Holy Spirit in the name of the Son (John 14:26). The Son also sends the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 15:26). Another major problematic issue arises with the Islamic interpretation of these texts in John. Jesus says twice about the Counselor that he would be the one “whom I will send to you” (John 15:26) and “I will send him to you” (John 16:7). In both of these passages the Counselor is sent *by* Jesus. The question naturally arises, in Islam, who sent Muhammad? Is Muhammad the messenger of Jesus or the messenger of Allah? The Qur’an is very clear that “Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” (48:29). Allah states in the Qur’an, “Lo! *We have sent thee (O Muhammad) with the truth, a bringer of glad tidings and a warner*” (Q 2:119; italics mine). The Muslim would never accept that Muhammad was the messenger of Jesus,

because all the prophets in Islam including Jesus, were messengers of Allah (Q2:285), Muhammad being the last one as the “Seal of the Prophets” (Q 33:40). Jesus is the one who sends the Counselor, and the Counselor is the Holy Spirit. It would then follow that the Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus as the Bible elsewhere attests (Acts 2:33). If this is the case, then Muhammad cannot possibly be the Counselor because he was not sent by Jesus. Let us further examine what Jesus said about the Counselor / Comforter in these passages and see if it fits the description of Muhammad:

1. *“He [the Father] will give you another Counselor.”*

Jesus promised the disciples that the Father would give them another Counselor. During his earthly life, Jesus had been their Counselor or Comforter. Now that he was going to leave them, he promised them *another* Counselor in his absence, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is “another Counselor” which implies more than one. In another New Testament passage Jesus is also called the *parakletos* (same word used of the Holy Spirit in John 14-16), because he is our Advocate, Helper, Comforter, or Counselor with the Father (1 John 2:1). The other “Counselor” was as Jesus said, “the Spirit of truth.” If Jesus meant Muhammad by the word “Counselor,” would it not be absurd for Jesus to have said “he will give you another Muhammad”? The disciples of Jesus did not have to wait 600 years for the Counselor to come. The Holy Spirit came as promised by Jesus over a month after the death and resurrection of Jesus on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4; cf. Acts 1:8).

2. *“To be with you forever.”*

Jesus promised the Counselor would be with his disciples forever. Muhammad did not stay with his disciples forever, but died in A.D. 632. The Counselor, the Holy Spirit has been with the Church since Pentecost.

3. *“You know him.”*

The disciples of Jesus knew the Counselor. Muhammad was not born until more than 500 years later after Jesus said these words and therefore, was obviously not known by the disciples of Jesus.

4. *“He dwells with you.”*

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, dwelled with the disciples of Jesus and thus

this was something the disciples experienced in their lifetime. Muhammad was not even born yet.

5. “*He will be in you.*”

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, would be in the disciples and by extension, all believers in Jesus. This shows that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a *spiritual reality*, not a physical one. This can never be said of Muhammad who was a mere man.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from a consistent and honest reading of all the texts which we surveyed above that the Muslim claim that Muhammad is prophesied in the Bible is absolutely baseless. One can make the Bible or any book say anything one wishes if context is ignored. The same is true of the Qur’an. If we are going to appreciate proper exegesis (“reading out”) of the Bible we have to be consistent with its context, its grammar, and its historical setting. The three texts that are usually marshalled by Islamic apologists, Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Song of Solomon 5:16, and John 14-16 do not support their contention that Muhammad is prophesied in the Bible. When these texts are read carefully and in context it is clear that the Islamic interpretation regarding Muhammad cannot sustain the weight of scrutiny. The prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 was to be a prophet like Moses. There are a number of character identity markers that set Moses apart such as knowing God “face to face” and the working of signs and wonders (Deut 34:10-11). The prophet like Moses was to be raised from among “his brothers,” i.e., from the people of Israel. The only suitable candidate to meet these requirements was Jesus. He knew God face to face and much more intimately than Moses, he performed signs and wonders during his ministry, and he was ethnically from the people of Israel.

The reference in Song of Solomon 5:16 to the one who is *machmad* “altogether desirable” as we saw, is a reference to the husband who is presumably Solomon. This text is a love poem, its setting is in Jerusalem, and the husband drinks wine. All of these factors taken together clearly indicate that Muhammad is not the referent nor does his name appear in this text. A case for the phonetic fallacy can be made here as Muslim apologists take the phonetic

sound of *machmad* and assume it sounds like the name Muhammad. We saw how other places which have the noun *machmad* would be nonsensical if we interpreted it as a reference to Muhammad. This is unsound exegesis and does grave violence to the meaning of the text. In short, Song of Solomon 5:16 says absolutely nothing about Muhamad.

When we surveyed John 14-16 we noted that if one allows the texts to speak for themselves it becomes extremely clear that the Counselor or Comforter mentioned by Jesus is the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Holy Spirit was predicted by Jesus elsewhere (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), and John the Baptist also made reference to Jesus being the baptizer in / with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). We also saw that Jesus is the sender of the Counselor and thus the Counselor is sent by Jesus. Islam believes that Muhammad was the messenger of Allah and that he was sent by Allah. Muhammad cannot be the promised Counselor because he was not sent by Jesus. The absurdity and inconsistency of such an interpretation as we have seen is a clear sign of eisegesis not exegesis. When all of these passages are considered it becomes clearly obvious that the advent of the Holy Spirit on the Church is the clear teaching of Scripture. To insert Muhammad into the 'Counselor' passages in John is eisegesis of the grossest kind.

Since the earliest days of the Christian Church, believers have been aware of the prediction of Jesus that many false prophets and false messiahs would arise with some even claiming and naming the name of Jesus (Matt 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22). There were those who preaching "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:3-4), and "another gospel" (Gal 1:6-9). False prophets were also identified by their denial of the Incarnation of the Son of God (1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7; cf. John 1:14), and their denial of the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22-23) as designations for the Godhead. Islam resonates with these identity markers and for this reason historically and theologically, Christians never accepted or regarded Muhammad as a prophet of God.

When the Bible is read in a coherent and consistent manner it will become quickly evident that it does not predict the coming of Muhammad at all in the passages cited above. The Bible rather points to him who is the theme, the center piece, and the subject of its focus, the one of whom the disciples testified about, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45).

-
- ¹ Ahmed Deedat, *The Choice: Islam and Christianity* (Vol. 1; Durban: IPC, 1993), 2-100.
 - ² For a listing of some of these texts see Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 146-54.
 - ³ All references and citations of the Qur'an will be designated with the abbreviation Q and unless otherwise stated, the English translation of the Qur'an used in this article will be that of Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (Delhi: Millat Book Centre, 1930). While the English in Pickthall's translation appears archaic and appears to resemble King James 'English' I consider Pickthall's translation to be the most faithful and accurate to the original Arabic text of the Qur'an.
 - ⁴ This is an alternate name for Muhammad.
 - ⁵ On a well-balanced refutation of this common Muslim claim see Gordon Nickel, *The Gentle Answer: To the Muslim Accusation of Biblical Falsification* (Calgary: Bruton Gate, 2015).
 - ⁶ This is the exact same methodology that cults use in judging the Bible. If the Bible does not conform with their "new" revelation or scripture, it is in error. Mormons for instance will judge the Bible by their sacred texts, *The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price*. The same methodology is employed by Islam with the Qur'an in its treatment of the Bible. On the selective use of the Bible by the cults see Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Ravi Zacharias, ed.: Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003); James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980).
 - ⁷ Nickel, *The Gentle Answer*, 77-78. The accusation that the Jews removed Muhammad's name from their Scriptures is demonstrated and argued by Nickel to be false in light of the manuscript evidence that predates Islam. Nickel, *The Gentle Answer*, 89-107.
 - ⁸ For a brief listing and treatment see Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 146-54.
 - ⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical citations will be taken from the English Standard Version.
 - ¹⁰ On this question see Alfred Guillaume, *Islam* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 61; Rene Dagon, *La geste d'Ismaël: d'après l'onomastique et la tradition arabe* [English translation: *The Ishmael Legend: Concerning the Onomasticon and the Tradition of the Arabs*] (Paris: Meme, 1982); Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 193.
 - ¹¹ Nickel, *The Gentle Answer*, 447.
 - ¹² *Ibid.*, 447-49.
 - ¹³ *Ibid.*, 445-46.
 - ¹⁴ An example of the phonetic fallacy can be seen if we compare the common Islamic cry *Allahu akbar* / "Allah is greater". The Arabic comparative adjective *akbar* sounds like the Hebrew word *achbar* in Hebrew which means a "mouse" (Lev 11:29). Should one deduce from the phonetic similarity between *akbar* and *achbar* that Muslims believe Allah is a mouse?
 - ¹⁵ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906), 326.
 - ¹⁶ For the other passages where *machmad* appears see 1 Kings 20:6; 2 Chr 36:19; Isa 64:10; Lam 1:7,10-11; 2:4; Ezek 24:16, 21, 25; Hos 9:6,16 and Joel 3:5.
 - ¹⁷ Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 285 (italics mine).
 - ¹⁸ Nickel, *The Gentle Answer*, 77-78.
 - ¹⁹ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 285.
 - ²⁰ Nickel, *The Gentle Answer*, 459-77.
 - ²¹ F. S. Coplestone, *Jesus Christ or Muhammad?* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2000), 20; Samuel M. Zwemer, *Islam and the Cross: Selections from 'The Apostle to Islam'* (Roger S. Greenway, ed.; P&R, 2002), 30. Zwemer also notes here that the words "Holy Spirit" occur on four times in the Qur'an and are of "very doubtful significance."
 - ²² *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.; revised and edited by Frederick William Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), no. 5591.