

# Islam *and* Monotheism

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*Muslims often boast that they have the purest form of monotheism of all the monotheistic religions. They claim that Islam holds to absolute monotheism and restricts worship to Allah alone, to the extent that even bowing to someone of honor which is done purely out of respect, not worship, is altogether forbidden.*

*They further deny that Allah can be represented by any physical or visible image since he is completely unlike anything.*

*With the foregoing in mind we set forth to examine the Quran and the Islamic source material to see whether such claims of Muslims stand the test of their own religious scriptures.*

*To facilitate easier reading, we have broken down the article into the following sections:*

- 1. Who Should A Muslim Serve?**
- 2. Are Muslims Supposed to Fear Allah Alone?**
- 3. Is it Reverence or Worship?**
- 4. Do Muslims really Invoke Allah alone?**
- 5. Seeking Help and Intercession from other than Allah?**
- 6. Do the Dead Hear or Not?**
- 7. What Condition is Muhammad in Exactly?**
- 8. A Physical Image and Symbol of Allah?**
- 9. Summarizing the Contradictions**
- 10. Concluding Remarks**

## 1. Who Should A Muslim Serve?

The word used in Islamic theology to denote the worship given to Allah alone is *ibadah*. This worship that is given to Allah alone is classified as *tauhid al-ibadah* or *tauhid al-uluhiyya*. Muslim propagandist Dr. Zakir Naik says: “*Tawheed al-Ibadah* means maintaining the unity of worship. *Ibadah* is derived from Arabic word ‘*Abd*’ meaning *slave* or *servant*. Thus *Ibadah* means *servitude* and *worship*”.

This term, and its various forms, can be found all throughout the Quran in relation to the worship given to Allah alone:

Say: O followers of the Book! come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah (alla na’buda illa Allaha) and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims. [S. 3:64 Shakir]

It is not (possible) for any human being unto whom Allah had given the Scripture and wisdom and the prophethood that he should afterwards have said unto mankind: Be slaves of me instead of Allah (‘ibadan lee min dooni Allah); but (what he said was): Be ye faithful servants of the Lord by virtue of your constant teaching of the Scripture and of your constant study thereof. [S. 3:79 Pickthall]

(Saying): Serve (ta’buduu) none but Allah. Lo! I am unto you from Him a warner and a bringer of good tidings. [S. 11:2 Pickthall]

That ye serve (ta’buduu) none, save Allah. Lo! I fear for you the retribution of a painful Day. [S. 11:26 Pickthall]

Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve (ta’buduu) any but Him, and to be good to parents, whether one or both of them attains old age with thee; say not to them 'Fie' neither chide them, but speak unto them words respectful, [S. 17:23 Arberry]

Verily, I am God: There is no god but I: So serve (fa’budni) thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise. [S. 20:14 Y. Ali]

And We sent never a Messenger before thee except that We revealed to him, saying, 'There is no god but I; so serve (fa'budun) Me.' [S. 21:25]

(Say): I (Muhammad) am commanded only to serve ('a'buda) the Lord of this land which He hath hallowed, and unto Whom all things belong. And I am commanded to be of those who surrender (unto Him), [S. 27:91 Pickthall]

Say (O Muhammad, to the disbelievers): Do ye bid me serve (a'budu) other than Allah? O ye fools! ... Nay, but Allah must thou serve (fa'bud), and be among the thankful! [S. 39:64, 66 Pickthall]

Behold, the apostles came to them, from before them and behind them, (preaching): "Serve (ta'buduu) none but God." They said, "If our Lord had so pleased, He would certainly have sent down angels (to preach). Now we reject your mission (altogether)." [S. 41:14 Y. Ali]

And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): but those who are too arrogant to serve Me ('ibadati) will surely find themselves in Hell - in humiliation!" [S. 40:60]

And who is more astray than one who calls (invokes) besides God, such as will not answer him till the Day of Resurrection, and who are (even) unaware of their calls (invocations) to them? And when mankind are gathered (on the Day of Resurrection), they (false deities) will become enemies for them and will deny their worshipping (bi'ibadatihim). [S. 46:5-6 Hilali-Khan]

In these last two references, praying or invoking Allah is a part of his service or worship, with the implication being that prayer is to be made to Allah alone. This will become important later on in our discussion.

Here are a few more Quranic references:

I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me (liya'budun). [S. 51:56 Y. Ali]

Say: 'O unbelievers, I serve (a'budu) not what you serve (ta'budun) and you are not serving (a'biduna) what I serve (a'bud), nor am I serving ('abidum) what you have served

('abattum), neither are you serving ('abiduna) what I serve ('abud). To you your religion, and to me my religion!' [S. 109:1-6 Arberry]

Now obviously, a person who serves or slaves for Allah would naturally be called a servant or slave. This is why, as Dr. Naik noted, Arabic has a noun form of the verb which is used throughout the Quran in reference to the slaves of Allah:

Evil is that for which they sell their souls: that they should disbelieve in that which Allah hath revealed, grudging that Allah should reveal of His bounty unto whom He will of His **slaves** (ibadihi). They have incurred anger upon anger. For disbelievers is a shameful doom. [S. 2:90 Pickthall]

If Thou punish them, lo! they are Thy **slaves** (ibaduka), and if Thou forgive them (lo! they are Thy **slaves**). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, the Wise. [S. 5:118 Pickthall]

And He is the Supreme, above His **servants** (ibadihi); and He is the Wise, the Aware. [S. 6:18 Shakir]

He is the Omnipotent over His **servants** (ibadihi). He sends recorders over you till, when any one of you is visited by death, Our messengers take him and they neglect not. [S. 6:61 Arberry]

There is none in the heavens and the earth but cometh unto the Beneficent as a **slave** (abdan). [S. 19:93 Pickthall]

O My **servants** ('ibadi) who believe! surely My earth is vast, therefore Me alone should you **serve** (fa'budun). [S. 29:56 Shakir]

And when the **slave** of Allah (abdullahi) stood up in prayer to Him, they crowded on him, almost stifling. Say (unto them, O Muhammad): I pray unto Allah only, and ascribe unto Him no partner. [S. 72:19 Pickthall]

The foregoing is quite clear: Allah alone is to be served, which means that an individual can only be the slave of Allah. A person, if a true believer, cannot be someone else's slave or own a slave since this violates the allegedly pure monotheistic worship of Allah. This, perhaps, accounts for why the hadith literature speaks out against anyone calling a person his or her slave or *abd*:

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "You should not say, 'Feed your lord (Rabbaka), help your lord in performing ablution,

or give water to your lord', but should say, 'my master (e.g. Feed your master instead of lord etc.), (Saiyidi),' or 'my guardian (Maulai),' and one should not say, 'my slave (Abdi),' or 'my girl-slave (Amati),' but should say, 'my lad (Fatai), my lass (Fatati),' and 'my boy (Ghulami).'

 [Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 46, Number 728]

Narrated Abu Hurayrah: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: None of you must say: "My slave" (abdi) and "My slave-woman" (amati), and a slave must not say: "My lord" (rabbi or rabbati). The master (of a slave) should say: "My young man" (fataya) and "My young woman" (fatati), and a slave should say "My master" (sayyidi) and "My mistress" (sayyidati), for you are all (Allah's slave and the Lord is Allah, Most High. (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 41, Number 4957)

In fact, one Muslim who was rather anxious to refute us myopic Christian bigots and "Jesuits" wrote:

"The Qur'an unequivocally makes it clear that no man, irrespective of his status (including a prophet), can enslave any other human being: "It is not (possible) for any human being unto whom Allah had given him the Scripture and wisdom and 'Nabuwah' (Prophethood) that he should afterwards have said unto mankind: Be slaves of me instead of Allah ..." [3:79]" (Dr. Habib Siddiqui, Islam and Coexistence: What I Didn't Say and Missionary Myopia; sources: A; B) (1)

Yet this is actually where the problem begins for the Muslims. The Quran says that there are Muslims who are slaves to other Muslims, and that Muslims can even own slaves:

O believers, prescribed for you is retaliation, touching the slain; freeman for freeman, slave for slave (wal-'abdu bil'abdi), female for female. But if aught is pardoned a man by his brother, let the pursuing be honourable, and let the payment be with kindness. That is a lightning granted you by your Lord, and a mercy; and for him who commits aggression after that -- for him there awaits a painful chastisement. S. 2:178

And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe, and certainly a believing maid is better than an idolatress woman, even

though she should please you; and do not give (believing women) in marriage to idolaters until they believe, and certainly a believing servant (la'abdum-mu'minun) is better than an idolater, even though he should please you; these invite to the fire, and Allah invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His will, and makes clear His communications to men, that they may be mindful. S. 2:221 Arberry

And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves ('ibadikum) and your female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. S. 24:32 Arberry

The hadiths record that Muhammad owned many black slaves and sold them:

Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah: There came a slave and pledged allegiance to Allah's Apostle (peace\_be\_upon\_him) on migration; he (the Prophet) did not know that he was a slave. Then there came his master and demanded him back, whereupon Allah's Apostle (peace\_be\_upon\_him) said: Sell him to me. And he bought him for two black slaves, and he did not afterwards take allegiance from anyone until he had asked him whether he was a slave (or a free man). (Sahih Muslim, Book 10, Number 3901)

Narrated Anas bin Malik: Allah's Apostle was on a journey and he had a black slave called Anjasha, and he was driving the camels (very fast, and there were women riding on those camels). Allah's Apostle said, "Waihaka (May Allah be merciful to you), O Anjasha! Drive slowly (the camels) with the glass vessels (women)!" (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 182)

Narrated 'Urwa on the authority of 'Aisha: On the days of Mina, (11th, 12th, and 13th of Dhul-Hijjah) Abu Bakr came to her while two young girls were beating the tambourine and the Prophet was lying covered with his clothes. Abu Bakr scolded them and the Prophet uncovered his face and said to Abu Bakr, "Leave them, for these days are the days of 'Id and the days of Mina." 'Aisha further said, "Once the Prophet was screening me and I was watching the display of black slaves in the Mosque and ('Umar) scolded them. The Prophet said, 'Leave them. O Bani

Arfida! (carry on), you are safe (protected)!" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 15, Number 103)

So now we have a problem! How can a Muslim be a slave to another or own a slave when the Quran says that a person is a slave to no one except Allah?

## **2. Are Muslims Supposed to Fear Allah Alone?**

Astonishingly, the Quran even says that Muslims are to fear or revere a woman's womb just as they revere Allah!

Mankind, fear your Lord (ittaqoo rabbakumu), who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women; and fear God (wa ittaqoo Allaha) by whom you demand one of another, AND the wombs (wa al-arhama); surely God ever watches over you. S. 4:1 Arberry

O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; - reverence God, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for God ever watches over you. Y. Ali

The Arabic word for fear is used throughout the Quran for the fear and worship due to Allah:

For Hajj are the months well known. If any one undertakes that duty therein, Let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good ye do, (be sure) God knoweth it. And take a provision (With you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me (al-taqwa wa ittaqooni), o ye that are wise. S. 2:197 Y. Ali

O ye who believe! Fear God as He should be feared (ittaqoo Allaha haqqa tuqatihi), and die not except in a state of Islam. S. 3:102 Y. Ali

To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and (all that is in) the earth and Ad-Din Wasiba is His [(i.e. perpetual sincere obedience to Allah is obligatory). None has the right to be worshipped but

Allah)]. Will you then fear any other than Allah (wasiban afaghayra Allahi tattaqoona)? S. 16:52 Hilali-Khan

O ye who believe ! profane not the Signs of ALLAH, nor the Sacred Month, nor the animals brought as an offering, nor the animals of sacrifice wearing collars nor those repairing to the Sacred House, seeking grace from their Lord and HIS pleasure. And when you put off the pilgrims' garb and are clear of the Sacred Territory, you may hunt. And let not the enmity of a people, that they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque, incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and in piety; but help not one another in sin and transgression. And fear ALLAH (wa ittaqoo Allaha); Surely ALLAH is Severe in punishment. S. 5:2 Sher Ali

O you who believe! When you hold secret counsel, do it not for sin and wrong-doing, and disobedience towards the Messenger (Muhammad SAW) but do it for Al-Birr (righteousness) and Taqwa (virtues and piety); and fear Allah (wa ittaqoo Allaha) unto Whom you shall be gathered. S. 58:9 Hilali-Khan

How, then, can the Quran command persons to fear someone or something other than Allah without those individuals being guilty of idolatry?

### **3. Is it Reverence or Worship?**

To top this all of, there are verses where Allah commands creatures to prostrate or bow down before other creatures:

And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam" and they bowed down (osjudoo li-adama fasajadoo). Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: He was of those who reject Faith. S. 2:34 Y. Ali

And when We said to the angels, 'Bow yourselves to Adam'; so they bowed themselves (osjudoo li-adama fasajadoo), save Iblis; he was one of the jinn, and committed ungodliness against his Lord's command. What, and do you take him and his seed to be your friends, apart from Me, and they an enemy to you? How evil is that exchange for the evildoers! S. 18:50 Arberry

Behold! Joseph said to his father: "O my father! I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrate (sajideena) themselves to me!" S. 12:4 Y. Ali

And he raised his parents upon the throne and they fell down in prostration (sujjadan) before him, and he said: O my father! this is the significance of my vision of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true; and He was indeed kind to me when He brought me forth from the prison and brought you from the desert after the Shaitan had sown dissensions between me and my brothers, surely my Lord is benignant to whom He pleases; surely He is the Knowing, the Wise. S. 12:100 Shakir

Both Adam and Joseph received worship since the word for bow/prostrate comes from sujud, the term from which we derive masjid or mosque, the place where prostration is made to Allah alone:

And that the mosques (al-masajida) are Allah's, therefore call not upon any one with Allah: S. 72:18 Shakir

The two Jalals comment:

And [it has been revealed to me] that the places of prayer belong to God, so do not invoke, in them, anyone along with God, by associating others with Him, like the Jews and Christians do, who, when they enter their churches and temples, they ascribe partners to God. (Tafsir al-Jalalayn; source; bold and underline emphasis ours)

In fact, bowing down to Allah is directly connected with the service that must be rendered to him:

Surely those who are with thy Lord wax not too proud to serve Him ('ibadatihi); they chant His praise, and to Him they bow (yasjudoona). S. 7:206 Arberry

Again, if one is to bow before Allah then how could Allah command creatures to bow to others beside himself?

#### **4. Do Muslims really Invoke Allah alone?**

The text of Sura 72:18 that we just cited also says that a person is to invoke Allah alone, a point reiterated in the following texts:

Say (O Muhammad): "Verily, my Salât (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for God, the Lord of the 'Alamîn (mankind, jinns and all that exists). S. 6:162 Hilali-Khan

And invoke not besides God, any that will neither profit you, nor hurt you, but if (in case) you did so, you shall certainly be one of the Zâlimûn (polytheists and wrong-doers). S. 10:106 Hilali-Khan

And who is more astray than one who calls (invokes) besides God, such as will not answer him till the Day of Resurrection, and who are (even) unaware of their calls (invocations) to them? S. 46:5 Hilali-Khan

This next text further says that even if there are others who can hear they still would be incapable of helping those who call upon them:

He merges the night into the day (i.e. the decrease in the hours of the night are added to the hours of the day), and He merges the day into the night (i.e. the decrease in the hours of the day are added to the hours of the night). And He has subjected the sun and the moon, each runs its course for a term appointed. Such is God your Lord; His is the kingdom. And those, whom you invoke or call upon instead of Him, own not even a Qitmîr (the thin membrane over the date-stone). If you invoke (or call upon) them, they hear not your call, and if (in case) they were to hear, they could not grant it (your request) to you. And on the Day of Resurrection, they will disown your worshipping them. And none can inform you (O Muhammad) like Him Who is the All-Knower (of each and everything). S. 35:13-14 Hilali-Khan

The only problem with this position is that traditional Islam permits praying to others besides Allah. For instance, there is a practice known as tawassul which refers to seeking Allah's aid through the mediation of others, specifically those who are no longer physically alive such as Muhammad. As one Muslim source says:

Supplicating Allah by means of an intermediary, whether it be a living person, dead person, a good deed, or a name or Attribute of Allah Most High. The scholar, YUSUF RIFA'I, says: I here want

to convey the position, attested to by compelling legal evidence, of the orthodox majority of Sunni Muslims on the subject of supplicating Allah through an intermediary (tawassul), and so I say (and Allah alone gives success) that since there is no disagreement among scholars that supplicating Allah through an intermediary is in principle legally valid, the discussion of its details merely concerns derived rulings that involve interschool differences, unrelated to questions of belief or unbelief, monotheism or associating partners with Allah (shirk); the sphere of the question being limited to permissibility or impermissibility, and its ruling being that it is either lawful or unlawful. There is no difference among groups of Muslims in their consensus on the permissibility of three types of supplicating Allah through an intermediary (tawassul):

(1) TAWASSUL through a living righteous person to Allah Most High, as in the hadith of the blind man with the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) as we shall explain;

(2) The TAWASSUL of a living person to Allah Most High through his own good deeds, as in the hadith of the three people trapped in a cave by a great stone, a hadith related by Imam Bukhari in his "Sahih;"

(3) And the TAWASSUL of a person to Allah Most High through His entity (dhat), names, attributes, and so forth.

Since the legality of these types is agreed upon, there is no reason to set forth the evidence for them. The only area of disagreement is supplicating Allah (tawassul) through a righteous dead person. The majority of the orthodox Sunni Community hold that it is lawful, and have supporting hadith evidence, of which we will content ourselves with the Hadith of the Blind Man, since it is the central pivot upon which the discussion turns. (Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri's *Reliance of the Traveler: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law In Arabic English Text, Commentary And Appendices* edited and translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller [Amana Publications, Beltsville Maryland, revised edition 1994], w40.1-2, pp. 933-935: source)

Some of the prayers offered to Muhammad now that he is dead include:

Tirmidhi relates, through his chain of narrators from 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, that a blind man came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and said, "I've been afflicted in my eyesight, so please pray to Allah for me." The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: "Go make ablution (wudu), perform two rak'as of prayer, and then say:

"Oh Allah, I ask You and turn to You through my Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy; O MUHAMMAD (YA MUHAMMAD), I SEEK YOUR INTERCESSION with my Lord for the return of my eyesight [and in another version: "for my need, that it may be fulfilled. O Allah, grant him intercession for me"]."

The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) added, "And if there is some need, do the same." (Ibid., w40.3, p. 935)

And:

Moreover, Tabarani, in his "al-Mu'jam al saghir," reports a hadith from 'Uthman ibn Hunayf that a man repeatedly visited Uthman ibn Affan (Allah be pleased with him) concerning something he needed, but Uthman paid no attention to him or his need. The man met Ibn Hunayf and complained to him about the matter - this being after the death (wisal) of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and after the caliphates of Abu Bakr and Umar - so Uthman ibn Hunayf, who was one of the Companions who collected hadiths and was learned in the religion of Allah, said: "Go to the place of ablution and perform ablution (wudu), then come to the mosque, perform two rak'as of prayer therein, and say:

'O Allah, I ask You and turn to You through our Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy; O MUHAMMAD (YA MUHAMMAD), I TURN THROUGH YOU to my Lord, that He may fulfill my need,' and mention your need. Then come so that I can go with you [to the caliph Uthman]." So the man left and did as he had been told, then went to the door of Uthman ibn Affan (Allah be pleased with him), and the doorman came, took him by the hand, brought him to Uthman ibn Affan, and seated him next to him on a cushion. 'Uthman asked, "What do you need?" and the man mentioned what he wanted, and Uthman accomplished it for him, then he said, "I hadn't remembered your need until just now,"

adding, "Whenever you need something, just mention it." Then, the man departed, met Uthman ibn Hunayf, and said to him, "May Allah reward you! He didn't see to my need or pay any attention to me until you spoke with him." Uthman ibn Hunayf replied, "By Allah, I didn't speak to him, but I have seen a blind man come to the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) and complain to him of the loss of his eyesight. The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, 'Can you not bear it?' and the man replied, 'O Messenger of Allah, I do not have anyone to lead me around, and it is a great hardship for me.' The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) told him, 'Go to the place of ablution and perform ablution (wudu), then pray two rak'as of prayer and make the supplications.'" Ibn Hunayf went on, "By Allah, we didn't part company or speak long before the man returned to us as if nothing had ever been wrong with him."

This is an explicit, unequivocal text from a prophetic Companion proving the legal validity of tawassul through the dead. The account has been classified as rigorously authenticated (SAHIH) by Baihaqi, Mundhiri, and Haythami. (Ibid., w40.4, pp. 936-937; bold, capital and underline emphasis ours)

Not only did Muslims pray to and through Muhammad, they also invoked Allah on the merits or the religious standing of others:

III: People asking the Imam to ask for rain when there is a drought

963. It is related that the father of 'Abdullah ibn Dinar said, "I heard Ibn 'Umar reciting the poem of Abu Talib:

Faultless, he is asked, by his noble face, to pray for rain,  
A support for the orphans, a defence for the widows."

It is related that Salim said that his father (Ibn 'Umar) said, "Sometimes I remembered the words of the poet while looking at the face of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he was praying for rain. He did not get down until the rain was flowing in every gutter:

Faultless, he is asked, by his noble face, to pray for rain,

A support for the orphans, a defence for the widows.

Those were the words of Abu Talib."

964. It is related from Anas, "If there was a drought, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab would ask al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdu'l-Muttalib to do the rain prayer. He would say, 'O Allah, we seek intercession with You by Your Prophet and we ask You for rain. We seek intercession with You by the uncle of our Prophet, so give us rain!'" He added, "And they were given rain." (Aisha Bewley, Sahih of al-Bukhari Collection, Chapter 21. The Rain Prayer; source; bold and underline emphasis ours)

Now notice how this Salafi version of Sahih al-Bukhari by Muhammad Muhsin Khan translates these narrations:

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Dinar: My father said, "I heard Ibn 'Umar reciting the poetic verses of Abu Talib: And a white (person) (i.e. the Prophet) who is requested to pray for rain and who takes care of the orphans and is the guardian of widows." Salim's father (Ibn 'Umar) said, "The following poetic verse occurred to my mind while I was looking at the face of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) while he was praying for rain. He did not get down till the rain water flowed profusely from every roof-g utter: And a white (person) who is requested to pray for rain and who takes care of the orphans and is the guardian of widows ... And these were the words of Abu Talib." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 17, Number 122)

Narrated Anas: Whenever drought threatened them, 'Umar bin Al-Khattab, used to ask Al-Abbas bin 'Abdul Muttalib to invoke Allah for rain. He used to say, "O Allah! We used to ask our Prophet to invoke You for rain, and You would bless us with rain, and now we ask his uncle to invoke You for rain. O Allah! Bless us with rain."(1) And so it would rain. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 17, Number 123)

Sunni writer Gibril Foaud Haddad has some harsh things to say of Khan's translation:

Note that in his translation of Bukhari (2:65), Muhammad Muhsin Khan alters the wording of the hadith to read: "A white person WHO IS REQUESTED TO PRAY FOR RAIN" in place of

"by whose face rain is sought." This is tahrif i.e. textual and semantic manipulation of the most important source in Islam after the Qur'an. (Tawassul of `Umar through al-`Abbas (Allah be pleased with them); source)

The reason why Khan rendered the Arabic in this manner is because, as a Salafi, he rejects the concept of tawassul as shirk, or as the sin of associating partners with Allah.

Still others take Umar's comments that he invoked Allah through Abbas as proof that Muslims are forbidden to seek Muhammad's mediation now that he is dead. After all, if Muslims were permitted to ask the dead for help then why did Umar seek Abbas' intercession instead of Muhammad's, unless such actions were prohibited?

Yet there is a way in which Umar's actions can be reconciled with praying to Muhammad. According to one source, when a Muslim asked the members of Muhammad's family to pray for him they did so by invoking Muhammad's intercession:

Abdullah bin Qurt narrates...

I then departed from the Masjid via Ethiopia Gate and said to myself, "I will commit a grave error if I fail to make salam at the tomb of Rasulullah, for I do not know whether or not I will see it again."

So I went to the room where 'Aishah was sitting at the grave. 'Ali and al-'Abbas were also present with al-Husayn sitting in 'Ali's lap and al-Hasan in al-'Abbas's lap. They were reciting Suratul-An'am while 'Ali was reciting Surah Hud. I made salam to Rasulullah.

Ali: O Ibn Qurt, are you going to Syria?

Ibn Qurt: Yes, O cousin of Rasulullah. I think that once I reach there the two armies will already be deeply embroiled in fighting. They will see me coming without help or reinforcements. I really fear that they will become weak and frightened. I wish that I could reach them before they fight so that I can at least advise them and counsel them with patience.

Ali: So what is stopping you from asking 'Umar to make du'a for you?...

Ibn Qurt: I am well aware of all these virtues of 'Umar which you have mentioned, but in addition I would like your du'a and the du'a of al-'Abbas, the paternal uncle of Rasulullah, especially here at the noble tomb of Rasulullah.

Al-Abbas raised his hand in supplication. Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Aishah (and Hafsa and Umm Salamah who had also arrived) joined them. He prayed, "O Allah, we seek intercession THROUGH THIS CHOSEN PROPHET AND SELECTED MESSENGER THROUGH WHOM ADAM ALSO SOUGHT INTERCERSSION and then You forgave his error. O Allah, make the road easy for Abdullah and fold up the long distances for him. Help the Sahabah of Your Prophet with victory. You are the Hearer of Du'a."

He then said, "Go Abdullah, for it is unlikely that Allah will reject the du'a of Umar, Abbas, Ali, al-Hasan, and the wives of Rasulullah, especially when they have interceded through the best of all creation." (Al-Imam al-Waqidi, 'The Islamic Conquest of Syria', A Translation of Futuhusham: The Inspiring History of the Sahabah's Conquest of Syria, translated by Mawlana Sulayman al-Kindi [Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., London 2005], Part 3: Al-Yarmuk, pp. 287-288; capital and underline emphasis ours)

The foregoing may explain why Umar's appeal to al-Abbas' prayers does not rule out the permissibility for Muslims to pray to Muhammad now that he is dead since a Muslim can argue that Umar wanted a living member of Muhammad's family to invoke their prophet due to their intimate biological ties. He may have felt that a family member praying to Muhammad would be more acceptable to Allah than if someone else had prayed to their deceased prophet. We will have more to say about Muhammad's present condition shortly.

## **5. Seeking Help and Intercession from other than Allah?**

The foregoing leads to a discussion of whether the Quran and Islamic sources permit Muslims to seek the help of others besides Allah. There are certain passages which suggest that they can:

O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him. Seek the means of approach to Him, and strive hard in His Cause as much as you can. So that you may be successful. S. 5:35 Hilali-Khan

Some see in this text an implicit permission to beseech Allah through intermediaries, by the mediation of righteous prophets and believers. These next texts provide additional support for this understanding:

He said: "That (wealth, authority and power) in which my Lord had established me is better (than your tribute). So help me with strength (of men), I will erect between you and them a barrier." S. 18:95 Hilali-Khan

And he entered the city at a time of unawareness of its people, and he found there two men fighting, - one of his party (his religion - from the Children of Israel), and the other of his foes. The man of his (own) party asked him for help (faistaghathahu) against his foe, so Musa (Moses) struck him with his fist and killed him. He said: "This is of Shaitan's (Satan) doing, verily, he is a plain misleading enemy." S. 28:15 Hilali-Khan

The hadiths clearly teach that the righteous do seek the aid of prophets and will receive it, at least on the day of judgment:

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar: The Prophet said, "A man keeps on asking others for something till he comes on the Day of Resurrection without any piece of flesh on his face." The Prophet added, "On the Day of Resurrection, the Sun will come near (to the people) to such an extent that the sweat will reach up to the middle of the ears, so, when all the people are in that state, they will ask Adam FOR HELP, and then Moses, and then Muhammad (p.b.u.h)." The sub-narrator added, "Muhammad will intercede with Allah to judge amongst the people. He will proceed on till he will hold the ring of the door (of Paradise) and then Allah will exalt him to Maqam Mahmud (the privilege of intercession, etc.). And all the people of the gathering will send their praises to Allah. (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 24, Number 553)

Yet there are other passages that strongly state that there are no intercessors or helpers besides Allah since he is sufficient:

Allah has full knowledge of your enemies, and Allah is Sufficient as a Wali (Protector), and Allah is Sufficient as a Helper. S. 4:45 Hilali-Khan

Allah it is He Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them in six Days. Then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty). You (mankind) have none, besides Him, as a Wali (protector or helper etc.) or an intercessor. Will you not then remember (or be admonished)? S. 32:4 Hilali-Khan

The Quran even frowns upon those who seek help from someone other than Allah:

Do then those who disbelieve think that they can take My slaves [i.e., the angels, God's Messengers, Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), etc.] as Auliya (lords, gods, protectors, etc.) besides Me? Verily, We have prepared Hell as an entertainment for the disbelievers (in the Oneness of God Islamic Monotheism). S. 18:102 Hilali-Khan

Or have they taken (for worship) Auliya' (guardians, supporters, helpers, protectors, etc.) besides Him? But Allah, He ALONE is the Wali (Protector, etc.). And it is He Who gives life to the dead, and He is Able to do all things. S. 42:9 Hilali-Khan

This compounds the problem since how can the ahadith literature claim that the Muslims will seek the protection of the prophets if Allah will send people to hell for this very thing?

## **6. Do the Dead Hear or Not?**

Now if those who have died are able to answer prayers and intercede for those living on the earth then this implies that they are alive in some dimension (whether heaven or the grave) and are cognizant of such invocations. The Quran seems to support this view since there are examples of messengers communicating with the dead such as Salih and Shuaib:

So they hamstrung the She-camel and turned in disdain from the commandment of their Lord, saying, 'O Salih, bring us that thou promisest us, if thou art an Envoy.' So the earthquake seized them, and morning found them in their habitation fallen prostrate. So he turned his back on them, and said, 'O my people, I have

delivered to you the Message of my Lord, and advised you sincerely; but you do not love sincere advisers.' S. 7:77-79 Arberry

Said the Council of those of his people who disbelieved, 'Now, if you follow Shuaib, assuredly in that case you will be losers.' So the earthquake seized them, and morning found them in their habitation fallen prostrate, those who cried lies to Shuaib, as if never they dwelt there; those who cried lies to Shuaib, they were the losers. So he turned his back on them, and said, 'O my people, I have delivered to you the Messages of my Lord, and advised you sincerely; how should I grieve for a people of unbelievers?' S. 7:90-93 Arberry

The above citations claim that both Salih and Shuaib addressed their people after Allah had destroyed them, which suggests that the dead can still hear. The next examples go even further and say that the dead do hear:

Narrated Ibn 'Umar: The Prophet looked at the people of the well (the well in which the bodies of the pagans killed in the Battle of Badr were thrown) and said, "Have you found true what your Lord promised you?" Somebody said to him, "You are addressing dead people." He replied, "You do not hear better than they but they cannot reply." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 23, Number 452)

Anas b. Malik reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) let the dead bodies of the unbelievers who fought in Badr (lie unburied) for three days. He then came to them and sat by their side and called them and said: O Abu Jahl b. Hisham, O Umayya b. Khalaf, O Utba b. Rab'ila, O Shaiba b. Rabi'a, have you not found what your Lord had promised with you to be correct? As for me, I have found the promises of my Lord to be (perfectly) correct. Umar listened to the words of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) and said: Allah's Messenger, how do they listen and respond to you? They are dead and their bodies have decayed. Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: By Him in Whose Hand is my life, what I am saying to them, even you cannot hear more distinctly than they, but they lack the power to reply. Then he commanded that they should be buried in the well of Badr. (Sahih Muslim, Book 040, Number 6869)

Moreover, the Quran denies that the martyrs are dead:

And say not of those who are slain in the way of God: "They are dead." Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not. S. 2:154 Y. Ali

Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; They rejoice in the bounty provided by God: And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve. S. 3:169-170 Y. Ali

In other narrations Muhammad claimed to have seen Moses praying in his grave!

Anas b. Malik reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: I came. And in the narration transmitted on the authority of Haddib (the words are): I happened to pass by Moses on the occasion of the Night journey near the red mound (and found him) saying his prayer in his grave. (Sahih Muslim, Book 030, Number 5858)

Anas reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: I happened to pass by Moses as he was busy in saying prayer in his grave, and in the hadith transmitted on the authority of 'Isa there is an addition of these words: I happened to pass on the occasion of the Night journey. In the hadith pertaining to Yunus (peace be upon him) the words of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) are: It is not meet for a servant that he should say, "I am better than Yunus (Jonah) son of Matta." (Sahih Muslim, Book 030, Number 5859)

These texts seem to suggest that the dead, because they still exist in another dimension or in a different manner, are capable of knowing events which occur in the physical realm.

Yet other verses and narrations emphatically state that the dead cannot hear and therefore do not know:

Surely you do not make the dead to hear, and you do not make the deaf to hear the call when they go back retreating. S. 27:80 Shakir

Until, when death comes to one of them (those who join partners with Allah), he says: "My Lord! Send me back, So that I may do good in that which I have left behind!" No! It is but a word that he speaks, and behind them is Barzakh (a barrier) until the Day when they will be resurrected. S. 23:99-100 Hilali-Khan

For verily thou (Muhammad) canst not make the dead to hear, nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call when they have turned to flee. S. 30:52 Pickthall

Neither are the living and the dead alike. Surely Allah makes whom He pleases hear, and you cannot make those hear WHO ARE IN THE GRAVES. S. 35:22 Shakir

Aisha, Muhammad's beloved, used the above references to refute the claim that the dead corpses at Badr could actually hear Muhammad speak to them:

Narrated 'Aisha: The Prophet said, "They now realize that what I used to tell them was the truth." And Allah said, 'Verily! You cannot make the dead to hear (i.e. benefit them, and similarly the disbelievers) nor can you make the deaf hear.' (27.80). (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 23, Number 453)

Narrated Hisham's father: It was mentioned before 'Aisha that Ibn 'Umar attributed the following statement to the Prophet "The dead person is punished in the grave because of the crying and lamentation Of his family." On that, 'Aisha said, "But Allah's Apostle said, 'The dead person is punished for his crimes and sins while his family cry over him then." She added, "And this is similar to the statement of Allah's Apostle when he stood by the (edge of the) well which contained the corpses of the pagans killed at Badr, 'They hear what I say.' She added, "But he said now they know very well what I used to tell them was the truth." 'Aisha then recited: 'You cannot make the dead hear.' (30.52) and 'You cannot make those who are in their Graves, hear you.' (35.22) that is, when they had taken their places in the (Hell) Fire. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 316)

Narrated Ibn Umar: The Prophet stood at the well of Badr (which contained the corpses of the pagans) and said, "Have you found true what your Lord promised you?" Then he further said,

"They now hear what I say." This was mentioned before 'Aisha and she said, "But the Prophet said, 'Now they know very well that what I used to tell them was the truth.'" Then she recited (the Holy Verse):-- "You cannot make the dead hear..." till the end of Verse. (30.52) (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 317)

Hisham narrated on the authority of his father that it was mentioned to 'A'isha that Ibn 'Umar had narrated as marfu' hadith from the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) that the dead would be punished in the grave because of the lamentation of his family for him. Upon this she said: He (Ibn 'Umar) missed (the point). The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) had (in fact) said: He (the dead) is punished for his faults or for his sins, and the members of his family are wailing for him now. (This misunderstanding of Ibn 'Umar is similar to his saying:) The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) stood by the well in which were lying the dead bodies of those polytheists who had been killed on the Day of Badr, and he said to them what he had to say, i. e.: They hear what I say. But he (Ibn 'Umar) misunderstood. The Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) had only said: They (the dead) understand THAT WHAT I USED TO SAY TO THEM was truth. She then recited: "Certainly, thou canst not make the dead hear the call" (xxvii. 80), nor can you make those hear who are in the graves, nor can you inform them when they have taken their seats in Hell. (Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 2027)

Another Muslim added his own explanation in what seems to be an obvious attempt of trying to reconcile these conflicting reports:

Narrated Abu Talha: On the day of Badr, the Prophet ordered that the corpses of twenty four leaders of Quraish should be thrown into one of the dirty dry wells of Badr. (It was a habit of the Prophet that whenever he conquered some people, he used to stay at the battle-field for three nights. So, on the third day of the battle of Badr, he ordered that his she-camel be saddled, then he set out, and his companions followed him saying among themselves, "Definitely he (i.e. the Prophet) is proceeding for some great purpose." When he halted at the edge of the well, he addressed the corpses of the Quraish infidels by their names and

their fathers' names, "O so-and-so, son of so-and-so and O so-and-so, son of so-and-so! Would it have pleased you if you had obeyed Allah and His Apostle? We have found true what our Lord promised us. Have you too found true what your Lord promised you?" 'Umar said, "O Allah's Apostle! You are speaking to bodies that have no souls!" Allah's Apostle said, "By Him in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, you do not hear what I say better than they do." (Qatada said, "Allah brought them to life (again) to let them hear him, to reprimand them and slight them and take revenge over them and caused them to feel remorseful and regretful.") (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 59, Number 314)

Qatada's explanation actually presupposes that the dead cannot hear and this is why it required a supernatural act on the part of Allah to bring them back to life.

The Quran further shows that the dead have no knowledge of events that took place after their demise:

One day will God gather the apostles together, and ask: "What was the response ye received (from men to your teaching)?" They will say: "We have no knowledge: it is Thou Who knowest in full all that is hidden." S. 5:109

And (remember) when God will say (on the Day of Resurrection): "O 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men: 'Worship me and my mother as two gods besides God?'" He will say: "Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, You would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner-self though I do not know what is in Yours, truly, You, only You, are the All-Knower of all that is hidden and unseen. Never did I say to them aught except what You (God) did command me to say: 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a Witness to all things. (This is a great admonition and warning to the Christians of the whole world). If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily You, only You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." S. 5:116-118  
Hilali-Khan

Jesus allegedly says that he only witnessed the deeds of the people while he was among them, but when he was taken out of this world Allah was the one who watched and witnessed their deeds. The foregoing seems to be pretty clear: The prophets have no knowledge of the events which transpired after them. This leads us to our next point.

### **7. What Condition is Muhammad in Exactly?**

The Quran expressly teaches that Muhammad will share the same fate as those before him and eventually die:

And Muhammad is but a messenger. Verily all Messengers have passed away before him. If then he dies or is slain, will you turn back on your heels? And he who turns back on his heels shall not harm ALLAH at all. And ALLAH will certainly reward the grateful. S. 3:144 Sher Ali

Verily, you (O Muhammad) will die and verily, they (too) will die. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, you will be disputing before your Lord. S. 39:30-31 Hilali-Khan

Many of Muhammad's followers were shocked when he died and refused to believe it, that is until these citations were quoted:

Narrated 'Aisha: (the wife of the Prophet) Allah's Apostle died while Abu Bakr was at a place called As-Sunah (Al-'Aliya) 'Umar stood up and said, "By Allah! Allah's Apostle is not dead!" 'Umar (later on) said, "By Allah! Nothing occurred to my mind except that." He said, "Verily! Allah will resurrect him and he will cut the hands and legs of some men." Then Abu Bakr came and uncovered the face of Allah's Apostle, kissed him and said, "Let my mother and father be sacrificed for you, (O Allah's Apostle), you are good in life and in death. By Allah in Whose Hands my life is, Allah will never make you taste death twice." Then he went out and said, "O oath-taker! Don't be hasty." When Abu Bakr spoke, 'Umar sat down. Abu Bakr praised and glorified Allah and said, No doubt! Whoever worshipped Muhammad, then Muhammad is dead, but whoever worshipped Allah, then Allah is Alive and shall never die." Then he recited Allah's Statement: "(O Muhammad) Verily you will die, and they also will die." (39.30) He also recited:

"Muhammad is no more than an Apostle; and indeed many Apostles have passed away, before him, If he dies Or is killed, will you then Turn back on your heels? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least Harm will he do to Allah And Allah will give reward to those Who are grateful." (3.144)

The people wept loudly, and the Ansar were assembled with Sad bin 'Ubada in the shed of Bani Saida. They said (to the emigrants): "There should be one 'Amir from us and one from you." Then Abu Bakr, Umar bin Al-Khattab and Abu U'baida bin Al-Jarrah went to them. 'Umar wanted to speak but Abu Bakr stopped him. 'Umar later on used to say, "By Allah, I intended only to say something that appealed to me and I was afraid that Abu Bakr would not speak so well." Then Abu Bakr spoke and his speech was very eloquent. He said in his statement, "We are the rulers and you (Ansars) are the ministers (i.e. advisers)." Hubab bin Al-Mundhir said, "No, by Allah we won't accept this. But there must be a ruler from us and a ruler from you." Abu Bakr said, "No, we will be the rulers and you will be the ministers, for they (i.e. Quraish) are the best family amongst the 'Arabs and of best origin. So you should elect either 'Umar or Abu 'Ubaida bin Al-Jarrah as your ruler." 'Umar said (to Abu Bakr), "No but we elect you, for you are our chief and the best amongst us and the most beloved of all of us to Allah's Apostle." So 'Umar took Abu Bakr's hand and gave the pledge of allegiance and the people too gave the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr. Someone said, "You have killed Sad bin Ubada." 'Umar said, "Allah has killed him." 'Aisha said (in another narration), "When the Prophet was on his death-bed) he looked up and said thrice, '(Amongst) the Highest Companion (See Qur'an 4.69)." Aisha said, "Allah benefited the people by their two speeches." 'Umar frightened the people some of whom were hypocrites whom Allah caused to abandon Islam because of 'Umar's speech. Then Abu Bakr led the people to True Guidance and acquainted them with the right path they were to follow so that they went out reciting:-- "Muhammad is no more than an Apostle and indeed many Apostles have passed away before him..." (3.144) (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 5, Book 57, Number 19)

But other citations claim that Muhammad has and will have knowledge now that he is dead:

They will present their excuses to you when ye return to them. Say thou: "Present no excuses: we shall not believe you: God hath already informed us of the true state of matters concerning you: It is your actions that God and His Apostle will observe: in the end will ye be brought back to Him Who knoweth what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did." S. 9:94

And say (unto them): Act! Allah will behold your actions, and (so will) His messenger and the believers, and ye will be brought back to the Knower of the Invisible and the Visible, and He will tell you what ye used to do. S. 9:105 Pickthall

And know that among you is God's Apostle: were he, in many matters, to follow your (wishes), ye would certainly fall into misfortune: But God has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you Unbelief, wickedness, and rebellion: such indeed are those who walk in righteousness;- S. 49:7 Y. Ali

These texts indicate that Allah makes known to Muhammad the actions of the people, and is present among them. Even though these verses obviously refer to Muhammad's earthly sojourn, Muslims quote them to support their belief that Allah can communicate information to Muhammad now that he is dead. As GF Haddad writes:

There are other verses that affirm that the Prophet, sall-Allahu `alayhi wa sallam, hears and sees the deeds of human beings. Allah Most High said: [And know that the Messenger of Allah is among you] (49:7). In the verses [Allah and His Messenger will see your conduct] (9:94) and [Act! Allah will behold your actions, and (so will) His Messenger and the believers] (9:105), the Prophet's, sall-Allahu `alayhi wa sallam, perception is put on a par with that of the Lord of the worlds Who sees and encompasses all on the one hand and, on the other, that of all the living believers. (Haddad, "Hâdir Nâzir", Omnipresence of the Prophet sall-Allahu `alayhi wa sallam, Standing During Mawlid; source)

Here are other passages that are often quoted to prove this point:

Thus, have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Apostle a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the Qibla to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Apostle from those who would turn on their heels (From the Faith). Indeed it was (A change) momentous, except to those guided by God. And never would God Make your faith of no effect. For God is to all people Most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful. S. 2:143 Y. Ali

But how (will it be with them) when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring thee (O Muhammad) a witness against these? S. 4:41 Pickthall

And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Apostle may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to God! He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help! S. 22:78

The foregoing verses expressly say that Muhammad will be a witness of what his community and the other nations have done, which presuppose that he will have knowledge of their condition even though he has been dead for centuries.

The hadith literature provides additional support for this position:

Narrated Abdullah: The Prophet said, "I am your predecessor at the Lake-Fount (Kauthar) and some men amongst you will be brought to me, and when I will try to hand them some water, they will be pulled away from me by force whereupon I will say, 'O Lord, my companions!' Then the Almighty will say, 'You do not know what they did after you left, they introduced new things into the religion after you.'" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 88, Volume 9, Number 173)

Narrated Sahl bin Sad: I heard the Prophet saying, "I am your predecessor at the Lake-Fount (Kauthar), and whoever will come to it, will drink from it, and whoever will drink from it, will never

become thirsty after that. There will come to me some people whom I know and they know me, and then a barrier will be set up between me and them." Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri added that the Prophet further said: "I will say those people are from me. It will be said, 'You do not know what changes and new things they did after you.' Then I will say, 'Far removed (from mercy), far removed (from mercy), those who changed (the religion) after me!" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 88, Volume 9, Number 174)

The above incident is apparently thought to take place after the dead are raised for the final judgment. Muhammad relays information regarding the time the Muslims will gather to meet with him, which shows that he has knowledge of future events. Yet these ahadith pose a contradiction: If Muhammad will not know what certain Muslims did after him then how did he know that there would be people who would make changes to his religion? Does this mean that he will forget on the day of judgment that there would be some (many?) that would come to him who, although professing to be Muslim, introduced changes to his religion? Or does this mean that he was told beforehand that people would bring in changes to his religion yet he wasn't told who these people will be or what changes they will make?

Yet in our view, Allah saying to Muhammad, "You do NOT know what they did after you left,...", implies that Muhammad did not perceive the words and deeds of his former companions while being in the grave. Why else would he be so surprised and needs to be informed about the reason why some particular people are now separated from him?

In these narrations Muhammad claims some general knowledge of the future, i.e. that such an event will take place, but not which of his companions this will be. Muhammad's great surprise on that day implies that he does not know now (in his earthly life) who it will be that is going to fall away from the true faith after his death. And on that "last day" he still does not know who and why until Allah makes the separation and then explains to Muhammad the reasons after he complains about that separation! In our opinion, this is the natural understanding of these narrations.

Yet, many Muslim interpret these narrations to mean just the opposite. Since Muhammad relays information regarding the time the Muslims will gather to meet with him, this shows that he has knowledge of future events. The above statement "you do not know" are explained away as a rhetorical device for the sake of dramatic effect. For example, GF Haddad writes:

The Prophet's designation of them as "My Companions" and the reply of the angels: "Do you not know..." are meant as didactic disclosures to the hypocrites that although they enter into his mercy in this world, they will not be allowed to enter it in the next unless they repent beforehand. The style of this disclosure is dramatic and develops as if from a state of ignorance to a state of discovery in order for the disclosure to be more effective. However, such ignorance-then-discovery are not literal for the Prophet upon him blessings and peace. How could they be when he is the one who is prophesying that this shall take place?? (Source)

In our view this interpretation seems highly artificial and a very weak attempt to explain away the obvious meaning of these narrations simply because they contradict a belief in Muhammad's awareness of all that goes on in the Muslim community.

Whatever the case, if Muhammad has or is given knowledge of events that transpire after his death then this seems to provide support for the position of some Muslims that Muhammad hears and answers invocations made to him. In fact, there are narrations which even say that Allah actually returns Muhammad's soul to his body in order to greet those who pray to him:

Narrated AbuHurayrah: The Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him) said: If any one of you greets me, Allah returns my soul to me and I respond to the greeting. (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 10, Number 2036)

Thus, it seems pretty obvious that Islam has elevated Muhammad to a divine status, portraying him as sharing in Allah's attribute of omniscience in order to answer prayers!

## **8. A Physical Image and Symbol of Allah?**

Muslims claim that Allah cannot be represented by any visible image and yet, astonishingly, there are narrations which say that Allah created Adam in his image, meaning in the image of Allah!

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Allah created Adam in HIS IMAGE, sixty cubits (about 30 metres) in height. When He created him, He said (to him), 'Go and greet that group of angels sitting there, and listen what they will say in reply to you, for that will be your greeting and the greeting of your offspring.' Adam (went and) said, 'As-Salamu alaikum (Peace be upon you).' They replied, 'As-Salamu 'Alaika wa Rahmatullah (Peace and Allah's Mercy be on you).' So they increased 'wa Rahmatullah' The Prophet added, 'So whoever will enter Paradise, will be of the shape and picture of Adam. Since then the creation of Adam's (offspring) (i.e. stature of human beings) is being diminished continuously up to the present time." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 74, Number 246, as translated in Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Quran In the English Language - A Summarized Version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir with comments from Sahih Al-Bukhari, Summarized in One Volume By Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, Ph.D. Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, pp. 142-143, fn. 1, pocket size edition; bold and capital emphasis ours)

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, created Adam in His own image with His length of sixty cubits, and as He created him He told him to greet that group, and that was a party of angels sitting there, and listen to the response that they give him, for it would form his greeting and that of his offspring. He then went away and said: Peace be upon you! They (the angels) said: May there be peace upon you and the Mercy of Allah, and they made an addition of "Mercy of Allah." So he who would get into Paradise would get in the form of Adam, his length being sixty cubits, then the people who followed him continued to diminish in size up to this day. (Sahih Muslim, Book 040, Number 6809)

This hadith has been transmitted on the authority of Abu Huraira and in the hadith transmitted on the authority of Ibn Hatim Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) is reported to

have said: When any one of you fights with his brother, he should avoid his face for Allah created Adam in His own image. (Sahih Muslim, Book 032, Number 6325)

These ahadith have caused trouble for some Muslims since they find it difficult to reconcile these statements with their belief that creatures do not resemble Allah. They interpret these reports to mean that Allah created Adam in Adam's image, i.e. in the shape and form that Allah had ordained for Adam! Note, for instance, how the following online version of Sahih al-Bukhari translated the hadith:

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Allah created Adam in his complete shape and form (directly), sixty cubits (about 30 meters) in height... (Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 74, Number 246)

Other Muslims, such as the Salafis, have no problem admitting that these narrations do indeed affirm that Adam was created in Allah's image:

Ibn Abi Aasim narrated in al-Sunnah (517) that Ibn Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not say 'May Allah deform your face' [a form of cursing in Arabic], for the son of Adam was created in the image of the Most Merciful." Shaykh Abd-Allah ibn al-Ghunayman (may Allah preserve him) said: "This hadeeth is *sahih* and was classed as such by the imams and by Imam Ahmad and Ishaq ibn Rahawayh. Those who classed it as *da'eef* have no evidence, except for the view of Ibn Khuzaymah, but those who classed it as *saheeh* are more knowledgeable than him.

Ibn Abi Aasim also narrated (516) that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When any one of you fights let him avoid the face, for Allah created Adam in the image of His Face." Shaykh al-Albani said: its *isnaad* is *saheeh*.

These two hadeeth indicate that the pronoun in the phrase "in His image" refers to Allah, may He be glorified...

From these ahadeeth we learn that it is proven that Allaah has an image (*soorah* in Arabic), in a manner that befits Him, may He

be glorified and exalted. His image is one of His attributes which cannot be likened to the attributes of created beings, just as His essence cannot be likened to their essence...

And he [Ibn Taymiyya] said: "There was no dispute among the salaf of the first three generations that the pronoun in the hadeeth refers to Allah, and it is narrated through many isnads from many of the Sahabah. The contexts of the ahadeeth all indicate that... but when al-Jahamiyyah became widespread in the third century AH, a group began to say that the pronoun refers to something other than Allaah, and this was transmitted from a group of scholars who are known to have knowledge and to follow the Sunnah in most of their affairs, such as Abu Thawr, Ibn Khuzaymah, Abu'l-Shaykh al-Asfahaani and others. Hence they were denounced by the imams of Islam and other Sunni scholars." ...

The Prophet's words, "Adam was created in His image" means that Allah created Adam in His image, for He has a face, an eye, a hand, and a foot, and Adam had a face, an eye, a hand, and a foot... but that does not mean that these things are exactly the same. There is some similarity, but it is not exactly the same. Similarly the first group to enter Paradise are likened to the moon, but they are not exactly the same. This confirms the view of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, who say that none of the attributes of Allaah can be likened to the attributes of created beings, without distorting or misinterpreting, or discussing how or likening Him to His creation.

See Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitah by Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Uthaymeen, 1/107, 293...

Moreover, the black stone, which is fixed to the Kabah, is said to actually be Allah's hand.

... When we reached Rukn Aswad (the Black Stone) he said, "O Abu Muhammad, "What (command) has reached you regarding this Black Stone?" Ata' said: Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) related to me that he heard Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying, "He who touches it, in fact touches THE HAND OF THE MERCIFUL (Allah)." ... (Sunan Ibn-I-Majah (Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Yazid Ibn-I-Maja Al-Qazwini), English version by Muhammad Tufail Ansari [Kazi

Publications, Lahore (Pakistan), 1st edition 1995], Volume IV, Chapter NO. XXXII: Excellence of Tawaf (Circumambulation), Hadith Number 2957, p. 252; bold and capital emphasis ours)

GF Haddad notes: "The Black Stone is the right hand of Allah Most High." Ibn Qutayba in *Ta'wil Mukhtalif al-Hadith* (1972 ed. p. 215=1995 ed. p. 198, 262) said that it was a saying of Ibn 'Abbas and relates a saying of 'A'isha that the Black Stone is the depository of the covenant of human souls with Allah on the Day of Promise (*alastu bi rabbikum*). He interprets the Black Stone as representing the place where one declares one's pledge of fidelity to the Sovereign. Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bari* (1959 ed. 3:463 #1520) cites al-Khattabi's and al-Muhibb al-Tabari's similar interpretations. Al-Qurtubi said in *al-Asna fi Sharh Asma' Allah al-Husna* (2:90-91): "It means that the Black Stone has the standing (*manzila*) of the Right Hand of Allah. metaphorically speaking." (Haddad, *Problematic hadiths and various questions*; source)

It will even come to life on the Day of Judgment!

2944. Sa'd b. Jubair (Allah be pleased with him) is reported to have said, "I heard Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) saying that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings Allah be upon him) said, "This Stone must come on the Day of Resurrection and it will have two eyes to see with and a tongue to talk with bearing witness for him who caressed it with Truth (Islam)." (*Sunan Ibn-I-Majah*, Volume IV, Chapter NO. XVII: Caressing The (Black) Stone (Fixed in a Wall of Ka'ba), pp. 244-245; bold and underline emphasis ours)

The Quran also refers to the Ark of the Covenant that God commanded Moses to fashion, which symbolized God's throne and his presence among his people:

And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the covenant, with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels. In this is a symbol for you if ye indeed have faith." S. 2:248 Y. Ali

Hence, the foregoing makes it rather clear that the Quran and Islamic narrations do acknowledge visible images for Allah!

## **9. Summarizing the Contradictions**

In order to assist the readers in remembering all the issues involved and the gross problems presented by the Islamic sources, we will provide a summary of the preceding data.

The Islamic concept of Allah's unity teaches that he alone is to be served, that he alone is to be feared. Yet the Quran commands Muslims to fear others besides Allah such as the relationships established by the womb.

Although the Quran expressly says that persons are to slave only for Allah, it also allows Muslims to own or be slaves, which means that they are not slaves to Allah alone.

Part of the service rendered to Allah alone includes bowing or prostration. Allah violates his own command of worshiping none but him by commanding creatures to bow or prostrate to other creatures.

The Quran says to invoke Allah alone, whereas other texts and references allow Muslims to invoke persons besides Allah such as Muhammad!

Related to this point is the express command of the Quran that Allah alone is a Muslim's helper and intercessor. This is contradicted by other statements which claim that there are others that help and intercede for Muslims, like Muhammad even though he is dead.

If the dead like Muhammad can help and intercede this presupposes that the dead are still conscious and can hear invocations made to them. But other passages expressly deny that the dead can hear since a barrier called Barzakh separates them, and also states that the prophets have no knowledge of the people's response to their message.

The Quran says that there is nothing comparable to Allah, which presupposes that there is no image which can be made of him. The Islamic narrations that say that Adam was created in Allah's image and that the black stone is a symbol of Allah since it

is his hand clearly contradict this belief since they prove that Allah can be depicted and does have (a) visible representation(s).

### **10. Concluding Remarks**

Our somewhat lengthy analysis shows that Islam is not the purest form of monotheism. Rather than present a coherent and consistent picture of the absolute worship of Allah, both the Quran and the Islamic sources teach quite contradictory things regarding Allah's worship, intercession etc. After all, there are references which clearly show that Allah is not the sole object of a Muslim's devotion since there are passages permitting believers to take others along with Allah as intercessors and helpers, and that these other entities actually hear and respond to the invocations made to them. Yet, at the same time, there are passages that expressly deny that believers have any helpers alongside Allah, and plainly forbid Muslims from serving and invoking others with their god.

It is little wonder that there are Muslim groups who hold to contradictory views regarding these very issues, and who accuse the others that disagree with them of distorting what Islam actually teaches. Their differences stem directly from the contradictions and confusion which exist in the Quran and the so-called authentic reference material of Islam.