

*Did Islam Originate from  
Anti-Trinitarian  
Christians?*

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# *A Christian Heresy?*


- What would happen if we discovered that Islam actually began as a heresy of Christianity based upon Arian-like anti-Trinitarian beliefs, and that the Qur'an was mostly composed of Christian liturgy adopted from Syriac texts as well as religious traditions borrowed from gnostic writings and other religious traditions?
- In addition, what if we have the evidence that this did not occur until the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, almost 100 years after the traditional death of Muhammad?
- This session will explore these claims and reveal the evidence that supports the view that the first "Muslims" were really heretical "Christians."

# *The Claims by the Traditional Account*

- The life of Muhammad was lived out in the “full light of history”
- Muhammad was already a revered prophet and a model of moral conduct for his followers
- The Qur’an as a revealed book was written down in Arabic within 20 years of Muhammad’s death
- Islam as a religion was fully formed by the time Muhammad died
- The Arabs were pagans before Muhammad came to convert them to Islam







*“The more one looks  
at the origins of  
Islam, the less one  
sees.”*

Robert Spencer, *Did Muhammad Exist?*, p. 2



# *Latest Developments in Islam*

[The Man]

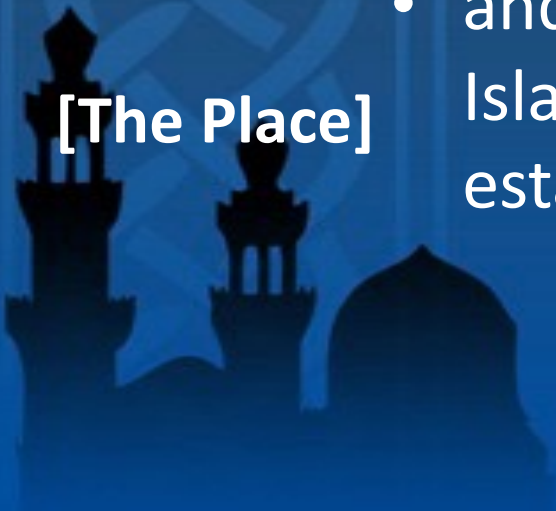
- We are learning that the Muhammad of traditional Islam was probably an invention of a later Arab leader,

[The Book]

- that the Qur'an was probably not collected and written down until the early 8th century (from many sources, including Christian and Jewish liturgy),

[The Place]

- and that Northern Arabia was likely the birthplace of Islam instead of Mecca, which was probably not established until the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.



*Evidence of an 8<sup>th</sup> Century Qur'an*



# *When Was the Qur'an Completed?*

- The Standard Islamic Narrative states that the Qur'an was written down within 20 years of Muhammad's death (by 650 AD).
- However, there is strong evidence that demonstrates that the Qur'an was not completed until well into the 8<sup>th</sup> century.
- Stephen Shoemaker, in his book *Creating the Qur'an*, provides provocative evidence that the Qur'an is not a 7<sup>th</sup> century document.



# *The Qur'an was Completed in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century*

- “On the basis of the available historical evidence , we conclude that the Qur'an's final composition into the canonical form that has come down to us today seems to have taken place around the turn of the eighth century under the direction of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) and his viceroy al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf.” (13)
- Chase Robinson concurs: “There is in fact a substantial body of evidence, from both inside and outside the Islamic tradition, identifying ‘Abd al-Malik as the one who, with the assistance of al-Ḥajjāj, standardized the Qur'an in the unvarying form that has come down to us today.” (43)

# *Canonical textus receptus of the Qur'an*

- Shoemaker claims “The bewildering confusion and complexity of the early Islamic memory of the Qur'an's formation ... only reaches some level of clarity once we recognize ‘Abd al-Malik as the primary agent responsible for producing and enforcing the canonical textus receptus of the Qur'an.
- Under his supervision , a team of scholars wove together and honed the various sacred traditions that had entered circulation among Muhammad's followers during the seventh century, creating a new imperial Qur'an that was imposed across the caliphate, displacing its antecedents in the process, often by force.”

# Shoemaker

- On the other hand, other scholars claim that Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjaj only made minor improvements, such as adding diacritical marks. (44)
- However, Shoemaker argues, “Regardless of whether we embrace such a hypothesis or not , numerous reports from the early Islamic tradition indicate that the changes to the Qur’anic text introduced at the direction of ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj were in fact substantial.” (49)
- For example, Shoemaker states that “Déroche, through careful paleographic and codicological study, has confirmed that that the earliest extant Qur’ans were in fact produced in the imperial chancery during the reign of ‘Abd al -Malik.” (68)
- In a sense, then, Shoemaker concludes that “the Qur’an is a revision of an older Christian text.” (248)



# *John of Damascus*

- Shoemaker realizes that John of Damascus (675-750), who worked as the chief tax collector under Abd al-Malik, documented some of the evidence that supports Shoemaker's assertions in his treatise on the *Heresy of the Ishmaelites*.

# John of Damascus

- “In a section of this treatise dedicated to cataloging various religious errors, John includes Muhammad’s followers, whom he considers to be little more than another variety of Christian heresy, naming them the “Ishmaelites.”” (50)
- “Islam was still a work in progress that was trying to find its way among the various monotheisms of the late ancient Near East , and John’s account provides a precious witness to how this process was still unfolding in his day before his own eyes. Indeed , it is likely that John would have been better informed than most Muslims regarding the affairs of the caliphate, including any official doctrines or scriptures that they were attempting to propagate.” (51)

# *John of Damascus*

- “In any case, John would have known well what was going on inside the caliphate at this time, and it surely stands as no mere coincidence that he identifies significant portions of the Qur’an as separate writings, seeming to confirm the conditions implied by al-Ḥajjāj’s speech.” (51)
- “Clearly, we must conclude, the sacred Ishmaelite writings that John knew in this era and describes in his account of their beliefs “cannot have been the Qur’an as we know it in its present form.” (51)



# *John of Damascus: Islam is a Heresy*

- “On this basis alone, it seems highly unlikely that the Qur’an as we now have it had been completely fixed by the turn of the eighth century, when John, who again was extremely well-informed and well-connected, wrote his description of the writings that Muhammad’s followers ascribed to him and revered as sacred scripture.” (52)
- For many Christians at that time, like John of Damascus, this new religion was understood as just a heresy of Christianity with anti-Trinitarian beliefs and a false prophet.

*Evidence that the Early Believers  
were not Muslims*



# *Community of Believers*

- Shoemaker also believes that Muhammad and his followers do not seem to have conceived of themselves initially as “a separate religious confession distinct from others” during the first several decades of their movement’s existence.
- Instead, the earliest “Islamic” community appears to have been a loosely organized confederation of Abrahamic monotheists “who shared Muhammad’s intense belief in one God and in the impending arrival of the Last Day, and who joined together to carry out what they saw as the urgent task of establishing righteousness on earth — at least within their own community of Believers, and, when possible, outside it — in preparation for the End.”



# Who were the “Believers”

- Donner referred to this community as the “*mu-minun*” (believers)<sup>1</sup>
- Shoemaker says this was probably a “loosely organized confederation of Abrahamic monotheists.” (59)
- They shared an intense belief in one God and the impending arrival of the Last Day
- They had a goal of establishing righteousness on earth in preparation for the End (59)

<sup>1</sup><https://fx-companion.com/2013/05/21/islamic-history-part-7-alternative-theories-of-the-early-islamic-community/>

# *Shoemaker: Tolerance for other Faiths*

- Shoemaker writes that, “Prior to ‘Abd al-Malik’s rule, the caliphate appears to have shown a remarkable degree of tolerance for other monotheist faiths; and, as noted above, there is even good evidence to suggest that they were welcomed within the fold of the Believers’ religious community, even as they remained in their own religious faiths ....
- Whether or not one agrees entirely with this hypothesis, the evidence on which it rests — which is substantial, particularly given the limitations of what we know about earliest Islam — indicates fairly broad tolerance and inclusion of other monotheists within the early history of the Believers movement.”

*Evidence of Arian-like Anti-Trinitarian Beliefs*



# Arius on Jesus

- "But we say and believe and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; and that he does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel he has subsisted before time and ages as perfect as God, only-begotten and unchangeable, and that before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established, he was not."

- — Arius of Alexandria's Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia (circa AD 300)





# *Qur'an Verses Refuting Trinity*

- ...The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" - Cease! (it is) better for you! - Allah is only One Allah. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son. (4:171, Pickthall)
- They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three." And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment. (5:73)

# *Donner on anti-Trinitarian Verses in Qur'an*

- “The Qur'an's stridently anti-trinitarian passages certainly would fit well into the program of Abd al-Malik and his advisers to emphasize Muhammad and the Qur'an, to make clear that Jesus was only a prophet, and boldly to proclaim Islam as a distinct religious confession.”

Fred Donner, *Early Muslims and People of the Book*, Routledge Handbook on Early Islam, Herbert Berg, ed., (Routledge Handbooks, 2018), 189.

## *Scholar Claims the Qur'an was a Christian Document*

“Gunter Luling maintains that the original Qur’an was not an Islamic text at all but a pre-Islamic Christian document.... Luling believes that the Qur’an reflects the theology of a non-Trinitarian Christian sect that left traces on Islamic theology, notably in its picture of Christ and its uncompromising Unitarianism.”

(Spencer, 13)

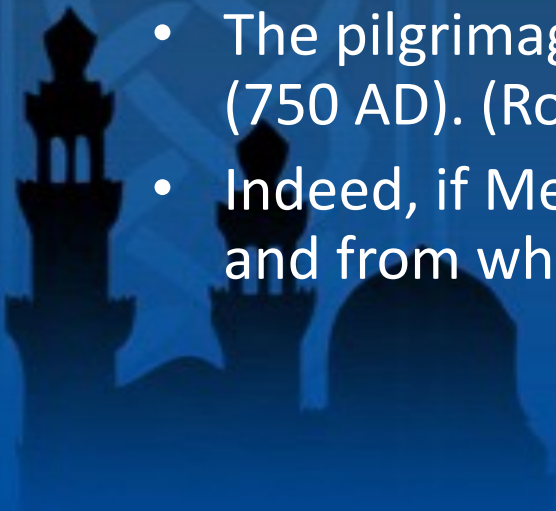
*Evidence that Mecca Did Not  
Exist in the Time of Muhammad*





# *Did Mecca Exist in the Time of Muhammad?*

- Recent archaeological and historical research calls into question whether Mecca even existed in the traditional time of Muhammad (570-632 AD)
- There are no archaeological artifacts from Mecca until the 8th century AD
- The first direct mention of Mecca in external literature occurs in 741 AD
- The first time Mecca is listed on a map of the Middle East was 900 AD
- The geographical descriptions of the city of the prophet in the Qur'an do not match up with the barren landscape found in Mecca
- The qiblas, or the direction of prayer in the mosques, did not point to Mecca until 724 AD
- The pilgrimage to Mecca was not established until the Abbasids had taken over (750 AD). (Routledge, 315). The original pilgrimage was to Jerusalem.
- Indeed, if Mecca did not exist in the early 7th century, then who was Muhammad and from where did he come?



*Evidence that Muhammad Did Not  
Exist in the 7<sup>th</sup> century*



# *Meaning of MHMD*

- Nothing is known of Muhammad until the late 7th century (from within Arab sources)
- much of what we know of Muhammad is written down hundreds of years later, and hundreds of miles away
- It looks like he is nothing more than a later redaction
- Possibly begun by Abd al-Malik!
- The first coin to mention Muhammad was minted by Abd al-Malik in 692 AD
- The first inscription with Muhammad's name on it is not until 690 AD
- Could the term "Muhammad" simply mean the "Praised One," or the "Chosen one"?

# *Abd al-Malik's Jesus is Muhammadun*

- According to the Inara Institute scholars, the beginning of Islam was a movement led by Abd al-Malik to unite all the Christians of the Arabian Empire (Monophysites as well as Nestorians).
- Jesus would be conceived as Abd-Allah, the servant of God and known as the *muhammad* (“praised one”)
- This move would be similar to the position of Arius who claimed that Jesus was a created being (“Like-Arian”)
- This view of Jesus was promoted through the minting of coins and also etched on the walls of the Dome of the Rock.



*Evidence that the Arabs Were  
Already Part of the Byzantine  
Empire*

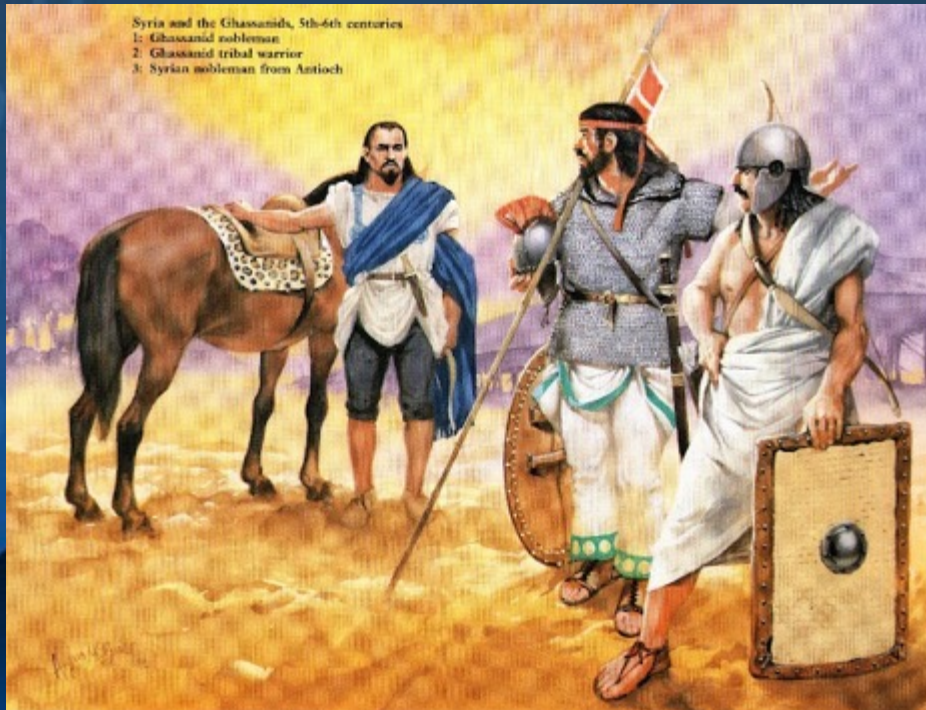


# *The Byzantine Empire*

- The Byzantine period began with the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 when the last Western emperor was overthrown
- However, the Roman Empire's eastern capital, Constantinople, was founded in 330 AD, and some say this was the beginning of the Byzantine Empire
- The Byzantine Christianity was Orthodox, but other Christian views were held by Nestorians and Miaphysites (Jacobites)

# Ghassanids and Lakhmids

## Syria and the Ghassanids



Royal House of Ghassan



# Who were the Ghassanids?

- An Arab tribe that emigrated from Yemen in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century to the Levant
- Many converted to Christianity
- The Ghassanids became a client state to the Byzantine Empire and fought alongside them against the Persian Sassanids and their Arab vassals, the Lakhmids.
- Known as Syrian Arabs (Saracens)
- The Ghassanids favored Miaphysitism, and their promotion of a simpler monotheism may have opened the door for Islam





# Ghassanid Coins



# Lakhmids

- The Lakhmids comprised an Arab kingdom in Southern Iraq and Eastern Arabia with al-Hira as their capital (300 -602 AD)
- They also emigrated from Yemen in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century
- Known as Mesopotamian Arabs (Ishmaelites)
- They were often clients of the Sasanian Empire, especially in the Byzantine/Sasanian wars
- Lakhmid Christians followed the Nestorian views on the nature of Jesus Christ



# Comparison

Miaphysitism

$2P \rightarrow 1N$

(fake crucifixion?)

Nestorianism

$2N \rightarrow 2P$

(only human  
crucified?)

Key

N = Nature

P = Person

Orthodox  
Christianity

$2N \rightarrow 1P$

Arianism

$1N \rightarrow 1P$

(Christ is not God)



# *Chalcedonian theology was the orthodoxy in Constantinople*

- Miaphysite churches were heavily persecuted by imperial authorities
- Patriarchs were tasked with converting or executing Miaphysites as heretics
- Nestorians were also persecuted, but mostly out of reach in Persia
- Therefore, the non-Chalcedonian Christian communities had no love for their fellow Byzantine Chalcedonian Christians



# *War between the two superpowers*

- The Romans and Sasanians periodically went to war with each other (control over trade or control over Syria and Iraq)
- Byzantine setback: Bubonic plague of Justinian in 541-542 claimed the lives of 25 million under Byzantine rule
- The Sasanian ruler, Khosrau II, took advantage and by 621 had conquered Palestine and Egypt and controlled large swaths of Byzantine territory
- However, in 622 Heraclius had a devastating victory over the Persians and gave his Arab vassals more autonomy at this time. (Thus, “year of the Arabs”) (Routledge, 313)
- Later, Heraclius’ Byzantine army invaded Mesopotamia in 627 and by 628 his army trounced the Persians so severely that Khosrau was overthrown by his own generals

# *Ripe for Disaster*

- One scholar writes, “Needless to say that by the end of this conflict these two formerly dominant empires were shells, ripe to be defeated by a new player on the geopolitical scene. The Persians had expended enormous blood and treasure on this enterprise, and were totally beaten by Heraclius. Their armies were decimated, their treasury empty, the people resentful of the heavy taxes that had been levied to pay for an unsuccessful war, and Khosrow II’s deposition brought about a period of huge turmoil around the throne, with various claimants and their backers fighting amongst each other and no political stability whatsoever.”

*Evidence of a New Christian  
Movement*



# *Mu'awiya, the First "Caliph" - and a Christian?*

- Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (597-680), was the first bona-fide Arab leader and "caliph" (the first four may have been minor historical leaders or mostly made up in later writings) and it was under his leadership that the Arabs were unified and swarmed over the land.
- Mu'awiya was probably a Christian (there is an inscription at Gadara with a cross at the beginning)
- Muawiyah was known as the "Commander of the **Faithful**" (The title "Caliph" was not yet in use)



# *Abd al-Malik's New Religion*

- “Abd al-Malik wanted to strengthen the Arabian empire from within by erecting an Arabian Church of the Arabian Empire.” (57)
- “His goal was to unify, under the banner of the Muhammad motto, the adherents of the old Syrian theology who had been driven into the East.” (57)
- The new religion was neither Nestorian nor Arian, but it was influenced by the unorthodox views of Jesus represented by both belief systems, as well as the apocalyptic urgency of Abrahamic Syrian Arab Christianity that promoted orthopraxy over orthodoxy.

# *A new Christian Movement*

- Under Abd al-Malik, “a new Christian movement, intended to unite all the Christians of the Arabian Empire, was announced by the demand that an understanding of Jesus as the Muhammad be adopted.
- This demand was preceded by another, namely, that Jesus be conceived as ‘Abd Allah’” (servant of God). (HOI, 52)
- However, the movement would also claim that while Jesus was the “praised one” (*muhammad*), he would still be just a human messenger of God.

# *Abd al-Malik*

- Abd al-Malik may have been an anti-Trinitarian Christian, but according to a number of revisionist scholars his use of “Muhammad” is a reference to Jesus as the “chosen one” or “praised one.” He also claims that this “chosen one” is the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary.
- Therefore, Ohlig claims the inscriptions Abd al-Malik had inscribed on the Dome of the Rock “actually concern Christian texts and symbols, which document Syrian-Arabian theological ideas” (Hidden Origins of Islam, 9)
- Ohlig also believes that ‘Abd al-Malik was “the first to found the Arabian church in Jerusalem as a foil to the church of the emperor, as a defender of orthopraxy against Orthodoxy.” (HOI, 21)

# *The Umayyad Dynasty's Conversion to Islam, A.J. Deus*

- The researcher A.J. Deus concludes, “Indeed, the new faith would be **like Arian** because it not only consisted of an alliance of converging Jewish, Arian, and Semi-Arian Christian sects but also because it added a new doctrinal element: Muhammad.
- The Muslims’ conversion of their population at the flick of a switch seems rather impossible, replacing countless sects of five competing religions all at once, Paganism, Arian Christianity, Manicheanism, Melkite Christianity, and Zoroastrianism.
- Conversions were a process in flux that could take centuries, even at sword point. Why else would history be full of sectarian bloodshed, if not for the old resisting the new? The same applies for Islam and one of its supposed early dynasties, the Umayyads.”



# *The Umayyad Dynasty's Conversion to Islam, A.J. Deus*

- Thus, Deus suggests that “the origin of Islam is by no means Pagan but rests on like Arian Christianity – pre-Nicaean Christology in its Arian branches merged with an adaptation of Nestorianism and Judeo-Messianism – and on professional Judaic insiders rather than on an amateurish chance construct.
- In other words, much of the content in the Koran rests on very old dogmas rather than on new ones. The target groups were many non-Trinitarian Judaic sects.”
- Therefore he concludes that “The final composition of the Koran needs to be freed from the assumption of having been revealed to a single prophet or even to a single sect. Instead, one might like to search for synod style agreements that may have been reached (and broken) in several stages over almost the entire seventh century or even before.”

*Evidence that the First Leaders of  
the New Movement Were  
Christians*

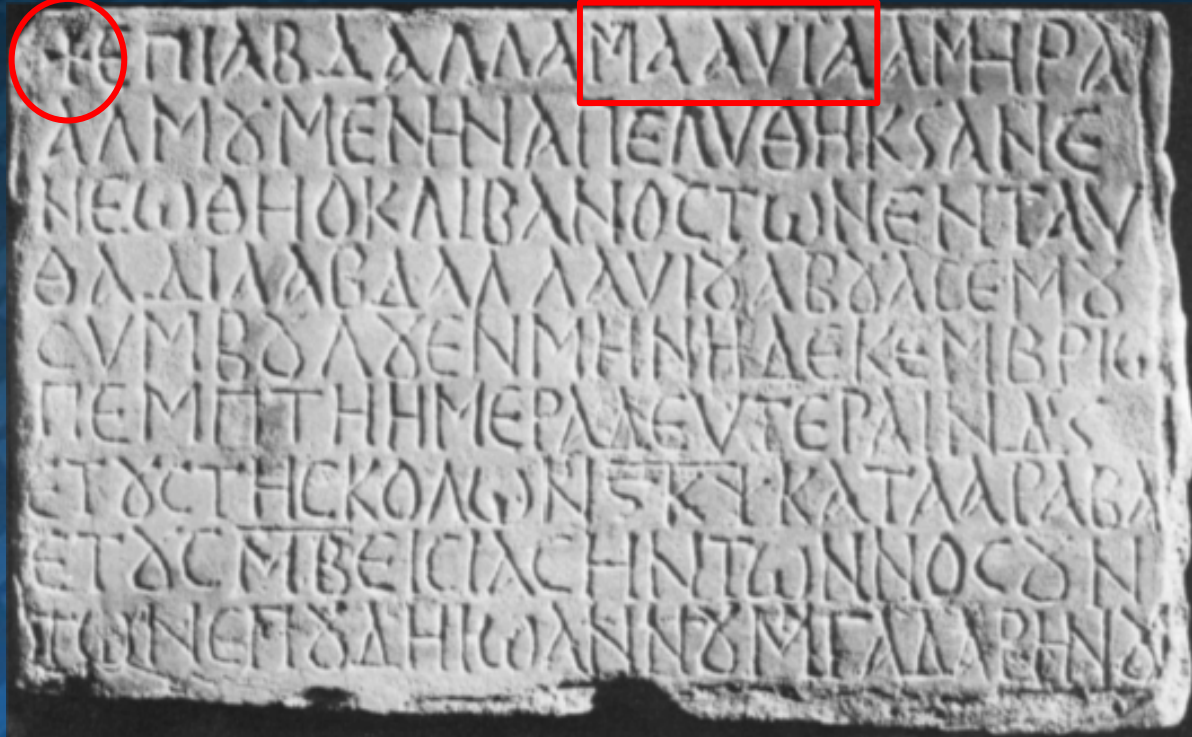


*Epigraphic and  
Numismatic Evidence*



Cross

# Was Mu'awiya a Christian?



Greek Muawiya inscription of Hammat Gader, 663 AD

The coin of Mu'awiya's rule had the cross on it (663 AD)





# *Abd al-Malik's coin*



Byzantine coin

Coin minted by Abd al-Malik  
Notice the lack of the cross

# Abd al Malik (692 AD), the great Arab Reformer, creates the first 'Muslim' coins, introducing Islam

- He makes Arabic the International language, and introduces the first Islamic COINS



**Byzantine Dinar**  
[mid 7<sup>th</sup> century]

(Emperor, Retainers,  
& Byzantine Cross)

- **Abd al-Malik's Coins** [685-692]

- (Image of Abd al-Malik, with the 'Shahada')



**Sufyani Dirham**  
[post 661]

(Caliph Mu'awiyya  
holding a cross)

**Abd al-Malik's Coins**  
[696 -> ]

(No images, and the  
'Shahada', with  
Qur'anic verses)





# Was Abd al-Malik a Christian?

- Volker Popp writes, “The contemporary epigraphic materials allow one to reconstruct the contents of Abd al-Malik’s *da’wa* (mission), namely, the understanding of Jesus as the *muhammad*, who as *rasul* is the apostle of the (Sasanian) Arabs.
- We can understand this view better when we explore the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock constructed during the rule of Abd al-Malik in 691-2.



*Evidence that the Dome of the  
Rock was Originally a Christian  
Church*





# *Dome of the Rock*



Abd Al Malik is known as the great Arab Reformer:

# He builds the Dome of the Rock in 691 AD

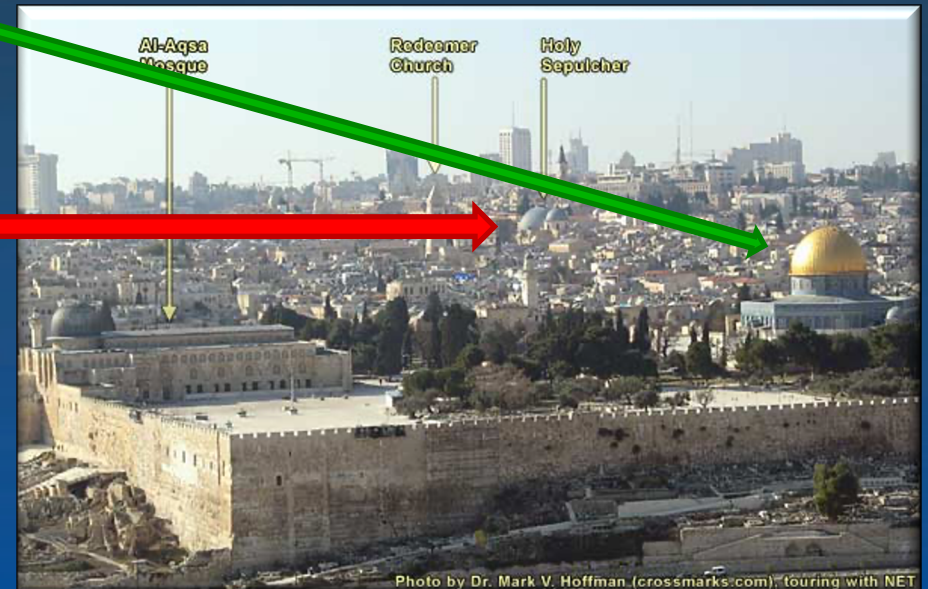
- The largest Arab structure & higher than the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulchre



• **DOME OF THE ROCK (691 AD)**

**CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE**

**AL AQSA MOSQUE (709 AD)**

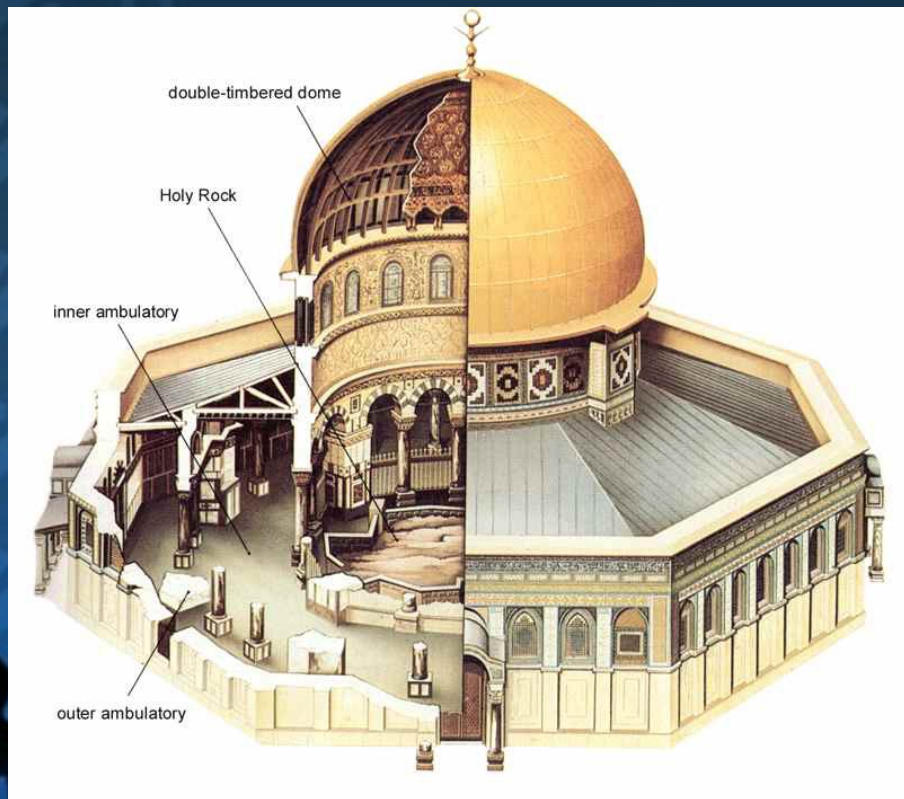




# *Significance of the Dome of the Rock*

- Note where it is situated, and in which city?
- It employs the same **Byzantine architecture**
  - But much larger and more prominent
  - And it sits above the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**
- It is situated in the **holiest city for Jews & Christians**
  - Why not in Damascus or Mecca?
  - Muslims say this is because of the 'Mi'raj' (night journey)...but is it?
- Let's look at the Inscriptions & see if this is true

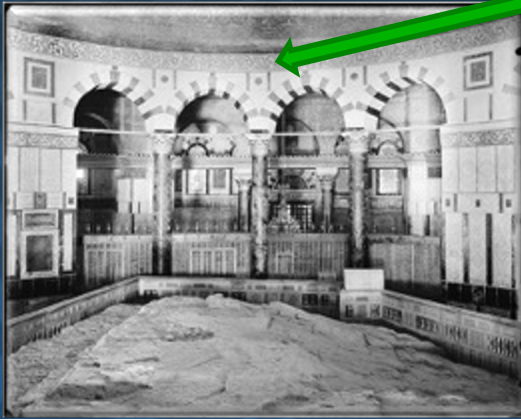
# INNER & OUTER AMBULATORY



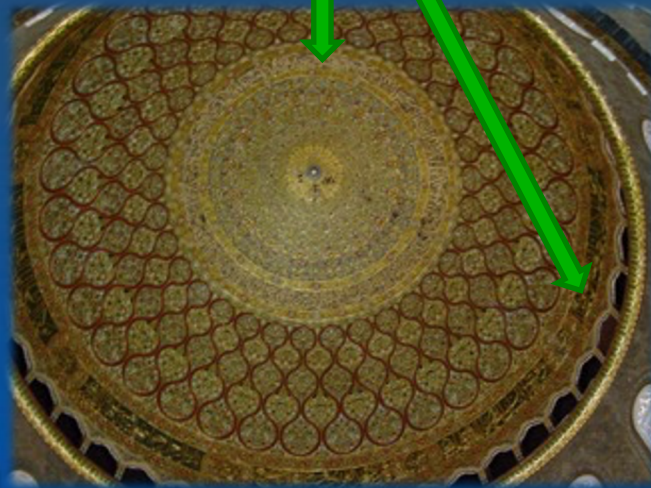


# AMBULATORY ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS

- Inner Ambulatory (some inscriptions)



Upper Dome  
(with Inscriptions)



Outer Ambulatory  
(many inscriptions)



# The Inscriptions are against Jesus being the Son of God

- Notice the references are all 'Qur'anic', yet they all attack the trinity, and Jesus' divinity
- ***“O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not “Three”. Cease! (it is better for you! Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that he should have a son.” (Sura 4:171)***
- ***“Praise be to God, Who hath not taken unto Himself a son, and Who hath no partner in the Sovereignty, nor hath He any protecting friend through dependence” (Sura 17:111)***
- ***“There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate. Say: He is God, the One! God, the eternally Besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him. Muhammad is the Messenger of God” (Sura 112)***



# Christian texts in the Dome of the Rock

- Volker Popp asserts that “According to the inscription in the Dome of the Rock, Abd al-Malik’s Jesus is *Abdallah* (servant of God) and *Muhammad* (the praised one, [God’s] chosen one).” Volker Popp, 63
- Ohlig concludes that, “The inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock, actually concern Christian texts and symbols, which document Syrian-Arabian theological ideas: that God is one and single, and that the one he has sent (Jesus) is to be praised (*muhammad*).” Ohlig, 9

# The Caliphial Protocols

- Yehuda Nevo: “Crossroads to Islam”
  - Beginning with the **Sufyani Period** (661 – 680 AD)
    - The Protocols do not mention:
      - Islam
      - Muslims
      - Muhammad
      - Qur’an
    - The **Marwanid Protocols** are similar
    - But, during **Abdul al Malik’s** reign, and in **691 AD**
      - The **Bismillah** and **Muhammad** are introduced overnight!
      - And this continues from then on!

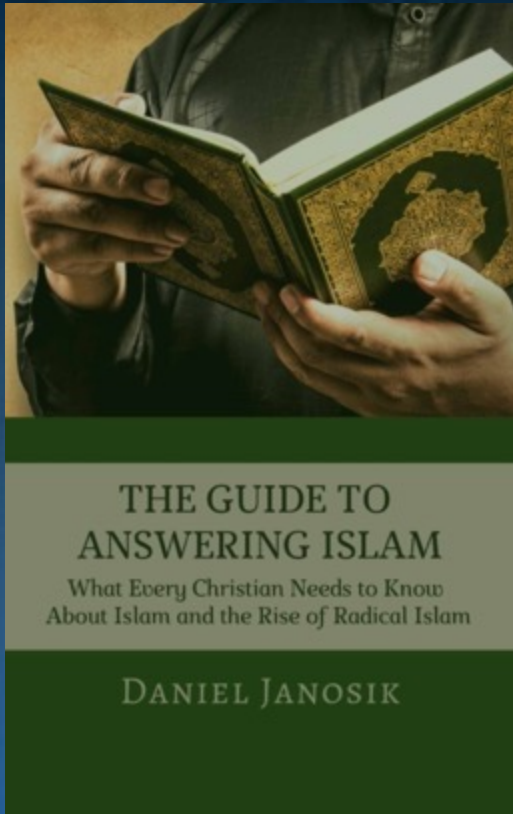


# *Conclusion: What Does the Evidence Show?*

- Evidence of an 8<sup>th</sup> Century Qur'an
- Evidence that the Early Believers were not Muslims
- Evidence of Arian-like Anti-Trinitarian Beliefs
- Evidence that Mecca Did Not Exist in the Time of Muhammad
- Evidence that Muhammad Did Not Exist in the 7<sup>th</sup> century
- Evidence that the Arabs Were Already Part of the Byzantine Empire
- Evidence of a New Christian Movement
- Evidence that the First Leaders of the New Movement Were Christians
- Evidence that the Dome of the Rock was Originally a Christian Church

**Conclusion: Islam DID Originate from Anti-Trinitarian Christians!**

# Questions?



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