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Overview

Central thesis

The Quran presupposes that Jews and Christians in Muhammad's time possess identifiable divine revelatory content in their existing Scriptures and can judge by it, follow it, recognize Muhammad, and test the Quranic claim; at the same time, the pre-Islamic Torah and Gospel tradition, widely attested across languages and regions, contains central statements the Quran rejects. A Muslim can avoid the immediate formal contradiction only by postulating either a “true core” that cannot be independently identified or a lost revelation without historical attestation. This exchanges the contradiction for an epistemic circle or a massive historical and referential gap.

Debate quick reference: six fields of evidence

PPT mnemonic: inspiration – confirmation – preservation – validity – obligation – Dhikr. For the master edition, “preservation,” “validity,” and “Dhikr” are deliberately defined more precisely: the core proof requires no total guarantee of every letter, but identifiable, accessible revelatory content used normatively.

Field of evidence	Quranic anchors	Minimum conclusion defensible in debate
1. Revealed / divine in origin	3:3; 5:44–46	The Torah and Gospel are treated as revelation given by God.
2. Confirmed / continuity	2:41; 2:89–91; 3:3; 5:48; 6:92	The Quran repeatedly places itself in a relationship of confirming continuity with earlier Scripture.
3. Presently available	5:43; 5:47; 5:68; 7:157	The revelatory content referred to can be found among actual possessors of Scripture and has not disappeared completely.
4. Normatively usable	5:43; 5:47; 5:68; 10:94	Earlier Scripture is assigned concrete functions of judgment, obedience, information, or verification.
5. Wholeness / nondiscrimination	2:85; 2:136; 3:84; 4:136; 29:46	Selective acceptance of earlier revelation requires additional explanation; no proof for every later part of the canon.
6. Dhikr / unchangeable words	6:115; 15:9; 18:27; 21:7; 21:48; 21:105	Useful supplementary line. The referent of “Dhikr” and “words” depends on context; do not use as the sole proof of preservation.

Strategic priority: The actual dilemma rests above all on fields 2–4 together with P1.5 and the contrary statements P2 attested before Islam. Field 6 is deliberately supplementary.

Part I – Framework of investigation and objective of proof

What exactly is to be proved

Four questions must be clarified:

1. Textual: What does the Quran claim about the Torah and Gospel of its Jewish and Christian addressees?

2. Historical: Which Torah and Gospel texts are actually attested before and during Muhammad's time?

3. Logical: What consequence arises if the Quran confirms these texts or content within them and simultaneously contradicts them?

4. Epistemic: Can a selective “true core” be identified independently of the Quran, so that earlier Scripture can actually confirm or test the Quran?

It is not necessary to claim:

• that the Quran expressly guarantees every letter of a present-day Bible edition;

• that all manuscripts are free of variants;

• that the Quran names every part of a 66-book, 73-book, or otherwise delimited canon;

• that every Mosaic legal provision remains in force for Muslims;

• that a lost revelation conforming to Islam is logically impossible.

Three levels of proof

Deductive core under an identification assumption

If the Quranic Gospel is identical with the attested Gospel tradition or continuous with it in the content of its central statements, conflicting statements give rise to a formal conflict.

Overall historical-abductive conclusion

Identifying the Quranic Torah and Gospel with the historically known Jewish-Christian traditions is not a purely grammatical truth. It is by far the best explanation of the Quranic addressees, names, stories, commands, and the situation of pre-Islamic transmission.

Epistemic test

If only an unknown subset of the existing texts is confirmed, it must be explained how that subset can be recognized independently. If agreement with the Quran alone becomes the criterion, appealing to earlier Scriptures loses its independent value for confirmation and testing.

The strengthened main argument

P1 – Existing divine revelatory content

The Quran presupposes that divine revelatory content can be found in the Scriptures possessed, read, and identified as Torah or Gospel by the Jews and Christians of its time. It assigns this content real functions for judgment, obedience, confirmation, information, and recognition of Muhammad.

P1.5 – Historical bridging premise

The Scriptures targeted by these Quranic appeals are identical with the Jewish-Christian textual tradition materially attested before Islam and in the seventh century, or at least continuous with it in the content of their central narratives and theological statements.

P1.5 must be justified historically, not merely derived from a single Arabic expression. It is supported by:

- the self-identification of actual Jewish and Christian communities as possessors of Scripture;
- the Quran's use of the historically known names Torah and Gospel;
- Quranic paraphrases of biblical stories and formulations;
- the geographically and linguistically widespread pre-Islamic transmission;
- the early Muslim and Christian-Muslim identification of these Scriptures;
- the complete absence of a materially attested alternative Gospel or Torah conforming to Islam.

P2 – Contrary statements attested before Islam

The materially attested pre-Islamic Gospel tradition, in its broad overall geographical, linguistic, and manuscript attestation, contains central statements about Jesus that the Quran rejects, particularly a Christology exceeding mere prophetic status and Jesus's crucifixion. This does not claim that every short fragment contains each of these statements. No alternative Gospel tradition conforming to Islam is materially attested.

P3 – Absence of an independent selection procedure

The Quran specifies no textually and historically independent procedure for distinguishing, within the existing Scriptures, a revelatory core conforming to Islam from allegedly corrupted parts.

P4 – Loss of independent confirming function

If agreement with the Quran is made the sole criterion for which earlier scriptural content is divine, earlier Scripture can no longer independently confirm or test the Quran, or serve as evidence for Muhammad.

Conclusion

The available data lead to a trilemma:

Muslim position	Consequence
The historically existing Torah and Gospels essentially correspond to the Scriptures meant by the Quran.	Then the Quran contradicts central statements of Scriptures it places in continuity with itself.
Only individual, unspecified components of the existing texts are true revelation.	Then an independent selection criterion is required. Without one, the selection becomes circular and earlier Scripture loses its independent evidential value.
The true Torah or true Gospel was a different text, subsequently lost.	Then manuscripts, quotations, chains of transmission, and historical traces are lacking; at the same time the Quran's present-directed commands, judgments, and claims of recognition become difficult to understand.

The first horn produces a substantive contradiction, the second an epistemic circle or loss of function, and the third a historical and referential gap. Only the first horn is immediately deductive; the entire trilemma is a strong cumulative and abductive argument.

Part II – The different forms of the Islamic dilemma

Form A: The classic two-horn dilemma

1. The Quran confirms earlier divine revelation and refers to the Scriptures available among Jews and Christians.

2. These Scriptures contradict the Quran in central teachings.

3. If they are reliably transmitted, the Quran contradicts a revelation it confirms.

4. If they are completely unreliable, the Quranic confirmations, commands, and claims of verification become problematic.

References: “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 873–874, 1095–1098, 1216–1217, 1417–1418; Avery/Jake, pp. 2–3, 50–52; Frost, PDF pp. 7–9.

Clarification: As a strict two-horn dilemma, this form is too crude because selective partial confirmation remains logically conceivable. It becomes defensible in debate by adding the third horn.

Form B: The strengthened trilemma

1. Identity/continuity: The attested Scriptures are meant – then the substantive contradiction arises.

2. Selective core: Only parts are meant – then a noncircular selection criterion must be specified.

3. Lost alternative Scripture: A different text is meant – then a historical and referential explanatory crisis arises.

Form C: The formal internal contradiction

1. If the Quran is true, the earlier revelation it places in continuity with itself is true.

2. This revelation teaches proposition p.

3. The Quran teaches not-p.

4. Two divine revelations from the same author cannot teach both p and not-p.

Scope: This form is fully deductive only if p is shown to belong to the referent confirmed by the Quran. That is precisely why P1.5 is needed.

Form D: The command and accountability version

Surahs 5:43–48 and 5:68 assign the Torah and Gospel concrete functions of judgment and obedience. At least the following follows:

1. The addressees must be able to recognize the revelatory content concerned.

2. Under normal theological assumptions, an obligation presupposes the possibility of fulfilling it.

3. A completely lost or in principle unidentifiable Scripture cannot fulfill this function.

Frost calls this the Accountability Argument and develops it especially on PDF pp. 56–60.

Limit: Usability for a legal judgment does not automatically imply the truth of every other statement in the entire textual corpus.

Form E: The verification version

Surah 7:157 claims that Muhammad's description is found among possessors of Scripture in the Torah and Gospel; Surah 10:94 refers to readers of earlier Scripture. A verification source must be accessible and sufficiently reliable in the area being tested.

The strongest use of 7:157 is not “Therefore John 1:1 is automatically confirmed,” but:

Where is the description of Muhammad claimed by 7:157 in the texts attested before Islam, and by what noncircular procedure is it identified?

If the proposed identifications fail, a direct Quranic verification claim fails.

Form F: The historical corruption trilemma

1. Corruption before Jesus: Then one must explain which Torah Jesus confirmed according to the Quran and why the Dead Sea Scrolls and other pre-Christian witnesses already represent the known tradition.

2. Corruption between Jesus and Muhammad: Then one must explain how competing Jewish and Christian communities across regions and languages replaced the same basic textual form.

3. Corruption after Muhammad: Then it is directly refuted by manuscripts centuries older.

4. Only local or partial corruption: Then the uncorrupted tradition remains attested somewhere, or an independent criterion is needed for the passages affected.

The test questions are: When? Who? Where? In which languages? Which text? What motive? What surviving contrary trace?

Form G: The comparative-evidence or Bayesian version

Two explanatory hypotheses are compared:

• Continuity hypothesis: The Quran considers the Scriptures available among Jews and Christians to be divine, recognizable revelation usable for the functions specified.

• Selection/corruption hypothesis: The Quran means only an unknown true core or lost originals and implicitly corrects the remaining contents.

The repeated formulations “with you,” “with them,” “in it,” “judge by it,” “uphold them,” and “find him in it” are more expected under the continuity hypothesis. The corruption hypothesis requires additional assumptions for which neither an alternative manuscript nor an independent selection procedure exists.

References: “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 1194–1214; Frost expressly understands the overall argument abductively, PDF pp. 9–11.

Form H: The nondiscrimination and wholeness version

Passages such as 2:85, 2:136, 3:84, and 29:46 condemn selective acceptance of Scripture or require faith in earlier revelations. The answer “Only what agrees with the Quran is true” resembles precisely the selective attitude the Quran criticizes elsewhere.

Limit: These verses alone do not prove that every later part of the canon is confirmed. But they intensify the problem of a confirmation entirely empty of content or purely self-referential.

Form I: The prophecy and recognition version

The Quran does not merely claim that earlier texts were once true; it makes their textual form at the time apologetically relevant to Muhammad. If Scripture is corrupt, an alleged prophecy of Muhammad cannot be recognized as authentic without an independent criterion. If it is sufficiently reliable, its actual textual form must be examined.

Frost's addition: The usual candidates – Deuteronomy 18, John 14–16, or Isaiah 29, for example – must be examined contextually, not merely on the basis of individual words. Frost discusses this on PDF pp. 81–83.

Form J: The identification version

Frost extends the previous approach: The identity of the Torah and Gospel is inferred not only from individual confirmation verses, but cumulatively from:

• the designation of actual Jews and Christians as “People of the Book”;

• explicit mention of the Torah and Gospel by name;

• biblical figures, stories, and legal formulations;

• paraphrases of canonical and late-antique traditions;

• the historical situation of Scripture;

• early Muslim reception.

This makes the claim of an entirely different scriptural corpus existing only in the Hijaz require considerably more explanation. Frost develops this line of evidence on PDF pp. 14–46.

Form K: The historical-theological and providential extension

Surahs 3:55 and 61:14 are interpreted to mean that God supported Jesus's true followers and granted them supremacy. If these were the historically dominant Christians, their Trinitarian Gospel tradition stands against the Quran. If they were vanished groups resembling Islam, one must explain what their promised supremacy and transmission consisted in.

Assessment: A useful supplementary argument, but not required for the core.

Form L: The guidance and light version

1. Surah 5:44 describes the Torah as bearing guidance and light; Surah 5:46 uses the same positive predicates for the Gospel.

2. The present-directed passages 5:43, 5:47, and 5:68 simultaneously presuppose that actual possessors of Scripture can use these revelations.

3. The historically identifiable pre-Islamic Torah and Gospel traditions contain central statements contradicting the Quran.

Test question: Which concrete components of the textual corpus available in the seventh century are then the Quranically presupposed “guidance and light,” and by what criterion independent of the Quran are they identified?

Evidential strength: Strong as a supplementary version, but not as an automatic total confirmation. The temporal and referential bridge still needs justification through P1.5.

Part III – Proof of the Quranic starting point

The strongest evidence referring to the present

“What is with you/them”

The confirmation formula appears, among other places, in:

• 2:41 – confirming what is “with you”;

• 2:89, 2:91, and 2:101 – confirming what is “with them”;

• 3:81 – confirming what is “with you”;

• 4:47 – confirming what is “with you.”

These formulations do not refute every conceivable partial corruption. But they make an exclusively vanished heavenly original implausible as the sole referent.

Surah 5:43 – “with them” and “in it”

Surah 5:43 asks why Jews make Muhammad their judge although they have the Torah with them (ʿindahum) and God's judgment is in it (fīhā).

The secure conclusion is:

A concretely existing Torah text contains identifiable divine legal content and is not wholly unusable for this proceeding.

The context concerns a legal judgment; it does not directly establish the truth of every theological or historical statement in the entire textual corpus. Precisely this limitation protects the argument from overextension.

Surah 5:47 – The Gospel's command or purpose

The widespread Ḥafṣ reading has wa-l-yaḥkum: imperative lām plus jussive – “Let the People of the Gospel judge.” A canonical reading by Ḥamza has wa-li-yaḥkuma: purpose lām plus subjunctive – in effect, “so that the People of the Gospel may judge.”

Al-Qurṭubī on 5:47 with both readings

The readings have different temporal and syntactic emphases:

• The majority reading is more suitable as a direct command.

• The purpose reading links judging more closely to the Gospel's original bestowal.

Both, however, presuppose that the Gospel was given as revelation for judgment. For a present command one should use the majority reading, but not claim that no canonical alternative exists at all.

The formulation “by what God revealed in it” can also be read as a restriction of content. It does not expressly guarantee that every line of an existing Christian textual corpus comes from God. But it does guarantee that divine revelatory content must be identifiable in the Gospel referred to if the command is to make sense.

Surahs 5:44 and 5:46 – “Guidance and light”

The Torah (5:44) and Gospel (5:46) receive the same positive predicates: guidance and light. That alone does not guarantee every line of a later textual corpus. In conjunction with 5:43, 5:47, and 5:68, however, the formulation increases the explanatory pressure on models claiming that the actually existing Scriptures were already completely unusable or unidentifiable.

Surah 5:48 – muṣaddiq and muhaymin

The Quran is described as confirming and as muhaymin over earlier Scripture. Depending on lexical and exegetical decisions, muhaymin can mean guardian, witness, trustee, or authoritative arbiter.

The response defensible in debate has two stages:

1. Lexically, the word does not by itself mean “textual corrector marking every contradictory earlier statement as a forgery.”

2. Even if a strong reading, “authoritative arbiter over earlier Scripture,” is conceded, the epistemic question remains: How could Jews and Christians recognize the true content before accepting the Quran, and what independent evidential value does their Scripture still have if the Quran alone decides what is true in it?

“A guardian presupposes an existing document” is correct but insufficient on its own; a judge can partly accept and partly reject a document. The stronger objection therefore concerns the absence of a selection procedure and the loss of independent confirmation.

Surah 5:68 – Upholding the Torah and Gospel

The People of the Book stand on nothing until they uphold the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to them. This speaks strongly against complete disappearance or unidentifiability in principle.

A Muslim interpreter may relate “uphold” to prophecies of Muhammad contained in them or to a true core. But then it must be shown where this content stands and how it is recognized independently of the presupposed truth of the Quran.

Surah 7:157 – Muhammad is to be found in the Scriptures

The verse locates the alleged description “with them” in the Torah and Gospel. It directly confirms the accessibility of this alleged description, not automatically every other statement in the same texts.

Its strongest use is a direct textual test: No proposed passage may be attributed to Muhammad merely on the basis of a remote verbal similarity. Context, historical addressees, grammar, and content must fit together.

Surahs 10:94; 16:43; 21:7 – Readers as sources of information

Surah 10:94 may be understood hypothetically and as limited to stories of the prophets. It is therefore not a stand-alone proof of the truth of every scriptural detail. Cumulatively, however, it shows that readers of earlier revelation count as possible sources of information in at least one relevant area.

Al-Kitāb and Ahl al-Kitāb: supplementary semantic evidence

The PPT section on al-kitāb above all supplies a negative semantic point: al-kitāb cannot lexically mean “the Quran” automatically. Surah 19:30 has Jesus say that God gave him al-kitāb; 3:64–65 addresses Jews and Christians as scriptural communities and names the Torah and Gospel as pre-Islamic revelations.

Secure conclusion: The word stem kitāb has multiple referents. Each identification must be made from context, addressees, verbs such as read/write/judge, and the historical situation of Scripture. The argument does not prove that every occurrence of al-kitāb means “the Bible”; it does, however, block the sweeping equation “al- kitāb = Quran.”

Addition from 4:136: The verse distinguishes the book sent down to the messenger from Scripture sent down earlier. This too supports a semantically relational, rather than single-referent, use of kitāb.

The cumulative evidence throughout the Quran according to Frost

Frost's Passage Index and analysis supplement individual verses with an overall pattern:

• 18 occurrences of Torah in 16 verses;

• 12 mentions of the Gospel;

• 18 uses of muṣaddiq in connection with earlier Scripture and a broader group of confirmation passages;

• six formulations “what is with you/them”;

• thirteen formulations with bayna yadayhi;

• recurring designations such as “book,” “guidance,” “light,” “reminder,” and “God's book”;

• passages concerning accountability, belief, recognition, and information.

Assessment: Frequency alone proves no total confirmation. But the overall pattern makes less likely the theory that the Quran always means only lost originals or an unspecified subset.

Nondiscrimination and commands concerning the whole

The PPT particularly emphasizes 2:85, 2:136, and 4:136. Together with 3:84 and 29:46, an additional question of consistency arises: How can the general rule against selectively distinguishing among divine revelations be combined with the later apologetic procedure of accepting only those earlier scriptural parts as authentic that already agree with the Quran?

Limit: These verses do not prove that every component of a subsequently delimited Jewish or Christian canon is confirmed. But they intensify the epistemic problem of a selection procedure dependent solely on the Quran.

The so-called corruption verses

Four yuḥarrifūna passages

The relevant passages are 2:75, 4:46, 5:13, and 5:41. Their contexts speak of particular groups, hearing, distorting, shifting out of context, using tongues, concealing, or misapplying. They do not expressly say that Jews and Christians worldwide replaced the entire Torah and Gospel text.

Especially important:

• 4:46 is immediately followed by 4:47, which confirms “what is with you.”

• 5:41 stands in the context of 5:43, where the Torah is still “with them” and contains God's judgment.

• 5:13–15 speaks of forgetting and concealing; one can conceal only something that in some form exists.

Surah 3:78

The verse distinguishes between the Book and what people present with their tongues as if it belonged to the Book. This directly fits misrecitation or false attribution and proves no global rewriting of the Book itself.

Surah 2:75–79

Verse 79 condemns people who “write with their hands” and then claim it comes from God. The text does not expressly say:

• that what is written replaces the entire Torah;

• that all Jews are involved;

• that Christians or the Gospel are affected;

• that no correct Torah remains available.

The section may target fabricated religious texts, false interpretations, or local practices. Frost proposes a connection with rabbinic traditions; this identification must be marked as a hypothesis, not as the necessary wording of the verse. Crucially, 2:41 and 2:89, 91, and 101 in the same chapter continue to confirm the revelatory material available to the addressees.

Historical development of Muslim views of corruption

The Islamic tradition is not uniform. Early views emphasize above all distortion of meaning, false interpretation, or local changes. Later authors, especially Ibn Ḥazm, advocate more extensive textual corruption. Al-Ṭabarī, al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Taymiyya, and others require differentiated treatment and must not be forced into a single scheme.

Justus, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya are particularly useful for historical contextualization; their positions must be distinguished chronologically and in terms of the history of tradition.

• Camilla Adang, Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible;

• Martin Whittingham, A History of Muslim Views of the Bible;

• Sabine Schmidtke, The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology and her works on Muslim reception of the Bible;

• Abdullah Saeed, “The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures”;

• Gordon Nickel, works on early taḥrīf accusations.

The factually secure conclusion is not that no early Muslim assumed textual alteration. It is this: The Quran itself formulates no clear doctrine of a worldwide, complete replacement of Torah and Gospel irreparable for its contemporaries; later tradition developed different models to explain the perceived differences.

Supplementary line: Dhikr and unchangeable words

The PPT links 15:9 (“Dhikr” is preserved) with 21:7 (“People of the Dhikr”), 21:48 (Moses and Aaron receive, among other things, dhikr), and 21:105. It also draws on 6:115 and 18:27 (“no one can change God's words”).

Useful point: The Quran does not use dhikr and “God's words” exclusively for a single textual referent. This allows questioning the sweeping claim that, conceptually, such preservation language concerns only the Quran.

Decisive limitation: The same choice of words in different verses does not automatically imply the same referent or the same kind of preservation. Therefore 15:9 must not be presented as the sole deductive proof that every Torah or Gospel manuscript had to remain unchanged; likewise, 6:115 and 18:27 can be related differently to God's decrees, promises, or words of revelation.

Recommended use: Employ it as a supplementary question and an internal Quranic consistency test, never as a load-bearing premise of the dilemma.

Part IV – The historical bridging premise P1.5

Why P1.5 is indispensable

“The Quran presupposes divine content in existing Scriptures” alone does not establish that the crucifixion or high Christology belongs to this confirmed content. A Muslim countermodel can distinguish:

• S: the entire existing Jewish-Christian textual corpus;

• D: the divine portion allegedly preserved within it;

• p: a statement contradicting the Quran.

A Muslim can claim that the Quran confirms D, while p is in S but not in D. This is logically possible. Therefore it must additionally be shown:

1. that the Quranic referent is historically connected with the known textual tradition;

2. that no independent candidate exists for another scriptural corpus conforming to Islam;

3. that the disputed statements are not local or late additions, but belong across cultures, languages, and regions to the pre-Islamic Gospel corpus;

4. that a selective core without an independent criterion empties the Quranic verification strategy of content.

Quranic identifying features

Frost gathers several mutually independent features:

• The Torah is associated with Moses, the children of Israel, the Sabbath, legal judgments, and familiar Torah narratives.

• The Gospel is associated with Jesus, his disciples, Zechariah, John the Baptist, parables, and characteristic Gospel formulations.

• The Torah and Gospel are treated as findable in writing and as possessions of actual religious communities.

• The Quran uses material from canonical texts as well as late-antique Jewish and Christian traditions. This shows broad familiarity with the religious environment of the time, not the existence of an isolated alternative tradition conforming to Islam.

These features do not prove that the Quran defines a later precisely delimited canon of 66 or 73 books. But they make it very likely that it targets the actually known Torah and Gospel traditions.

The addressees' historical self-identification

In Quranic and early Islamic usage, “People of the Book” designates actual Jews and Christians. Frost points out an important consequence:

• Surah 5:5 permits food from possessors of Scripture and marriage to women from among them.

• Surah 9:29 likewise addresses actual possessors of Scripture.

• Early Islamic practice and the four Sunni legal schools generally understood this to mean ordinary Jewish and Christian communities, not an otherwise unknown group with a special Scripture conforming to Islam.

Anyone claiming that “People of the Book” exclusively meant possessors of a vanished alternative Torah or Gospel must explain why Islamic legal practice and early political encounters nevertheless treated the known Jews and Trinitarian Christians as these groups.

Assessment: This is not a stand-alone textual proof, but a strong consistency test for the alternative referent theory.

Material witnesses to the Torah before Jesus and Muhammad

The transmission situation is especially important for the Torah because the Quran portrays Jesus as confirming the Torah. Relevant witnesses are:

• Dead Sea Scrolls containing texts from the Torah and other parts of the Hebrew Bible dating before and around Jesus's time;

• the Greek Septuagint tradition, whose Torah translation originated before Christianity;

• Jewish and Christian quotations and separate branches of transmission;

• Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus from the fourth century, containing large parts of the Torah.

Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library · Codex Sinaiticus · Codex Vaticanus [2] [3]

A very early total replacement would have had to occur before these witnesses. Then one must explain why the Quranic Jesus confirms the Torah without naming an entirely different Torah, and why no trace of that other version survives. [2] [3]

Material Gospel witnesses before Muhammad

Witness	Cautious dating and extent	Evidential value
P52 / Greek P 457	Palaeographically dated to the second century or around 200; portions of John 18:31–33, 37–38. Manchester Library notes that more recent research tends to favor a date close to 200. Official digitization	Attests the Johannine Passion narrative long before Islam. Do not present it as precisely dated to 100–150.
P66 / P. Bodmer II	Late second or early third century; extensive codex of John. CSNTM	Attests a large part of John's Gospel about four centuries before Muhammad.
Codex Vaticanus	Fourth century; contains the Torah and the four Gospels. Vatican Library	A shared identifiable Torah and Gospel tradition.
Codex Sinaiticus	Mid-fourth century; oldest completely surviving New Testament collection. Partner libraries' project	Direct examination of the four Gospels, including Christology and the Passion.
Codex Washingtonianus	Late fourth to early fifth century; four canonical Gospels. Smithsonian	Geographically independent four-Gospel witness.
Old Syriac Gospels	The separate four Gospels were probably translated into Syriac in the fourth/fifth century; the tradition may have older roots. Syriaca.org	Especially important for the Syriac-speaking Middle East; refutes the idea that only large Greek codices bear the central statements.
Garima Gospels	Ethiopic Gospel codices, radiocarbon-dated to the late fifth to early seventh century. Ethiopian Heritage Fund/Oxford context	An additional pre-Islamic or early Islamic African Gospel tradition.

The argument is not “Every individual passage survives in every manuscript.” It is:

The four Gospels and their central statements about Jesus's status, death, and resurrection circulated in multiple languages and regions long before Muhammad. No pre-Islamic textual tradition instead offers a Gospel conforming to Islam in which Jesus appears only as a Quranic prophet and is not crucified.

Why a worldwide total replacement is historically extremely unlikely

A universal corruption would have to explain:

1. how separate Jewish and Christian communities coordinated changes to their texts;

2. how the same basic contents appeared in Greek, Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic traditions;

3. why opposing groups that disagreed theologically preserved no earlier version conforming to Islam or used it against one another;

4. why no manuscript, quotation, liturgical trace, or chain of transmission of the alleged alternative text survives;

5. why the Quran nevertheless refers to the Scriptures of the time without warning.

The correct conclusion is not “logically impossible,” but:

historically unattested, ad hoc in relation to all surviving evidence, extraordinarily unlikely, and sustainable only through ever more auxiliary assumptions.

Early Christian-Muslim and Muslim testimonies

Frost supplements material evidence with reception history:

• John of Damascus already knows the argument that Muslims accept prophets but contradict their transmitted statements about Christ.

• George of Bʿeltan and al-Kindī address the tension between the Quranic appeal to earlier Scripture and the accusation of corruption.

• The precise historical attribution of the Leo–ʿUmar correspondence is disputed, but it is in any case an early witness to the controversy over the four Gospels, prophecies of Muhammad, and corruption.

• Hadith traditions report the bringing of a Torah scroll, a legal passage present in it, and its concealment.

These testimonies vary in strength and must not uncritically be treated as direct records of events. Their cumulative value is that early debates presuppose actual Jewish and Christian Scriptures and do not present a clearly identified alternative Islamic Gospel.

Supplementary hadith evidence for concrete use of Scripture

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 4449. In a report about a Jewish adultery case, Muhammad has a specific Torah brought and says, “I believe in you and in the one who sent you down.” The report thus connects the Torah text before him with divine sending down. Sunnah.com lists the tradition as ḥasan according to al-Albānī.

Arabic wording of the key formula:

آمَنْتُ بِكِ وَبِمَنْ أَنْزَلَكِ

Evidential value: Strong early Islamic traditional evidence against the claim that for Muhammad an actual Torah text was in principle merely a worthless human forgery. By itself, it does not guarantee the inerrancy of every Torah line.

Sunan Abī Dāwūd 4736. ʿĀmir b. Shahr reports that the Negus's son read a verse from the Gospel in the Negus's presence; when he laughed, the Negus replied, “Are you laughing at Allah's word?” Sunnah.com records the grading ṣaḥīḥ according to al-Albānī. Since the statement comes from the Negus and modern isnād evaluation is not entirely

uniform, this remains secondary supplementary evidence. Arabic wording of the key formula:

أَتَضْحَكُ مِنْ كَلَامِ اللَّهِ؟

Methodological limit: Hadith reports are traditional testimonies, not modern verbatim transcripts. Their value here lies in the early Islamic perception of concrete Torah and Gospel texts, not in an independent text-critical proof of complete preservation.

Part V – Proof of the central contrary statements P2

Objective and levels of proof

P2 does not require possession of the autographs. It suffices to show:

1. The disputed statements demonstrably stood in the Gospel tradition long before Muhammad.

2. They were not restricted to a single late language, region, or manuscript.

3. On the same subject the Quran advances an incompatible statement or claims content that cannot be found in the Scriptures referred to.

The examples are ordered by strength.

Core proof A: Jesus's ontological status

Pre-Islamic Gospel text

John 1:1 predicates divine being of the Logos; John 1:14 identifies this Logos as the one become flesh. John 20:28 has Thomas address Jesus as “my Lord and my God.”

Codex Sinaiticus, John 1 · Codex Sinaiticus, John 20:28 [2]

Quranic counterposition

Surah 5:72 rejects attributing deity to the Messiah; 4:171 identifies him as a messenger, warns against “Three,” and rejects divine sonship. Surah 5:75 emphasizes Jesus's and Mary's human consumption of food.

Surah 5:72–75 · Surah 4:171 [2]

Precise logical form

Do not formulate it as:

Gospel: “Jesus is the entire Godhead or the Father.”

Instead:

• Gospel: The incarnate Logos possesses divine status or divine essence; Jesus is addressed as “my God.”

• Quran: Attributing deity to the Messiah is rejected as unbelief; Jesus is classified as a messenger within a strictly non-Trinitarian model of revelation.

• The two models assert incompatible statements about Jesus's ontological status.

This form avoids confusing “Jesus is God” with “Jesus is the Father” or “Jesus is the entire Trinity.”

Core proof B: Jesus's crucifixion and death

All four Gospels attest Jesus's crucifixion and death in pre-Islamic textual witnesses:

• Matthew 27

• Mark 15 [2]

• Luke 23 [2]

• John 19 [2]

Surah 4:157 says, “They did not kill him and did not crucify him,” then continues with the appearance, the disputants' doubt, and Jesus's exaltation.

Surah 4:157

Against the traditional non-crucifixion interpretation

• Gospels: Jesus was crucified and died.

• Traditional Islamic interpretation: Jesus himself was neither crucified nor killed.

• Both historical statements cannot be true simultaneously.

The “Romans” escape route

A minimalist reading may claim that 4:157 denies only that “the Jews” themselves killed Jesus; Romans could nevertheless have crucified him. This weakens this specific contradiction.

The price:

• The traditional substitution or non-crucifixion interpretation is abandoned.

• The statements about mere appearance, ignorance, and exaltation need a new explanation.

• The independent Christological proof remains.

Strong supplementary proof C: God as Father

The Torah calls God Israel's Father, for example in Deuteronomy 32:6, and the Gospel uses Father language throughout, including Jesus's relationship with the Father.

The Quran rejects statements about people as God's children and denies divine sonship. Biological procreation must here be distinguished from ontological or relational sonship.

Assessment: A strong cumulative contrast, but exegetically more complex than John 1:1/20:28. Do not present it as an argument about biological procreation.

Strong supplementary proof D: Muhammad in the Torah and Gospel

Surah 7:157 claims a findable description of Muhammad. Common candidates are:

• Deuteronomy 18;

• John 14–16 and the Paraclete;

• Isaiah 29;

• Isaiah 42;

• Song of Songs 5:16.

Every identification must satisfy the literary context, speaker, addressees, grammar, and described characteristics. Mere similarity of sound or a general mention of a coming messenger is insufficient.

If the proposed passages fail, the Quran's claim that the description can be found is directly erroneous. This argument does not require concluding that 7:157 confirms every other Gospel statement.

Supplementary but nonessential areas of contradiction in Frost

Frost also discusses:

• the command to fight in 9:111, allegedly already binding in the Torah and Gospel;

• God's love or lack of love toward unbelievers;

• heaven, hell, and ideas of marriage in the afterlife;

• differing stories of prophets;

• late-antique Jewish and Syriac-Christian influences.

These areas can strengthen the cumulative argument. They should not bear its core because they raise additional questions about canon, metaphor, abrogation, theological systematics, and literary dependence. The strongest sequence for debate remains:

1. Jesus's ontological status;

2. the traditional non-crucifixion interpretation;

3. the unfindable description of Muhammad;

4. only then further narrative or theological differences.

Why textual variants do not remove P2

The biblical manuscripts contain real variants. The argument does not require freedom from variants.

• The crucifixion appears in all four Gospels and does not depend on a single textually uncertain line.

• John 1:1 and 20:28 appear in pre-Islamic textual witnesses.

• The longer ending of Mark is not needed.

• No known early variant offers the Islam-conforming alternative text “Jesus was not crucified” or “the Logos was not divine” at the relevant passages.

The objector therefore must show not merely variants, but a pre-Islamic textual form that removes precisely the central contrary statements and is historically identifiable as a candidate for the Quranic Gospel.

Part VI – Comprehensive catalogue of Muslim escape routes and responses

Group A – Which Scripture is meant?

1. “The Quran does not confirm the whole present-day Bible.”

Response: Correct. The Quran defines no modern complete canon. The argument needs only an identifiable Torah or Gospel tradition and at least one central conflict. Assessment: Hits the overbroad version, not the core.

2. “Only the original Torah and original Injīl are confirmed.”

Response: This explains divine origin, but not the present-directed functions: “with them,” “in it,” judging, upholding, and finding. An exclusively lost original cannot fulfill these functions. Assessment: Fails as a complete explanation; logically possible as a distinction between origin and later text.

3. “The Injīl was given to Jesus; the four Gospels were later written about Jesus.”

Response: The objection identifies a real conceptual difference. But the Quran presupposes that this Injīl can later be found in writing among Christians. Historically, euangelion/Injīl designates both the message and its written Gospel form. P1.5 must show why the fourfold Gospel tradition is the best historical referent. Assessment: Requires the bridging premise, but does not refute it.

4. “Biographical accounts cannot be the revelation given to Jesus.”

Response: In Abrahamic traditions, revelation need not consist exclusively of the recipient's verbatim speech. Both Torah and Quran also contain biographical material about their prophetic recipients. Moreover, the Quran itself paraphrases Gospel narratives. Assessment: No necessary ground for exclusion.

5. “Only Jesus's direct words within the Gospels are the true Injīl.”

Response: An independent criterion is then needed for which words of Jesus are authentic and divine. Moreover, Jesus's direct words themselves contain predictions of the crucifixion, Father language, and exalted claims about himself. Assessment: Shifts but does not solve the problem.

6. “Injīl is singular; four Gospels cannot be meant.”

Response: Historically, “Gospel” designates one message and can serve as a collective term for the four Gospels. Four accounts of the one Gospel are no grammatical contradiction. Tatian already combined them in the Diatessaron in the second century. Assessment: Fails as a grammatical exclusion.

7. “Kitāb means heavenly prescription, not a physical book.”

Response: The term can have heavenly and earthly referents. The relevant contexts additionally speak of reading, writing, concealing, possessing, and judging. A purely transcendent object does not explain these actions. Assessment: Semantically correct but insufficient.

8. “A special Torah or Gospel conforming to Islam existed in the Hijaz.”

Response: Manuscript, quotation, table of contents, and chain of transmission are lacking. The theory must also explain why actual Jews and Trinitarian Christians count as possessors of Scripture in Islamic legal practice. Assessment: Logically possible, historically ad hoc.

9. “Torah and Gospel are merely metonymic names for partly corrupt texts.”

Response: Metonymy is possible, but must be justified from context. Positive predicates, functions of judgment, and claims of findability speak against a merely empty courtesy title. Assessment: Possible as a partial model; incomplete without a selection criterion.

10. “‘What is with you/them’ confirms only some of their possessions.”

Response: No one should infer “every object or text in Christian possession.” The literary referent is the revelatory material identified previously or subsequently. Which parts of it are confirmed remains the decisive question. Assessment: Hits a total formulation, not the reference to the present.

11. “Bayna yadayhi means only temporally ‘before it.’”

Response: Even if this translation is conceded, “with you,” “with them,” “they read,” “in it,” “judge,” and “find him in it” remain. The argument should never rest solely on the literal expression “between its hands.” Assessment: No escape from the cumulative evidence.

12. “The Quranic possessors of Scripture were different Christians and Jews from those historically known.”

Response: Then 5:5, 9:29, early marriages, legal schools, and the entire early Islamic treatment of actual Jewish and Christian communities demand explanation. Assessment: Historically extremely weak.

Main references: Avery/Jake, pp. 11–13, 54, 57, 64–65; “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 1047–1063, 1575–1586; Frost, PDF pp. 42–46.

Group B – What does “confirm” mean?

13. “The Quran confirms only general core themes.”

Response: A general confirmation must include at least central themes. Crucifixion, salvific significance, Jesus's identity, and God's fatherhood are not peripheral Gospel details. If “core” is defined exclusively as “what the Quran agrees with,” confirmation becomes self-referential. Assessment: One of the strongest escape routes; avoids direct contradiction only by weakening independent evidential value.

14. “Taṣdīq means fulfill, make true, or correct.”

Response: Fulfillment and legal development can explain changes. Without positive justification, this does not mean a historical statement is “confirmed” by its negation. Assessment: Semantically possible, but no license for every contrary statement.

15. “Muhaymin makes the Quran the corrector of earlier Scriptures.”

Response: Muhaymin can express strong authority, but does not by itself mean “textual critic.” Even under the strongest authority reading, loss of function remains: Earlier Scripture cannot independently verify the Quran if the Quran alone determines what is valid within it. Assessment: Can defend internal consistency, but sacrifices external confirming value.

16. “The differences are deliberate divine corrections.”

Response: The Quran must make this corrective function recognizable and provide a criterion. Otherwise the theory becomes unfalsifiable: Agreement counts as confirmation, contradiction as correction. Assessment: Logically conceivable, methodologically circular or unfalsifiable.

17. “Only prophecies of Muhammad are confirmed.”

Response: The Quran does not expressly restrict all confirmation formulas to this. Moreover, the alleged prophecy must actually be findable in the pre-Islamic texts. Assessment: Creates a direct textual test instead of a solution.

18. “The Quran confirms a divine portion D within the larger textual corpus S.”

Response: This model is formally consistent. But it requires an independent procedure identifying D. Without this procedure, neither is the command to possessors of Scripture practically determinate nor is their Scripture an independent confirmation. Assessment: Logically possible, epistemically incomplete.

19. “For internal consistency, a Muslim may use the Quran as the highest criterion.”

Response: Correct. This is not automatically a formal circle if only internal consistency is being defended. But it does not answer the Quranic claim to cite earlier Scripture as confirmation or a basis for recognition. Assessment: A justified objection to an overly hasty accusation of circularity; the price is loss of independent verification.

20. “Correctly interpreted, the Gospels teach neither the Trinity nor Christ's deity.”

Response: Particular Christian formulas must not be anachronistically read into every passage. Nevertheless, John 1:1/14, 20:28, Jesus's forgiveness of sins, authority, and worship attest an ontological status beyond that of the Quranic mere messenger. Assessment: Must be answered textually, not merely dogmatically.

21. “The dilemma wrongly demands a word-for-word copy.”

Response: No. What is required is consistency concerning jointly asserted historical or theological states of affairs, not identical wording or identical law. Assessment: A straw man against the clarified version.

Main references: “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 44–47, 1434–1452, 1583–1584; Avery/Jake, pp. 20–22, 38–39; Frost, PDF pp. 49–68.

Group C – Corruption and transmission

22. “Surahs 2:79, 3:78, 4:46, and 5:13 teach textual corruption.”

Response: The passages describe particular groups and concrete actions. None formulates a worldwide replacement of all Torah and Gospel texts. 3:78 expressly distinguishes the Book from false rendering. Assessment: Attests abuse or partial manipulation, not total loss.

23. “2:79 expressly says people wrote the Book with their hands.”

Response: The verse condemns fabricated texts and false divine attribution. It does not unambiguously identify the product with the entire Torah, specifies no global imposition, and in context concerns no Gospel texts. Assessment: The strongest possible textual-corruption passage, but insufficient for total falsification.

24. “Taḥrīf is only distortion of meaning.”

Response: This fits the positive scriptural passages well and supports the thesis that the text remained available. But it does not solve the actual substantive contrast between Quran and Gospel text. Assessment: Weakens the textual-corruption thesis, not P2.

25. “Textual variants, canon formation, and apocrypha prove alteration.”

Response: They prove processes of transmission and delimitation, not replacement of the central Gospel message. The relevant test is whether an early variant removes the disputed statements. Assessment: Hits naive freedom from variants, not the historical core argument.

26. “Before printing, priests could easily change a few copies.”

Response: Texts already existed early in different regions, languages, and competing communities. A local change alters no manuscripts in other churches and countries. Assessment: Historically insufficient.

27. “Corruption occurred immediately in the transition from oral to written transmission.”

Response: Possible as a mere hypothesis, but without an earlier text or alternative tradition conforming to Islam. It makes Jesus's mission and the Quranic confirmation of his followers require historical explanation. Assessment: Logically possible, unsupported by evidence.

28. “God was entitled to let earlier time-bound Scriptures be lost.”

Response: A temporally limited legal order can end. This does not explain why the Quran later refers to these Scriptures as existing sources of judgment and recognition. Assessment: No complete escape route.

29. “No one can change God's words” concerns only the Quran, decrees, or promises.

Response: The core proof does not depend on this sentence. Even if the narrow interpretation is correct, the positive scriptural functions and historical transmission remain. Assessment: Irrelevant to the strongest version.

30. “Correct and false versions coexisted in the seventh century; the correct ones were subsequently lost.”

Response: Then at least one correct version, quotation, or trace must be presented. The theory posits the needed text precisely where the Quran needs it, then lets it disappear without trace. Assessment: Ad hoc hypothesis.

31. “True Scripture was replaced everywhere very early.”

Response: This would require evidence for the earlier text, mechanism of replacement, geographical spread, and motive. Only witnesses to the allegedly false tradition exist. Assessment: Not logically impossible, historically extremely weak.

32. “We possess no autographs and no chain of transmission back to Moses or Jesus.”

Response: P2 does not claim possession of the autographs. It asks which textual form materially existed before Muhammad. Pre-Islamic manuscripts are directly relevant to that question. Assessment: Shifts the objective of proof.

33. “Christian scholars themselves admit that the Bible is corrupt.”

Response: Textual criticism documents variants; “corruption” can have many meanings. Variants do not imply that the central statements were inserted only after Muhammad or that an original text conforming to Islam existed. Assessment: Equivocation between variants and theological total replacement.

Main references: “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 872–893, 1047–1063; Avery/Jake, pp. 57, 63–65; Frost, PDF pp. 68–71, 93–101.

Group D – Escape routes based on verses, grammar, and law

34. “Surah 10:94 is only hypothetical; Muhammad did not doubt.”

Response: Whether Muhammad actually doubted is not decisive. The hypothetically permitted consultation presupposes reliability in the area concerned. Assessment: A limitation, not a complete refutation.

35. “10:94 concerns only stories of the prophets.”

Response: This can be conceded. That is why 10:94 is used only cumulatively, not as proof of every Christological point. Assessment: Hits overextension, not the limited conclusion.

36. “Only possessors of Scripture converted to Islam are asked.”

Response: The verse does not expressly say this. Even converts obtain their knowledge of earlier stories from a pre-existing scriptural tradition. Assessment: Additional assumption without solving the referential question.

37. “Agreement can confirm the Quran; disagreement need not refute it.”

Response: As a merely asymmetric indication this is logically possible. But then earlier Scripture must not be presented as general proof of continuity. Where there is an explicit claim to confirm the same revelation, central contrary statements need explanation. Assessment: Weakens the deductive claim, not the abductive one.

38. “5:47 describes only the Gospel's former purpose.”

Response: The canonical Ḥamza reading permits a purpose construction; the majority reading is a command. Both presuppose the Gospel's capacity to judge, but differ in temporal application. Assessment: A justified qualification; do not conceal it as nonexistent.

39. “5:43 confirms only a single legal judgment.”

Response: The verse certainly confirms at least one existing divine judgment. Total reliability does not follow. But together with the other passages, it refutes complete unusability. Assessment: A justified limitation; formulate P1 correspondingly narrowly.

40. “5:68 means only following prophecies of Muhammad.”

Response: Then these prophecies must be textually identified and contextually demonstrated. Otherwise the answer presupposes what it should show. Assessment: Creates a direct verification test.

41. “The Quran may abrogate earlier laws.”

Response: Yes. Changes in law must be distinguished from denial of historical events or ontological statements. Assessment: Hits only a bad equation of law and history.

42. “Jesus confirms the Torah and nevertheless changes laws; the Quran may similarly correct.”

Response: Surah 3:50 speaks of permitting previously forbidden things. That shows legal change, not reversal of the statement of whether Jesus was crucified or what status he possesses. Assessment: No analogy for central historical and ontological statements.

43. “5:49 and Islamic law make the Quran the sole legal authority.”

Response: For Muhammad and the Muslim community, the Quran may possess normative authority. This removes neither the preceding statements about scriptural functions for other communities nor the claim of historical continuity. Assessment: Legal hierarchy is no doctrine of textual corruption.

Main references: “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 881–890, 1097–1111, 1204–1208, 1423–1425; Avery/Jake, pp. 7–10, 35–37, 69–70; Frost, PDF pp. 56–63.

Group E – Substantive counterobjections

44. “The Quran rejects only biological sonship.”

Response: Some verses employ biological polemic, and Christians teach no sexual procreation by God. Therefore do not argue from biological sonship. The stronger contrast concerns divine essence, worship, authority, and “my God.” Assessment: Hits imprecise Christian polemic, not the ontological conflict.

45. “Jews did not crucify Jesus; Romans did.”

Response: A reading exclusively concerned with agency can weaken the specific crucifixion contradiction. It abandons the traditional non-crucifixion interpretation and leaves Christology untouched. Assessment: Partly successful against an incautious form.

46. “The Quran criticizes only Christians' statements, not the Gospel text.”

Response: Precisely this intensifies the explanatory problem: The criticized teachings demonstrably appear in the Gospels. If the Quran attributes them exclusively to people, it appears not to acknowledge or know their written origin. Assessment: No escape route, but a possible explanation of the error.

47. “Muhammad's description was removed from the Scriptures.”

Response: Earlier textual witnesses containing the removed passage are lacking. The claim must specify when, where, and in which mutually independent traditions the removal occurred. Assessment: Historically unattested.

48. “Every divergence is a deliberate restoration of truth.”

Response: Without an external criterion, this model is indistinguishable from an error by the Quran's author. It can explain every possible state of the evidence and is therefore unfalsifiable. Assessment: A protective claim instead of an explanation.

Group F – Tradition, rhetoric, and counterattacks

49. “Hadith, the Salaf, and tafsir decide; the dilemma applies only to Quranists.”

Response: Later sources are relevant to Islamic interpretation, but are mutually nonuniform and cannot arbitrarily redefine the earlier Quranic text. The core argument begins with the primary source acknowledged by all schools. Assessment: Tradition can supply models, but cannot produce a missing historical alternative Scripture.

50. “The academic majority reads the Quran as accusing textual corruption.”

Response: Such a uniform majority must not be presupposed. Specialist literature distinguishes distortion of meaning, local textual alteration, concealment, and later total-corruption theories. Specific authors and arguments must be named. Assessment: An unspecified appeal to authority.

51. “The Quran is poetic and ambiguous; literal readers misunderstand it.”

Response: Rhetoric and ambiguity are real. They do not justify every retrospective meaning. An interpretation must explain grammar, context, parallel passages, and historical addressees. Assessment: A methodological observation, no independent escape route.

52. “Christians have their own dilemmas and biblical contradictions.”

Response: Even if a counterattack were correct, that would not clarify the Islamic claim. The truth of a criticism does not depend on the critic's inerrancy. Assessment: Tu quoque or a change of subject.

53. “The Christian bears the burden of proving an unbroken chain back to Moses or Jesus.”

Response: Broader questions may arise concerning Christian inspiration. The Islamic dilemma requires only proof of which texts existed before Muhammad and which Scriptures the Quran directed its contemporaries to. Assessment: Conflates different objectives of proof.

Main references: “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” pp. 1418–1458, 1575–1586; Avery/Jake, pp. 31–39, 64–68; Frost, PDF pp. 63–101.

Part VII – Limits and debate practice

Limits of the argument

No historical argument can completely rule out the mere logical possibility that:

• an entirely lost text existed;

• every surviving tradition was altered before the earliest witnesses;

• the Quran confirms only an invisible subset;

• God determines selection of this subset solely through the later Quran.

Such possibilities are not good explanations merely because they can be formulated consistently. A defensible explanation must additionally possess evidence, predictive power, simplicity, and independent testability.

The correct final assessment is therefore:

The Islamic dilemma is no assumption-free mathematical proof against every logically constructible Islamic theory. It is a very strong internally Quranic, historical, and epistemic argument that refutes the usual total-falsification thesis and burdens more sophisticated partial-corruption or loss theories with considerable unsupported additional assumptions.

Five guiding questions for debate

1. Which concrete Torah and Gospel does the Quran mean in 5:43, 5:47, 5:68, and 7:157?

2. Which pre-Islamic manuscript or tradition attests another Gospel conforming to Islam?

3. By what criterion independent of the Quran is it decided which passages of the existing Gospels are divine?

4. Where exactly is the description of Muhammad claimed in 7:157, and does the context support this identification?

5. If the Quran alone decides which biblical passages are true, in what independent sense does earlier Scripture still confirm the Quran?

Twelve PPT challenges – in a defensible version

1. If 5:47 directs Christians to the Gospel: Which text or content identifiable in the seventh century could practically fulfill the command?

2. If only a “true core” of the existing Gospels is confirmed: Which specific verses belong to it, and what criterion independent of the Quran decides?

3. If the true Injīl was a different, lost book: Where are a manuscript, quotation, description of contents, chain of transmission, or any historical contrary trace?

4. If 7:157 calls Muhammad findable in Torah and Gospel: Which pre-Islamically attested passage is meant, and does it fit grammatically, historically, and contextually?

5. If 5:43 presupposes a concrete Torah “with them” containing God's judgment: Why should the same actual textual corpus in principle no longer contain identifiable divine revelation?

6. If muhaymin in 5:48 is understood as a corrective: How does a possessor of Scripture independently recognize which parts are true before accepting the Quran?

7. When is total textual falsification supposed to have occurred – before Jesus, between Jesus and Muhammad, or after Muhammad – and which material witnesses support that exact period?

8. Which known pre-Islamic Gospel variant removes both the crucifixion and high Christology and supplies an alternative text conforming to Islam?

9. How does an exclusively Quran-dependent “I believe only the matching parts” fit 2:85, 2:136, 3:84, and 4:136?

10. If the Torah and Gospel in 5:44–46 contain “guidance and light”: Which concrete contents in the historical textual corpus are meant?

11. What does Abū Dāwūd 4449 show about early Islamic perception of a concretely available Torah – and which theory best explains this report?

12. If 6:115, 18:27, and the Dhikr passages are narrowly restricted as preservation language to Quran or decrees:

What contextual rule justifies each restriction? (Supplementary question, not core proof.)

Three short versions for presentations and livestreams

15-second trilemma. If the historically existing Scriptures are meant, they contradict the Quran. If only an unknown portion is true, an independent selection criterion is lacking. If the true Gospel was another lost book, its historical trace is lacking.

“Guidance and light” version. The Quran calls the Torah and Gospel guidance and light; the same Scriptures are findable among actual possessors of Scripture and used for judgment. Therefore show which historically attested content is supposed to be this light if the central Gospel statements are simultaneously rejected.

Three-question version. Are the Torah and Injīl from God? Is the content addressed by the Quran identifiable to its contemporaries? If so: Why may the Quran contradict central statements of the historically attested tradition; if not: How could the Quranic commands and verification claims function?

When internal consistency is invoked

A fair response is:

You can establish internal consistency by saying the Quran confirms only the revelatory portion corresponding to it. But you have not yet shown that this portion historically existed, was recognizable to the possessors of Scripture at the time, or independently confirms the Quran. You have avoided the formal contradiction through an additional assumption, but have not yet supplied a positive explanation of the data.

When a lost Injīl is claimed

Questions:

- Who possessed it?
- In what language did it exist?
- When and where was it quoted?
- What manuscript or catalogue attests it?
- How did it disappear from separate Christian communities?
- Why does the Quran not mention the loss but continue directing its addressees to the Gospel?
- How could 7:157 serve as public evidence if the correct text was not verifiable?

When a true core is claimed

Questions:

- How large is this core?
- Which specific verses belong to it?

• How do you know this without already presupposing the Quran's truth?

• Could Christians recognize the same core before knowing the Quran?

• If not: How could they responsibly judge by it according to 5:47 or 5:68?

• If so: What historical criterion did they use?

Exaggerations to avoid

• Do not say: “The Quran guarantees every letter of the whole present-day Bible.”

• Do not say: “P1 and P2 alone produce a formal contradiction against every conceivable subset model.”

• Do not pretend that no canonical purpose reading exists for 5:47.

• Do not claim that muhaymin cannot mean any primacy or authority.

• Do not infer the truth of every Christology directly from the legal judgment in 5:43.

• Do not use 7:157 as blanket confirmation of all Gospel statements; test the alleged Muhammad text itself.

• Do not let 10:94 bear the argument alone.

• Do not deny textual variants.

• Do not use the longer ending of Mark.

• Do not portray Christian sonship as biological procreation.

• Do not confuse “Jesus is God” with “Jesus is the Father” or “Jesus is the entire Trinity.”

• Do not dogmatically date P52 to 100–150; “second century or around 200” suffices.

• Do not claim a lost Scripture is logically impossible.

• Do not treat hadith reports as modern verbatim transcripts.

• Do not equate legal abrogation with reversal of historical events.

• Do not place Frost's weaker supplementary contradictions ahead of the two core proofs.

• Do not say: “All ancient biblical manuscripts are identical in content to today's Bible.” The correct statement is: Variants exist, but the contrary statements supporting P2 are widely attested long before Muhammad.

• Do not say: “6:115 or 18:27 alone proves that every biblical manuscript is unchangeable.” The scope of “God's words” requires interpretation.

• Do not say: “15:9 automatically guarantees preservation of the Torah and Gospel because both are called Dhikr somewhere.” The same word stem does not automatically mean an identical referent.

• Use “A preserved book can never be corrupted” only as a rhetorical-theological question, not as a stand-alone formal-logical proof.

• Do not present a tafsir paraphrase as a verbatim original quotation. Use direct quotations only after checking the specific Arabic text or a reliable edition.

• Do not let “bayna yadayhi” alone prove “in its hands.” Even under the temporal reading, the stronger present-directed formulations “with them,” “in it,” “judge,” “read,” and “find” carry weight.

Overview of evidential strengths

Subclaim	Assessment
Christ's deity and crucifixion appeared in the Gospels long before Muhammad.	Virtually unassailable
These statements were inserted only after Muhammad.	Refuted by pre-Islamic witnesses
Findable divine content in Torah and Gospel was presupposed in the seventh century.	Very strong
The Scriptures were not completely unusable for the functions named by the Quran.	Very strong
The Quran expressly confirms every statement of the four Gospels.	Not proved and not needed
The historically known traditions are the best referent of the Quranic appeals.	Very strong historically and abductively
A lost Gospel conforming to Islam is logically impossible.	Cannot be claimed
Such a Gospel is historically attested.	No
The subset model is formally contradictory.	Not necessarily
The subset model has an independent selection procedure.	Not shown
The strengthened trilemma creates considerable explanatory pressure.	Extraordinarily strong

Part VIII – Sources and primary material

Quranic text, grammar, and readings

• Quran.com – Surah 5:43–48

• Quranic Arabic Corpus – Word analysis [2]

• Al-Qurṭubī on 5:47 and both readings [2]

• Quranic Arabic Corpus – 4:157 [2]

• Quranic Arabic Corpus – 4:171 [2]

• Quran.com – 7:157 [2]

• Quran.com – 10:94 [2]

Manuscripts and institutional digitizations

• University of Manchester – P52 / Greek P 457

• CSNTM – P66 / Bodmer II [2]

• Vatican Library – Codex Vaticanus [2]

• Codex Sinaiticus Project [2]

• Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art – Codex Washingtonianus [2]

• Syriaca.org – Old Syriac four Gospels [2]

• Ethiopian Heritage Fund – Garima Gospels in the Oxford context [2]

• Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library [2]

Research literature from Frost's bibliography

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1996.

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Sunan Abi Dawud 4736 – Sunnah.com; Gospel verse as “Allah's word” in the Negus tradition; Sunnah.com: ṣaḥīḥ according to al-Albānī; use as supplementary evidence. Full reference: Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Sunna, no. 4736 (in-book: Book 42, Hadith 141; English numbering Book 41, Hadith 4718).

Edward William Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, root ṣ-d-q.

PPT “Das Islamische Dilemma 3(2).pptx,” especially the debate modules, challenges, and al-Kitāb, Dhikr, Taṣdīq, and hadith sections. Only arguments that can be situated within the dossier's levels of proof were adopted.

Primary material of the investigation

- “Islamisches Dilemma.pdf,” 1,655 PDF pages.
- “The Islamic Dilemma – Avery Austin Vs Jake Brancatella.pdf,” 72 PDF pages.
- Christopher W. Frost, The Islamic Dilemma, Vektor Publishing, 2026, 130 PDF pages/256 book pages.

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