

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

MUHAMMAD (PBAH) FORETOLD IN THE BIBLE BY NAME AND SOME OTHER PROPHECIES By A. S. Ghauri and I. R. Ghauri, I. R. Lahore, Pakistan: Al-Mahrid Institute of Islamic Sciences, 2009, n/a pp., n/a/ price.

THE ONLY SON OFFERED FOR SACRIFICE, ISAAC OR ISHMAEL By A. S. Ghauri and I.R. Ghauri, (2010). New Delhi, India: Gyan Publishing House, 2010, 377 pp., .99 Kindle.

I WAS A TARGET FOR MUSLIM EVANGELIZATION:

A CHRISTIAN CRITIQUE OF MUHAMMAD FORETOLD IN THE BIBLE BY NAME

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Abstract

The nature and scope of interactions between Muslims and Christians are rapidly increasing. Many devout constituents of each religion are eager to win converts to their faith, so it is important for members of each to become familiar with the other. This article reports experiences that led a Christian sociologist to undertake an in-depth evaluation of a significant Islamic book that claims Muhammad was foretold in the Bible. His summary and critique can help members of both faiths gain increased knowledge and understanding of the other. Under the impact of globalization, immigration, international trade, warfare, refugee services, and other sources of population mobility, the number of Muslims residing in Western societies is rapidly increasing, so Muslim neighbors are no longer a rarity. Thousands more from dozens of nations are annually a part of international student bodies. Faculty members at all levels of education and in schools of all types increasingly encounter them. Some have Muslim colleagues, and most meet Muslim peers at professional meetings. Christians who do not assimilate the popular but false ideology that all monotheistic religions are equivalent to each other soon recognize that familiarity with the teachings of Islam is important.

KEY WORDS: Islam, Christianity, Bible, Qur'an, Muhammad, Jesus Christ, Song of Solomon

A graduate student from a Muslim nation whom we and other Christians befriended when he studied in Milwaukee several years ago sent me an email about two books in December 2012. He wrote, "I found these books very engaging. I think everyone should read them whether or not Muslims." Attached to his email were the online texts of two Islamic books (Ghauri & Ghauri, 2009, 2010). I studied *Muhammad Foretold in the Bible by Name* in depth. Its chief purpose is to

prove that Prophet Muhammad was unequivocally foretold by the Bible prophets that Jews and Christians will clearly recognize that fact (The other book, *The Only Son*, is written to prove that Ishmael, not Isaac, was offered by Abraham as a sacrifice to God). My friend knows about my faith in Christ and trust in the Bible, so I am sure he hoped my conversion to Islam would result from discovering that the Prophet is included in biblical teachings. Wondering why I had never seen the Prophet's name in the Bible, I carefully read *Muhammad Foretold*.

After I read it and with considerable deliberation, I concluded that my most appropriate response would be in the role of a social scientist and using the form of my own scholarly book review rather than either a summarizing the critiques by others or merely stating personal opinions. (Only later did I learn that there are numerous internet accounts related to the book and especially the topic of prophecies of Mohammad in the Bible.)

In February 2013 I emailed my detailed response to my friend, nearly all of it presented as a lengthy book review that had eighteen specific topics in the critique. He thanked me for it, saying he would need time to study it.

On March 15th I was surprised to receive an email from the primary author of the book, Abdus Sattar Ghauri, to whom, without my knowledge, my friend had forwarded my review. Ghauri is a staff member in the Institute of Islamic Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan, where he serves as an expert on the Bible. His email thanked me for spending time on reviewing his book, but then stated that my review is "very harsh, unjust, prejudiced, and one-sided." Therefore he asked if I would kindly reconsider my observations, taking an objective and impartial stance. (He included not even one specific example of that alleged harshness and prejudice.)

Frankly, I was afraid. The example of Salmon Rushdie (n.d.) who suffered death threats and a *fatwa* because of his 1988 novel, *The Satanic Verses*, entered my mind. Might I become a victim of the *jihād* for disrespecting Ghauri's significant apologia for Islam or for my failure to accept Muhammad as God's final Prophet?

Nevertheless, I very carefully reconsidered every detail of my review. Then as a fellow author who has also received critical reactions to my work, I sent an email in which I first shared my empathy with his feelings. Then I next wrote that I was unable to find any significant errors in my evaluation. I added some clarifications of details and further evidence related to his book's deficiencies. I emphasized that the main basis for my evaluations was the Bible. I knew that it is highly esteemed in the Qur'an and throughout Islam. With but minor adaptations, this is what I wrote to him and my friend:

Muhammad Foretold

My review of Ghauri & Ghauri (2009) is written from the perspective of my professional specialty in the Sociology of Religion along with my knowledge of Christian theology and the Bible.

Description and Summary

This book is the culmination of more than two decades of study by Abdus S. Ghauri, a fellow of the Al-Mahrid Institute of Islamic Sciences in Lahore, Pakistan, who is described as “a student of biblical literature” and the author of a number of papers (p. xiv).

Its main purpose is to demonstrate that King Solomon in the Bible foretold the advent of Prophet Muhammad (pbAh). [The notation of (pbAh) is inserted in the book title and after every mention of each prophet’s name; it means “peace and blessings of Allah upon him.”] Ghauri claims that his book’s exposition in a world of growing tension between the Muslim world and the West will bring the followers of major religions to “an understanding” that the advent of Prophet Muhammad was so unequivocally foretold by prophets in the Bible that people of book (Jews and Christians) will recognize that truth just as clearly as they recognize their own children (p. xv). His chief evidence consists of eight verses in the Song of Solomon (5:9-16).

Chapter 1 on the question of whether King Solomon was the author of the Song of Solomon consults several Christian commentaries and concludes that he undoubtedly was. It also claims that “my beloved” in Song 5:9-16 refers to Muhammad by name and that the Hebrew word for this “beloved” is *dod*, which signifies an uncle on the paternal side (father’s brother) who is loved by someone. Because Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, he could not have any paternal relatives (p. 15).

Chapter 2 summarizes Christian interpretations that apply those verses to Jesus Christ. His chief resource for this is Matthew Henry’s *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (AD 1704) because it is closest in time to the Authorized Version of 1611 (commonly called the KJV or King James Version). Henry’s work has a “masterly adroitness of beautifully and effectively explaining the words of the Bible,” and it provides “deep insight into the Bible and its language.” Nevertheless, he uses “shades of meanings according to his own taste and requirements. He ... has closed upon him the doors of impartial, analytical, and critical study of the theme due to his credulous preconceptions” (p. 10). He probably “fully understands that the application of this prediction to Jesus Christ (pbAh) is not justifiable. It is only due to this double mindedness that he has indulged himself in such a far-fetched, ridiculous, self-contradictory verbosity and mental exercise” (p. 27).

Chapters 3 through 14 are devoted to separate analyses of each set of words and phrases used to describe the beloved in Song 5:9-16, assuming that they prophesy the future coming of Muhammad. Each chapter covers a KJV expression: My beloved, white and ruddy, chiefest among ten thousand, his head and hair, his eyes, his cheeks and lips, his hands and belly, his legs and countenance, speech of his mouth, altogether lovely (“exactly Muhammad the Magnificent”), my beloved friend, and the Daughters of Jerusalem.

In each case, alternative meanings of the Hebrew and English words are mentioned. Invariably the argument is that the description is inapplicable to Jesus Christ but perfectly fits

Muhammad. Whichever potential choice of an English word or phrase best fits the description of Muhammad is assumed to be the most accurate, as in the following examples:

The words "altogether lovely" in verse 16 come from the Hebrew word M+H+M+D+I+M. The last two letters (im) are a plural ending in Hebrew, but here it is alleged to be a plurality that is not of number but of majesty and honor, similar to the name Elohim for the Lord God, so this is Muhammad's name (pp. 117-118). Further, the Hebrew pronunciation of "altogether lovely" is said to be "*wa kullu Muhammadim*" (p. 120). This is its only plural appearance in the Bible, but the singular form is equivalent to the English MHMD for Muhammad and appears nine times (discussed below).

The most prominent argument throughout these chapters is that each description does not fit Jesus Christ, even though Ghauri acknowledges that the Bible has no record of his physical appearance. The lover described in Song 5:9-16 is "altogether lovely," vigorous, and strong, but, reflecting Isaiah 53, Jesus "had no form nor comeliness." He was so unattractive that people had to cover their eyes against looking at him. Rather than a leader, he was despised and rejected. His leadership abilities were so insufficient that he was not able to establish either an army or a religion. (Christianity, Ghauri claims, was founded later by Paul.) Jesus was so weak that he was crucified, but Muhammad was such an attractive and strong leader that he was able to recruit an army and lead it to victory.

Another example is the "chiefest among 10,000" (verse 10). Today "the *Shahadah* (witness) of Prophet Muhammad (pbAh) is declared five times a day through the 'Call for Prayer' in every nook and corner of the world where there be some Muslim population, whereas there is no such phenomenon regarding Jesus Christ or any other principality of the world" (note 83, p. 32). As Michael Hart declared, Muhammad "was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels" (p. 33). He was far more important to the development of Islam than Jesus was to the development of Christianity. He was responsible for both the theology of Islam and its main ethical and moral principles, and he played the key role in proselytizing the new faith and establishing Islam's religious practices. "It is probable that the relative influence of Muhammad [pbAh] on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ [pbAh] and Saint Paul on Christianity" (p. 34).

At the conquest of Makkah (Mecca) Muhammad commanded "an army of literally and exactly ten thousand holy ones. ... All of them are loyal and faithful to him..." (p. 36). In contrast, Jesus Christ never commanded any group of 10,000 persons. He was convicted and sentenced to death. With a crown of thorns on his head, he was ridiculed and insulted, people spitting on his face. His disciples betrayed and forsook him, assigning to him a "death of curse to pave the way for their salvation" (p. 36). Jesus' followers do not stick to the literal, natural, and obviously direct meanings of prophecy, instead interpreting it freely and arbitrarily to fit predetermined aims.

“The chiefest among ten thousand” can by no means be applied to Jesus Christ but only to Prophet Muhammad (p. 38). Similar interpretations are applied to each of the other analyses of Chapters 3 - 14.

Chapter 15, “Recapitulation,” ends the text. It first summarizes the preceding discussions of Song 5:9-16, then extends them to Jerusalem, which is a “City of Peace” both to Israelites in Palestine (Galatians 4:24-26) and to Ishmaelites in Makkah where Hagar lived and was buried. Next it emphasizes that, although King Solomon has been depicted as a very wicked man who committed idolatry, witchcraft, and other sins, the Qur’an revealed through Muhammad exonerates him from all such accusations. He preached Monotheism so beautifully to the Queen of Sheba that she, along with himself, willingly embraced Islam (Qur’an 27:44). After fifteen centuries of desecration and character assassination, King Solomon was honorably acquitted by Allah of all false charges. His innocence was established through the Prophet of Arabia, so in Song 5:9-16 King Solomon prophetically paid homage to his benefactor, the Prophet Muhammad. The book has four appendices. “A Brief Account of the History of Jerusalem” is by Ghauri's son, the coauthor who also compiled the Index. The others are a “Recording of the Vowel Signs to the Text of the Old Testament,” “Muhammad Foretold by Moses,” and “A Clear-cut Prophecy Regarding Prophet Muhammad in the *Assumption of Moses*.” The *Assumption* is an incomplete pseudepigraphical manuscript that was originally written in Hebrew between AD 7 and 29. (Ghauri uses BC and AD instead of the secular BCE and CE to designate calendar years.) It supports Ghauri's claim that Moses’ reference to a future prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-20) could apply only to Muhammad and not to Jesus Christ.

Evaluation

(A typical book review, of which I have published hundreds, blends evaluative comments into the book's description instead of listing them separately. However, each of the following overlapping and interrelated comments deserves its own attention. An error in one or even a few details must not be used as a basis for rejecting any of the others. I am human and imperfect. My main specialty in the Sociology of Religion is American Christianity, not Islam, and I am not a theologian, so please forgive me if my limited knowledge pertinent to any details mentioned below is deficient. The comments are not listed in any particular logical order, nor in that of their relative importance. The Bible references are intended to provide introductions to or summaries of their respective topics; they do not cover everything the Bible teaches about them.)

1. Ghauri should be commended for the clarity of his writing in English, which I assume is a second language rather than his mother tongue. He has consulted several Christian sources to learn how they interpret Song 5:9-16 as a description of Jesus Christ. He also has so thorough a knowledge of the history and publications of Islam that he can find almost any one of the alternative descriptions of the Prophet Muhammad that he desires.

2. Ghauri also has worked very diligently to support his thesis. However, he does so in the style of "card stacking" propaganda that lists every smidgen of evidence that favors his thesis while ignoring all contradictory evidence except when he can refute it. Despite the word *Sciences* in the name of the Al-Mahrid Institute, he does not use the scientific method of research to test his thesis that Muhammad was foretold by Solomon. That would require gathering all evidence related to the topic, including any that could demand rejection, negation, or qualification of his hypothesis.

3. The assumption that Solomon wrote the Song is consistent with the conclusions of most Bible scholars. However, its traditional English name is *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's*. Therefore most Christian and Jewish scholars leave the door open to the possibility that 1) someone else wrote the Song in Solomon's honor, or 2) whoever wrote it used some of Solomon's experiences, or 3) Solomon was a sponsor for the author's work, or 4) it was written under the oversight or supervision of Solomon, or 5) it is a collection of earlier popular oral love poems that were gathered together at about the time of Solomon (ca. 971-931 BC), or 6+) that any of several additional but less likely possibilities of authorship might apply.

4. The Song is written in the form of poetry. It is a drama with two main characters poetically conversing with each other: the male lover and his beloved female, plus interspersed questions and comments by others. The Hebrew language usually is clear as to which speaker is male, which female, and which the plural others, although the KJV and some other English translations do not clearly designate which of the three is speaking. In the passage that Ghauri uses, verse 9 has two questions the others ask the "most beautiful among women" about her lover, and verses 10-16 are her poetic answer to describe him.

The Song most clearly consists of poetic expressions of romantic love and erotic desires between a young man and a young woman in ancient Israel, but some view it as a single love poem that describes King Solomon's blossoming relationship with his Shulammitte bride, while others declare that it is a collection of many (18, 23, 28, 31, etc.) poems on the single theme of heterosexual love. It could actually be Solomon's enticement to a young woman to leave her shepherd lover and become a part of his harem.

The Song also has been viewed as a cycle of wedding songs, a liturgy carried over from ancient fertility cults, a love poem, or a collection of love poems. There is no biblical or other evidence to support Ghauri's view that it was written in whole or in part as a prophecy of future events.

One book in my library is a new translation of *The Song of Songs* by Falk (1990). She is a Jewish poet and Hebrew scholar who reminds us that the difficulty of understanding the Song resides in both the text and its critical interpretation. Its original Hebrew has audibly apparent rhythms, sound-plays, puns, sensory images, alliterations, metaphors, and the parallelism characteristic of other biblical poetry (Falk, p. 106).

The Song is a *wasf* (an Arabic word) that poetically describes its subject through images of the parts of the human body. "The similarity between certain passages in the Song and modern

Arabic poems was discovered in the last century; as a result, the technical term wasf has become familiar in scholarly studies of the Song. ... The leap of the metaphor—the leap between the object and the image that describes it, ... troubles Bible scholars. ... a fault with scholarly interpretation lies in its literalistic approach” (Falk, pp. 127, 129). Ghauri has made that literalistic mistake by assuming that every word and phrase in 5:9-16 is an objectively accurate description of the beloved, not a figurative one that exercises the “poetic license” of using emotionally favorable nouns and adjectives without attention to the definitional or dictionary accuracy of the words' meanings.

5. "The Song of Solomon has in fact been subject to a broader range of interpretation than probably any other book in the Bible" (ESV, 2008, p. 1211). Christian interpreters of its broader meaning generally understand it as an allegory full of picturesque and symbolic expressions of God's love for Israel, Christ's love for his bride (the church), or Jesus' love for individuals who believe in him. They all remind us that God loves humanity. It thus is used to praise the nature, personality, and character of Jesus Christ. It is not a prophecy describing his physical body, but that is the predominant image of Jesus that Ghauri refutes.

6. Ghauri mistakenly assumes that Song 5:9-16 is Solomon's prophecy of Muhammad and that each description of the lover is a precisely accurate cognitive, literal, or “scientific” application of the meaning of the word. After summarizing alternative meanings of each Hebrew word and its English translation, especially as elaborated by Matthew Henry, he chooses the word that he claims to be the most accurate translation of five to ten or more alternatives. His choice invariably is whatever best fits his idealized picture of Muhammad. By that process of circular argumentation and specious reasoning, every phrase in verses 10-16 perfectly fits Muhammad and each supports his conclusion that each trait alone and thus all of them together constitute a verifiably true description of Prophet Muhammad's appearance and character.

7. Occasionally, but rarely, a careful reading of Ghauri's footnotes exposes his admission that many of those characteristics are merely a part of "tradition" or of what is “said to be” Muhammad's traits. Nevertheless, whenever such speculations fit his thesis that Muhammad is described or named in the Bible, they are presented as if they are solidly confirmed facts.

8. While doing that, however, whatever Matthew Henry or other Christian commentators imply about Jesus Christ is inconsistently treated as incorrect. Ghauri says that using verses 9-16 to describe Christ "is not justifiable. It is only due to this double mindedness that he [Henry] has indulged himself in such a far-fetched, ridiculous, self-contradictory verbosity and mental exercise" (p. 27). He warns against "the trickery of translation and interpretation" by reference to John's vision of Jesus with head and hair white as snow (Revelation 1:14), while Song 5:11 is of a lover with black hair. Therefore, “How adroitly the ‘white’ has been proved to be ‘black.’ Objective study is considered [a] basic precondition for a just and impartial research. It demands that some theme should be presented faithfully in its actual form and it should be interpreted according to the requirement of the context and the intent of the writer without twisting or manipulating it to one's own intent and purpose” (p. 48).

Yet Ghauri himself lifts each description of the lover out of its wider context of the eight chapters of the Song. All of his analyses presume a literal meaning for each word, ignore the figurative nature of the Song's unique literary and poetic style, and overlook the intent of the writer. The verses selected are a small fragment of poetry in a poetic book of the Bible that is acknowledged by Christian and Jewish scholars and theologians to be one of the most allegorical books of the Bible. By transforming its poetry into objective prose, he violates his own ethical principles.

9. Although Ghauri should be commended for consulting many Christian resources, the ones he most uses are very old. Every language changes over time, but he assumes that the English words in the KJV and Matthew Henry's *Exposition* perfectly translate and interpret the meanings of the ancient Hebrew Bible used in CE 2009. Dozens of English translations since 1611 benefit from the discovery of older manuscripts and findings from more recent research about the ancient cultural context. (Might he think "Authorized Version" means "authorized by God," not just by King James I in England who sponsored it and paid the translation expenses?)

Old biblical commentaries are still useful for many purposes, but their authors and current Bible translators would agree that newer interpretive studies come closer to providing an accurate reflection of the original Hebrew and other languages. Copying the Hebrew text has been so accurate that only trivial changes have resulted from studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls (written ca. BCE 225 to CE 68), but findings from research in archeology, history, linguistics, semantics, textual analysis, literary criticism, anthropology, ancient Hebrew culture, and other fields of scientific and scholarly research that clarify meanings have contributed to modified interpretations of many details that are relevant to the context and meaning of the Song of Songs and other Bible texts.

The mistake of using old instead of recent biblical texts is analogous to a common error among those Christians who mistakenly assume that the interpretations of complex religious doctrines or puzzling Bible passages by a respected preacher, professor, theologian, author, or church leader are without error. They confuse human explanations of the Bible with the Bible itself. If they then meet someone who just as rigidly accepts a different authority's interpretations and neither party can tolerate the other, they might form a new sectarian group. If that new sect survives and grows, it could become a new denomination. Of course, that is just one oversimplified account of numerous influences that have created divisions among Christians. My textbook on the sociology of American religion (Moberg, 1984) describes many other ways that happens.

A similar sociological, theological, and pragmatic process is at work in Islam with its divisions created by various *imams*, *mullahs*, *muftis*, *shaykhs*, *shorlars*, *ulema*, and other teachers, clergy, and leaders. As a result, Islam's divisions are similar to Christian denominations. The most prominent are the Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Sufis, but there also are Black Muslims, Ibadis, Quranists,

Talibans, Yazdânists, Ahmadiyya, Karaimists, and other smaller groups, besides numerous cultural adaptations in faith and practice among the diverse Islamic people groups located in scores of nations.

10. As I read Ghauri's book, I wondered how Muhammad could have celebrated Ramadan (mentioned at least twice in widely separated passages), since it is a fast to celebrate the Koran. By checking elsewhere, I learned that its origin was a pagan Arabic tribal celebration before Islam became a religion, even though Ramadan is patterned more closely after the Jewish Yom Kippur.

11. The Hebrew language in which the Jewish Scriptures (the Christian Old Testament) was written has no vowels. Ghauri assumes that Hebrew words with letters equivalent to the English MHMD refer to Muhammad (pp. 117-122). In this context he cites 1 Kings 20:6; Isaiah 64:11; Lamentations 1:7, 10, 11; Ezekiel 24:16, 21, 25; Hosea 9:6, 16; and Joel 3:5. Not knowing Hebrew, I carefully examined and compared all of them in the KJV and nine other Bible translations. I was not able to find any way whatsoever to fit Muhammad's name into the context of even one of those verses. A large variety of translations do appear in the alternative English translations of those passages, so I wonder how many additional interpretations of the Hebrew words could be created by linguistic scholars of Hebrew through the process of inserting different vowels into each occurrence of those four letters.

12. Although Ghauri relies heavily upon Matthew Henry's commentary that compares the lover in the Song to Jesus, he fails to recognize that it is a popular work that is mainly devotional in orientation. It is not a scholarly analytical treatise. Henry was a Presbyterian minister in England, not an expert in philology or linguistics who had erudite knowledge of the ancient Hebrew language in which the Song was written. His commentary is more like an inspirational sermon for ordinary people than an in-depth analysis of the chapters, verses, and words of the Bible. That is why it has so much flowery language in passages that Ghauri dislikes.

13. Logically, God will not contradict himself. The Qur'an affirms the truth of the Bible (e.g., in 5:46-48 and 10:95), yet when the Bible and the Qur'an report the same events, they often disagree. If Allah is another name of the God of the Bible (known in it as Yahweh, Elohim, the I AM, Lord, and other names), why does the Qur'an disagree with so many of the descriptions and actions of the God of Abraham, Moses, the Old Testament Prophets, and Jesus that are in the Bible?

When I first read the entire Qur'an (Dawood, 1993), I noticed some details that were consistent with the Bible. For example, the Qur'an and Bible both report the virgin birth of Jesus. Both believe in angels, Satan, demons, and much more. Many characteristics of God are similar, but I cannot find "Allah is love" nor any other references to his love anywhere in the Qur'an, even though God's love for Israel and all the rest of humanity is a major topic in the Bible (see, e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6 and 7:8; Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16-18; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 3:1 and 4:7-21). Both the Qur'an and the Bible condemn idolatry, which includes creating false objects of worship like one's appetite (Qur'an 25:43) and also greedy self-centeredness (Matthew 6:24; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5), but the central focus of their definitions of idolatry often differ.

They both teach about heaven and hell, but who will go to each, how, on what grounds, and with what degree of certainty are greatly different. In the Qur'an heaven is a destination for Muslim males, but I can find no mention of women's going there, except, perhaps, for virgins who are there to give men sexual pleasure. The Bible teaches that hell was created for the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), but at the final judgment the unbelieving people who are compared to goats that disobey God will also be cast into it (25:31-46). In contrast, Qur'an 19:70 states that every Muslim will pass through hell. Those who fear Allah will be delivered, but wrongdoers will be left there, so "those that disbelieve and deny Allah's revelations shall become the inmates of Hell" (Qur'an 5:86).

As I read *The Koran*, I also was struck by numerous discrepancies between the Bible's original reports about people and events and the same people and events mentioned in the Qur'an. Someone in the past rightly or wrongly explained them to me by saying that Muhammad was illiterate (Ghauri agrees; see also Qur'an 7:157). Because he did not know how to read, he learned about Judaism, the Bible, and Christianity from other people, mainly during campfire discussions, not by reading the Bible. The Qur'an was revealed to him orally. Flaws in the memories of his narrators who told Bible stories and the normal human distortions of ordinary recollections account for many of the differences between the Qur'an and the Bible.

14. Some technical details of Ghauri's book are deficient. For example, it has no bibliography or list of publications used by the author. Readers can learn what they are only by referring to footnotes. The first note on a specific source usually lists its details, sometimes without the date of publication, but most of those details are missing when a source is used a second or later time, often several chapters apart among the 591 footnotes in the book.

The lengthy Index that was apparently done very carefully is almost completely useless. Only three of 25 index references that I looked up are on the listed page. Since those three were on or below page 22, my hunch is that the discrepancies occurred after page proofs were indexed when the publisher decided never to start a new chapter on an even-numbered page.

Specific Biblical Teachings and Warnings

In addition to the above evaluations for any general audience, several teachings of the Bible that are relevant to *Muhammad Foretold* need mention in any review that is written for a Christian audience.

15. The Bible has many warnings against changing its message. Its last book summarizes them in these words, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19; this and my subsequent quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible). This repeats the

message of Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 that we must not add to nor subtract from the commands of the Lord God. "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6). If God never changes, we also can ask why we need the Qur'an or any other new revelation from him?

16. The Bible strongly condemns false prophets and teachers who introduce destructive heresies by their instructions. (Examples of those warnings are 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 4:1-7; 6:3-10; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 2:18-27; 2 John 7-11.) Down through the centuries there have been many false prophets who "wag their own tongues while saying, 'The LORD declares'" (Jeremiah 23:31). They deceive and mislead people, and they displease God when they "prophesy the delusions of their own minds" (Jeremiah 23:26). They whitewash sinful deeds, plunder people's treasures, deny justice to the poor and needy, and profane the name of God (Ezekiel 22:28-31).

Jesus warned his followers that both false Christs and false prophets will come "in sheep's clothing" and will deceive many (Matthew 7:15; 24:4-5, 10-13, 23-27; Mark 13:5-6, 21-23; Luke 17:23-24). The Qur'an has at least one similar reminder: "And who is wicked than the man who invents a falsehood against God ..." (61:7), but its definition of wickedness is not the same as the sin of the false teachers described in the Bible.

17. Many details of God's nature will always remain obscure to us because he is so vastly above and beyond our limited understanding. He is the Creator whose thoughts are far higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9) -- so much so that most scientific discoveries reflecting the wonders of his work raise additional questions instead of providing final answers. The Bible teaches us that God is a tri-unity (Trinity) -- One God who exists as the three "persons" of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Allah also refers to himself with plural pronouns like We, Us, and Our, and the Qur'an mentions the Holy Spirit several times (e.g., 2:87; 5:110; 97:4; 16:102). God's nature as One who is nonetheless evident or manifest in three "persons" (a Trinity) is repeatedly evident throughout the Bible, but how the one and only God can somehow be three persons remains one of numerous mysteries to us. We do not know how he created the universe out of nothing, nor whether he used evolutionary methods for developing some of its details. Gravity, how suns and planets can spin in space, dark matter, and countless other realities also remain a mystery to scientists.

We humans are so finite that we cannot completely understand the Trinity and much more about him and his works, yet the Bible assures us that we are created in his image. That image is reflected in the fact that we each are one whole being, but we simultaneously are the three parts called body, mind, and spirit. Those parts are not separated until death. When the body dies and returns to "the dust of the earth," the spirit lives on. It immediately goes to our Creator if we have accepted God's free gift of forgiveness through the sacrificial atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:35-58). Those who reject that gift, face a different future (see John 3:36; 5:25-29; 11:25-26; Hebrews 9:27-28).

People down through the ages have reflected on and wondered about what happens after death. Their thoughts, dreams, wishful thinking, and occasional visions of that endless future have contributed to a wide variety of speculations, rituals, burial practices, and religious teachings.

Scholarly study and scientific research are producing new glimpses of that future. Recent neurological research, brain scans, MRIs, etc., are revealing evidence of physiological changes at or near death that might reflect the separation of the spirit from the body. Especially prominent are the multiplying reports about two kinds of near-death experiences (NDEs) that people have. Some are delightful because they are filled with bright light, joyful encounters with family members who died earlier, and other pleasant sensations. Other NDEs are so full of horrible, hell-like terror and pain that those who experience them completely repress the memory and very soon after recovery cannot recall them at all.

Maurice Rawlings, M.D. (1979), a teacher of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, published one of the best studies about the first reactions of patients revived by CPR from medically diagnosed death. Revived persons who had good experiences were glad to talk and write about them, but not those with bad experiences. That is why most popular reports of NDEs give the impression that every death is accompanied by heaven-like happiness and joy with few or none like hell. (Even if people with bad experiences were capable of recalling them, how likely would they be to confess that they went to or through the gates of hell?)

18. The Bible tells us to be alert to the hypocritical masquerades and other deceptive tricks of Satan. He is the most successful in luring people to do wrong when it is disguised to look like righteous or godly behavior (2 Cor. 11:13-15). The social sciences show how easily and often people select and twist moral values to justify their sinful self-centered and greedy habitual behavior by finding "good reasons" for violating ethical teachings like the Ten Commandments. Christians are tempted by Satan to take biblical teachings and Bible verses out of their context in order to excuse or rationalize their own sinful behavior. "All a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart" (Proverbs 21:2). Satan quoted the Bible when he tempted Jesus. His efforts failed because Jesus knew his Bible so well (Matthew 4:1-11). We all need to learn it better

The basic purpose of the Bible is to share the good news (Gospel) of salvation through Jesus Christ. It points people toward God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He loves all people, even his enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). He gave us a "free will," the ability to choose to obey or disobey him, but everybody has sinned by doing wrong and by failing to obey him completely. "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law. ... But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:20-22). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). It is by accepting God's free gift of loving grace that we are saved, "not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:8-10). Submission to God includes obedience to God. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26).

Accepting God's free gift of salvation from sin gives us the assurance that we'll be spared from all the horrors of hell. Instead we'll go to be with God forever. Our bodies will die, but at that moment our spirits will go to our permanent home, a wonderful place beyond the grave that is symbolically described in Revelation 21:1 - 22:6.

The good news is "...of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter [and hundreds of others]. ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins. ... Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ... The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable ..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-44). That "Blessed Hope" may be the most wonderful of all the promises of God.

Reaching that goal of heaven is not a zero-sum game. The gift of eternal life is not limited to a few human beings. God wants everybody to repent and receive that gift (2 Peter 3:9). But you, I, and everyone else must "swallow our pride" in order to receive it. Measuring ourselves by comparisons with other people is a serious mistake (2 Corinthians 10:12). No matter how much good we have done and are doing, we fall far short of perfection when we instead evaluate ourselves by the faultless example of Jesus Christ. We need to admit that we are sinners, acknowledge that we are not good enough to earn salvation by our own efforts, and know that God forgives us when we depend on the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for us.

Conclusion

Careful examination of the evidence used by Ghauri to convince Jews and Christians that King Solomon was a prophet who foretold Muhammad in the Bible reveals many biblical, linguistic, archeological, historical, logical, and other errors. Those flaws strongly suggest that, despite its name, the Al-Mahrid Institute of Islamic Sciences is not a center for scientific research but is instead an agency for publicizing and propagating Islam. Only uneducated and gullible Christians and Jews who do not know the Bible well will be convinced by these and other cleverly imaginative efforts that skillfully use card stacking, glittering generalities, name calling, and other propaganda techniques in the attempt to prove that Song of Solomon 5:9-16 is a prophecy to foretell the advent and career of Muhammad.

Muhammad Foretold indeed will strengthen the belief of Muslims that Muhammad continues the biblical line of Abraham, Solomon, the prophets, and Jesus. If they are not strongly grounded in the Bible, a few Christians exposed to it will be convinced of its argument that Islam fulfills the Scriptures and is God's holy successor to Christianity. Professors, pastors, counselors, and other Christian leaders need appropriate ammunition to help them correct its widely disseminated arguments.

Final Reactions

My fears of becoming a victim of an Islamic *jihad* were relieved by Ghauri's prompt and surprising reply to my follow-up of the review of his book, even though he again failed to include any reference whatever to specific evidence of errors or unfairness on my part. He thanked me for my email and then wrote, "Ultimately you and I both, along with all the human beings, are to be presented before the Lord and will be answerable for all our acts and judgments."

With that, of course, I fully agree, although with the proviso that I do not fear death and judgment because the total account for God's negative judgment of my sins, flaws, and failures has already been paid in full by my Lord and Redeemer. (John 3:13-18; Romans 8:1-4, 8-11, and Ephesians 2:4-10 are examples of God's relevant promises in the Bible.) I therefore do not fear the final judgment, as do those Muslims and other people who believe their final fate depends solely upon the balance of their good and bad deeds.

Mr. Ghauri concluded with these words, "I am really thankful to you for giving so much of your precious time to my book. Please write the review what you deem fit according to your conscience. You are a great writer and critical observer." He concluded with the request that I arrange to send him a copy of the issue of the journal in which my review is published, then thanked me once more.

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