

A COMPARISON OF MUHAMMAD AND JOSEPH SMITH
IN THE PROPHETIC PATTERN

by

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ABSTRACT

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As early as 1831, critics attacked Joseph Smith by comparing him to Muhammad. Over time, the comparison deepened as critics and scholars observed doctrinal and political similarities between Mormonism and Islam. Later, scholars compared Joseph Smith to Muhammad because both had generated a new religion and there seemed to be several similarities in the lives of Joseph Smith and Muhammad. These and other comparisons between the two men and their religions have been made from 1831 to the present, yet there have been few thorough, non-polemic examinations of Joseph Smith and Muhammad in the typology of prophethood. While notable similarities exist in the lives of many prophets, the unique similarities shared by these two has warranted further inquiry. I argue the comparison, though initially the result of anti-Mormonism, is

justifiable and enlightening. It reveals unique commonalities that occur in the lives of restoration prophets as a result of the role they are divinely called to fulfill. While modern scholarship strongly tends to ignore the possibility of divine influence, I argue that prophetic similarities between Muhammad and Joseph Smith are best explained by divine influence acting in similar circumstances. While I approach the topic in the language of a scholar, this work is intended to contribute in the context of Mormon studies. For Latter-day Saint scholars, a better understanding of Muhammad's mission and role as a prophetic figure could allow us to see him in a different light, not as founder of a false tradition, but as a revelator to his people in his own right, providing the portion of God's knowledge that he was granted, even if incomplete from a Latter-day Saint perspective.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines shared patterns of prophetic typology in the lives of two religious figures: Muhammad and Joseph Smith. I will argue that typological similarities between Muhammad and Joseph Smith fit well within a biblical framework and show that divine influence acted in their lives under somewhat similar circumstances. This examination will also show that Muhammad, like Joseph Smith, fits well into the pattern of a revelator in his own right as he dispensed to his people the portion of God's truth that was granted to him.¹

An analysis of this type is different than earlier comparisons. As early as 1831, anti-Mormons employed an already developed polemical stance against Muhammad to discredit Joseph Smith.² Over time, comparisons, still mostly negative, continued as

¹ Latter-day Saints believe God gives His word in portions to different peoples as they are ready to receive it (Alma 26:37; 29:8). This could explain their view that Muhammad did not receive as much of His word as did Joseph Smith.

² A series of six articles appeared in the Palmyra *Reflector*, ed. Obadiah Dogberry, beginning January 7, 1831 and continuing weekly. The second and fifth of these articles include comparisons of Joseph Smith to Muhammad (articles found in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, 2 vols. [Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1951], 1:283–95). Alexander Campbell, a noted evangelist and founder of the Church of Christ, published several articles. The first appeared on February 7, 1831 in the *Millennial Harbinger*, a monthly periodical published by Campbell in Bethany, Virginia (found in Kirkham, *A New Witness*, 2:107). Campbell stated that the Book of Mormon was no evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet, for Muhammad had also miraculously produced a book. The Reverend Eber D. Howe also compared his view of the deception of Joseph Smith to his views of Muhammad in his *History of Mormonism, or, A faithful account of that singular imposition and delusion: with sketches of the characters of its propagators, to which are added inquiries into the probability that the historical part of the Golden Bible was written by one Solomon Spaulding [i.e. Spaulding], and by him intended to have been published as a romance* (Painesville, NY: published by the author, 1840), 12. Protestant ministers were imitating what Catholics had done to them for years. Catholics had accused Protestants of being like Muhammad by departing from the truth and creating a false system of worship. See Arnold H. Green, "The Muhammad-Joseph Smith Comparison: Subjective Metaphor or a Sociology of

critics and observers pointed out superficial similarities with Islam, often to disparage Mormonism.³ Later, scholars like Eduard Meyer compared Joseph Smith to Muhammad because both had generated a new religion.⁴ Meyer's study was the first to take the comparison beyond the obvious surface similarities.⁵ These and other comparisons between the two men and their religions have been made from 1831 to the present, but most are obviously polemic. Other comparisons are written with poor methodology and fail to examine Joseph Smith and Muhammad in the light of what they claimed to be: divinely inspired men.⁶ Polemic comparisons of the past have rested primarily on similarities of content, such as the polygamous practices and militancy of Muhammad and Joseph Smith. Though some such comparisons may be legitimate, they seem strikingly polemic and superficial when scrutinized. However, as this study examines Muhammad and Joseph Smith through the lens of prophetic typology rather than content,

Prophethood?" in *Mormons and Muslims*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2002), 112.

³ These surface similarities often included the claim of prophethood, plural marriage, militant doctrine, and scripture in addition to the Bible. The similarities are noted but not explored in much depth. See for example D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905); Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861); T.B.H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York City: D. Appleton and Co., 1873).

⁴ Eduard Meyer, *Origin and History of the Mormons: With Reflections on the Beginnings of Islam and Christianity*, trans. Heinz E. Rahde and Eugene Seaich (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1961).

⁵ For example, Meyer examines the divine manifestations both men experienced after a period of perplexity and begins to compare the revelations received (*Origin and History*, 1, 31, 37, 44–48).

⁶ Green asserts that Meyer, who became the main source for the comparison, had a questionable method and purpose—he studied Mormonism to better understand Islam and he studied Islam to learn more about the language and culture of people of the Old Testament. I share Green's assessment that this is poor methodology—studying Mormonism in order to learn about Islam or vice versa will yield inadequate and perhaps very misleading results. Meyer acted under the assumption that events are shaped by the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time that moves through history determining the course of events and creating comparable movements and institutions when conditions are comparable. His assumption was that seventh century Arabia and the nineteenth century American frontier would produce comparable movements because they were comparable environments (Green, "The Muhammad-Joseph Smith Comparison," 116–17). While I disagree with Meyer's social theory of *Zeitgeist*, I assert a commonality exists in the time and cultures of Joseph Smith and Muhammad when viewed through the lens of apostasy and an ensuing restoration prophet. This may account for some of the parallels in their lives. I differ from Meyer by asserting that divine influence best explains these commonalities. Hugh Nibley was critical of Meyer's comparison on several levels in "Islam and Mormonism—A Comparison," *Ensign* (March 1972), 55–64.

different insights emerge that prove the comparison to be both legitimate and enlightening in many ways. The two prophets begin to look alike, but in a different way: not in content, but in prophetic form—the form of divinely called messengers restoring the true religion of ancient prophets, opening a new and final dispensation of truth in an era of apostasy, with renewed revelation and emerging scripture to create a religious community prepared to usher in the day of judgment.

Prophetic Typology

Many scholars have acknowledged that biblical prophets share certain broadly-based characteristics and challenges.⁷ For example, they are often called to confront the culture and practices of their day. Their calling comes from God through a heavenly experience. They are given a divine mandate to declare the message they receive, often despite feelings of inadequacy. They generally face great opposition. Their message is often recorded as scripture. This phenomenon may be referred to as a prophetic typology, motif, or pattern. Latter-day Saints can extend this same motif to many Book of Mormon prophets such as Lehi, Alma, and Mormon.⁸ It is my view that this typology is characteristic of prophets called by God—because He calls them they have similar experiences from which patterns emerge.

However, many scholars (and I share their assessment) further maintain that religious figures in other faith traditions face similar challenges and assume many of

⁷ For example, see Mircea Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 462–63; Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1949); Geo Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1955); Kenneth Cragg, *The Weight in the Word: Prophethood, Biblical and Qur'anic* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999).

⁸ For example, Joseph F. McConkie and Robert L. Millet discuss how Lehi fits the established role of an Old Testament prophet. See *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92), 1:21.

these same patterns.⁹ For example, consider Buddha in India, Confucius in China, or Muhammad in Arabia. This begs the question: why these similarities/parallels? If it is true that prophetic typology evidences a divine stamp, and it extends to those outside the body of biblical, or even Latter-day Saint prophets, it can be argued that God has inspired many religious individuals in various times and places.

Divine inspiration to diverse figures is clearly taught in the Book of Mormon itself. Ammon taught that “God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in” (Alma 26:37). Alma further stated, “the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8). Moroni later wrote that God sent prophets to declare the coming of Christ and that “there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good” (Moroni 7:23–24). LDS leaders have also allowed for the possibility that God inspired Muhammad. A Statement of the First Presidency from 1978 reads: “The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. He gave them moral truths to enlighten whole nations and bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.”¹⁰

LDS doctrine, then, allows for the possibility of divine inspiration to go beyond the body of commonly accepted prophets. It should be noted that though Joseph Smith and Muhammad both claimed to be prophets, the veracity of this assertion will not be

⁹ For example, see H.H. Rowley, *Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 1–73; Cragg, *The Weight in the Word*, 1–39; Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 98–114.

¹⁰ First Presidency, “Statement of the First Presidency regarding God’s Love for All Mankind” (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 15 February 1978), 1 leaf. Also see, Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. James E. Talmage (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1919), 396.

discussed in this thesis. However, the concept of prophethood will briefly be considered to address potential objections to the use of the term “prophet” in relation to Muhammad. Undoubtedly most Latter-day Saints would dispute that Muhammad fits the LDS notion of a prophet, just as Muslims would object to its application to Joseph Smith. Muslims today consider Muhammad to be the “Seal of the Prophets” or the final prophet in a long line of prophets from Adam to Jesus of Nazareth. (Qur'an 33:40). For Muslims, Joseph Smith would thus be unacceptable as a prophet.¹¹

Latter-day Saints also employ certain criteria to judge the authenticity of a prophet, and it is clear that Muhammad does not meet some of these qualifications. For example, in 3 Nephi 20:24, Jesus stated that all the prophets that have spoken “have testified of me.” Most Latter-day Saints assume this standard applies to all true prophets.¹² In addition, Latter-day Saints accept that to be a legitimate prophet the individual must hold the proper priesthood keys. Parley P. Pratt taught that no man is authorized to hold priesthood keys unless he is “a literal descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”¹³ Muhammad is a descendant of Abraham through Ishmael, but not Isaac or Jacob. Based on these principles, Muhammad does not fully fit into the LDS role of a

¹¹ There has been much discussion in Christian-Islam interfaith discourse about the possibility of Christian acceptance of Muhammad as a prophet to some degree. It generally results in mincing at words—what exactly does it mean to be a prophet and could Christians consider Muhammad to be a prophet in some sense of the word? For more on this, see David A. Kerr, “He Walked in the Path of the Prophets’: Toward Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad,” in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Zaidan Haddad (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 426–46.

¹² While Muhammad does accept Jesus as a prophet and the Qur'an verifies his Second Coming, it is not in the capacity as the Son of God or spiritual Savior, which is the connotation in 3 Nephi (see 3 Nephi 11:7–11).

¹³ Parley P. Pratt, “Heirship and Priesthood,” in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: F. D. Richards and Sons, 1854–86), 1:261. See also Joseph F. McConkie, “Prophets: How Shall We Know Them?” in *The Old Testament and the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book Company, 1986), 159–75.

prophet.¹⁴ However, this study will examine Joseph Smith and Muhammad within a prophetic typological context. Therefore, when the term prophet is used in relation to Joseph Smith and Muhammad it will refer to them from the perspective of typology. In other words, the typological approach accepts that the term prophet can refer to certain general similarities and patterns that may exist between individuals who claim divine inspiration. For example, Alfred Guillaume asserted that the word prophet, which derives from the Hebrew (and Arabic) *nabi*, denotes “one who is in the state of announcing a message which has been given to him.”¹⁵ Hence, in a general sense the term “prophet” fits the prophetic typological criteria and can be applied to both Muhammad and Joseph Smith. In addition, this study refers to Muhammad and Joseph Smith as restorers, or restoration prophets. Muhammad saw himself as a restorer and should be examined in that light, although Latter-day Saints may not fully agree with that designation.¹⁶

Literature Review of Prophetic Typology

As mentioned above, typological patterns can be documented not only with the Hebrew prophets of the Bible, but also with many religious figures across the spectrum of culture and time. Many scholars have examined this phenomenon. Reviewing some of their studies will help to see that prophetic typology is a legitimate area of research. This

¹⁴ Joseph Smith used the term prophet in a much broader perspective than Latter-day Saints typically do today, declaring that anyone with the spirit of prophecy (or testimony of Jesus) is a prophet (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957], 5:215–16 [hereafter *HC*]). Latter-day Saints today typically use the term to refer to those ordained as prophets, seers, and revelators, or even more narrowly, to the President of the Church. Muhammad certainly would not be considered a prophet by Latter-day Saints in the latter sense and probably not by most in the former, but the point is that the term *prophet* has multiple applications and meanings.

¹⁵ Alfred Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination among the Hebrew and other Semites* (New York: Harper, 1938), 112.

¹⁶ Muhammad restoring monotheism is his primary claim as a restoration prophet. Even Latter-day Saints could accept this designation.

review will also show that the methodology employed in this thesis has been well established and accepted in academia.

Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958) compares religious phenomena and identifies patterns across the wide spectrum of religious experience. He identifies how the sacred came to be and how it was often associated with elements such as sky, moon, water, trees, stones, etc., showing that patterns emerge as religious experiences and practices are viewed throughout history. Eliade states that while manifestations of the sacred have occurred in particular places and at particular times in history, "their structure remains the same in spite of this and it is precisely this permanence of structure that makes it possible to know them." He argues that "almost all the religious attitudes man has, he has had from the most primitive times."¹⁷ Eliade does not identify a prophetic typology per se, but his studies clearly show fundamental patterns of the sacred that transcend time and culture.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell compares myths from many cultures and identifies similar basic themes. Though every motif is not evident in every myth, he finds enough to show a pattern. While his work broadly examines many aspects of myth, it is more useful in identifying a prophetic typology than Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. This is because Campbell's unifying theme is the hero in myth—the sage, prophet, savior, warrior. The hero is called to adventure or gains divine knowledge by a supernatural experience and often refuses the call initially. The hero is assisted by supernatural forces, passes through tribulation and emerges triumphant, even if through great sacrifice and divine assistance. He often renounces the world he came from and teaches a higher, nobler way. He has the ability to cross back

¹⁷ Eliade, *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, 462–63.

and forth between the two worlds. Campbell argued that these patterns are the product of a common source—the human psyche. Although Campbell’s studies focus primarily on psychological explanations for the various mythic manifestations, religious communities would likely emphasize a more direct experience with divinity. Muslims and Latter-day Saints, for instance, would certainly be more inclined to believe that divine inspiration best explains patterns in prophetic experience.

In *Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel*, H. H. Rowley compares and contrasts the prophetic roles of the Hebrew prophets with Chinese spiritual leaders such as Confucius, Mencius, and Mo-tzu. He identifies several elements of a prophetic typology: (1) their message came from a source greater than they were—the divine, however understood or defined; (2) they corrected national leaders and saw the need for political rulers to act in accordance with wisdom or divine will for peace to be achieved; (3) their role as social reformers—only by changing people could evil be done away with; (4) the ideal of a “golden age” where living God’s will would bring extended peace; and (5) the perception of a personal relationship with God. Rowley successfully identifies spiritual leaders in and outside of the biblical tradition that fit this prophetic typology. His study is helpful in establishing a precedent for comparing prophetic experiences outside of the Bible.

Kenneth Cragg’s *The Weight in the Word* more exclusively focuses on the prophetic pattern in relation to Islam. He acknowledges the similarity between Muhammad and ancient Hebrew patriarchs frequently mentioned in the Qur’an. He then examines the similarities and differences between Muhammad and the prophetic figures,

from Hosea and Isaiah to Malachi.¹⁸ He identifies many notable similarities between Muhammad and these biblical prophets. For example, he notes the shared passion for the unity of God and the annihilation of idolatry. He compares the prophetic “burden” in the Old Testament (Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Malachi 1:1) to Surah 73:5 in the Qur'an, “a heavy saying” or “a weighty word.” Muhammad and biblical prophets had the responsibility of taking the weighty word of God (generally a message of repentance) to the people. The “burden” stems from the very will to escape it. Human nature—even in prophets—shrinks from hard demands.”¹⁹ This burden motivates the prophet to recruit followers: Muhammad had Companions, Jesus had disciples; Moses had Aaron and Jeremiah had Baruch. Cragg compares prophetic personality, inspiration, reaction to opposition, and suffering. Most significant to this study is the fact that he found enough evidence to compare Muhammad and biblical prophets despite their many differences.

W. Montgomery Watt notes that some scholars have asserted that the similarities between Muhammad’s Islam and the Hebrew tradition resulted from the influence of Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices in seventh century Arabian society.²⁰ This argument claims that Muhammad’s thinking and his development of Islam was largely influenced by Jewish and Christian heritage. If this is true, it lessens the significance of the similarity between Muhammad and biblical prophets. Watt argues, however, that there was no obvious channel through which these ideas could have reached Mecca, aside from some knowledge being carried through the conversations of ordinary people. He argues that

¹⁸ For a brief comparison of similarities between Joseph Smith and Muhammad, see Green, “The Muhammad-Joseph Smith Comparison,” 127–31.

¹⁹ Cragg, *The Weight in the Word*, viii.

²⁰ W. Montgomery Watt, “The Nature of Muhammad’s Prophethood,” *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 8, no. 2 (1987): 81.

influences should be spoken of in terms of parallels rather than influences.²¹ That is, it is historically more accurate to say that Judeo-Christian theology and Islamic theology have parallels rather than that the former influenced the latter to any great degree. If Jews, Christians, and Muslims have many similarities, it may be the result of a common source rather than influence of one on the other. This evidences the possibility of divine influence creating typology. Uri Rubin argues that early Muslims sought to connect Muhammad to the chain of biblical prophets in order to establish him as a prophet in the eyes of the “People of the Book,” as Jews and Christians are commonly called within Islam.²² In order to do this, they had to “establish the story of Muhammad’s life on the same literary patterns as were used in the *vitae* of the other prophets.”²³ While this may be true of some of the more spectacular stories of Muhammad’s life, there are enough well-established similarities to warrant including Muhammad in the biblical pattern of prophethood. It could also be said that Latter-day Saints have tried to do this with Joseph Smith.²⁴ Such attempts do not necessarily mandate altering facts, but seek to identify and emphasize commonalities that may indeed exist.

Geo Widengren compares Muhammad to biblical and other ancient near eastern spiritual leaders in *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension*. He identifies essential traits characteristic of what he terms *apostolic* experience, such as: (1) miraculous birth, (2) a heavenly experience (ascension) and the prophet, apostle, or messenger emerging as a leader, (3) receiving a heavenly book and delivering revelation

²¹ Ibid., 81–82. Watt notes that Hans Küng “and others” acknowledge the difficulty of identifying Judeo-Christian channels of influence in Mecca.

²² Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995), 21.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See, for example, Hugh B. Brown, *God is the Gardener and Profile of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 29–48.

to the people, (4) longing for change and an emerging new epoch, and (5) religious influence on secular rule. Such motifs connect Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and other non-biblical religious figures.

One scholar has compared Muhammad to a particular prophet in the typology of prophethood. In a portion of his article, “On the Early Life of Abraham: Biblical and Qur’anic Intertextuality and the Anticipation of Muhammad,” Brian M. Hauglid typologically compares Abraham and Muhammad, showing motifs that connect their lives.²⁵ For example, people anticipated their comings because of various signs, both experienced miraculous events in birth or early childhood, both called followers to monotheism, and both faced resistance from within and opposition from an arch-rival. In examining these motifs, Hauglid notes elements of prophetic typology and shows how Abraham and Muhammad fit the typology and where they differ. He also explores motifs found in their lives that do not fit a general prophetic typology. A similar methodological approach will be employed in this study to show that Muhammad and Joseph Smith often fit a general prophetic typology and sometimes connect beyond normal generalities. It may be added that Hauglid’s reason for comparing these particular prophets was twofold: (1) western scholarship has recognized the typological connection between Abraham and Muhammad and (2) Muhammad compared himself to Abraham.²⁶ Similarly, scholars have recognized the typological connection between Joseph Smith and Muhammad, and Joseph is reported to have compared himself to Muhammad on at least one occasion

²⁵ Brian M. Hauglid, “On the Early Life of Abraham: Biblical and Qur’anic Intertextuality and the Anticipation of Muhammad,” in *Bible and Qur’ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 87–105.

²⁶ Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Islam* (1898; repr., New York: Ktav, 1970), 95.

(although there is no reason to believe that Joseph viewed Muhammad as a role model, as Muhammad did Abraham).²⁷

All of these studies identify a typology of prophethood, though the typology differs from one study to another. They have been reviewed to show that a well-established methodology exists for typologically comparing religious figures. This thesis will not attempt to compare Muhammad and Joseph Smith within an existing typological model. Rather, because models emerge as various religious leaders are compared, this thesis will set forth a typological model for a comparison of Joseph Smith and Muhammad.²⁸ The areas of comparison, each comprising a chapter, are as follows: (1) forerunners and prophecies were made prior to the emergence of both men; (2) an environment of apostasy led to a state of perplexity, which led to a heavenly manifestation; (3) continued revelation followed; (4) both men produced books of scripture that are comparable in various aspects; and (5) opposition and persecution followed their emergence, which resulted in an exodus and a unified community.

The studies most applicable to this thesis are Arnold H. Green's three articles on the Muhammad—Joseph Smith comparison. The first, coauthored with Lawrence P. Goldrup, briefly reviews major points of the comparison, but spends most of its time evaluating the validity of the comparison itself.²⁹ Green and Goldrup conclude that most

²⁷ Scholars who have recognized the typological connection include Meyer, *Origin and History*; David Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*; Hans Thimme, "Mormonism and Islam," *The Moslem World*, 24 (April 1934), 155–67; and Green's three publications: "The Muhammad-Joseph Smith Comparison," 111–33; "Mormonism and Islam: From Polemics to Mutual Respect and Cooperation," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 199–220; and "Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad? An Essay on the Perils of Historical Analogy," coauthored with Lawrence P. Goldrup, *Dialogue* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 46–58. Joseph's alleged comparison of himself to Muhammad is found in an affidavit of Thomas B. Marsh to Henry Jacobs, justice of the peace in Richmond, Missouri, October 24, 1838 (*HC* 3:167n).

²⁸ This is not to say that no such model exists. Rather, this study will borrow from previous comparisons, focusing on aspects I consider legitimate.

²⁹ Green and Goldrup, "Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?" 46–58.

of the analogy is flawed in two ways: “outright errors and gross oversimplifications.”³⁰ They are correct in noting many errors that resulted from poor knowledge of Mormonism or Islam or both. But they oversimplify their study by only looking at the surface of some comparisons. For example, they argue that the first heavenly visions do not compare well because Joseph was seeking answers to specific questions and received them, whereas Muhammad was dismayed by his experience and thought he was going mad.³¹ I contend that a deeper look at these experiences explains this difference. I argue that Muhammad was in fact seeking answers to specific questions and that his dismay at the vision resulted from the lack of a theological structure by which he could interpret his experience.³² Joseph was familiar with the experiences of biblical prophets receiving revelation. For Muhammad however, revelation was not emphasized, unless it can be argued that the poets of his day received it.³³ In any case, Muhammad reinterprets his experience through the help of family members more familiar with prophetic calls and moves forward in his mission in a very similar way to Joseph Smith.

Green and Goldrup also argue that “it is difficult to draw a precise comparison between the one sacred volume of Muhammad and the three canons of scripture compiled or translated by Joseph Smith.”³⁴ I argue it is not that difficult. Each LDS book of scripture compares well to the Qur'an in different aspects, as will be discussed in chapter five. They also argue that Muhammad's and Joseph Smith's concept of God differed greatly. Muhammad pushed his followers towards belief in one God in an era when a

³⁰ Ibid., 53.

³¹ Ibid., 54.

³² For Muhammad, visions were nonsense that came to the poets of his day. Muhammad felt these men were unreliable and fringy. See Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 84.

³³ In Muhammad's day it was the *jinn* (spirits) who influenced poets, not Allah.

³⁴ Green and Goldrup, “Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?” 54.

plurality of gods was commonly accepted. Further, they argue, he elevated God from the material to an incomprehensible level. Joseph, on the other hand, separated the Godhead into three distinct individuals in an era when Christianity was largely defined by acceptance of the Trinity. Also, Joseph taught an embodied and comprehensible God in a generation when God was a mysterious essence and largely ineffable in Christianity. Although their concepts of God differed, Joseph and Muhammad both moved society to a more meaningful (and what Latter-day Saints would consider more correct) understanding of God. Muhammad elevated his society from polytheistic idol worshippers to monotheists. Joseph tore down years of what he viewed as uninspired creedal statements to an ancient biblical view of the Godhead. Therefore, although Green states that Joseph Smith and Muhammad “moved in opposite directions” on this issue, in a different sense they moved in the same direction, according to the portion of light and truth they received.³⁵

Green and Goldrup do note several legitimate comparisons, but consider the comparison as a whole to be inappropriate. Their objections, however, are largely based on the flawed attempt to equate the two men, calling “Joseph Smith an American Muhammad or Mormonism the Islam of America,” attempts which are primarily polemic. They conclude that “the analogy has in the final analysis contributed little to an understanding of either religion.”³⁶ I agree with this assessment, but argue that the comparison does add to an understanding of the unique role of restoration prophets and to Latter-day Saint understanding and appreciation of Muhammad. Perhaps the comparison has yielded little benefit because it has largely been polemic in nature.

³⁵ Ibid., 57.

³⁶ Ibid., 58.

The second article by Green, “The Muhammad—Joseph Smith Comparison: Subjective Metaphor or a Sociology of Prophethood?” also did little with the actual comparison, examining the history and motives for it instead.³⁷ Green concluded that if the analogy is pursued, it must be demonstrated “that the similarities outweigh the differences.” I reject this assertion. Christian scholars find a valid and purposeful comparison between Joseph of Egypt and Jesus despite the vast differences, which certainly outweigh the similarities. As demonstrated, even some of the differences Green noted actually contain a similarity when viewed in a different context. Green also stated that future studies would need to work out the “characteristics of the subgroup inhabited by Muhammad and Joseph Smith to the exclusion of all other prophets.”³⁸ I argue that the subgroup is that of restoration prophets. Muhammad and Joseph Smith clearly viewed themselves this way. While this subgroup does not exclude all other prophets (additional studies examining other restoration prophets, such as Moses, to see if similar parallels can be identified would be useful), it does provide a subgroup to help add meaning to the comparison. Finally, Green states that future studies must not repeat the common mistake of pursuing the comparison “simply as a means to the end of vindicating their own theological tenets and advancing their own ulterior motives,” but that it be done “to promote understanding and friendship” between the two faiths.

Green’s third article, “Mormonism and Islam: From Polemics to Mutual Respect and Cooperation,” provides a thorough history of the comparison and the evolution of how Mormons view Muslims, but again, little is done in furthering or examining the

³⁷ Green, “The Muhammad—Joseph Smith Comparison,” 111–33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

comparison.³⁹ Rather, Green's worthy intent seems to be to promote understanding and friendship between the two faiths as they pursue common goals. I assert that a more thorough examination of the comparison itself will further this cause.

The Muhammad—Joseph Smith Comparison: Overview of Chapters

What follows is a brief overview of the Muhammad-Joseph Smith comparison for the subsequent chapters. Some of the following comparisons match up well with established patterns for prophethood. Others are unique to Joseph Smith and Muhammad (and perhaps a few other religious figures). The comparisons will be presented as chronologically as possible, tracing events in the lives of Muhammad and Joseph Smith.

Chapter 2: Forerunners and Prophecies

Muhammad and Joseph Smith both had forerunners. According to Islamic tradition, a group of inspired men in Mecca known as the *hunaifa* recognized the need for restoration to monotheism. They spoke out for the truth, but were not able to bring God's revelation to accomplish what they desired—that was Muhammad's task. There are similarities between the *hunaifa* and the Protestant Reformers, who paved the way for restoration through Joseph Smith. They recognized the deficiency Christianity had fallen into and sought to correct abuses and unscriptural innovations, restoring it to a pure state. They too, however, were unable to fully accomplish this—that was Joseph Smith's task. Certainly the *hunaifa*'s teachings and beliefs influenced Muhammad and the Protestant Reformer's ideas influenced Joseph. Both groups were harbingers for the message of

³⁹ Green, "Mormonism and Islam," 199–220. Green does little evaluation of the comparison in this article and does not examine points of comparison any deeper than previously established.

restoration their respective prophetic beneficiaries brought. This is not to say that the Reformers or the *hunaafa* recognized the prophetic roles of Joseph Smith or Muhammad, but in both cases their actions created an environment more conducive to an eventual restoration.

Another significant event prepared the way for their coming prior to their births. Lineal ancestors of both men prophesied their future greatness. As a little boy, Muhammad seemed a favorite of his grandfather, ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib. On one occasion, Muhammad’s uncles were driving him away from the resting place of ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib, who responded: “Let my son alone, for by Allah he has a great future.”⁴⁰ Asael Smith, the grandfather of Joseph Smith, likewise sensed that “God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind.” After reading the Book of Mormon, Asael felt confident that Joseph was this descendant.⁴¹ In addition to lineal ancestors, others had also prophesied Muhammad’s and Joseph’s coming. Even their names had been foretold prior to their births.⁴²

These phenomena seem to be unique to restoration prophets who appear on a blank canvas rather than as successors in a prophetic line. This emergence poses unique problems for restoration prophets because they are creating a new faith tradition rather than reforming or continuing an established one. I argue that God provides forerunners and prophetic pronouncements to prepare the way for such an advent. Divine influence prepared many people who would eventually encounter the new religions. Biblical

⁴⁰ Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 73.

⁴¹ George A. Smith, “Memoirs,” handwritten ms. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Special Collections), 2. For easy reference see Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 112. See also *HC* 2:443.

⁴² Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 69–70; 2 Nephi 3:6–15; JST Genesis 50:24–33.

prophecy was reinterpreted to prove the validity of these restoration prophets. These influences eased the emergence of Muhammad, Joseph Smith, and their respective religions.

Chapter 3: Apostasy, Perplexity, and a Heavenly Manifestation

As is often the case for prophets, Muhammad and Joseph Smith both appeared at a time when their societies were prepared for the knowledge they revealed. Muhammad's and Joseph's followers saw them as restorers of truths, which had been lost for many years through apostasy.⁴³ Just as Latter-day Saints believe that the primitive Christian church contained the fullness of the gospel, Muslims believe that the Arabs once held to the "purity of the worship of the One God," but it "came to be contaminated" as the beliefs of neighboring pagan tribes influenced the people of God.⁴⁴ This may be analogous to how Latter-day Saints view the corrupting influence of Hellenistic culture (or other forces) on the primitive church as Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire.

The loss of truth in both cases resulted in an atmosphere devoid of revelation. Although separated by centuries, early nineteenth century New York and early seventh century Mecca were both the scene of religious confusion. Arabia was a land of polytheism, New York a region of divided Christians verbally warring with one another. Muhammad was "dissatisfied with the corruption, idolatry, and social inequities that plagued Mecca; he sought for a higher truth that would provide peace, justice, and

⁴³ See Qur'an 5:19; 1 Nephi 13:34–37; and D&C 1:22–30.

⁴⁴ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources* (London: George Allen, and Undwin, 1983), 4.

spiritual fulfillment for him and his people.”⁴⁵ Likewise, Joseph Smith’s mind was “called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness” as a result of the “war of words and tumult of opinions” on the subject of religion (Joseph Smith—History 1:8, 10).

Both men sought knowledge from God as a result of this environment.

Muhammad took to solitary places where he could ponder and meditate over spiritual matters. He experienced visions in his sleep and heard voices declaring him to be the messenger of God.⁴⁶ When Muhammad was forty years old he had a vision from God known to Muslims as the “Night of Power.” He was meditating in a cave when an angel who identified himself as Gabriel appeared to him and commanded him to read, or recite. Muhammad was frightened and resisted, but the message was repeated and he recited the words given to him by the angel. As Muhammad left the cave, he wondered whether this was truly from God, whereupon the angel appeared again and assured him that he was called to be the messenger of God.⁴⁷

Joseph Smith’s initial calling, known as the “First Vision,” came at the age of fourteen. Confused by the claims of various Christian churches, he was inspired by a verse in the Bible to seek direction from God. Like Muhammad, he retired to a solitary place—a grove of trees behind the Smith family cabin—and knelt in prayer. Like Muhammad, there was a struggle; initially seized upon by a dark power, he exerted himself in prayer and was delivered by the opening of a vision. He saw a pillar of light wherein stood two heavenly Personages. One of them called Joseph by name, pointed to

⁴⁵ James A. Toronto, “Islam,” in Spencer J. Palmer and others, *Religions of the World* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1997), 216.

⁴⁶ Lings, *Muhammad*, 43.

⁴⁷ Qur’an 96:1–5. Muhammad memorized the message given to him as well as others received throughout his life. They were likewise memorized by his followers and were recorded after his death. The written compilation of these revelations constitute the Muslim holy book, the *Qur’an*, often translated in English texts as *Koran*.

the other and proclaimed: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Joseph was then instructed not to unite himself with any of the churches but that the fullness of the gospel would later be made known to him.⁴⁸ These remarkable visitations designate the beginning point of the prophetic careers of Muhammad and Joseph Smith.⁴⁹

The calls of Muhammad and Joseph Smith flow out of similar circumstances: a scene of religious confusion, a man seeking clarity and truth through pondering, the quest for divine guidance, and a heavenly manifestation. While many prophets experience a divine call, these unique circumstances that brought forth new world religions are unique to restoration prophets. To dismiss the similarities because of differences such as time and place, varied reaction to the divine call, or the circumstances of age and family (as Green and Goldrup note) is to ignore the common thread of divine response to an apostate people.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ HC 4:536. For multiple accounts of Joseph’s First Vision, see Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision: Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980).

⁴⁹ Joseph’s pre-visionary years were conspicuous for their ordinariness. His mother stated that “nothing occurred during his early life except those trivial circumstances which are common to that state of human existence” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith: The Unabridged Original Version* [Arlington, VA: Stratford Books, 2005], 113). In this regard, Muhammad’s story is quite different. His history contains several miraculous accounts foreshadowing his grand destiny. These include prophecies from some who came in contact with him and miraculous blessings and healings of people and animals near him (Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 70–72, 79, 81; Lings, *Muhammad*, 25–26). Some scholars note, however, that as to his socio-economic standing, Muhammad seemed a boy of little consequence. Although part of the ruling tribe of Mecca, he was “among the ‘poorer cousins.’” He was an orphan by the age of six and was “not among the privileged members” of his tribe (John L. Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd Lewis, *World Religions Today* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002], 190). Overall, however, Muhammad seems to have a much more remarkable pre-visionary life than Joseph Smith. By way of interest in the non-prophetic lives of Joseph Smith and Muhammad, both men marry (in fact, both eventually take plural wives) and were supported in their prophetic office by their spouses remarkably well. One amusing difference, however, is that Khadija, Muhammad’s first wife, married him because of his upstanding reputation in the community whereas Emma, Joseph’s first wife, married him in spite of it.

⁵⁰ Green and Goldrup, “Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?” 52.

Chapter 4: Continued Revelation

As restoration prophets, Joseph and Muhammad needed large quantities of revelation to fulfill their calls. Both men continued to receive revelation throughout their lives. There are remarkable similarities as well as some notable differences in the manner they received revelation. After the initial visionary experience, both men experienced a period of silence in which they questioned their standing before God. In both instances, the silence was eventually broken by another heavenly vision.⁵¹ Perhaps this is unique to restoration prophets who are given time to contextualize their experience in preparation for further revelation. For Muhammad, the silence was broken by the angel Gabriel returning. For Joseph, it was the angel Moroni. These angels became personal tutors for the prophets, who seemed to need personal divine instruction for their call because there was no established doctrinal or theocratic system in place, a unique factor for restoration prophets.

This chapter also evaluates the type of revelation Muhammad and Joseph received. Revelation sometimes came directly from such angelic visitations as Gabriel and Moroni, but at other times in less direct forms. Muhammad stated that revelation came in two ways. The first and easiest was directly from the mouth of a heavenly messenger. The second Muhammad described as being “like the reverberations of a bell... the reverberations abate when I am aware of their message.”⁵² According to one scholar, what Muhammad seems to mean is that he does not consciously hear distinct

⁵¹ Compare Muhammad’s experience as recorded in Lings, *Muhammad*, 44–45 to Joseph’s as recorded in Joseph Smith—History 1:28–30.

⁵² Lings, *Muhammad*, 44–45.

words, but when the noise stops it has transformed into words.⁵³ Thus, both Joseph and Muhammad were sometimes spoken to directly, while at other times the process required more effort on their part.⁵⁴ It must be noted, however, that Orthodox Muslims are adamant in asserting that Muhammad as a human being in no way influenced the substance or wording of the revelations he received. They are directly the words of God.⁵⁵ In contrast, Joseph Smith's revelatory experience seems to be much more open to human influence. While the messages are expressly from God, they are given "after the manner of [man's] language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24).

Compare the Muslim claim of uninfluenced revelation with God's own statement regarding Joseph's revelations: "his language you have known, and his imperfections you have known; and you have sought...that you might express beyond his language" (D&C 67:5). I argue these differences are less significant than they appear. I will present evidence that Muhammad and Joseph Smith appear to have received revelation in very similar manners. These men came from vastly different cultures and lived centuries apart, yet their revelatory experiences were so similar that divine inspiration is the best explanation for this correlation. Also, the sheer amount of revelation both men received can be explained through their unique roles as restoration prophets.

Chapter 5: The Books

Muhammad and Joseph both produced new books of scripture that are comparable in several aspects. Joseph Smith's revelations were recorded during his

⁵³ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Koio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 17.

⁵⁴ Note the Lord's instruction to Oliver Cowdery to "study it out" in his mind (D&C 9:8).

⁵⁵ Muslims view the Qur'an as the "inlibriate" word of God. The Qur'an is the "Word of God" made book (Qur'an). For Christians it is the "Word of God" made flesh (Christ).

lifetime and many were published before his death. Gabriel instructed Muhammad to proclaim the messages he received, which Muhammad described as being written on his heart. Committed to his memory, he then taught them to others who memorized them and many were likely written down before he died, but it was after his death that they were eventually compiled as the Qur'an. The Qur'an, then, is a compilation of 114 revelations on a variety of subjects that were received throughout the twenty-two year prophetic career of Muhammad.

Joseph Smith produced three primary books of scripture for Latter-day Saints. The Doctrine and Covenants is probably most similar to the Qur'an in terms of situational revelations; it is a compilation of revelations received over a period of time often based on the needs and questions of God's people. But the Qur'an is also comparable to the Book of Mormon, as both serve as the chief converting tool and the keystone of faith. The Qur'an is also comparable in some respects to the Pearl of Great Price, which is a compilation of various revelations, translations, and historical and theological documents. Both books reveal non-biblical information about biblical prophets that tends to harmonize the experiences of Joseph Smith and Muhammad with biblical prophetic experiences, lending credence to their calls.

Although Muslims and Latter-day Saints generally accept the Bible as God's word, the Qur'an and Latter-day Saint scriptures were believed to be necessary because truth had been lost or corrupted from the biblical record.⁵⁶ While receiving scripture is a general characteristic for prophets, the type and amount of scripture received by Joseph

⁵⁶ Qur'an 5:13–14 states: "They change the words from their (right) places and have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them. . . . And from those who call themselves Christians, We took their covenant, but they have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them." Compare this to 1 Nephi 13:28: "there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God."

Smith and Muhammad evidences their similarity as restoration prophets. The new records given through Muhammad and Joseph Smith were intended to supplement and restore God's word, which had been lost through apostasy.⁵⁷

Chapter 6: Opposition and Exodus

In harmony with the prophetic pattern, Joseph and Muhammad both encountered great opposition.⁵⁸ At first, both men revealed their theophanies only to close associates, primarily family members, and received support and encouragement for the most part. With the calling, however, came the duty to proclaim, and proclamation is generally not greeted by acclamation.⁵⁹ This is particularly true if the message contradicts traditional belief or practice, as prophetic messages generally do. Ibn Ishaq records that Muhammad's message was not opposed by the people "until he spoke disparagingly of their gods."⁶⁰ Likewise, Joseph's claims that ran contrary to accepted Christian beliefs were a source of his persecution. Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph's mother, recalled that shortly after the Book of Mormon came forth, the different denominations were "very much opposed" to Mormon beliefs, specifically stating that the Methodists "rage, for they worship a God without body or parts, and they know that our faith comes in contact with

⁵⁷ Muhammad and Joseph Smith both indicate that the loss of truth was the result of omission and alteration. Joseph reportedly stated: "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors" (*HC*, 6:57). See also 1 Nephi 13:32–40; Qur'an 2:79, 174; 5:15.

⁵⁸ Cragg notes: "Hostility to messengers is a dominant and permanent theme in all prophetic story" (*The Weight in the Word*, 18).

⁵⁹ McConkie, using the Bible as a standard, wrote: "If there were true prophets who went unopposed, we have no record of it... popular rejection has become a standard argument in favor of a man's claim to be a prophet... If the Bible is our standard, we would do well to be suspicious of any that are too well received" ("Prophets: How Shall We Know Them?" 161).

⁶⁰ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 118.

this principle.”⁶¹ Thus, both men experienced opposition, in part because of the God they revealed. Although Muhammad’s and Joseph Smith’s view of God was greatly different, they both taught a God that came closer to revealed truth and moved further from mainstream belief. Yet there were deeper and more complex motives for persecution. Economic factors motivated both prophets’ persecutors, though in slightly different ways. Political power also became a major factor as outsiders viewed the new religious systems as threatening to the political status quo, a threat perceived in part because of the nature of certain revelations the prophets were receiving. While opposition is a common motif for prophets, restoration prophets seem to face a tremendous amount of it because they are creating a new religious tradition rather than affirming or altering an existing one.

For Muhammad and Joseph Smith, rejection meant physical removal. The exodus pattern seen in Islam and Mormonism is another piece in the prophetic pattern. Muhammad went to Yathrib, which became Medina, and Joseph first to Pennsylvania, then back to New York, to Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo. Exodus also resulted in an even tighter community, with social, political, and economic aspects that often exacerbated the persecution. Muhammad was eventually able to gain enough of a following to return to Mecca and conquer it without much bloodshed, whereas Joseph’s persecution ended in his own blood being shed.

Conclusion

Making comparisons has the ability to sharpen the focus of one’s view, clarifying details and a presenting a fresh outlook. I assert this will be the outcome as Muhammad and Joseph Smith are compared in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

⁶¹ Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 241.

Clearly, there are similarities in the callings and actions of many spiritual leaders in history, including Muhammad and Joseph Smith. In many aspects, they fit a prophetic pattern. Their unique similarities often seem to be the result of their unique role as originators of new religious movements who saw themselves as restoration prophets. In LDS terms, both men are seen by their respective communities as the head of a last dispensation leading up to the end of the world. Their followers believe that full salvation can only be obtained by accepting them as authentic prophets and adhering to their teachings. Their prophetic lives crossed in moments of congruency that seem beyond mere coincidence. Too many of these commonalities were beyond the control of the prophet themselves, denying the possibility that they both intentionally forced their lives into a prophetic motif. The vast differences in culture and time make the possibility of accrediting the similarities to the human psyche dubious. Science may be unable to explain, quantify, and measure inspiration; yet, Muhammad and Joseph Smith deserve to be examined in the light of how they saw themselves. Because of the implicit anti-supernaturalism prevalent in many fields of academic study, experiences of transcendence and revelation have been relegated to the margins of explanation. When the self-understanding of both men and both faith communities are respected, new insights add new meaning to the Joseph Smith—Muhammad comparison.

CHAPTER 2 FORERUNNERS AND PROPHECIES

Signs often foretell and prepare the way before a prophet appears. For example, miracles are signs that may accompany both birth and childhood. This motif of miracles is seen in biblical prophets like Abraham, Isaac, Moses, and Jesus, or even in religious figures of other faiths such as Muhammad, Buddha, and the Hindu savior Krishna. Miraculous events connected with the birth of a prophet convince some to believe that prophethood is predetermined rather than a chance occurrence.¹ Those who argue for predestination (or foreordination) find further support in forerunners who precede a prophet. Forerunners can be people or events that anticipate or prepare the environment for the appearance of a major religious figure. It is significant that various people, events, and prophetic statements serve as signs in anticipating the coming of both Muhammad and Joseph Smith. These signs strongly support the argument that divine inspiration rather than the human psyche best explains the existence of prophetic typology. This chapter will examine forerunners of and biblical and contemporary prophecies about Joseph Smith and Muhammad that were crucial to their emergence as prophets.

¹ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 319. Campbell sees this motif not just in the lives of prophets, but great men and women—heroes.

Forerunners

Some individuals in seventh century Mecca, who came to be known as the *hunafa*, felt the need for a return to monotheism.² The Arabic term *hunafa* is plural for *hanif*, which simply refers to the tendency of certain individuals for a *monotheistic* approach, a belief in one God. The *hunafa* were not an organized group per se, but a movement in Arabian society that criticized the polytheistic religious practices of the Arabs and were sometimes persecuted for doing so. While some Arabs tolerated the *hunafa*, others forced them to the fringe of Meccan society or even banished them.³ There is disagreement in Islam about who qualifies as a *hanif* and how many there were, but some general characteristics are evident.⁴ The *hunafa* were not satisfied with the religious status quo and sought a return to the practices of ancient prophets. Some sought to reform the practices of Meccan religious society and some awaited the coming of a prophet to bring correction. At least a few recognized Muhammad as that prophet when he came.

These *hunafa* present several apparent similarities with the Protestant Reformers, many of whom believed some Catholic practices had become corrupted and sought a return to primitive Christianity. Just as the *hunafa* spoke out against religious abuses in Meccan society and were often persecuted for doing so, Reformers objected to the abuses of the Church in their day and were often harassed, punished, or even martyred as a

² There had been various attempts at religious reform throughout Arab history, but as these do not relate directly to Muhammad as the *hunafa* do, they will not be discussed. For a brief overview of some of these, see Maulana Muhammad ‘Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet* (Lahore: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam, 1984), 26–30.

³ Lings, *Muhammad*, 16, 73; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 102–03.

⁴ Ibn Ishaq records that four men broke with polytheism just prior to Muhammad’s birth or when he was a child (Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 98–99). Lings writes that “there were—and always had been—a few who maintained the full purity of Abrahamic worship” (*Muhammad*, 16). Apparently, the four *hunafa* Ibn Ishaq mentioned refer to those who ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib, Muhammad’s grandfather, was acquainted with. Lings argues that there were many who would have been considered *hunafa*. G.R. Hawting feels that the role of the *hunafa* is largely a later distortion (*The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 21, 27, 36–37, 42–43).

result. As religious pioneers, both groups presented new ideas that opened the way for voicing opposition to prevailing religious practices.⁵

While most Reformers and their followers simply wanted to correct perceived abuses of the Catholic Church, a few eventually felt the need for a restoration of some kind. Many struggled in an attempt to remain true to the authority of a church with whom they often disagreed doctrinally or ritually. Some felt there had been an apostasy. For example, John Wesley declared that Christians had “turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.”⁶ He seems to have been torn for a time between allegiance to Anglican Church authority and adherence to his personal convictions. Eventually, he took it upon himself to ordain others, including Thomas Coke. Wesley’s brother, Charles, wittily criticized him for ordaining without authority. He wrote:

*How easily are bishops made
By man or woman's whim:
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
But who laid hands on him?*⁷

Roger Williams, founder of the first Baptist church in America, eventually concluded there was a need for restoration. Cotton Mather said, “Mr. Williams [finally] told [his followers] ‘that being himself misled, he had [misled them,] and] he was now satisfied that there was none upon earth that could administer baptism ... [so] he advised

⁵ The Reformers certainly did this on a much larger scale than the *hunafa*, but the similarity still exists. It may be added that the *hunafa*'s criticisms were more serious than those of the Reformers. Most Reformers simply wanted to adjust a few practices of the Church, while the *hunafa* felt their society worshipped false gods and needed to be restored to the one true God.

⁶ *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 7:27. For easy reference, see James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), 162.

⁷ Quoted in C. Beaufort Moss, *The Divisions of Christendom: A Retrospect* (London: SPCK, n.d.), 22.

them therefore to forego all ... and wait for the coming of new apostles.”⁸ Williams refused to continue as pastor to his Baptist congregation because he felt there was “no regularly-constituted church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be until, new apostles are sent.”⁹ Protestant reformers arrived at different solutions to perceived problems. Some of them sought reform while others looked for restored authority.

Just as the Reformers proffered different solutions to their disagreements with the Church, neither were the *hunaifa* united on a particular course of action. A few joined Christianity because it was closer to the monotheistic beliefs they held.¹⁰ Islamic tradition speaks of four notable *hunaifa* that lived near the time and place of Muhammad and were members of his tribe. It seems they are remembered because they were acquainted with Muhammad’s grandfather.¹¹ Two of them, Waraqah b. Naufal and Uthman b. al-Huwayrith, became Christian for a time but Waraqah believed Muhammad’s vision, which occurred shortly before he died. A third hanif, Ubaydullah b. Jahsh, joined Islam when it emerged, but later became Christian. The fourth, Zayd bin ‘Amr looked for true religion his entire life but could not find it in Christianity or Judaism and died before the advent of Islam.¹² He had questioned a Jew who told him about the religion of *hanif*: “the religion of (the prophet) Abraham who was neither a Jew nor a Christian, and he used to

⁸ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana; or, the Ecclesiastical History of New England* (Hartford: S. Andrus and Son, 1853), 2:498.

⁹ William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America, or the Land We Live In*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1872), 1:502.

¹⁰ ‘Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet*, 29. ‘Ali believes that the *hanif* movement was definitely existent, but feeble. Karen Armstrong writes that the *hunaifa* who joined with Judaism or Christianity likely did so “as an interim measure, until the *din Ibrahim* (the religion of Abraham) was properly established” (*Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* [New York: Atlas Books/Harper Collins, 2006], 44).

¹¹ In addition, these four stand out because they refused to participate with the rest of the tribe in the celebration on the day of the goddess al ‘Uzza due to their monotheistic beliefs (Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Isma‘il Ragi A. al Faruqi [Philadelphia: North American Trust Publications, 1976], 67).

¹² Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 98–99.

worship None but Allah (Alone).” Zayd went to a Christian monk who told him the same. He then declared: “O Allah! I make You my Witness that I am on the religion of Abraham.”¹³ Ibn Ishaq records that Zayd sought the religion of Abraham, traveling in search of truth, questioning monks and rabbis. As an old man he exclaimed: “O God, if I knew how you wished to be worshipped I would so worship you; but I do not know.”¹⁴ Finally, a monk in Syria reportedly told Zayd that no one could guide him to the religion he was seeking. He assured him, however, that a prophet would soon come from his own country that would bring the religion of Abraham. Zayd was killed in Lakhm while returning to Mecca to seek this prophet.¹⁵ These accounts show that, like the Protestant Reformers, some *hunafa* seemed to find what they were seeking, while others awaited further direction.

Some Jews in the area and even a few Christians anticipated the coming of a prophet. This belief influenced the *hunafa*. Although the Jews felt the prophet would be Jewish, some *hunafa* believed he might be Arab. After all, it was the Arabs who needed to return to monotheism. Waraqah felt it would require an Arab prophet to rid his people of idol worship because Jewish and Christian influence had previously had almost no impact on Arab pagan society around Mecca. Waraqah also felt the prophet would come in his lifetime. When he learned of Muhammad’s vision, he accepted Muhammad as the

¹³ Muhammad Muhsin Khan,, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari*, 9 vols., 4th rev. ed., trans. (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1976–71), 5:107 (hereafter Bukhari). This multi-volume set is one of several collections known as *hadith*. The hadith are a collection of the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari’s is among the most trusted in Islam. Bukhari lived over two centuries after Muhammad but painstakingly collected traditions about Muhammad that could be traced to what were considered reliable sources. Most Sunni Muslims consider them to be second only to the Qur’an. For a collection of articles on the reliability of early sources on Muhammad, see Harald Motzky, ed., *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 1–330; Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 1–260. See also R. Marston Speight, “The Function of *hadith* as Commentary on the Qur’ān, as Seen in the Six Authoritative Collections,” in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 63–81.

¹⁴ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 100.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 103.

anticipated prophet.¹⁶ Waraqah was a tremendous forerunner for Muhammad, serving “as a kind of John the Baptist in the accounts of Muhammad’s early revelations.”¹⁷

Not all *hunaafa* accepted Muhammad when he came and the Reformers certainly brought along what Latter-day Saints would consider some untenable doctrinal baggage. Therefore, the *hunaafa* and the Reformers cannot as a whole be considered intentional forerunners awaiting Islam and Mormonism. Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints commonly refer to the Protestant Reformers as forerunners of Joseph Smith and it is clear that the *hunaafa* played a role in preparing for Islam. The *hunaafa* indicated the existence of “a national Arabian monotheism which was the preparatory stage for Islam.”¹⁸ Many Latter-day Saints believe the Reformers increased diversity and tolerance, thereby preparing the way for Joseph Smith to restore the fullness of the gospel.¹⁹ Reformers were persecuted and martyred in Europe where nation-states often gave allegiance to a particular church and where church and state were closely connected.²⁰ Even in the United States, where religious liberty was a cherished value, the Mormons were persecuted and driven from their land. Without the work of the Reformers, an environment where the LDS Church could be successfully established seems dubious. Likewise, without the influence of the *hunaafa*, Arabs accepting Islam may have been hindered further. Restoration prophets face unique challenges and opposition because they attempt to initiate a new religious system.

¹⁶ Lings, *Muhammad*, 44.

¹⁷ F.E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 123.

¹⁸ J. Frick, “The Originality of the Prophet,” translated from German, in *Studies in Islam*, ed. Merlin L. Schwartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 86–98. See also, Rodney Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 2 (June 1999): 290.

¹⁹ Although particular sects continued to practice intolerance, the attitude of tolerance was certainly incorporated into the United States Constitution.

²⁰ For examples, see Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 274–279.

This explains the need for forerunners who help prepare people for the prophet's message.

At least some forerunners seemed to sense a great event approaching. For example, there were some in the days of Joseph Smith who sought to find the original gospel Jesus preached, just as the *hunafa* sought to find the religion of Abraham. They were referred to as *seekers*. Several of these seekers believed that God would soon engage himself in the religious affairs of men on earth. Some of the seekers' experiences are comparable to those of Waraqah and Zayd, the *hunafa* who anticipated that God would call a prophet to bring His message to their people. While some scholars may explain away religious experience as a product of the psyche, divine inspiration preparing for the emergence of a prophet best explains the following accounts.

Wilford Woodruff, who became the third President of the LDS Church, recalled his interaction with Robert Mason, a seeker. Mason told young Wilford about a vision where he found himself in an orchard of fruit trees. He became hungry but found no fruit. The trees began to fall to the ground "as if torn up by a whirlwind," until there were no trees left standing. Shoots began to spring from the roots and became young, beautiful trees which blossomed and brought forth fruit. "I stretched forth my hand," he told Wilford, "and plucked some of the fruit. I gazed upon it with delight; but when I was about to eat of it, the vision closed and I did not taste the fruit." The voice of the Lord then came to Mason, declaring: "Son of man, thou hast sought me diligently to know the truth concerning my Church and Kingdom among men. This is to show you that my Church is not organized among men in the generation to which you belong; but in the days of your children the Church and Kingdom of God shall be made manifest." Mason

then turned to Wilford and prophesied: “I shall never partake of this fruit in the flesh, but you will and you will become a conspicuous actor in the new kingdom.”²¹ This experience prepared Wilford for the coming Restoration. Just as Zayd was killed after learning that a prophet would soon come but before he could unite with Islam, Mason passed away before receiving the ordinances of the LDS Church. Yet the actions and sayings of these men prepared others for accepting the newly restored religions.

Like Waraqah in Islam, a few seekers found and accepted the LDS Church as a fulfillment of their seeking. In a vision, an angel told one of these seekers, Solomon Chamberlain, that “all Churches and Denominations on the earth had become corrupt, and [there was] no Church of God on the earth but that he would shortly rise up a Church.”²² He received this revelation several years before the Book of Mormon was translated and felt that God led him to Palmyra, New York where he met the Smith family and received a witness that this was the religion he had been seeking.

Another seeker, Benjamin Brown, was born in New York in 1794 and sought the truth among various denominations. Several spiritual manifestations had convinced him that the gifts of the Spirit as held anciently would be restored. He was baptized a Latter-day Saint after he received a Book of Mormon and had two angels appear to him, convincing him this was the religion for which he had been searching.²³ Forerunners such as these in both LDS and Islamic history prepared the way for the acceptance of the missions of Muhammad and Joseph Smith.

²¹ Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881), 3.

²² Larry C. Porter, “Solomon Chamberlain—Early Missionary,” *BYU Studies* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1972): 315. For further examples of seekers who found the LDS Church, see David F. Boone, “Prepared for the Restoration,” *Ensign* (December 1984), 17–21.

²³ Benjamin Brown, *Testimonies for the Truth: A Record of Manifestations of God, Miraculous and Providential* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 1–10.

It is clear that forerunners such as the *hunafa* and the Protestant reformers influenced both Muhammad and Joseph Smith respectively. Muslims are adamant that the Qur'an was not influenced by any outside factors, considering it the direct word of God. However, events and ideas from Muhammad's day influenced his thoughts and actions, which led to receiving the Qur'an. Muhammad himself is generally considered one of the *hunafa*.²⁴ The *hunafa* commonly retreated in solitude to the caves or mountains to escape the world and focus on spiritual matters. It is said that *hanif* Zayd sojourned at Mt. Hira after being expelled from Mecca, a practice Muhammad followed; he came to love solitude.²⁵ He would retire to Mt. Hira for contemplation and prayer, which brought him to the Night of Power when the angel Gabriel first appeared to him.²⁶

There are additional evidences that forerunners influenced Muhammad and prepared the way for his acceptance. Waraqah, one of the prominent *hunafa* previously mentioned (and Muhammad's relative through marriage) helped Muhammad interpret his encounter with Gabriel and encouraged him to proceed. Some believed Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib, was also a *hanif*. Muhammad was raised by his grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, who followed the general religious customs of his day but is said to have been "nearer to the religion of Abraham than most of his contemporaries."²⁷ It is not difficult to see why Muhammad had monotheistic leanings and how the *hunafa* may have influenced his thoughts. Like them, he questioned the religious practices of his day and

²⁴ There is some disagreement among Muslims as to the extent of this. While the Qur'an tells Muhammad to be *hanif* (10:105), Shi'ite Muslims generally believe Muhammad was always *hanif*, which means he was always monotheistic—he never participated in the false worship common in his day. The Qur'an only specifically identifies one man as having been *hanif*—Abraham (3:67).

²⁵ M.J. Kister, "Al-Tahannuth: An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 31, no. 2 (1968): 232.

²⁶ There is some debate in Islam about the purpose of the practice of seeking solitude. For a discussion on what Muhammad may have been doing at Mt. Hira when he experienced a vision, see *ibid.*, 223–236.

²⁷ Lings, *Muhammad*, 16.

sought the true religion of Abraham in the midst of apostasy. As the Qur'an declares: "Say (O Muhammad): 'Truly, my Lord has guided me to a Straight Path, a right religion, the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham), Hanifa [i.e. the true Islamic Monotheism—to believe in One God...]" (Qur'an 6:161).

Like Muhammad, Joseph's environment largely influenced the initial questions that prodded him to obtain revelation. Protestants primarily produced the religious pluralism of early America, which eventuated in conflicting religious claims that captured Joseph's attention. His mother wrote that, "Joseph's mind became considerably troubled with regard to religion."²⁸ Joseph explained: "There was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion....During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness...The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists... [who were] equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets...In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right...? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" (Joseph Smith—History 1:5, 8–10). Joseph eventually concluded that perhaps mankind had "apostatized from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament."²⁹ The Reformer's work resulted in a religious landscape that generated questions in Joseph's mind and at least indirectly led to his First Vision.

Forerunners who questioned the status quo and sought greater enlightenment created the environment that stimulated Muhammad's and Joseph Smith's thinking. That

²⁸ Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 115.

²⁹ Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92) 1:271, spelling and capitalization modernized.

environment spurred questions and contemplation, which led to their visionary experiences. The work of these forerunners prepared others to accept the doctrines taught by both prophets. The best explanation for the actions and thoughts of these forerunners is that God was preparing for a future event.

Prophecies

While some forerunners anticipated the coming of a prophet or that a great work was about to be done, others actually foresaw the coming of Muhammad and Joseph Smith.³⁰ Prophecies about Joseph Smith and Muhammad were made thousands of years before their births as well as within the generation of their births. They or their followers have reinterpreted or altered scripture (under divine inspiration) to apply to the coming of Muhammad and Joseph Smith, and lineal ancestors of both men prophesied of their coming.³¹ These phenomena, which may be considered divine groundwork for the arrival of a prophet, are not exclusive to restoration prophets, but seem to be much more common than that found in the lives of other prophets. The unique difficulties of establishing a freshly revealed religion, which does not have an established hierarchy of priests or body of believers, may explain why. The argument, which I assert seems more plausible than alternatives, is that God lays the groundwork for the arrival of the prophet to ease their emergence.

³⁰ Of course these prophecies are presented as Joseph Smith and Muhammad interpreted them, or, more often, their followers. One could certainly disagree with these interpretations. For example, Christians and Muslims interpret some of the prophecies of Jesus differently; for Muslims, they apply to Muhammad, for Christians they apply to the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ.

³¹ It could be argued Joseph Smith himself did this (see JST—Genesis 50:24–38 and 2 Nephi 3:4–15) and Muhammad seems to have at least allowed it (see Lings, *Muhammad*, 17 where Waraqah, who died before Muhammad, apparently applies passages from the Gospels to Muhammad).

Both traditions understood their leaders to be the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. The Qur'an declares that Muhammad was spoken of in the Bible: "Muhammad whom they find written with them in the Taurat (Torah)...and the Injeel (Gospel)," and "Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Taurat [(Torah) which came] before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad," or Muhammad (Qur'an 7:157; 61:6). In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi quotes Joseph of Egypt prophesying that "a seer shall the Lord my God raise up...he shall do a work...which shall be of great worth...unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins...And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father" (2 Nephi 3:6–7, 11, 15). Thus, Muslim and Latter-day Saint scripture helps and compels their followers to identify biblical writings that prophesy the coming of their prophet. This is a remarkable similarity that is also true of Moses and Jesus.³²

Muslims have identified several Old and New Testament prophecies of Muhammad. Perhaps the most prominent is in Deuteronomy: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (18:18). The application to Muhammad is easily seen: when Muhammad was called, he was commanded to speak (or read or recite) the words God gave him (see Qur'an 96:1–5). Muslims have created lists

³² Latter-day Saint scripture clearly foretells the coming of Moses (JST Genesis 50:24), but Jewish tradition also confirms this. See Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 1A (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 96. According to the New Testament, Jesus plainly claimed Old Testament scripture spoke of Him. See John 5:39. His followers, particularly Matthew, found many Old Testament passages to apply to Jesus. See, for example, Matthew 21:1–5; Matthew 1:22–23; 2:15; 2:17–18; 2:23; 4:14–16; 21:4–5; 27:6–10.

comparing Muhammad and Moses to demonstrate how Muhammad fulfills this scripture.³³

According to Muslim belief, Isaiah also prophesied of Muhammad. Muslims generally interpret Isaiah 42, which Christians view as a Messianic passage, to refer to Muhammad. An early hadith shows that early Muslims understood this passage to be a prophecy of Muhammad:

Narrated Ata bin Yasar: I met Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'As and asked him, "Tell me about the description of Allah's Apostle which is mentioned in Torah (i.e. Old Testament)." He replied, "Yes. By Allah, he is described in Torah with some of the qualities attributed to him in the Quran as follows:

"O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness (for Allah's True religion) And a giver of glad tidings (to the faithful believers), And a warner (to the unbelievers) And guardian of the illiterates. You are My slave and My messenger (i.e. Apostle). I have named you "Al-Mutawakkil" (who depends upon Allah). You are neither discourteous, harsh Nor a noise-maker in the markets And you do not do evil to those Who do evil to you, but you deal With them with forgiveness and kindness. Allah will not let him (the Prophet) Die till he makes straight the crooked people by making them say: "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah," With which will be opened blind eyes And deaf ears and enveloped hearts."³⁴

The similarity of this passage to the first seven verses of Isaiah 42 is clear. There is evidence that Muslims in Muhammad's day had access to the Hebrew Bible and found passages they felt referred to him.³⁵ There appears to be no record that Muhammad himself used such passages to refer to himself.

Muhammad's followers have also applied several New Testament verses to him.

While Christians believe that Jesus' statements about the Comforter in John 14–16 refer

³³ For example, see High Commission for the Development of ArRiyadh, "Islam: Bible Prophecies of Muhammad (part 2 of 4): Old Testament Prophecies of Muhammad," n.p. cited: 10 May 2007. Online: http://www.arriyadh.com/En/Islam/LeftBar/IslaminFoc/more/Bible-Prophecies-of-Muhammad--part-2.doc_cvt.asp.

³⁴ Bukhari 3:190.

³⁵ Several other passages are applied: Songs of Solomon 5:16; Haggai 2:7; Deuteronomy 33:2; Micah 4:1–2; Psalms 72:8–17; Genesis 21:13, 18. It is unclear how many of these were applied to Muhammad by his contemporaries as opposed to later Muslim scholars who sought biblical passages to fit Muhammad.

to the Holy Ghost, Muslims contend that they apply to Muhammad. The argument rests on the Greek word *parakletos*, translated as “Comforter.”³⁶ Islamic scholars argue the translation means “honorable” or “glorified one,” which is the meaning of the name Muhammad.³⁷ Jesus declared to His apostles that this Comforter “will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak” (John 16:13). The belief that Muhammad only recited what he heard (rather than putting revelatory ideas into his own words) can fit well with John 16:13. This part of Jesus’ prophecy induced some to believe that it had not been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, as the Christians claimed.³⁸ *Hanif Waraqah* felt certain that Jesus’ prophecy of one who would not speak for himself but would speak what he heard was not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.³⁹ However, when Waraqah learned of Muhammad’s revelations he quickly connected Muhammad to the prophecy.

Although Qur’anic verses certainly declare Muhammad to be in the Bible more clearly than he is found in modern Bibles, the same can also be said for Joseph Smith. The previously cited passages from 2 Nephi tie Joseph Smith to Old Testament prophecies with certainty, although the actual Old Testament text as found today reads differently than the Book of Mormon. These discrepancies are not a problem for Latter-day Saints or Muslims because both faiths believe the Bible has been corrupted. Their more “modern” scripture is thus believed to be more accurate. For example, in Joseph Smith’s revisions of the Bible (JST), Genesis 50 is similar to the 2 Nephi passage and even stronger in some instances: “and his name shall be called Joseph” (JST Genesis

³⁶ See particularly: John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7–14. James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Hendrickson: Peabody, Massachusetts, n.d.), Greek dictionary entry 3875.

³⁷ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 103.

³⁸ See Acts 2.

³⁹ Lings, *Muhammad*, 17.

50:33). Similarly, Muslims revise Genesis 17:20 slightly to apply to Muhammad more clearly, instead of vaguely describing the greatness of Ishmael's descendants.⁴⁰ While Christians or contemporary scholars disregard these LDS and Islamic approaches to the Bible, both faith communities have nevertheless viewed biblical prophecy as a compelling harbinger of each founding prophet.

Latter-day Saints apply several additional biblical passages to Joseph Smith.⁴¹ Isaiah 29 speaks of a sealed book coming forth and the learned being unable to read it. Latter-day Saint history tells of Martin Harris taking writings from the gold plates to Dr. Charles Anthon who reportedly declared, "I cannot read a sealed book" (Joseph Smith—History 1:65). Isaiah 52 and Habakkuk 1 can also be applied to Joseph Smith using Book of Mormon passages. The Book of Mormon tells of Jesus Christ's visit to the ancient Americas shortly after His resurrection. Speaking of events in the last days, Jesus quoted Isaiah 52:13–15, a prophecy of a servant of the Lord who would be "exalted and extolled," but whose visage would be marred (3 Nephi 20:43–44). Latter-day Saint scholars have concluded that this prophecy of Jesus Christ is also meant to apply to Joseph Smith.⁴² In this same discourse, Jesus Christ also quotes Habakkuk 1:5, a prophecy of a servant of the Lord who would do a work among scattered Israel but they would not believe it, "although a man shall declare it unto them" (3 Nephi 21:9). To Latter-day Saints, this man is clearly Joseph Smith.⁴³

⁴⁰ For a discussion on how Muslims have reinterpreted this passage, see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 23–24.

⁴¹ In addition to those discussed here, see Isaiah 11:10–12; Ezekiel 37:15–19; Daniel 2:44–45; Malachi 3:1–5; Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 14:6 which Latter-day Saints believe foretell the work of Joseph Smith.

⁴² Joseph F. McConkie, "Smith, Joseph, Jr., Book of Mormon prophecies of," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 731–32.

⁴³ McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4:149.

It is somewhat difficult to determine how directly Joseph Smith applied biblical passages to himself. He seems to have at least done so indirectly. George Laub, an early member of the Church, recorded notes from a sermon of Joseph Smith on 12 May 1844: “Brother Joseph Smith was chosen for the last dispensation or seventh dispensation. [At] the time the grand council [sat] in heaven to organize this world, Joseph was chosen [as] the last and greatest prophet, to lay the foundation of God’s work of the seventh dispensation. Therefore the Jews asked John the Baptist if he was Elias, or Jesus, or that great prophet that was to come [John 1:19–28].”⁴⁴ In this sermon Joseph apparently not only applied a vague New Testament text to himself but also declared that He was known and chosen before the world was organized. Such a thought would not be foreign to a Muslim’s view of Muhammad: “Allah decreed that Muhammad should be His prophet even before Muhammad was born” (Qur’an 4:79).⁴⁵

Since we have no record of Muhammad applying scripture to himself—and for the most part, the same can be said for Joseph Smith—it is likely that it was their followers who amassed the prophetic scriptural evidence endorsing their respective prophet. This, of course, does not mean that both these prophets did not come to see themselves as legitimate restoration prophets or that God had not planned or anticipated their appearance. The fact that biblical scripture was applied to Muhammad and Joseph

⁴⁴ Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith, The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 370; spelling and punctuation modernized. See also *HC* 6:363–66.

⁴⁵ The Latter-day Saints’ view differs in that they believe in foreordination performed in an actual premortal existence. While some may argue this statement in the Qur’an is somewhat vague, the doctrine in Islam that all things occur according to the will of Allah and that Muhammad was predestined is clear.

Smith during their lifetimes shows that they were not opposed to this practice and may reveal something of how they viewed themselves.⁴⁶

In addition to the prophecies of ancient biblical prophets, the lineal ancestors of Muhammad and Joseph Smith foretold their coming as well. While a little boy, Muhammad seemed a favorite of his grandfather, ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib. This is not surprising as ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib had lost his son ‘Abdullah, the father of Muhammad, while Amina, Muhammad’s mother, was pregnant with Muhammad. Some remarkable events surrounded the engagement of Muhammad’s parents and Amina’s pregnancy, which gave the impression that something great would come from this union.⁴⁷ Later, when Muhammad was a little boy, his uncles would drive him away from the resting place of ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib, who then responded with the prophetic statement: “Let my son alone, for by Allah he has a great future.”⁴⁸

Joseph’s grandfather seemed to have similar prophetic impressions. Asael Smith, the paternal grandfather of Joseph Smith, prophesied that, “God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind.” Joseph’s grandmother, Mary, was convinced this referred to Joseph. While Asael seemed to hold to Universalist doctrines that ran somewhat contrary to Joseph’s teachings, he read the Book of Mormon

⁴⁶ Latter-day Saints and Muslims do not rely alone upon biblical passages to claim legitimacy for their prophets, but such prophecies certainly bolster the faith of the believer. To the non-believer it is a fantastic claim to have ancient prophets foretelling not only the coming of the prophet, but even their specific name. (As discussed, Joseph of Egypt foretold Joseph Smith’s name [2 Nephi 3:6–15; JST Genesis 50:24–33] and Jesus foretold Muhammad’s [John 14:26; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 103]). To have Moses, Joseph, and even Jesus prophesying of the Muslim or LDS prophet is a phenomenal claim that, if proved true, would give clear biblical credence to their faith.

⁴⁷ See Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 68–69, where on two different occasions women saw a light between ‘Abdullah’s eyes and sought him as a husband but after Amina had conceived Muhammad the light was gone. Also, Amina had a revelation during her pregnancy indicating to ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib the unborn child would be special. This will be discussed shortly.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

nearly through just before he passed away.⁴⁹ According to Joseph, Asael declared that Joseph “was the very Prophet that he had long known would come in his family.”⁵⁰ Skeptics may view these evidences as the hopes of any good progenitor for their posterity, but followers of Mormonism and Islam view them as further evidence of the divine calling of their respective prophets.

While ancient prophets prophesied the actual names “Joseph” and “Muhammad,” it was their parents who were ultimately inspired to name them as they did. Ibn Ishaq records that it was “alleged in popular stories” that while Amina was pregnant with Muhammad she heard a voice saying, “You are pregnant with the lord of this people and when he is born say, ‘I put him in the care of the One from the evil of every envier; then call him Muhammad.’” In addition, she is said to have seen a light proceed from her womb by which she saw the castles of Bosra in Syria. It is significant that those who were in Bosra would be later recipients of Islam. This then becomes a sign that an important religious figure was about to be born.⁵¹ When Muhammad’s grandfather was asked why the boy had been named Muhammad instead of being given an ancestors’ name, as was the custom, he replied: “I did so with the wish that my grandson would be praised by God in heaven and on earth by men.”⁵²

There is no direct evidence available suggesting Joseph’s parents received revelation regarding his name. There is, however, circumstantial evidence that Latter-day Saints often point to in support of the idea. It is typical for an oldest son to be named after

⁴⁹ Particularly, Asael believed the grace of God saved all people regardless of repentance. He felt the humiliation of rebirth was unnecessary. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 17, 25, 199–200.

⁵⁰ *HC* 2:443; see also Smith, “Memoirs,” 2.

⁵¹ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 69.

⁵² Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 48.

the father. Joseph was the fourth son, preceded by an unnamed son who died, by Alvin, and by Hyrum, but it was who Joseph received the name of his father, as Joseph of Egypt had prophesied.

Muslims and Latter-day Saints claim that prophecies about Muhammad and Joseph Smith, respectively, are found in the Bible and in the sayings of lineal ancestors. Both of their grandfathers proclaimed their greatness. Followers claim that the book of Genesis, Isaiah, and Jesus prophesy of both men. While prophecies about a prophet are not a prerequisite to prophethood, they present an interesting typological pattern fairly unique to restoration prophets. It is also noteworthy that the greatest prophet in Islam and the greatest prophet in Mormonism exhibit this phenomenon. Such evidence supports the claim that these men acted under divine inspiration.

CHAPTER 3

APOSTASY, PERPLEXITY, AND A HEAVENLY MANIFESTATION

As is often the case for prophets, Muhammad and Joseph Smith both lived when their society was ripe for new ideas. As discussed in chapter two, forerunners had prepared the way for their work to be accepted by some. This is not to say they avoided tremendous opposition, as will be discussed in chapter six. Those who accepted them, however, viewed the Prophets as restorers of truth that had been lost through years of apostasy.¹ Just as Latter-day Saints believe that the primitive Christian church contained the fullness of the gospel, Muslims believe that the “purity of the worship of the One God” was once held among the Arabs, but that those beliefs were contaminated as they mixed with neighboring pagan tribes with polytheistic tendencies.² This may be analogous to the Latter-day Saint view of the corrupting influence of Hellenistic culture on the early Church as Christianity began to spread throughout the Roman Empire. Truth mixing with culture led to corruption. These apostate conditions became the catalyst for Muhammad and Joseph Smith to seek truth, which led them both to a heavenly manifestation, marking the beginning of their prophetic missions.

¹ See Qur'an 5:19; 1 Nephi 13:34–37; D&C 1:22–30.

² Lings, *Muhammad*, 4.

Apostasy

Although centuries separate them, early nineteenth century New York and early seventh century Mecca share a few commonalities. Both were scenes of religious confusion. Arabia was a land of polytheism, New York a region of divided Christians verbally warring with one another. Muhammad was “dissatisfied with the corruption, idolatry, and social inequities that plagued Mecca; he sought for a higher truth that would provide peace, justice, and spiritual fulfillment for him and his people.”³ Similarly, Joseph Smith’s mind was “called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness” because of the “war of words and tumult of opinions” on the subject of religion (Joseph Smith—History 1:8, 10).

According to Muslim tradition, Abraham had originally established true religion for the Arabs. Abraham visited Hagar and Ishmael after they were expelled at Sarah’s request. Upon running out of water, Hagar went to a precipice to see if there was someone to help them; seeing no one, she went to another vantage point but again found no help. Distraught, she passed back and forth between these two points seven times then sat down to rest when an angel appeared to her and prophesied that God would make a great nation out of Ishmael. God then opened her eyes and she saw a well of water (see Genesis 21:16–18).⁴ Near this well, known to the Arabs as Zamzam, God commanded Abraham and Ishmael to build a cubical sanctuary, the Ka‘ba, which is the holiest place on earth for Muslims, located in modern day Mecca. The most holy object in the Ka‘ba is a stone that an angel brought to Abraham. It had been preserved in a nearby hill since

³ Toronto, “Islam,” 216.

⁴ Lings, *Muhammad*, 2.

descending from Paradise and was white when it came down, but, as Muhammad explained, became blackened from the sins of men.⁵

The Ka‘ba was the central place of worship for followers of Allah. As the society in Mecca grew, people began to leave the city to settle elsewhere but, desiring to maintain their worship, many took a stone from Mecca as an imitation of the black stone. They set up the stone wherever they settled and used it as a place of worship. Over time, the stones came to be worshipped in place of Allah and the people “forgot their primitive faith and adopted another religion for that of Abraham and Ishmael.”⁶

The religion of Abraham was not entirely abandoned, but became corrupted. The revealed religious practices Abraham and Ishmael had established were altered, most critically through worshipping lesser gods. As the Qur'an accuses them: “And most of them believe not in Allah except that they attribute partners unto Him” (12:106). This polytheism largely resulted from an expanding society and increasing trade routes which brought outside influences to bear on the once pure religion. Idols were eventually added to the stones set up in scattered settlements and pilgrims and travelers visiting the Ka‘ba began bringing idols to Mecca.⁷ This gradual corruption continued until the miracle of Zamzam, the true meaning of the Ka‘ba, and the worship of Allah were all but forgotten.⁸ This polytheism became entrenched in the centuries preceding Muhammad.⁹ In his day, each tribe had their own idol, and three hundred and sixty idols were set up in the Ka‘ba

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 35–36.

⁷ Ibn Ishaq gives some detail about who began this corruption and which idols they began to worship, see Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 36–40.

⁸ Allah was technically still considered to be the High God, but less attention was paid to Him than to the demigods beneath him, which also became less and less important over time.

⁹ For a more thorough discussion on the religious climate leading up to Muhammad’s day, see Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 55–73.

itself.¹⁰ While Arabs had abandoned many of the practices of the religion of Abraham, Allah’s primary concern eventually expressed through Muhammad boiled down to polytheism; they had ceased to worship Allah alone.

In comparison, the religious scene Joseph Smith faced seems more complex, perhaps because more is known about it. In Joseph’s First Vision, God declared that all religious sects were wrong: “all their creeds were an abomination” in His sight (Joseph Smith—History 1:19). John W. Welch wrote on the implications of this LDS scriptural phrase, concluding that the creeds had “become metaphors or manifestations of the Apostasy itself...as both cause and effect, symptom and result, of the disturbing religious conditions” in Joseph’s day. The Lord’s statement to Joseph Smith identified “several problems raised by or in conjunction with the creeds. No specific malady was exclusively singled out.”¹¹

Apostasy can be traced through the declarations of various creeds through the centuries from Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith. They began as simple, short statements of belief. Early Christian leaders and councils then began adding doctrine until, in the LDS view, “a considerable number of odd and incorrect doctrines had been intermingled with the originally valid and truthful elements.”¹² Protestant creeds followed, intended to clarify and distinguish religious groups from one another. The result was “confusion, dissension, and self-serving manipulation,” which often erupted in “hostility, persecution, and violence.”¹³

¹⁰ ‘Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet*, 16.

¹¹ John W. Welch, “All Their Creeds Were an Abomination,” in *Prelude to the Restoration, From Apostasy to the Restored Church, the 33rd Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 228–29, 246.

¹² *Ibid.*, 234.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 240.

As with Arab apostasy, Christian apostasy resulted largely from outside influences engraining themselves within the religion. Expansion from Mecca and exposure to pagan tribes corrupted the true religion of Abraham among the Arabs. Expansion from Jerusalem and contact with cultural and philosophical influences, particularly hellenization, corrupted the true religion of Jesus Christ, according to Latter-day Saints.¹⁴ The great difference seems to be in the way they were corrupted. Arabs seemed to have swung the door of religious tolerance wider and wider until the concept of God was extremely loose and polytheism reigned. Christian creeds, however, defined and redefined God in more rigid expressions of faith, often condemning other viewpoints. While these disagreements opened the way to diversity, they also led to dogmatism and the “war of words” and “tumult of opinions” Joseph Smith faced.¹⁵ The effect, however, was the same: Joseph Smith and Muhammad both became perplexed over religion. This confusion drove them to seek revelation.

Perplexity

Muhammad’s childhood is filled with remarkable legends of the miraculous.

From a historian’s perspective, there are very few sources that accurately report events in Muhammad’s life leading up to his calling. The information available may seem more

¹⁴ Stephen E. Robinson explained: “The hellenization of Christianity is a phenomenon that scholars of Christian history have long recognized. Hellenization refers to the imposition of Greek culture and philosophy upon the cultures of the East. The result was a synthesis of East and West, a melting pot of popular culture that was virtually worldwide. In the realm of religion, however, synthesis means compromise, and when we speak in terms of the gospel, compromise with popular beliefs means apostasy from the truth” (“Nephi’s ‘Great and Abominable Church,’” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 [1998]: 32–39).

¹⁵ As entire books have been written on the subject, justice cannot and need not be done to the LDS view of the Apostasy in this thesis. Several books have been devoted to this topic, see Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*; Alexander Morrison, *Turning From Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005); Tad Callister, *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006). For a more thorough discussion on the religious climate in Joseph Smith’s day, see Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 53–108.

like folklore than history to the modern scholar because much of it was written well after Muhammad's death, is unverifiable, and because it is infused with supernatural elements suspicious to modern scholars.¹⁶ Yet, to pious Muslims, these are an integral part of Muhammad's life. As discussed in chapter two, many people received manifestations of Muhammad's future greatness. Muhammad's nursemaid, Halima, met sudden prosperity upon caring for the boy and animals he came in contact with were miraculously healed. One story attributed to Halima claims that two men in white cleansed his heart from all sin when he was a boy. The list of anomalous occurrences goes on.¹⁷ Such miraculous events, if true, certainly gave Muhammad pause and caused him to wonder about his destiny.

In contrast, Joseph Smith's boyhood seems remarkably ordinary.¹⁸ Prophecies existed that would later be applied to him, but he was certainly unaware of these as a youth. His mother wrote that she was frequently asked about Joseph's childhood, the questioner expecting to hear some remarkable incidents, but, "as nothing occurred during

¹⁶ Charles Wendell and Muhammad Abdul Rauf discuss the reliability of accounts of Muhammad's childhood from their respective views as modern historian and pious Muslim in "The Pre-Islamic Period of Sirat al-Nabi," and "A Muslim Response to 'The Pre-Islamic Period of Sirat al-Nabi,'" *The Muslim World* 62, no. 1 (January 1972): 11–48.

¹⁷ Chapters and numerous articles have been written about the miraculous events of Muhammad's childhood. This thesis is not the appropriate place for such details. For more information, see Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 66–94; Lings, *Muhammad*, 12–32; Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 75–79.

¹⁸ In Islam, there is a tradition, almost an insistence to some, of Muhammad's purity. His uncle stated that "I have never seen him tell a lie, indulge in jests and vulgarity, or mix with street boys" ('Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet*, 60). In contrast, Joseph himself confessed (in what became LDS scripture, no less) that he was "left to all kinds of temptations; and...fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth and the foibles of human nature," which led him into "divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God," although not "guilty of any great or malignant sins" (Joseph Smith—History 1:28; see also D&C 20:5–6). There is a reference in the Qur'an, however, which indicates Muhammad, too, erred in some way but that Allah guided him, probably referring to his religious ignorance prior to Islam (93:7). Some Qur'anic translators choose the word *unaware* instead of *erring*, illustrating the sensitivity of this issue to some.

his early life except those trivial circumstances which are common to that state of human existence, I pass them in silence.”¹⁹

Life circumstances allowed both men time for contemplation. Although Muhammad was born into a wealthy tribe, he was “among the ‘poorer cousins.’” He was orphaned by age six and was “not among the privileged members” of his tribe, which meant he had to work hard for a living.²⁰ He worked as a herdsman in his youth which afforded him adequate time for reflection.²¹ His marriage to Khadija, who tradition states was fifteen years older than Muhammad and quite wealthy, allowed Muhammad even more time for meditation because temporal demands were no longer an immediate concern. Joseph, whose family farmed as their primary source of income, would also have found adequate time for contemplation.

Perhaps endless hours of thought can have significant impact on a mind, particularly when those minds are bent towards seeking meaning and truth in life, a tendency Muhammad and Joseph Smith both demonstrated. Joseph’s mother described him as being less inclined to books than her other children, but “much more given to reflection and deep study.”²² One biographer described Muhammad as having a “constant preoccupation...with the discovery of the underlying truth of life.”²³ Such dispositions channeled these men into a state of perplexity which yielded a mind and heart ripe for revelation.

¹⁹ Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, 113.

²⁰ Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis, *World Religions Today*, 190.

²¹ Muhammad was proud of this heritage and even linked it to his prophethood: “God sent no prophet who was not a herdsman...Moses was a herdsman; David was also a herdsman; I too, was commissioned to prophethood while I grazed my family’s cattle” (Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 58).

²² Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 134.

²³ Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 58.

Socially and philosophically, Muhammad identified with the *hunafa*. Their dissatisfaction with polytheism had infected Muhammad, but his anxiety had broader roots. Most of the *hunafa* were concerned with personal salvation, as Muhammad certainly was, but his quest was more than personal. Muhammad was deeply concerned with the condition of his society. Successful trade had made the Arabs in Mecca rich and traditional tribal values had crumbled under the weight of a new prosperity. Customarily, tribes had taken care of their own, meted out justice, and brought some stability to society. Individual prosperity was tearing down customs which had traditionally brought social order. This unrest demanded political change to maintain stability. Muhammad was acutely aware of these issues and believed the current course would lead to the disintegration of the tribe. This was evident in Muhammad's own tribe, the Quraysh. Unless they "learned to put another transcendent value at the center of their lives...his tribe would tear itself apart morally and politically."²⁴ For religious, political and social reasons, Muhammad sought Allah's help for himself and his people.

Perhaps Muhammad's quest to elevate society was partially the result of the miraculous elements of his youth. Even if these have been exaggerated, he may have known he was exceptional. Joseph, being young and having had a fairly ordinary childhood, seems to have had a much more personal quest. He does not seem concerned with social or political issues—few fourteen-year-olds are—but with his personal spirituality. According to Joseph's 1838 account of his First Vision, he was perplexed about which church was right for him. He wrote: "My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join"

²⁴ Karen Armstrong, "Muhammad and the Angel, the Painful Birth of a Great Faith," *Utne Reader* 62 (March/April 1994): 78.

(Joseph Smith—History 1:18). Other sources reveal Joseph’s search to be even more personal. In an 1832 account of his First Vision, Joseph stated that he felt convicted for his sins.²⁵ In 1841, he mentioned feeling concerned about being prepared for the next life.²⁶ These personal concerns drove him to the grove to pray, in addition to his search for the correct sect. Although Joseph’s quest was more exclusively personal, in retrospect Latter-day Saints clearly believe Joseph’s search occurred for the benefit of mankind. In a revelation to Joseph in 1831, the Lord declared: “I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven” (D&C 1:17). Personal concerns partly drove both men to seek divine guidance, but when viewed from a modern vantage point, God can be seen taking an active role in changing history in a way that extends far beyond the personal lives or societies of Muhammad and Joseph Smith. It seems God was determined to bring greater light to mankind.

Muhammad spent more time meditating in solitude as he approached the age of forty, often traveling to the cave at Mt. Hira to pray fervently for guidance.²⁷ This was partly because he had already begun to experience dreams and visions. He described these “powerful inward signs” as “true visions” which came in his sleep and were “like the breaking of the light of dawn.”²⁸ These dreams seemed to deepen his conviction that his people had gone astray and that the solution was not to be found in sources then available on the earth, such as Judaism or Christianity.²⁹

²⁵ Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 155–57.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁷ ‘Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet*, 60.

²⁸ Lings, *Muhammad*, 43.

²⁹ Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 72.

Joseph's conclusion that he must seek wisdom from God came as he studied the scriptures, attended various religious gatherings, and discussed his religious concerns with others. His conundrum had been building for two or three years.³⁰ He was reading the Epistle of James in the New Testament when an answer leapt out at him: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Joseph later wrote: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart." Joseph concluded: "I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12–13). Both men realized that the knowledge they needed was not to be found on the earth.³¹

A Heavenly Manifestation

The stage was now set for God to respond to the searching questions of Muhammad and Joseph Smith in a remarkable way. In Muhammad's day, there was a common practice among the Arabs known as *tahannuth*, customarily done during the month of Ramadan.³² While details of this practice are unknown, it involved religious devotion through solitary time in prayer and meditation and may have included

³⁰ That Joseph's quest was not a sudden impulse, but a process over two or three years is apparent from his 1832 account of the First Vision. See Milton V. Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: The First Vision in its Historical Context* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 124.

³¹ It is interesting that neither man seemed to doubt the existence of God or that answers could be found through Him. In both instances, this belief seems to stem, at least in part, from the natural creations surrounding them. In his 1832 account of the First Vision, Joseph describes looking upon the sun, moon and stars, upon the beasts, fowls, and men walking upon the earth in majesty and determining that the scriptures are true when they say "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms 14:1) (Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 156–57). Haykal describes similar feelings from Muhammad as he viewed the creations of God (*The Life of Muhammad*, 58–59, 71).

³² See Kister, "Al-Tahannuth," 223–36 for a discussion on possible practices involved in *tahannuth*.

almsgiving to the poor who came for this purpose. Muhammad had been to the cave at Hira to practice *tahannuth* often, but his journey in A.D. 610 would be unique. It is not apparent that Muhammad did anything different that year, but his desire for guidance had increased. There are several versions of what happened on what would later be known as *layla al-qadr*, the “Night of Destiny” or “Night of Power.” Some accounts say Muhammad was meditating, some that he was sleeping.³³ In either case, an angel appeared to him and commanded him to “Read!” or “Recite!” Muhammad understood what the angel wanted—he wanted him to prophesy, to speak the word of God. Muhammad refused, saying, “I am not a reciter,” or “poet.”³⁴ In Muhammad’s experience, those who claimed to speak in this way were soothsayers, people possessed by a *jinn*, what Christians might call a spirit. His response was an objection to the thought of being possessed as the bards he detested were.³⁵ His contempt was well founded: the *jinni* were entirely unreliable and “delighted in leading people astray.”³⁶ He was seeking the direction of Allah, not the guidance of a *jinn*.

The angel then “took me and whelmed me in his embrace until he had reached the limit of mine endurance.” The angel repeated the command: “Recite!” Again Muhammad protested, “I am not a reciter.”³⁷ The angel repeated the command a third and fourth time, pressing Muhammad with his cloth covering so hard that Muhammad thought he would

³³ Both men seem to be awake but in a visionary state—Joseph “came to himself” and found himself lying on his back (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). According to Ishaq, Muhammad was asleep when the angel first appeared to him (Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 106).

³⁴ Lings, *Muhammad*, 43. Muhammad’s cousin, the learned *hunafa* Waraqah, later identifies this messenger as the angel Gabriel (Maulana Muhammad ‘Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* (London: Curzon Press, 1978), 8).

³⁵ An entire chapter in the Qur’an regards the *jinn*, Surah 72. Notice the similarity to the English word *genie*. Although the words come from entirely different origins (*genie* comes from Latin which predates the Arabic term), their meaning and sound are so similar that French translators of the *Arabian Nights* used the English *genie* for the Arabic *jinni*.

³⁶ Armstrong, *Prophet*, 21–22.

³⁷ Lings, *Muhammad*, 43. Some scholars have noted a similarity to the biblical story of Jacob wrestling with an angel.

die. Simply hoping to escape death, Muhammad responded “What then shall I read?” The angel then recited the first words of what became the Qur'an:

Recite in the name of thy Lord who created!
He createth man from a clot of blood.
Recite: and thy Lord is the Most Bountiful
He who hath taught by the pen,
taught man what he knew not (96:1–5).

Muhammad repeated the words, hearing “the first words of a new Arabic scripture pouring, as if unbidden, from his lips.”³⁸ They had been permanently carved upon his heart and in his memory.³⁹

Joseph Smith was fourteen when his vision came in the spring of 1820. Motivated by the scripture in James, he had selected a private setting near his home to petition God in seclusion. He sought an answer to his several concerns with the pure faith of a boy, or as he said, “under a realizing sense” of how remarkably simple the solution was—ask and ye shall receive.⁴⁰

Finding himself alone in the grove, Joseph began to pray when he was “seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak” (Joseph Smith—History 1:15). He heard a noise behind him as if someone were approaching, but saw no one and again tried to pray. The “noise of walking seemed to draw nearer” and Joseph jumped to his feet to survey his surroundings but saw nothing that might produce such a sound.⁴¹ He felt as though thick darkness surrounded him and thought he was “doomed to sudden destruction,” not to “an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the

³⁸ Armstrong, *Prophet*, 22.

³⁹ Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 73.

⁴⁰ Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 159 (1835 account).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

unseen world” who had power beyond anything he had felt (Joseph Smith—History 1:15, 16). Renewing his efforts to call upon God, he was delivered as a pillar of light appeared over his head and descended gradually until it rested upon him.

Joseph and Muhammad both experienced an alarming sensation of being on the brink of death, yet persisted and emerged from it. Muhammad’s threat, however, came from the angel and he was delivered as he obeyed the messenger; Joseph believed that what he felt came from the adversary and overcame it through calling upon God more intensely.

Joseph stated: “my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was enwrapped in a heavenly vision.” A personage appeared in the midst of the light, followed soon by another who resembled the first in “features or likeness.”⁴² They stood above him in the air, their brightness and glory beyond all description. Joseph continued: “One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). The messenger, Jesus Christ, assured him that his sins were forgiven and testified of His atoning sacrifice.⁴³ After getting possession of himself, Joseph asked which of all the Christian sects was right and which he should join. The Lord responded that He did not acknowledge any of them as His and Joseph was forbidden to join with any of them. The Lord informed him that the fullness of the gospel would be made known to him at a future time.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 159–60, 168, 170.

⁴³ Ibid., 157, 159. That his sins were forgiven is recorded in two of the four accounts Joseph had published; it seems to be one of the first messages communicated (1832, 1835).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 168; Joseph Smith—History 1:19. Joseph was also told many other things which he did not relate and saw many angels in this vision (Joseph Smith—History 1:20; Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*, 159).

Joseph's revelation directly addressed his concerns, Muhammad's indirectly. Perhaps this is because Muhammad sought something less defined; but it was a starting point nonetheless. The revelation he received did confront the swelling pride and prosperity in Meccan society. Muhammad's first revelation forcefully reminded the Meccans of man's position in the universe: Allah had created man from a clot of blood and taught him things he did not know.⁴⁵

The after-effects of the two visions were drastically different. After coming to, Joseph went home, leaned upon the fireplace and assured his concerned and questioning mother that he was fine. He wrote: "I had now got my mind satisfied so far as the sectarian world was concerned" (Joseph Smith—History 1:26). Muhammad, on the other hand, was so terrified at the thought of a *jinn* possessing him, that when he awoke from his vision, he thought, "Woe is me poet or possessed—Never shall Quraysh say this of me! I will go to the top of the mountain and throw myself down that I may kill myself and gain rest." On the way up, a heavenly messenger confronted him. He called Muhammad's name and introduced himself, just as God later did to Joseph Smith. "O Muhammad!" the messenger called, "Thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel" (Qur'an 53:6–10). He turned to see who was speaking and saw the form of a man descending, standing in the air.⁴⁶ Muhammad turned away from him but whichever way he turned the messenger stood, repeating the same words.⁴⁷ This dissuaded Muhammad

⁴⁵ Armstrong, *Prophet*, 46.

⁴⁶ The messenger descended and stood above Muhammad in the air, just as God had descended and stood in the air above Joseph. Another account has Gabriel sitting on a throne, a well known prophetic motif (Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 126–27. Other prophets had reacted with terror to a divine calling, but Muhammad's reaction seems even more extreme. Armstrong suggests that this is because Muhammad did not have "the consolations of an established religion to support him and help him interpret his experience." (Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 84).

⁴⁷ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 106. According to some sources, Muhammad at first appears to have believed the being he saw was God, "but later concluded it must have been the angel

from suicide. Instead he instinctively returned to his wife, Khadija, throwing himself into her lap, convulsing and pleading for her to cover him. This response was vastly different from Joseph's calm return to his home. Muhammad was only consoled after the reassurance of Khadija and his cousin, the *hunafa* Waraqah, who assured him the vision was from Allah.⁴⁸

It may seem strange that Muhammad, a mature adult, needed the assurance of others to convince him the revelation was divine, while Joseph, a fourteen-year-old boy, knew it was from God, even when others tried to convince him otherwise. Shortly after the visions, both men shared their experience with a trusted and learned Christian. But Waraqah's reassurances to Muhammad were vastly different than the reaction Joseph received as he spoke to a trusted minister: "he treated my communication not only lightly, but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil" (Joseph Smith—History 1:21). Others who learned of Joseph's vision reacted in a similar manner, yet Joseph stood resolutely by his conviction that he had seen God.⁴⁹ Perhaps their age difference actually contributed to this dissimilarity—a fourteen-year-old may conceivably be impressionable and naïve enough to not question or doubt his experience, whereas

Gabriel" (Mircea Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 vols. [New York: Macmillan, 1987], 10:143). While this idea finds little or no acceptance in Islam today, it was frequently debated in the formative period of Islam, the issue being one of the corporeal vs. transcendent nature of God. See Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, "The Throne Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muhammad," in *The Disciple as Scholar*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges, (Provo, UT: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University, 2000), 323–38. The contention is that Qur'an 74:1–7 was the first revelation Muhammad received rather than Qur'an 96:1–5. According to this view, Muhammad had completed his meditation at Hira and was descending when he saw God upon His throne (Daniel C. Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007], 52). Peterson notes that "there seems little motive for later Muslims to have invented so embarrassing a tale in connection with their prophet" because it contradicts the anti-anthropomorphic theology developed later (Ibid., 52–53). If the account is accurate, it would lend an even closer parallel to Joseph Smith's vision.

⁴⁸ Lings, *Muhammad*, 44.

⁴⁹ See Joseph Smith—History 1:23–25.

Muhammad's doubts stemmed from the unreliability he saw in those who claimed to have revelations.

It is a remarkable similarity that those closest to both men did not doubt the authenticity of the visions or the integrity of the recipients. Khadija became and remained an adamant supporter of Muhammad. Many of the first converts to Islam were Muhammad's kinsmen. The same is true in Mormonism. Joseph's family, and later his wife, stood by him remarkably well through the difficulties of his life.⁵⁰

Despite initial disclosures to close associates, both men were cautious about revealing the vision to others.⁵¹ It seems likely that persecution caused this hesitancy. Waraqah had warned Muhammad that he would be called a liar, used spitefully, cast out, and fought against; it had always been so for messengers of God.⁵² Joseph learned through experience that persecution would follow his divine calling. One of his early revelations counseled him: "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many" (D&C 24:8).

It is unclear how well Joseph or Muhammad sensed the ramifications of these initial visions. While in retrospect it is easy to identify the visions as marking the beginning of their prophethood, neither man seemed to realize what would follow. The Qur'an declares of Muhammad: "And you were not expecting that the Book (this Qur'an)

⁵⁰ Joseph's mother records his concern that his father would not believe him after the appearance of the angel Moroni, yet the family accepted that vision as well as the first (Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, 129–31). Stark has compared the support of Muhammad's family to the support of Joseph Smith's family. He believes the support of these "holy families" were indispensable in establishing both faiths ("A Theory of Revelations," 296–98).

⁵¹ For a discussion on how the perception, use, and recitation of Joseph's First Vision evolved in Mormon history see James B. Allen, "Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith's First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43–61. Muhammad begins preaching more publicly after Allah commands him to do so, first to his family (Qur'an 26:214), and then openly (Qur'an 15:8–9, 94).

⁵² Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 107.

would be sent down to you” (Qur'an 28:86). Although the Lord told Joseph the fullness of the gospel would later be revealed to him, he probably did not anticipate what that would entail; he seems to have been primarily concerned about his own soul at the time of his vision.

Muhammad’s Night of Destiny seems to be all that was necessary for his prophetic call. It was evidence enough for his followers that the respected merchant and family man of Mecca had been chosen as God’s Apostle, reciting God’s messages until his death, twenty-two years later. Joseph Smith, while chosen at age fourteen, was tutored and prepared for a more official entrance afterwards—ten years passed before he organized a church as was sustained as its leader. As will be discussed in the next chapter, it was requisite for him to receive priesthood keys to organize the Church, perform ordinances, and act as God’s mouthpiece. But the importance of those days in Ramadan 610 and the spring of 1820 cannot be overstated. Each would change the course of religious and world history.

CHAPTER 4 CONTINUED REVELATION

A period of silence followed the first divine encounters. The stillness of the heavens was distressing and Joseph and Muhammad both sought further direction. Joseph felt convicted for his sins; he had become “entangled again in the vanities of the world” and “fell into many foolish errors...offensive in the sight of God” (D&C 20:5; Joseph Smith—History 1:28). Once again his sins motivated him to seek divine guidance. After Gabriel’s visit, Muhammad continued to have revelations for a short time, but they soon stopped. Muhammad thought he had been forsaken, that perhaps now God hated him.⁵³ Both men would soon receive further revelations solidifying their prophetic roles. Muhammad and Joseph Smith did not view revelation as a new phenomenon, nor did they view their own revelations as the creation of new ideas; both of them received revelation that assimilated them with ancient prophets who, in turn, had received revelations similar to those of Joseph Smith and Muhammad. Both prophets believed that Adam was the first prophet and they were simply revealing the same truths that God had revealed to prophets before them.⁵⁴ Revelation would continue throughout both men’s lives. This chapter will explore four aspects of revelation for Muhammad and Joseph

⁵³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 111–12.

⁵⁴ “I am not a new thing among the Messengers,” Muhammad told his audience (Qur’an 46:9). Armstrong notes that while revelation often used to describe an entirely original thought, Muhammad understood “more clearly than many other religious leaders” that “no religious vision or concept can be original, because it claims to point to the fundamental, pre-existent reality” (*Muhammad*, 86). Joseph Smith clearly taught this same doctrine and, like Muhammad, understood it more clearly than other religious leaders (Alma P. Burton, comp., *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977], 53).

Smith: (1) the importance of revelation, (2) the difficulty of receiving revelation, (3) different modes in which it came, and (4) a brief comparison of their revelation's content.

Breaking the Silence

Over three years passed after Joseph's First Vision without a notable divine encounter. Finally, on the evening of 21 September 1823, Joseph supplicated God for forgiveness and for a "manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him," having full confidence it would come because of his previous experience (Joseph Smith—History 1:29). A light appeared in his room, continually brightening until a personage stood in the air at Joseph's bedside. The messenger identified himself as Moroni and informed Joseph that God had a work for him. There was an ancient record deposited in a hill nearby that contained the fullness of the gospel, which Joseph would eventually receive and translate in preparation for the establishment of God's kingdom. By the middle of the next day, Moroni had visited Joseph five times, repeating the first message several times and adding counsel and instruction.

Past Muhammad—Joseph Smith comparisons have correlated Moroni's appearances to Joseph Smith with Gabriel's visits to Muhammad.⁵⁵ This comparison is worthwhile in a few respects. Both messengers repeatedly appeared in the prophets' early careers and the following years. Although God and Christ were Joseph's first visitors, it is unclear whether he initially understood that he would be a prophet.⁵⁶ Moroni, however, clearly conveyed that message, as Gabriel did to Muhammad. Both angels manifested the power of God so that the prophets were humbled into submission. According to Islamic

⁵⁵ Thimme, "Mormonism and Islam," 155–67; see Green and Goldrup, "Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?" 49.

⁵⁶ Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 44.

tradition, Gabriel virtually forced Muhammad to begin reciting the Qur'an and later prevented him from committing suicide when he asserted his inescapable presence.⁵⁷ On Joseph's first visit to the hill Cumorah, Moroni prevented Joseph from removing the record engraved on gold plates because Joseph felt tempted to use them for personal gain. As he reached for the plates, "a shock was produced upon his system." A second and third attempt produced more powerful jolts, after which Moroni appeared and rebuked him for being enticed to use the plates improperly.⁵⁸ Moroni and Gabriel acted as tutors in preparing and guiding the prophets in their missions.

After Moroni's visit, Joseph was given specific instructions pertaining to his mission. This was no longer just a matter of Joseph's personal spirituality. He had been called to help restore the fullness of the gospel and was instructed to return to the hill on the same day every year for further revelations. In these meetings, Joseph "received instruction and intelligence from [Moroni]...respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days" (Joseph Smith—History 1: 54).

After his initial vision at Mt. Hira, Muhammad soon received several additional revelations, but then they stopped. For two years nothing came. He wondered if he had been delusional in the cave at Hira, or if God had abandoned him. Seeking relief, he returned to the cave.⁵⁹ Like Joseph, Muhammad pled with God in prayer and in the revelation that followed Allah reassured him: "By the forenoon, and by the night as it

⁵⁷ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 105–06.

⁵⁸ Oliver Cowdery describes the experience in great detail in a series of articles ("Letter VII," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 10 (July 1835): 157–58; "Letter VIII," *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 13 (October 1835): 198–200.

⁵⁹ Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 79. It is not clear whether the revelation came at Hira or sometime afterwards. While background to Qur'anic surahs have been compiled (termed *asbab al-nuzul* [i.e. "the occasions of revelation"]), there is often less known about many of them than sections of the Doctrine and Covenants revealed to Joseph Smith. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

spreads its wings over the world in peace, your Lord has not forsaken you; nor is He displeased with you. Surely the end shall be better for you than the beginning” (Qur'an 93:1–4).⁶⁰ Muhammad learned that his first interchange with the Angel had been neither superficial nor singular and as time passed, his prophetic mission gradually unfolded.

Muhammad's early revelations addressed the persecution that followed his prophetic emergence, encouraged care for the poor, and prescribed the manner of prayer.⁶¹ Many of these rituals would later be expanded and refined, but the basic principles of Islam were beginning to unfold. It is uncertain how many revelations Muhammad received in his very earliest days as Allah's Apostle, partly because he kept quiet about them because of persecution. He revealed them primarily to early converts who were usually close associates.⁶²

The Difficulty of Receiving Revelation

Receiving revelation was often not a comfortable experience. It is a well established motif for prophets to view their divine encounters as a burden in many ways.⁶³ It could be a terrifying experience to encounter the divine and an arduous task to deliver divine messages to a hostile audience, but this was not the only stress revelation brought. The experience could be physically and emotionally exhausting. Physical

⁶⁰ As cited in *Ibid.*, 80. There is little variance on the chronological order of surahs. Some problems arise, however, because some surahs were revealed in portions over a period of time but later compiled as one surah. Many of the early surahs, such as 68, 73, 89, address the opposition the earliest Muslims faced in Mecca. It seems unclear, however, which surah followed the period of silence. Surah 93 is usually cited because it explains the silence, but it seems more likely that the first seven verses of Surah 74 may have followed the silence. A few scholars even believe these to be the very first part of the Qur'an revealed (see discussion in W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953], 48–49, 60–66; Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*, 147–52; 'Ali, *Muhammad the Prophet*, 64–67).

⁶¹ See Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 54, 63 for a brief discussion on the content of Muhammad's early revelations.

⁶² Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 89.

⁶³ See Cragg, *The Weight in the Word*, 1–39.

hardship is suggested by the fact that Gabriel crushed Muhammad in his first encounter, and Joseph described “coming to himself” after the First Vision. After Moroni visited Joseph Smith, Joseph was fatigued enough that his father took notice when working in the fields the next morning and sent him home. On the way, he fell while trying to cross a fence (see Joseph Smith—History 1:48).⁶⁴ Allah said to Muhammad: “Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rent asunder by the fear of Allah” (Qur'an 59:21). As will be discussed in chapter six, the aftereffects of revelation were also strenuous because persecution followed.

This is not to say revelation was entirely burdensome, for it could be an enthralling experience.⁶⁵ A worldly comparison to a job promotion may be illustrative. A few employees might see this as entirely positive while the added responsibility may cause others to feel burdened. For most it is probably a mix of the two. For Joseph Smith and Muhammad, their reactions often depended on the content of the revelation. When God forgave sin, expressed approval, or restored lost spiritual knowledge it was delightful. Often, however, the revelations required the prophets to perform difficult tasks and occasionally revelation upbraided them for error, which was a distressing experience for both men.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Surely this was partly due to having been up all night, but was also likely the result of the exhaustion of revelation as described after the First Vision and other occasions (see recollection of Philo Dibble from “Early Scenes in Church History,” in *Four Faith Promoting Classics* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968], 81).

⁶⁵ See Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, 134, where Lucy describes the joy that came to Joseph and his family as they contemplated what they had received and anticipated further revelations. See also Joseph Smith—History 1:71 footnote (p.59) where Oliver Cowdery describes how he and Joseph felt after the appearance of John the Baptist; and *HC* 2:380–83 where Joseph describes the joy resulting from glorious manifestations in Kirtland. See Armstrong, *Prophet*, 49, where she discusses German historian Rudolf Otto’s classification of revelation as terrifying but delightful in relation to Muhammad.

⁶⁶ See, for example, D&C 3:5–9; 10:1–2, 8–9 where Joseph is rebuked for fearing man more than God, and Qur'an 80:1–10 where Muhammad is rebuked for paying more attention to an unbelieving political leader than a believing blind man.

Over time Joseph Smith grew somewhat callous to the exhaustion revelation induced. It still required effort to obtain, but the physical hardship of receiving revelation grew easier. In Kirtland, Joseph Smith received one of his most glorious visions, recorded in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Sidney Rigdon, an early convert, experienced the vision with Joseph. Afterwards, Joseph appeared vibrant and strong, but Sidney was weak and pale. Noticing this, Joseph remarked with a smile, “Brother Sidney is not as used to it as I am.”⁶⁷ Muhammad apparently never did get used to it; it was an agonizing process for him. As he later stated: “Never once did I receive a revelation without thinking that my soul had been torn away from me.”⁶⁸ Aisha, one of Muhammad’s later wives, told how she saw Muhammad receiving revelation on a very cold day and noticed the sweat dripping from his forehead.⁶⁹

A dark episode in the lives of Muhammad and Joseph Smith illustrates some of the challenges faced in receiving revelation and the importance of continued revelation as they sought to fulfill God’s purposes. In addition to outside critics, Muhammad and Joseph Smith both encountered satanic opposition. After Joseph had translated 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, with Martin Harris acting as scribe, the manuscript was stolen through Harris’s carelessness. Fearing he had lost his calling and not knowing how to proceed, Joseph sought revelation.⁷⁰ The Lord told him that wicked men had taken the manuscript with the intention of altering the words, hoping he would retranslate the same material after which they could show that the two manuscripts did not match, thereby

⁶⁷ “Early Scenes in Church History,” 81.

⁶⁸ Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, trans. Anne Carter (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1971), 74.

⁶⁹ Bukhari 1:2.

⁷⁰ Joseph found an instrument called the Urim and Thummim buried with the gold plates, which was initially used in translating the record and receiving revelations. Moroni took it after the loss of the 116 pages (*HC* 1:21–22).

proving him to be a false prophet. Consequently, Joseph was instructed not to retranslate that portion of the record, for “the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught” (D&C 3:1).⁷¹

For Muhammad it was not the designs of wicked mortals under satanic inspiration, but the direct intervention of Satan himself that led to what is now referred to as the “Satanic Verses.” It should be noted that in pious Muslim circles, many believe this tradition to be false or misrepresented.⁷² As the tradition records, Muhammad faced great opposition from polytheists after he began insisting on the worship of the one true God. Struggling with the dilemma of how to reconcile the people to his message, he longed for a revelation that would help. He meditated on this for some time, and finally received these words as part of what is now Surah 53: “Have you thought of al-Lat and al-‘Uzza and Manat the third, the other, these are the exalted Gharaniq whose intercession is approved.”⁷³ The meaning to his listeners was clear. Muhammad had just granted three lesser gods official status as intermediaries between the people and Allah. Polytheists were thrilled and joined the Muslims in prostrating themselves with Muhammad when he finished reciting the surah. Shortly thereafter, Gabriel appeared and rebuked Muhammad: “What have you done, Muhammad? You have read to these people something I did not bring you from God and you have said what he did not say to you.” Like Joseph Smith, Muhammad was devastated, fearing God’s displeasure. But, like

⁷¹ D&C 10:8–19, 30. D&C 3 was given after the incident and prior to section 10.

⁷² Ibn Ishaq did not record the story, nor did Muslim or Bukhari in the hadith (traditions), the earliest and most reliable accounts of Muhammad’s life. Nor is it recorded in the Qur’an, although some Western scholars claim 17:75–77 refers to it. This passage fits the context of the satanic verses account, but is not clear enough to be conclusive (Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 110–11). It is no wonder pious Muslims deny the account—critics have used it when attempting to disprove the prophethood of Muhammad. Most recently, Salman Rushdie’s novel, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Viking, 1988) renewed the controversy, which led to a violent response.

⁷³ Although Ibn Ishaq does not record this tradition, Guillaume inserts it into his translation of Ishaq as a quote from al-Tabari (*The Life of Muhammad*, 165–66).

Joseph, further revelation brought him comfort and assured him of his calling. It was revealed that Satan had “interjected something into his desires as he had on his tongue.” The verses were removed from Surah 53 and he was later told that every prophet had experienced this struggle: “Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before you but when he did recite the revelation or narrated or spoke, *Shaitân* (Satan) threw (some falsehood) in it. But Allâh abolishes that which *Shaitân* (Satan) throws in. Then Allâh establishes His Revelations. And Allâh is All-Knower, All-Wise” (Qur’an 22:52).⁷⁴ These trying experiences taught both prophets valuable lessons that fortified their resolve to follow the will of God.

Both prophets found their more spectacular visionary experiences difficult to describe. Joseph and Muhammad both ascended to or perceived the highest heavens, but seemed uncertain about how the experience took place. “Whether in the body or out I cannot tell,” Joseph said of one such revelation (D&C 137:1). Muhammad was taken to Jerusalem in his famous Night Journey and then ascended to heaven to speak with Allah, but Ibn Ishaq reports contradictory statements as to whether or not this was a physical journey. He concluded, like Joseph, that only God knows, but that it does not matter, either way it was from God.⁷⁵ Revelation from God was a fantastic experience that carried with it both elation and burden.

⁷⁴ Notice the similarity in affirming God’s insurmountable power to D&C 10:1–3.

⁷⁵ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 181–83.

Modes of Receiving Revelation

In addition to visits from angels and God, great prophets from the past visited Muhammad and Joseph, who both related physical descriptions of them.⁷⁶ Such visitations happened on numerous occasions throughout their lives, but though these direct encounters were spectacular, they were comparatively infrequent. The grand beginnings of revelation in Islam and Mormonism and the occasional spectacular theophanies may misrepresent the typical manner in which revelation came. Usually, the method was more subtle. For Muhammad, there were two principal modes of revelation.⁷⁷ Either he heard the words directly from the mouth of God or (more typically) the Angel, or they were put into his heart. These two methods match the prophetic motifs of revelation Widengren discussed. He noted two types: (1) the prophet who ascends to heaven, receives a book or message, then descends and is sent back into the human sphere to proclaim it, or (2) the prophet who remains in the human sphere but receives revelation from God in a less dramatic way.⁷⁸

This second process was the more common form and seems to be what the Qur'an originally meant when speaking of "revelation."⁷⁹ Muhammad described this less direct method: "Sometimes it is (revealed) like the ringing of a bell, this form of inspiration is the hardest of all and then this state passes off after I have grasped what is inspired."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ See *Ibid.*, 183–84, where Muhammad describes Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. See Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 59, where Joseph describes the Apostle Paul, and Burton, *Discourses*, 269, where Joseph declares Adam and Seth to be the most handsome men.

⁷⁷ The Qur'an states: "It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by Revelation, or from behind a veil, or (that) He sends a Messenger to reveal what He wills by His Leave" (42:51).

⁷⁸ Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 142.

⁷⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 18. For examples of visionary experiences in the Qur'an see 8:43; 48:27; 53:1–18. For examples of auditory revelations see 53:10 and 81:19, which seem to indicate these were more typical.

⁸⁰ Bukhari 1:2.

Toshihiko Izutsu quoted the above hadith passage and offered an explanation of what was meant: “What Muhammad is trying to convey thereby seems to be that while he is actually receiving revelation he does not have the consciousness of hearing any intelligible words spoken,” except, perhaps, “a mysterious indistinct noise... but the moment it ceases he realizes that the noise has already transformed itself into distinct meaningful words.”⁸¹ Orthodox Muslims generally disagree with Izutsu’s interpretation.⁸² They adamantly view Muhammad as an instrument for Allah to deliver a message, much like a radio conveys sound but does not influence or enter into what is being said. Armstrong, however, agrees with Izutsu: “It would be a mistake to imagine Muhammad acting passively as a sort of telephone between God and man. Like other prophets, he sometimes had to struggle to make sense of the revelations, which did not always come to him in a clear verbal form.”⁸³ The debate is not whether the Qur'an is the word of God or not, but whether Muhammad shaped the words or simply spoke them as dictated to him. Armstrong continues: “The Qur'an warns [Muhammad] to listen to the inarticulate meaning carefully and with what Wordsworth would call a ‘wise passiveness.’ He must not rush to put it into words before these had emerged in their own good time.”⁸⁴ The passage she refers to is Qur'an 75:17–19: “Move not thy tongue with it to hasten it; Ours is to gather it, and to recite it. So, when We recite it, follow thou its recitation. Then Ours is to explain it.”

⁸¹ Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran*, 17.

⁸² Jacob S. Dharmaraj and Glory E. Dharmaraj, “Christian Muslim Relationship: A Theological Debate over Prophethood and Scriptures,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 12, no. 2 (Singapore: Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia, 1998): 304. See also Kenneth Cragg, “The Riddle of Man and the Silence of God: A Christian Perspective of Muslim Response,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 17 (October 1993): 161.

⁸³ Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 88.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

The view that Muhammad struggled to put revelation into words matches a common view of how biblical prophets commonly received revelation, entering into the process as human beings.⁸⁵ The Qur'an and the Doctrine and Covenants both associate the method of revelation to their prophets (Muhammad and Joseph Smith, respectively) with how ancient prophets received revelation. Joseph's revelations compare themselves to the revelations of Moses and Abraham (see D&C 8:3; 132:29–31). The Qur'an states that revelation was given to Muhammad as it was to Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Jacob, Moses and others (see Qur'an 4:163–64). Such passages validate the revelations of Joseph Smith and Muhammad by identifying them with prophets of the past.

The concept of revelation being a struggle also matches how Joseph Smith usually received it. He once said it was “an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord.”⁸⁶ While Joseph grew somewhat immune to the physical burden of experiencing the divine presence, it was not easy to put revelation into words.⁸⁷ Muhammad's struggle to receive revelation seems to be tied more to the receipt of the message itself. That is, Joseph's struggle was to receive the content of the revelation and to put that idea into suitable words, whereas the traditional Muslim view is that Muhammad's revelations were received in words but the struggle to receive the words could be agonizing.⁸⁸ Thus, Joseph's revelations more commonly underwent revision and editing than did Muhammad's, who gave poetic messages that required less (if any) wordsmithing.

⁸⁵ See Cragg, *The Weight in the Word*, 2, where he states that in Judaism and Christianity “prophethood is inherently biographical.”

⁸⁶ *HC* 1:226.

⁸⁷ I am referring here (and in most of this chapter, except when specified) to revelations such as those recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, rather than revelation as the term might be applied to the translation of the Book of Mormon, in which case, the words may have come directly and more easily to Joseph (see Royal Skousen, “Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1997), 61–93.

⁸⁸ Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 74.

Both prophets spoke of revelation to the heart.⁸⁹ The Qur'an tells of revelation being brought down upon Muhammad's heart so that he could be a messenger in the Arabic language (see Qur'an 26:192–95). Passages from the Doctrine and Covenants are similar. The Lord explained to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery that revelation would come “in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (D&C 8:2). Again, the idea is that a thought is conveyed to the heart or mind, after which the prophet may have to put it into words.

Joseph's revelations admitted that the language was not always perfect, that his humanity may have influenced the wording. When a few early converts were not satisfied with the quality of language in Joseph's revelations, the Lord acknowledged the imperfectness of Joseph's language (see D&C 67:5). That Joseph was not infallible when he wrote or dictated revelation is evident. Often he revised a revelation to read more perfectly. As one LDS commentator put it:

Latter-day Saints understand inspiration to lie primarily in the Prophet Joseph rather than in the text. That is, the divine revelation was given through the Prophet and was often shaped by his vocabulary, thinking, and ability to express himself. As the Prophet's skills or understanding increased, he could edit and revise what had been written earlier as he saw ways of expressing the intent of the revelation more clearly or more exactly, and this has the effect of making such revisions even *more* inspired than the original.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ The actual conveyance of knowledge is sometimes presented symbolically. For example, in some traditions Muhammad received knowledge when Allah or the Messenger touched him or placed a drop on his tongue (Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 108–09). A similar idea in Mormonism is found in the diary of Charles L. Walker, dated February 2, 1893, in which Walker writes: “Brother John Alger said while speaking of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that when he, John, was a small boy he heard the Prophet Joseph relate his vision of seeing the Father and the Son, [and] that God touched his eyes with his finger” (A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. [Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1980], 1:755–56).

⁹⁰ Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 2:10. The authors note how different this is from Protestant views on scripture. They attribute inspiration primarily to the text and therefore trust the earliest copies (similar to orthodox Muslims) whereas Latter-day Saints want the more mature prophetic judgment on a topic and therefore seek the latest revelation.

In Joseph's revelations, the Lord acknowledged that the revelations "were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24). The Lord explained to Joseph that God reasons with men as men reason with one another, until they come to understanding (see D&C 50:11–12). A similar idea is seen in the Qur'an, which rarely resembles the thundering voice of God as found in the Old Testament, but often introduces an idea with "Hast thou not seen?" or "Have you not considered?" inviting the listener to enter a dialogue and reason with his Creator (see Qur'an 2:243, 246).⁹¹ This implies an evolutionary process of arriving at a greater awareness over time, leaving the door open for improving understanding and providing the possibility for the prophet to improve the revelations.

Joseph seemed to be less concerned about wording, and more concerned about content whereas Muhammad, at least as understood by orthodox Muslims today, was deeply concerned about the actual language used. Despite this modern understanding, from the perspective of an outside observer, Muhammad's method for dictating revelation seems quite consistent with Joseph Smith's. Like Joseph, Muhammad often rearranged material after it had been received and amended revelation later when greater understanding had been given.⁹² Rodney Stark compares this process to the inspiration great composers experience. Gershwin and Mozart received entire pieces in a few moments, as if through revelation. But later, they often adjusted and polished the music into a superior state.⁹³

⁹¹ Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 95.

⁹² Stark, "A Theory of Revelations," 293.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 292. See also Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 85, where she suggests religious inspiration may be understood akin to the inspiration great thinkers such as Archimedes received. This process is "not the abdication of reason but rather reason speeded up, encapsulated in an instant, so that a solution appears without the usual laborious logical preparations."

Joseph Smith had a prophetic heritage for fallibility in written revelations that Muhammad did not have. Book of Mormon prophets, whose words Joseph translated, asked readers not to condemn their scripture “because of the imperfections which are in it,” for “if there be faults they be the faults of a man” (Mormon 8:12, 17). In the Latter-day Saint tradition, it seems that human weakness may enter into either the receiving or recording of revelation. Despite the imperfect wording of revelations, however, Joseph proclaimed: “I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”⁹⁴ Again, Joseph seems to be speaking of content and doctrine, not literary accuracy.⁹⁵ In one of Joseph’s revelations, the Lord said it this way: “ye know that there is no unrighteousness in them” (D&C 67:9).

For some early converts, it was the manner of revelation that convinced them that Muhammad or Joseph Smith was a true prophet. Revelation sometimes came in front of an audience and although the prophets often struggled to put the revelation into words, on occasion there were no false starts, no second attempts as is common when composing normal prose. It was as though Muhammad and Joseph Smith (when translating the Book of Mormon) were reading something rather than composing it.⁹⁶ This illustrates that revelation came in various manners at different times. Translating the Book of Mormon was a revelatory process for Joseph. His wife Emma reported, Joseph would “dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any

⁹⁴ Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 369.

⁹⁵ This is not meant to imply that the language of LDS revelations is entirely unimportant. Joseph Smith praised Doctrine and Covenants section 76 for “the sublimity of the ideas; the purity of the language...” (HC 1:252). Still, Joseph’s frequent revisions and emphasis on content over language suggests a much lower emphasis on precise language than with the Qur’an. Joseph even wrote section 76 in different lingual forms, such as in poetry versus how it is found in the Doctrine and Covenants (see HC 5:288).

⁹⁶ Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” 293–94; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 98.

portion of it read to him.”⁹⁷ The quality and content of the revelations (Muslim and Mormon), and their quick reception convinced many that they were authentic.⁹⁸

Content of the Revelations

Although the Lord spoke harshly of Christian creeds in Joseph Smith’s First Vision (see Joseph Smith—History 1:19), many of his early revelations harmonized quite nicely with Christendom as a whole. The Book of Mormon, the first LDS scripture published, contained comparatively little that contradicted conventional Christian doctrine. Likewise, Muhammad’s initial revelations were “highly compatible with Arab paganism.”⁹⁹ They did not “attempt to deny either the existence or the power of the other divinities...no denunciations...of those who would assign companions to Allah, no insistence on the uniqueness of the supreme deity.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, many of the early revelations simply reminded Muhammad’s tribe of the values they had long held but that were being forgotten, particularly caring for the poor.¹⁰¹ For both prophets, this would change.

It is a common motif for prophets to gradually become more schismatic.¹⁰² Muhammad and Joseph Smith fit this pattern. The further into their prophetic careers one looks, the more divisive the revelations become. This can easily be traced in the Qur'an and in the Doctrine and Covenants. Both books of scripture are compilations of

⁹⁷ Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *The Saints' Herald*, 26 (Oct. 1, 1879): 290. For easy reference, see Preston Nibley, *The Witnesses of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), 28.

⁹⁸ Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” 294.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹⁰⁰ Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 96.

¹⁰¹ This is reflected in what Muhammad’s movement was called in its early years: *tazaqqa*. While the word is difficult to translate, it implies developing the virtues of compassion and generosity and giving graciously to all of God’s creatures (Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 97).

¹⁰² Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” 301–02.

revelations given over the span of their respective prophet's life. Revelation built upon itself, distending until the place where it began and the place it ended seems rather distant. Revelation evolved, meeting the needs of the growing religions, providing doctrine and practices that developed into unique religious systems. It is from this phenomenon that Meyer seems to draw the conclusion that Joseph and Muhammad started out with genuine revelation but later shifted to a state of fictional inspiration.¹⁰³ His argument seems based on the view that some of the later revelations were increasingly heterodox, sometimes dealt with sensual matters, and were, therefore, obviously uninspired. But such an argument reveals more about Meyer's discomfort with what was being revealed than it does about the legitimacy of Muhammad or Joseph Smith as prophets. In fact, evolving revelation is a common motif. The revelations of Jesus and Moses, for example, also grew progressively schismatic and heterodox.¹⁰⁴ This need not indicate that they had lost divine inspiration, as Meyer himself would likely acknowledge.

One example of evolving revelation in Islam and Mormonism is the doctrine of the nature of God. Contemporary Latter-day Saints today point to the First Vision as the foundation of their doctrine on the Godhead, but there is little evidence that early members viewed it that way. This is partly because knowledge of the vision does not seem to have been widely disseminated.¹⁰⁵ It is uncertain whether Joseph's view of God's nature evolved over time or whether he simply revealed it over time to ease believers into acceptance. Either way, the Prophet did not reveal the full doctrine of God's nature until near the end of his life. Similarly, Allah gradually emerged in Muhammad's public

¹⁰³ Meyer, *Origin and History*, 37, 56, 120.

¹⁰⁴ Stark, "A Theory of Revelations," 301.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, "Emergence of a Fundamental," 43–61.

revelations as the supreme God among a backdrop of numerous deities which, at first, were simply ignored.¹⁰⁶ While God's nature never became as defined in Islam as in Mormonism, His attributes, power, and role did, but gradually (much of it after the death of Muhammad under Neo-Platonist influence). An important difference in Joseph's and Muhammad's revelations concerning the nature of God is that they moved in largely opposite directions. Muhammad pushed his followers towards belief in one God in an era when a plurality of gods was commonly accepted. Further, he elevated God from the material to a superior level—from dumb idols that have no power to hear or speak to a benevolent, compassionate God (see Qur'an 23:92; 59:22–24). Joseph, on the other hand, separated the Godhead into three distinct individuals in an era when the acceptance of the Trinity largely defined Christianity. Further, he taught an embodied and comprehensible God in a generation when God was non-corporeal and largely indescribable. The similarity in Joseph and Muhammad's approach is that they moved against the common views of society, and, although they seem to have taught an opposite view of God, actually revealed what, to many, was a more meaningful understanding of God. Muhammad elevated a society from polytheistic idol worshippers to monotheists; Joseph tore down years of what he viewed as uninspired creedal statements to an ancient biblical view of the Godhead, both of them acting on that portion of light and knowledge which God gave to them.

While it is not unusual to find parallel doctrines when comparing the revelations or beliefs of various religions, there are some unique parallels in Mormonism and Islam.

¹⁰⁶ Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 96. Also see Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 86, where she discusses the Islamic rejection of a Greek-inspired version of God and a return to a more Semitic version. Many Latter-day Saints may see a parallel in Mormon history. Also see Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 165, where Ibn Ishaq records the tolerance of Muhammad to polytheism (partly recorded in Surah 109 of the Qur'an).

Both religions contain revelation that sets forth dietary laws including the prohibition of alcohol.¹⁰⁷ Both prescribed specific guidelines for caring for the poor and developing a society with communitarian characteristics.¹⁰⁸ Both endorsed plural marriage under certain conditions.¹⁰⁹ Both received revelation on how to lead their followers in political and military struggles against the prevailing powers of their time.¹¹⁰ One final similarity in the revelations: Muhammad and Joseph Smith both referred to knowledge they had received from God but were not allowed to reveal. After communing with Allah in his Night Journey, one tradition has Muhammad saying, “And he revealed to me secrets that I am not allowed to communicate to you.”¹¹¹ As mentioned previously, in 1838 Joseph said that he could not write all that was revealed in his First Vision. In addition, Heber C. Kimball reported Joseph as saying: “Would to God I could tell you what I know! But you would call it blasphemy, and there are men...who would want to take my life.”¹¹² This allows for the possibility that he understood far more than he revealed publicly, and progressively unveiled knowledge according to what believers could bear, or as God directed him.

Hans Thimme argued that Muhammad’s and Joseph Smith’s revelations both grew less and less theological.¹¹³ When one compares Muhammad’s Medina surahs with those received in Mecca it becomes clear that this is the case for Muhammad’s

¹⁰⁷ See D&C 89 and Qur'an 5:3–5, 90.

¹⁰⁸ See D&C 42:30–39; 51:3–5; 85:3; 119; 120 and Qur'an 9:34–35, 60, 103; 51:19; 70:24.

¹⁰⁹ See D&C 132:34–45, 61–65 and Qur'an 4:3–24. This practice was commonly accepted in the time and culture of Muhammad and the doctrine he revealed actually limited the practice through allowing no more than four wives for one man. Joseph Smith revealed it in a time and culture that viewed the practice as repugnant and met great opposition.

¹¹⁰ This will be discussed at greater length in chapter seven.

¹¹¹ Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 107.

¹¹² Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), 322. See also Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 232–33, where Joseph claimed he could not reveal certain doctrines until the temple had been completed.

¹¹³ Thimme, “Mormonism and Islam,” 162.

revelations. As Green and Goldrup note, however, the comparison to Joseph Smith is incorrect and reveals Thimme's ignorance of Mormonism. "The later portion of the Doctrine and Covenants, notably sections 76, 88, 93, 101, 107, 110, 120, 121, 131, and 132, contain some of the most important contributions to Mormon theology."¹¹⁴

At times observers were critical of the revelations these two prophets received. The Qur'an invites disbelievers to "produce a Surah of the like thereof...But if you do it not, and you can never do it, then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers" (Qur'an 2:23–24). An astonishing parallel is seen in Joseph's life. Associates of the Prophet were critical of the language in his revelations. As with Muhammad's critics, a divine dare invited them to select "the least" of all the revelations and "appoint him that is the most wise among you" to try and "make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true; But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true" (D&C 67:6–8). In both instances, an educated man took up the challenge and failed miserably, lending greater credibility to the prophets.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

If further revelations had not followed the initial visions, Muhammad and Joseph Smith would likely have passed into history unnoticed. Others had experienced the divine in similar ways. But for these two, the theophanies continued and progressed into a pattern of revelation that established new religious movements. Muhammad and Joseph Smith both understood that continuing revelation was necessary for the dilemmas of their

¹¹⁴ Green and Goldrup, "Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?" 53.

¹¹⁵ Daniel C. Peterson, *Abraham Divided* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1995), 93; the men were Nadr ibn-Harith and William E. McLellan.

day. Revelation came gradually, as though God was following a logical process in establishing a religion. This was well suited for the circumstances; the prophets were able to gradually develop their understanding and mission and the people were not overwhelmed with new doctrines or practices too quickly. Both men had initially sought wisdom from available sources, but to no avail. Joseph once stated: “Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.”¹¹⁶ The Qur'an expresses a similar idea when it praises the night of Muhammad's revelation: “The night of *Al-Quadr* is better than a thousand months” (Qur'an 97:3). Such was the function of revelation for Muhammad and Joseph Smith. Continued revelation defined their missions throughout their lives.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Burton, *Discourses*, 155–56.

¹¹⁷ It is interesting to note how differently the two faith traditions handled revelation following the death of the prophet: Islam's approach resembled the later Protestant model—believing that revelation ceased after the death of the revelator. Latter-day Saints identify more closely with a Catholic model: the charisma of the office replaced the charisma of the prophet. In other words, revelation continued but through the appointed head of the institution (see Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” 302).

CHAPTER 5 THE BOOKS

Perhaps the greatest lasting evidence of prophethood is scripture. The Qur'an indicates that a heavenly book was given to each messenger of God in every era.¹ Muslims and Latter-day Saints believe the writings of their respective prophets stand as irrefutable proof that God sanctioned their work. A generous amount of scholarship compares the Bible and the Qur'an, but Latter-day Saint scripture is a better analogue to the Qur'an for several reasons.² Muslims and Latter-day Saints accept the Bible as God's word but believe that error crept into the Old and New Testaments. Both systems agree a new book was needed to confirm God's previous word, establish truth, and restore lost knowledge. The Old and New Testaments were given to ancient peoples whereas the Qur'an was a revelation to the Arabs of Muhammad's day; it is God's culmination of scripture for Muslims. For Latter-day Saints, there are three books that fulfill a similar purpose—the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. This chapter will discuss how each of these LDS texts is variously comparable to the Qur'an.

¹ See Qur'an 13:38 as cited in Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 116.

² See, for example, Jacques Jomier, *The Bible and the Qur'an*, trans. Edward P. Arbez (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1964); Christopher R. Matthews, ed. *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

A Brief Typological Comparison

The typical manner in which prophets produce scripture is through direct revelation, which is then written down by the prophet or their followers. While Muhammad and Joseph Smith both follow this general pattern, Joseph Smith displays an additional method for producing scripture. As discussed in the previous chapter, revelation often came to Muhammad and Joseph Smith in similar ways, but Joseph Smith brought forth scripture that did not come directly from God to the Prophet in the same manner as the Qur'an and most of the Doctrine and Covenants. Rather, the Book of Mormon and part of the Pearl of Great Price were translated with divine assistance from ancient records. There is nothing comparable to this in the story of Muhammad, and seems a rather unique occurrence among scripture-producing prophets. Scripture is often received as a single revelation during a theophany and then written down, or it is the compilation of multiple revelations that are recorded over time. In contrast, the Book of Mormon was translated from an unknown ancient language in the equivalent of about two months-worth of working days.³ Joseph was not a linguist and would have been unable to translate an ancient record like the Book of Mormon. Accordingly, the angel Moroni explained to him that “God had prepared” an instrument called the Urim and Thummim “for the purpose of translating the book” (Joseph Smith—History 1:35). Joseph also seems to have possessed a seer stone that assisted him in the translation process. Joseph explained that he used these instruments to translate the record, though little is known about exactly how the translation happened.⁴ As Joseph insisted, “it was

³ See Dean C. Jessee, “The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript,” *BYU Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 278.

⁴ Joseph simply explained that he translated the plates “through the medium of the Urim and Thummim (HC 4:537). See also Skousen, “Translating the Book of Mormon,” 90–91. For discussion on the

not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon” and that “it was not expedient for him to relate these things.”⁵ In addition, part of the Pearl of Great Price was translated from an ancient manuscript, but Joseph gave no information on how the translation occurred, only that it was done by the gift and power of God.⁶

There is also a unique element in Muhammad’s receiving of the Qur’an: while the word of God revealed through prophets is always considered sacred by followers, Muslims take this to a more extreme level. Yes, the Qur’an came by revelation in the same way other prophets receive revelation, but Muslims believe the Qur’an to be God inlibriate (from Latin *liber*, “book”).⁷ In other words, just as Christians speak of Jesus Christ as being God (or the Word) incarnate; that is, God presenting Himself in the flesh, in human form, Muslims consider the Qur’an to be God manifest in book (or word) form.⁸ This is an important distinction between Latter-day Saint and Muslim views of scripture.

The Book of Mormon and the Qur'an

In Muslim/Latter-day Saint comparisons, the Qur’an has most commonly been compared to the Book of Mormon.⁹ While the two books are textually dissimilar, there

translation process, see Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 63–64, 66, 71–73, and Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30–33.

⁵ Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 23.

⁶ For a discussion on possibilities for the translation of the book of Abraham, see Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse by Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 241–43. That Joseph indicated he literally translated the book of Abraham (as opposed to receiving it by revelation, etc.) is indicated by several of his statements (see Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:50, 87, 90).

⁷ Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 232.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Green and Goldrup, “Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?” 50.

are some interesting parallels. The Book of Mormon was the first book of scripture Joseph Smith produced and Mormons generally consider it the foundation scripture of their religion—Joseph’s greatest miracle. The Qur'an serves a similar purpose for Muslims. Critics of Muhammad noted that he did not perform miracles as other prophets had done. As Muhammad began his ministry, the Meccans asked, “Why are not signs sent down to him from his Lord?” Moses turned his staff into a serpent; Jesus raised the dead.¹⁰ Allah responded to this challenge: “Is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down to you the Book (the Qur'an) which is recited to them?” (Qur'an 29:50–51). Muslims view the Qur'an not only as Muhammad’s greatest miracle, but possibly the greatest miracle of all time. The miracles of Moses and Jesus passed away and were no longer visible to mankind, but the Qur'an stands as a lasting witness to all people. Muhammad himself said, “There was no Prophet among the Prophets but was given miracles because of which people had security or had belief, but what I have been given is the Divine Revelation which Allah has revealed to me. So I hope that my followers will be more than those of any other Prophet on the Day of Resurrection.”¹¹ This indicates that Muhammad viewed the Qur'an as his great miracle and as superior scripture, just as his followers do today.

The Latter-day Saint view of the Book of Mormon is somewhat comparable.

However, Latter-day Saints undoubtedly hold the Bible in higher esteem than Muslims.

While both faiths believe the Bible was corrupted, Muslims believe this corruption runs

¹⁰ Although this is a common accusation, Islamic tradition reports several miracles performed by Muhammad. See Bukhari 5:132–33, for example, where Muhammad splits the moon in half because the people of Mecca wanted a miracle as evidence of Muhammad’s calling, or Bukhari 1:205–06 where Muhammad miraculously waters many people and camels out of two water bags and the bags are still full when he is done, similar to Jesus’ feeding of the 5000, or Bukhari 8:74–75 where Muhammad invokes Allah for rain upon the request of the people and then invokes Him to stop it upon the request of the people after it had rained for a week.

¹¹ Bukhari 9:282.

much deeper than do Latter-day Saints. Most Muslims rarely study or teach from the Bible, whereas it stands as canonized scripture for Latter-day Saints; it is believed, studied, and used in teaching. Muslims generally treat it like most Latter-day Saints do the Apocrypha: it is officially recognized that it contains much truth, but few have studied it, possibly because there is much “better” scripture to study and they don’t feel it is important enough to occupy their attention. Thus, while both books are primary scriptures for their faiths, “in no way has the Book of Mormon supplanted the Bible as has the Koran.”¹²

Still, the Book of Mormon generally holds a higher place than the Bible in the hearts of many modern Latter-day Saints for several reasons. Joseph Smith stated that it was “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (Introduction to the Book of Mormon).¹³ The Book of Mormon defined and set apart Latter-day Saints from other faiths, just as the Qur'an did for Muslims. Both were used to proselytize early converts and continue as the greatest missionary tool of their faith.¹⁴ Muslims use the Qur'an and Latter-day Saints use the Book of Mormon as evidence that they alone hold the complete truth. This is the idea conveyed in Joseph’s statement that the Book of

¹² Nibley, “Islam and Mormonism—A Comparison,” 60.

¹³ Latter-day Saint leaders have insisted the Bible is as much scripture as the Book of Mormon (see M. Russell Ballard, “The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” *Ensign* [May 2007], 80–82) and it may be said that Church leaders preach from and place roughly equal emphasis on both, yet Joseph’s “most correct of any book” statement and the repeated emphasis of Church leaders (for example, see Ezra Taft Benson, “Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* [November 1988], 4–6) puts slightly greater emphasis on the Book of Mormon than the Bible in the minds of many Latter-day Saints.

¹⁴ Armstrong gives several accounts of the Qur'an being used as a conversion tool in early Islam (*Muhammad*, 25–32). For a discussion on how early Latter-day Saints used the Book of Mormon, see Grant Underwood, “Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology,” *Dialogue* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 1984): 35–74. In early Latter-day Saint history the Book of Mormon was not taught from as extensively as the Bible, but was used as evidence of the restoration of the gospel. As Givens wrote, the Book of Mormon “has exerted influence within the Church and reaction outside the Church not primarily by virtue of its substance, but rather its manner of appearing, not on the merits of what it *says*, but what it *enacts*” (*By the Hand of Mormon*, 64).

Mormon is the keystone of the religion. If it is false, all else falls with it; if it is true then everything else is true with it—just as it could be said the Qur'an is the keystone of Islam.

There are some remarkably similar passages in the Book of Mormon and the Qur'an that explain part of their purpose. The Qur'an states that it is “a confirmation of (the revelation) which was before it [i.e. the Taurat (Torah), and the Injeel (Gospel)]” (Qur'an 10:37). “And this (the Qur'an) is a blessed Book which We have sent down, confirming (the revelations) which came before it” (Qur'an 6:92).¹⁵ Similarly, the Book of Mormon was sent to convince men “that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true” (1 Nephi 13:39). Although Latter-day Saints have emphasized this purpose much more than Muslims, the scriptures of both faiths claim the purpose of confirming previous scripture.

The Qur'an and the Book of Mormon were sent to affirm the Bible, but not in its entirety. The Qur'an claims that men had altered God's word: “Know they (Jews) not that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal? And there are among them (Jews) unlettered people... Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, ‘This is from Allah,’ to purchase with it a little price!” (Qur'an 2:77–79).¹⁶ The Qur'an explains that the covenant had been given to Israel, but lost through disobedience. Part of the accusation is that “they change the words from their (right) places and have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them.” The same charge is then made to the Christians (Qur'an 5:12–14). Thus, Muslims view the Qur'an's version of a

¹⁵ See also Qur'an 3:3; 46:30. There are numerous similar Qur'anic passages, see for example 3:48, 65; 4:47; 7:157; 9:111.

¹⁶ See also 2:174. G. Ghous Ansari adds this commentary: “Not only important passages were deleted from the holy books of the past, but they also went to the extent of adding man-made passages to the Scriptures” (“The Concept of Prophethood,” *Bulletin of Christian Institutes of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 3 [1981]: 152).

biblical tale as always superior to the Jewish or Christian version, which may contain distortions.¹⁷

For Latter-day Saints, this same pattern holds true with the Book of Mormon and other canonized LDS scripture; their version of a story or doctrine is superior to the biblical equivalent.¹⁸ Latter-day Saints see this as justifiable because the Book of Mormon and the writings of Joseph Smith report biblical corruption. Nephi, an early Book of Mormon prophet, wrote that after the Bible had gone forth in its purity, many “plain and precious things” were taken from the book (1 Nephi 13:28). A later prophet made a similar incrimination: “Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls?” (Mormon 8:33). Joseph Smith affirmed that he believed the Bible “as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers,” or “as far as it is translated correctly” (Articles of Faith 1:8).¹⁹ However, he taught that “many important points touching the salvation of man had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled.”²⁰ Joseph explained that “ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors.”²¹ Joseph’s statement allows the alterations to have been either intentional or accidental—or both, just as the Qur’an gave warning to those who alter scripture (intentional) but also state that unlettered Jews may have done it (accidental).

One self-stated purpose of the Qur’an and the Book of Mormon is to rectify corrupted scripture. As the Lord informed the prophet Nephi, “these things shall be hid

¹⁷ Shalom Goldman, *The Wiles of Women/The Wiles of Men* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xx.

¹⁸ Compare, for example, the story of the patriarch Joseph as found in Genesis with what is recorded in 2 Nephi 3.

¹⁹ Discourse of 15 October 1843, as recorded by Willard Richards in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 256.

²⁰ Jesse, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:372.

²¹ Burton, *Discourses*, 245.

up, to come forth...and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away” (1 Nephi 13:35, 40). Joseph Smith was to be the “choice seer” that would make these things known (2 Nephi 3:6–15). Similarly, Allah declared: “O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Now has come to you Our Messenger (Muhammad) explaining to you much of that which you used to hide from the Scripture...there has come to you from Allah a light (Prophet Muhammad) and a plain Book (this Qur'an)...Now has come to you Our Messenger making (things) clear unto you, after a break in (the series of) Messengers” (Qur'an 5:15, 19). The Book of Mormon and the Qur'an are both referred to as plain books given to restore lost knowledge, and Muhammad and Joseph Smith as the prophets who brought the message.

It is challenging for skeptics of Islam and Mormonism to explain the existence of the books if they did not come from God. This challenge stems not only from the complex literary content of the books, but also the manner in which they were given. Part of the miracle of both books is that Muhammad and Joseph Smith were uneducated men when they produced them. The Qur'an often refers to Muhammad as the *ummi* prophet, typically believed to mean the *unlettered* prophet.²² It declares: “Neither did you (O Muhammad) read any book before it (this Qur'an), nor did you write any book with your right hand.”²³ This passage is often referred to as evidence that Muhammad was entirely illiterate. Scholars debate this, claiming he must have had at least rudimentary reading and writing skills as a businessman.²⁴ Whether he was illiterate or only slightly literate,

²² See Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 88 for a discussion on variant translations of this term.

²³ 29:48. See also Qur'an 7:157; 62:2.

²⁴ Some authors suggest Muhammad was probably literate to some extent because it was common for Meccans, especially businessmen like Muhammad to have limited ability in reading and writing but that we don't know the extent. See W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad's Mecca* (Oxford University Press, 1956), 26–52; Rodinson, *Mohammed*, 38–49.

the kind of language found in the Qur'an is not that of an uneducated man. As Robert Payne stated, in the Qur'an the Arabic "language reaches its greatest heights. Muhammad, who detested poetry, was the greatest poet to come out of Arabia."²⁵

Perhaps the Book of Mormon text is generally less sophisticated in its vocabulary and structure than the Qur'an, which is entirely in poetic form. Yet, Stark noted that the Book of Mormon and Qur'an both contain language "far too sophisticated to be the creation of someone with so little education."²⁶ Close associates of Joseph Smith attest to this. His wife Emma said of the translation process: "It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible." She reported that at the time of the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph could not compose a "well-worded letter let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon... [which was] marvelous to me, a marvel and a wonder, as much as to anyone else."²⁷ The educated Sidney Rigdon, one of Joseph's closest companions, remarked that Joseph had little common learning: "If that was all the education he had, he never wrote the book."²⁸ The limited literacy of Muhammad and Joseph Smith emphasizes the miraculous nature of the Qur'an and the Book of Mormon.

The primary position of these books in their respective faiths is evident not only from the emphasis believers place on them, but by the amount of criticism they have drawn. Countless polemic works have been devoted to discounting the divine origin of the Qur'an and the Book of Mormon. Perhaps this is because there are few other plausible

²⁵ Robert Payne, *The History of Islam* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1959), 3.

²⁶ Stark, "A Theory of Revelations," 294.

²⁷ Smith, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," 290. For easy reference, see Nibley, *The Witnesses of the Book of Mormon*, 28.

²⁸ Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 60. Another companion of Joseph said, "Who was Joseph Smith? An unlettered youth. Could he do anything to accomplish these things? Not unless God has revealed it to him." (John Taylor, "Remarks by Elder John Taylor," in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:211.

explanations for the existence of books such as these, produced by uneducated men. Critics have accused Muhammad and Joseph Smith of stealing material from the Bible or other sources.²⁹ There is a story in the Qur'an very similar to Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man.³⁰ Other parts are similar to various New Testament texts as well as to some Greek legends.³¹ Book of Mormon critics have claimed that Joseph copied much of the Bible or that he plagiarized an earlier work known as *Manuscript Found* or *Manuscript Story*, written by Solomon Spaulding. Later scholars easily explained these claims; they do not account for the bulk of the books.³²

Despite repeated attacks, both books have remained the keystones of their faiths. Though vastly different in style and history, both play a central role in their respective religions, acting as a foundation for testimony and as a great missionary tool. Both books serve a similar purpose in restoring lost doctrine, and state their purpose of confirming and supplementing the Bible.

The Doctrine and Covenants and the Qur'an

Perhaps the LDS scripture most comparable to the Qur'an in terms of situational revelations (revelation given in response to an immediate need or question) is the

²⁹ See Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not A Muslim* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 66–85, 104–162; Ibn Rawandi, “Origins of Islam: A Critical Look at the Sources,” in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, ed. Ibn Warraq (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 89–125; Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: Or, A Faithful Account of that Singular Imposition and Delusion* (Painesville, OH: By the author, 1834), 278–87; Thomas W. Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 47–77; David P. Wright, “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

³⁰ Surah 46:20. Muslims typically explain similarity to New Testament passages by stating that Allah is the source for all scripture (see Qur'an 2:285).

³¹ Dharmaraj, “Christian—Muslim Relationship,” 307.

³² For a discussion on this and other authorship issues relating to the Book of Mormon, see *Book of Mormon Authorship*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982).

Doctrine and Covenants. The Book of Mormon is not original revelation to Joseph Smith; it is a translation of an ancient record written by prophets who lived in the Americas. The Doctrine and Covenants however, like the Qur'an, reportedly came from God to His prophet through various means of revelation and were recorded over a period of time.

Both books are similar in length; the Qur'an is made up of 114 chapters, referred to as surahs, and the Doctrine and Covenants contains 138 chapters, referred to as sections, plus two “official declarations.” Both books contain revelations that are quite lengthy (several pages) and others that are very short (a few sentences). The Qur'anic text reads as God speaking in the first person as does most of the Doctrine and Covenants.³³ The revelations they contain often came on an as-needed-to-know basis as the prophets or their followers developed questions, sought and obtained answers, and eventually recorded them as scripture. For example, Bukhari records an account of someone approaching Muhammad with a question about how the spirit enters and leaves the body. Those present watched as Muhammad received revelation on the spot, which he then declared to them and it was eventually recorded as Qur'an 17:85. Similarly, Joseph commonly approached the Lord with a question, often prompted by the request or query of another. For example, Martin Harris came to Joseph requesting a revelation because he was concerned about losing his farm which he had mortgaged to pay for the printing of

³³ Technically the Doctrine and Covenants is most often the voice of Jesus Christ, not God the Father—Allah. Also, there are several exceptions to the first person voice, such as section 2, which contains the words of the angel Moroni. Section 7 is a portion of a record by John the Beloved. Section 13 records the ordination of Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist. Section 20 contains instruction on Church organization and practice. Section 74 is an explanation of a passage from the New Testament. Sections 85, 127 and 128 are letters from Joseph Smith. Section 102 contains minutes from the organization of the first high council of the Church. Section 107, 123, 129–31, and parts of many other sections are instructions or explanations from Joseph Smith. Section 109 is a prayer given by Joseph Smith. Section 134 is a treatise on government written by Oliver Cowdery. Section 135 is a tribute to Joseph Smith written by John Taylor. Section 138 is a revelation had by Joseph F. Smith, described in his language. The two Official Declarations are revelations by later prophets and are not written first person from the Lord.

the Book of Mormon. Joseph received a revelation the following day, now recorded as section nineteen in the Doctrine and Covenants. Sections in the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants contain headings that often provide such historical background to the revelations that are helpful in understanding the context of the revelations. Some editions of the Qur'an provide a similar service for the same reason, the study of the background or setting of the surahs being termed *asbab al-nuzul* (i.e. "the occasions of revelation").³⁴

As these examples demonstrate, both books are specific to their time and place. The Qur'an is a uniquely Arab book, addressing the problems of Muhammad's people in that era. The Jews and Christians, whom the Qur'an refers to as *ahl al-kitab*, the People of the Book, had been given a heavenly book, but the Arabs had not received a prophet or scripture until the Qur'an.³⁵ The Doctrine and Covenants also addressed the needs and concerns of a small group of people at a particular time. Yet, as with other scripture, both books have continued to provide guidance to successive generations.

Muhammad's contemporaries criticized him for receiving his book in pieces because the Arabic view of a prophet was one who ascended on high and received God's message all at once.³⁶ The Qur'an indicates that Moses received the whole Torah at once

³⁴ Because the early historical records in Islam are distant, sparse, and sometimes questionable, there is often less reliable information regarding the events that surrounded the receipt of particular surahs when compared to historical background on section in the Doctrine and Covenants. For examples of *asbab al-nuzul* see Maulana Muhammad 'Ali's English translation of the Qur'an (Lahore, Pakistan: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1973); Andrew Rippin, "The Function of Asbab al-Nuzul in Koranic Exegesis," in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, ed. Ibn Warraq (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 392–419.

³⁵ Widengren discusses the likelihood of the Qur'an as the first Arabic scripture. He states that there was likely no Arabic translation of the Bible at the time of Muhammad (*Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 151–60).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

and Jesus received the Gospel in a similar way.³⁷ Muhammad's critics challenged: "we will put no faith in your ascension until you bring down for us a Book that we would read." Allah responded: "And (it is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts), in order that you might recite it to men at intervals. And We have revealed it by stages" (Qur'an 17:93, 106). While Allah does not reveal His reasoning for doing this, perhaps it is similar to how He explained the gradual revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants: "ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. For he will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith" (D&C 98:11–12). Although the Qur'an was given in portions, it clearly declares that the whole of it was foreordained and written in heaven before it was given. Muhammad "saw himself as producing a book on earth to represent the heavenly original."³⁸

The gradual receipt of revelations according to the needs of the people and prophets reveals some unique patterns. The Qur'an has been described as "the diary of the Prophet Mohammed. His loves and hates, doubts and questions have been expressed in various ways throughout the Qur'an."³⁹ Similarly, the Doctrine and Covenants tracks many of the events and struggles, the questions and thoughts of Joseph Smith because the revelation he received addressed these issues. Critics condemn the Qur'an as "a potpourri of religious thoughts," a designation that could also apply to the Doctrine and Covenants.⁴⁰ Both books seem to be a collection of often unrelated material, shifting

³⁷ Ibid., 122–23; See Qur'an 2:50, 81; 5:48; 17:2,4; 3:43–44; 5:50; 57:27, as cited by Widengren.

³⁸ Daniel C. Peterson, "The Language of God: Understanding the Qur'an," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 4 (2001): 55.

³⁹ Dharmaraj, "Christian—Muslim Relationship," 304. For a discussion on the relationship of Muhammad's life to the Qur'an and vice versa, see Herbert Berg, "Context: Muhammad," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 187–204.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 306.

from one topic and situation to an entirely different issue. This is partly explained by the fact that both books contain revelations to fill in the gaps, as it were. The errancy of previous scripture influenced revelations in both books—the Qur'an corrects what Muslims view as false doctrine believed by Jews and Christians; the Doctrine and Covenants corrects doctrine that Christians believe because of errors in the Bible.⁴¹ They often confirm biblical teachings, clarify misunderstood points, reemphasize forgotten laws, and provide specific situational guidance rather than having a unified theme. This may cause the books to appear as a medley of disconnected thoughts. Both contain relatively short revelations received over a 23 year period for the Qur'an and 20 years for the Doctrine and Covenants.⁴²

The revelations received in the Qur'an and Doctrine and Covenants help trace the establishment of Islam and Mormonism. New truths and practices gradually emerged, usually as the result of circumstances the prophets encountered. This is much easier to track in the Doctrine and Covenants because the sections are mostly organized chronologically. Thus, a gradual pattern of restoration unfolds section by section. The Qur'an is organized from longest to shortest chapter, with the intentional exception of the first chapter. Likewise, the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants is an intentional exception to its chronological pattern.⁴³ In both cases they are placed there as a preface.

⁴¹ See, for example, Qur'an 4:157–59, 171; 5:18, 41–42; D&C 7; 22; 74; 76:25–109, 130:3.

⁴² I am here referring to Joseph Smith's revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. A few revelations of later prophets have been added to the Doctrine and Covenants.

⁴³ Other sections received or written by Joseph Smith that do not follow the chronological pattern are D&C 133 and 137.

Both prophets intended their revelations to be compiled in a book. Joseph Smith had published two books containing his revelations prior to his death.⁴⁴ His revelations were usually written by scribes and then prepared for publication under his direction. All of the sections from Joseph Smith added after his death had been recorded during his lifetime. As Muhammad recited revelations, his followers committed them to memory or wrote them on pieces of parchment, bark, bone, or whatever was available. The first private copy of the Qur'an was probably compiled about two years after the death of Muhammad. The first semi-official version came about twenty years after his death and within two centuries the kinks had been worked out to produce a standard version.⁴⁵ Widengren cites Qur'an 29:48, which refers to Muhammad writing, to show that Muhammad himself wrote down some of his revelations. As with Joseph Smith, Widengren states that Muhammad clearly intended the revelations to be compiled into a book.⁴⁶

An essential difference is that, unlike the Doctrine and Covenants, the Qur'an is closed scripture—no new revelations will be added because they ceased with the death of Muhammad. Many Muslims believe it must even be in the original language to be in true form.⁴⁷ The Qur'an was eventually translated into other languages, but a translation out of Arabic is generally considered as an interpretation of the Qur'an. Only the Arabic Qur'an is the speech of God because most Muslims believe the words of the Qur'an are the actual words of God as dictated to Muhammad. The poetic flow and beauty of the Qur'an as it

⁴⁴ The 1833 edition was entitled *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ* and contained 65 sections. The 1835 edition, entitled *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*, contained 102 sections.

⁴⁵ Jacques Jomier, *The Bible and the Qur'an*, 3–4. For a history and analysis of the gathering and recording of the Qur'an, see W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Surveys 8: Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 40–56.

⁴⁶ Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 148–50.

⁴⁷ See Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 49.

reads in the Arabic is often viewed as a great evidence of its divine origin, a poetic form that is generally lost when translated.⁴⁸ The Doctrine and Covenants, on the other hand, is an open book which the living prophet of the LDS Church may add to or even alter.⁴⁹ The Doctrine and Covenants has been translated into nearly 50 languages and each is considered scripture as much as the English version.

Though the Book of Mormon has typically been compared to the Qur'an in past Muhammad—Joseph Smith comparisons, the Doctrine and Covenants is more comparable than other LDS scripture in many aspects. It compares better than the Book of Mormon and the Qur'an do in structural matters and in the manner they were received.

The Pearl of Great Price and the Qur'an

The third book of LDS scripture comparable to the Qur'an on a few points is the Pearl of Great Price. It is a collection of five documents Joseph Smith wrote that do not fit well in any other LDS book of scripture.⁵⁰ Two of these, *Moses (Selections from the book of Moses)* and *Abraham (The book of Abraham)*, contain information about prophetic figures that is not recorded in the Bible, particularly Adam and Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Similarly, the Qur'an provides additional details not found in the Bible about the lives of these same prophets with the exception of Enoch, who is

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Under specific guidelines including the consent of his counselors and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

⁵⁰ The five documents are: *Selections from the book of Moses* (basically the Joseph Smith—Translation of Genesis 1–6), *The book of Abraham* (a translation from Egyptian papyri Joseph Smith obtained in 1835), *Joseph Smith—Matthew* (an extract from Joseph's translation of Matthew 24), *Joseph Smith—History* (Joseph Smith's written 1838 account of his initial visions), and *The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Joseph's 1842 statement of beliefs for the Church).

only mentioned briefly.⁵¹ In addition, both books add detail to Satan's history. While the Bible often focuses on describing events, the Qur'an and the Pearl of Great Price provide more dialogue between God and his prophets and between the prophets and the people to whom they preached.

The Book of Moses is Joseph Smith's translation of most of the first six chapters of Genesis. Joseph Smith translated Abraham from papyri he obtained in 1835. These books read like a historical record, much like the Old Testament, giving accounts that provide added detail to the lives of biblical prophets. The Qur'an, on the other hand, provides additional details to biblical prophets by mentioning them "individually, in anecdotes, as examples quoted in preaching—not in the sequence of a large historical recital, but according to circumstances, to serve as lessons."⁵² Purposes for these anecdotes include giving Muhammad a sense of hope and perseverance when rejected (see Qur'an 38:17), warning listeners that God will punish unbelievers just as He had throughout biblical history (see Qur'an 8:54), and establishing the legitimacy of Muhammad's prophethood by linking him theologically with biblical prophets (see Qur'an 4:163).⁵³ The latter purpose certainly contains a parallel in the Pearl of Great Price where Joseph Smith's revelations are shown to be the continuation of ancient prophetic teachings (see Moses 1:33; 5:58–59; 6:7, 53–62).

There are other theological purposes in the Pearl of Great Price and comparable material from the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an uses the story of Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham to emphasize the importance of worshipping Allah alone (see 7:23–29, 59–

⁵¹ The Qur'an also discusses at length the stories of Joseph, Lot, David and Solomon, Jesus, and a few others more briefly.

⁵² Jomier, *The Bible and the Qur'an*, 45.

⁵³ See Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'an and Muslim Literature* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2002), 3–11.

63, 172; 23:22–24; 2:124–32), a doctrine Muhammad taught heavily. The Pearl of Great Price puts Jesus Christ in the stories of Old Testament prophets like Adam, Abraham, Noah, and Moses and asserts He revealed His gospel to them (see Moses 1:32; 5:7–9; 6:53–62; 8:19; Abraham 1:16; 3:24–28), a doctrine Joseph Smith emphasized. Also, both books add to the story of God’s covenant with Abraham in a way that is conducive to their respective doctrine. The Qur'an includes Ishmael in the covenant story and the Pearl of Great Price adds the gospel of Christ to the covenant (see Qur'an 2:124–28; Abraham 2:9–11). While skeptics may believe such scripture was manufactured to further the agenda of the respective prophet, believers can logically view it as God using different aspects of history to emphasize what He is revealing to that particular prophet.

Both the Pearl of Great Price and the Qur'an reveal more about Satan being cast down than the Bible. In the Qur'an, Satan was upset because Adam was honored above other creatures when they were told to prostrate themselves to Adam. Satan refused, Allah questioned him, and he replied, “I am better than him.” Allah then cast him out: “get down from this (Paradise), it is not for you to be arrogant here. Get out, for you are of those humiliated and disgraced” (Qur'an 7:11–13). Satan departed with “angry outbursts” and “promises to tempt men.”⁵⁴ In the Pearl of Great Price, it was Jesus being honored when Satan rebelled (see Moses 4:1–3; Abraham 3:27–28), a significant difference, yet both books add some detail to Satan’s history and events surrounding his interactions with Adam and Eve.⁵⁵ Both books, unlike the Bible, also record that Adam repented and made covenants with God after being cast out of Eden.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19–20.

⁵⁵ Compare Qur'an 2:34; 7:11–18; 20:116–20 with Moses 4:1–21; Abraham 3:27–28.

⁵⁶ See Qur'an 2:37; 20:115 and Moses 5:5–9; 6:53–54, 59–68. See also M. Mir, “Adam in the Qur'an,” *Islamic Culture* 62 (1988): 9.

Another unique parallel between the Qur'an and the Pearl of Great Price is that both claim Abraham and other patriarchs in the Old Testament wrote scripture. The Qur'an mentions "The Scriptures of Ibrâhîm (Abraham) and Mûsâ (Moses)" (87:19; see also 53:37). Widengren notes that several Arabian traditions also claim that Adam was given revelation and commanded to write it.⁵⁷ The Qur'an states that "Adam received from his Lord Words" (2:37). Likewise, the Pearl of Great Price contains the writings of Abraham and Moses and states that in the days of Adam "a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration; And by them their children were taught to read and write" (Moses 6:5–6).

There are several notable congruencies in what both books record on the lives of biblical prophets. The Qur'an and the Pearl of Great Price both add detail to the confrontation of Noah and the unbelievers in his day, particularly the outright refusal of the unbelievers to hearken to the voice of God (compare Qur'an 7:59–63 with Moses 8:15–17, 21–24). Both books, unlike the Bible, describe Abraham's battle with the idolatry of his father, and his father's people. They also describe an attempt made on Abraham's life as a result of his preaching, and how Abraham was saved through divine intervention (compare Qur'an 6:74; 19:41–50; 21:51–71; 29:24 with Abraham 1:1–20).⁵⁸ The Qur'an records that Abraham was shown "the kingdom of the heavens and the earth" and both books record Abraham looking at the stars and skies and receiving spiritual

⁵⁷ Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 22–23. Widengren notes that this was not a terribly unique belief; the Sabians also believed similarly and even seem to have had a book of Abraham.

⁵⁸ In the Qur'an the unbelievers attempted to burn Abraham. In the Pearl of Great Price he was nearly slain on an altar. There are many extra-biblical accounts of the attempted execution of Abraham with varying details; see John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001), 539–43.

knowledge (Qur'an 7:75; compare Qur'an 7:76–79 with Abraham 3:2–19). Both books also offer additional details in an account of one of Moses' meetings with God (see Qur'an 7:142–47 and Moses 1:1–9, 25–42).⁵⁹

Major portions of the Pearl of Great Price are accounts of the Creation. The Qur'an mentions the Creation frequently, but does not provide a detailed historical account.⁶⁰ Like its recitals of biblical prophets, the Creation story is generally used anecdotally in teaching a principle, such as the omnipotence of God (see Qur'an 2:117; 21:104). The Qur'an Creation story largely mirrors the biblical account, but departs from it occasionally. This is also true of the Pearl of Great Price account and in both cases these variations have produced or support unique theological positions. For example, the Qur'an tells of six creative periods, like the Bible, but denies that God rested on the seventh, asserting that the Creation had not exhausted Him (see 46:33; 50:38; 50:15). This emphasizes the majesty and power of God, His complete supremacy that is prevalent in Islamic theology.⁶¹ Similarly, creation passages from the Pearl of Great Price emphasize LDS doctrines such as Jesus' role in the Creation or premortal life (see Moses 1:33; 3:9; Abraham 3:22–24). Further, the Qur'an states that the “creation of the heavens and the earth is indeed greater than the creation of mankind,” emphasizing the Islamic view of man as the creatures or slaves of Allah (40:57). Contrast that with the following passage from the Pearl of Great Price where the creation of mankind seems to be the very reason for the creation of everything else: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to

⁵⁹ For more on Moses in the Qur'an, see Brannon M. Wheeler, *Moses in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002).

⁶⁰ For a discussion on Qur'anic and hadith references to the Creation, see Andrew Rippin and Jan Knappert, *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam* (Manchester: University Press, 1986), 59–63.

⁶¹ See H.U. Weitbrecht Stanton, *The Teaching of the Qur'an, with an Account of its Growth and a Subject Index* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1969), 31–38.

bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,” emphasizing the LDS view of the grand heritage and potential of man (Moses 1:39). Thus, the Qur'an and the Pearl of Great Price teach different doctrines on the Creation, but both add details to the biblical account in a way that emphasizes the doctrines of their respective faith traditions. The Pearl of Great Price and the Qur'an do not compare well in structure or substance but, like the Book of Mormon and the Qur'an, both play a unique and similar role in their respective religions. They supplement or correct biblical teachings and lend credence to their prophets and religions.

Conclusion

Islam and Mormonism are vastly different religions, yet there are some notable similarities in how and why their books of scripture were received and the role they play in their respective faith traditions. The typical comparison of the Book of Mormon and the Qur'an, though originally polemic in nature, has merit on some levels because of the central position they hold in their religion. The Doctrine and Covenants and the Qur'an compare quite well structurally, and in how they were received. Both were revealed through prophets to address the needs and concerns of the people of their time. The Qur'an and the Pearl of Great Price both add unique variations on well-known biblical stories that help develop a distinctive faith tradition rooted in the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament. The production of large portions of scripture is a unique characteristic of restoration prophets like Muhammad and Joseph Smith. It is notable that both produced lengthy scripture comparable on several levels that are fundamental to

their religions. Perhaps it was their books more than their lives that gave followers a lasting legacy and changed the course of world and religious history.

CHAPTER 6 OPPOSITION AND EXODUS

When Muhammad returned from his vision on Mt. Hira and sought refuge in the comfort of his wife, Khadija, she took him to her cousin, the learned *hanif* Waraqah. After Muhammad described his visionary experience, Waraqah replied, “I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would turn you out.” Alarmed, Muhammad asked, “Will they drive me out?” Waraqah answered, “Anyone...who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility; and if I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out then I would support you strongly.”¹ Waraqah passed away shortly thereafter, but his pronouncement proved true. Joseph Smith also had early warnings that his mission would invite persecution. In his first appearance to Joseph, Moroni informed him that “God had a work for [him] to do; and that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). In some of his earliest revelations the Lord told Joseph to “be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many” (D&C 24:8). His martyrdom was also foreshadowed when the Lord told him to “be firm in keeping the commandments...even if you should be slain” and that “if they reject my words, and this part of my gospel and ministry, blessed are ye, for they can do no more unto you than unto me” (D&C 5:22; 6:29). Kenneth Cragg observed that, “hostility to messengers is a dominant and

¹ Bukhari 1:4.

permanent theme in all prophetic story.”² The lives of Muhammad and Joseph Smith would be no exception, sometimes with notable similarities. The perseverance of these prophets through persecution is a lasting tribute to the sincerity of their belief that they were divinely appointed messengers. It is difficult to explain why they would endure the trials they did if they did not genuinely believe they were called of God. Their sincerity will be seen as this chapter examines causes and types of persecution, related motives, and prophetic response to opposition.

Motivating factors that drive one human being to persecute another are telling indicators of what the persecutor values and how they perceive the actions or pronouncements of those they persecute as threats. Motives for persecution, no doubt, can be multiple and complex. In the case of the Muslims and the Mormons, persecutor motives changed as believers moved from one place to another, depending upon the circumstances of the society in which they were developing. This chapter cannot examine all such motives and differences, but will note major elements influencing persecutors and focus on points of potential similarities, such as economic threats, political jealousy, and the perception that fundamental values of society were being threatened. In so doing, it will seek to explain some of the unique parallels in the opposition Muhammad and Joseph Smith faced and in the results of that opposition, such as relocation.

Early Persecution

Initially, it seems persecution was somewhat of a knee-jerk reaction. Islam and Mormonism were new, small, unknown, and, though not terribly heterodox at first, were at least critical of some religious practices or doctrines of the day. Thus, members of

² Cragg, *The Weight in the Word*, 18.

society who did not experience conversion may have tolerated the conversion of a friend or relative, or applied mild persecution, such as social pressure and exclusion, but not threatening serious bodily harm or death. Although both prophets' initial disclosure of their divine encounters to immediate family members met with support, Muhammad and Joseph Smith both eventually learned that persecution followed revelation. Muhammad hesitated to preach publicly because he feared the rejection he had been assured would follow. Ibn Ishaq recorded that three years after Muhammad's theophany, he had revealed it to only a few when God commanded him to "proclaim [his message] openly" (Qur'an 15:94).³ Joseph, younger and perhaps more naïve, seemed surprised by the ridicule he faced when he revealed his vision to confidants outside of his family (see Joseph Smith—History 1:21–23). Both men sometimes overcame their hesitancy to reveal new truths as a result of divine command, or even threat. Muhammad told his uncle that Gabriel had visited him, warning him that "if I did not do as I was ordered my Lord would punish me."⁴ Similarly, Eliza R. Snow recorded that Joseph told her and several others that when a particular doctrine was revealed to him, he "hesitated and deferred from time to time until an angel of God stood by him with a drawn sword, and told him that, unless he moved forward...his Priesthood would be taken from him and he would be destroyed!"⁵ That both men would hesitate, but then press forward despite their awareness of the coming persecution they would face, indicates they fully believed in their cause.

³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 117.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1884), 70. The particular command was to establish plural marriage.

Initially, Mormons and Muslims viewed opposition as blatant religious persecution. By nature, theological disagreements almost invariably result in condemnation and ill feelings. As Kenneth Winn notes, non-Mormons knew that “gentile” was “not meant as a sobriquet of endearment.”⁶ Latter-day Saint and Islamic scripture both assert that persecutors were motivated by their own sins, a condemnation based on disobedience to particular religious tenets. The Doctrine and Covenants states: “But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves” (D&C 121:17). Similarly, the Qur'an declares: “And none can deny it except every transgressor beyond bounds, (in disbelief, oppression and disobedience to Allah) the sinner! When Our Verses (of the Qur'an) are recited to him he says: ‘Tales of the ancients!’ Nay! But on their hearts is the *Rân* (covering of sins and evil deeds) which they used to earn” (Qur'an 83:12–14). Thus, theological differences that condemned others’ beliefs or practices elicited religious passion, which undoubtedly played a part in persecution, but a deeper look reveals additional motives.

Money became a factor in Islamic and LDS persecution, though in somewhat different aspects. Shortly after the organization of the Church, Latter-day Saints in New York claimed their sudden success was endangering the craft of hireling priests. Latter-day Saints perceived mob action in tearing down a dam erected for the purpose of baptizing as being “instigated...by certain sectarian priests of the neighborhood, who began to consider their craft in danger.”⁷ Winn notes that while there was likely “an element of truth” in such charges, there must have been further motivation, demonstrated by the fact that converts to orthodox Protestant sects, which would have resulted in

⁶ Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 64.

⁷ HC 1:86.

similar economic losses, did not suffer the degree of persecution Mormons did.⁸ This is partially explained in that competition between mainstream Protestant religions had to be tolerated as acceptable, while defining Mormonism as irreligious allowed persecution with a clear conscience. As Spencer Fluhman argues, antebellum Americans believed Mormonism was “not a religion at all” and “crossed too many cultural and religious norms for comfort.”⁹ It is likely that economic loss may have been a factor for some of Joseph’s persecutors, but their anger was more complex. To many, Joseph appeared as a charlatan trying to accrue wealth through fraud rather than the cherished Puritan value of hard ethical work.¹⁰ They were motivated not solely by fear of losing money, but by cultural anger at unearned luxury.¹¹

Pecuniary motives were a definite aspect in early Islamic persecution. A defining episode in Muhammad’s preaching, referred to as “the satanic verses,” marks a turning point from toleration mingled with mild persecution to more severe opposition. Trade and religion were intertwined in Mecca as Arabs came from afar to worship at the Ka‘ba, the holy shrine in which the gods were housed. There were additional shrines near Mecca that served as centers of trade at al-‘Uzzā, Naklah, and at-Tā’if, each being tied to a specific goddess. Muhammad’s recitation of the satanic verses acknowledged these goddesses, which brought great public acceptance; the Quraysh didn’t seem to mind

⁸ Winn, *Exiles*, 63–64.

⁹ J. Spencer Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Antebellum America” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin—Madison, 2006), 2.

¹⁰ A Mormon critic in 1841 equated Joseph Smith with Muhammad upon these grounds—both were in it for “pecuniary aggrandizement” (William Harris, *Mormonism Portrayed: Its Errors and Absurdities Exposed, and the Spirit and Designs of Its Authors Made Manifest* [Warsaw, IL: Sharp & Gamble, Publishers, 1841], 44).

¹¹ Winn, *Exiles*, 66–71. Winn argues that “Republican theorists feared this love of luxury because it encouraged ambitious men to corrupt the virtue of other citizens and rob them of their independence” (p. 69). Various elements of Joseph’s life factored into this perception, such as his involvement in money-digging and his cooperative economic policies in Kirtland (see Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism,” 58–60).

Muhammad's preaching much as long as it didn't interfere with their enterprise. Soon, however, Gabriel reprimanded Muhammad and informed him the verses had come from Satan. He was told to retract them and replace them with verses from God (see Qur'an 53:19–23; 22:52). Upon doing so, Muhammad's message became more clearly hostile to the Meccan pantheon of gods, and particularly to the goddesses of the three shrines, and thus “threatened their enterprises and stirred their anger against Muhammad.”¹²

Muhammad's message grew continually more monotheistic, as evident in the Muslim profession of faith that emerged in the Meccan period: “there is no god but Allah.”¹³ This was a direct confrontation with Meccan theological and economic practices and would insult pilgrims coming to Mecca, who brought business with them and gave honor to Qurayshi leaders who oversaw the Ka‘ba.¹⁴ In addition, Muhammad's social gospel of caring for the poor and his preaching of accountability at the day of judgment affronted the selfish accumulation of wealth the Quraysh had practiced in recent years.¹⁵

At first, the Quraysh tried to bargain with Muhammad, revealing their view that he was either ambitious or delusional. ‘Utbah b. Rabī‘ah pled with Muhammad: “If it be wealth thou seekest, we will put together a fortune for thee from our various properties that thou mayst be the richest man amongst us. If it be honour thou seekest, we will make thee our overlord and take no decision without thy consent; and if thou wouldst have kingship, we will make thee our king,” conditional upon Muhammad's agreeing to stop preaching, “and if thyself thou canst not rid thee of this sprite that appeareth unto thee,

¹² Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 107.

¹³ Armstrong notes that when Muhammad forbade his followers to worship other deities, he “lost most of his supporters overnight” (*Muhammad*, 107).

¹⁴ Lings, *Muhammad*, 53.

¹⁵ Arabian ideology had previously little or no doctrine of an afterlife, except in the memories and spirit of the tribe to which they had belonged (Qur'an 45:24).

we will find thee a physician and spend our wealth until thy cure be complete.”¹⁶

Qurayshi leaders went to Muhammad’s uncle, clan leader Abū Tālib, and begged him to put a stop to Muhammad’s nonsense: “O Abū Tālib, your nephew has cursed our gods, insulted our religion, mocked our way of life and accused our forefathers of error; either you must stop him or you must let us get at him, for you yourself are in the same position as we are in opposition to him and we will rid you of him.”¹⁷ Of course they do not directly mention money, but, as Watt put it, “To be selfish is one thing; to uphold selfishness as an ideal is another.”¹⁸ Their motivation was thus veiled by, or perhaps intermingled with, religious and cultural concerns.

Neither prophet was left without some protection. Abū Tālib begged Muhammad to stop, but, seeing the sincere commitment of his nephew, continued to offer his protection until his own death a few years later. This tribal protection, a sort of blood-feud system where tribal revenge often dissuaded serious offenses, protected Muhammad from suffering anything but mild persecution. While such a system may appear primitive to modern Westerners, it was basically the legal institution of the day that prevented complete chaos. Muhammad continued to endure opposition, but nothing that was strictly forbidden by custom.¹⁹ He was subjected to verbal derision, having garbage dumped at his doorstep, a sheep’s uterus thrown at him while praying, was chased through the streets, and pulled around by his robe while worshipping at the Ka‘ba—each distressing, but nothing that would be likely to ignite tribal violence.²⁰

¹⁶ Lings, *Muhammad*, 60–61.

¹⁷ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 119.

¹⁸ Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 127.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁰ For accounts of such persecution, see *Ibid.*, 118, 124; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 191; Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 124, 137; Qur’an 37:13–17. The persecution threatened to become much more severe near the end of Muhammad’s stay in Mecca. There was an assassination plot wherein one member

This type of persecution is similar to what Joseph Smith experienced in the New York period.²¹ He suffered verbal abuse, minor physical attacks, and legal prosecution. Like Muhammad, Joseph was protected somewhat by the legal system of his day, which may have held at bay the kind of life-threatening persecution that would occur when the religions become large and successful enough for society to consider them a more menacing threat. Although violence was culturally accepted as a solution to problems in Muhammad's day, he may have actually been safer than Joseph in the early years. Joseph's supposed protection was a legal system that could be cumbersome and indifferent, or sometimes biased based on the personal views and acquaintances of judge or jury. Muhammad's protection came from a powerful tribe, with decisions of protection (and swift "justice") being administered over by a close relative who cared for Muhammad. That protection only began to dissolve when Abū Tālib passed away and Abū Lahab, another uncle, became clan leader. He believed Muhammad was either self-deceived or a deceiver himself, and Muhammad finally felt it necessary to leave Mecca.²² Just as the Quraysh appealed to the accepted legal institution of their time (clan leaders) to stop Muhammad, opponents of Joseph Smith appealed to the law. He was prosecuted at least twice in New York for "disorderly conduct," but also faced more menacing threats because he lacked the powerful, personal protection Muhammad had enjoyed.²³ Persecution of Joseph Smith and his followers was undoubtedly curbed by social and legal precedent and Muhammad and his followers by tribal custom—persecution beyond

from each clan would simultaneously stab Muhammad, thereby making blood-feud impossible because all clans were guilty and could not be overcome if they were united; the matter would be settled instead by payment of blood money contributed from all the clans. The plan was thwarted by a revelation warning Muhammad of the danger (Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 222–23).

²¹ See Joseph Smith—History 1:60; Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, 164–70.

²² Lings, *Muhammad*, 50; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 191.

²³ See examples in *HC* 1:88–96.

verbal or economic sanction could only be applied to unimportant members of one's own tribe, or those without tribal protection, such as slaves.²⁴ Hannah Rahman argued that “tendentious historians, writing a few generations after the Prophet's death... would lay a disproportionate emphasis on the theological strife during Muhammad's lifetime.”²⁵ Perhaps the same could be said about Mormon perception of persecution: the motives of persecutors went well beyond religious differences.²⁶ Economic and socio-cultural factors played a role in persecution, though it would be a mistake to completely dismiss religious factors. It is unlikely that persecutors bothered to analyze their motives, being driven, instead, by a combination of influences.

Growth of Persecution and Resulting Exodus

Increasing persecution and support from followers in a new location eventuated in revelations directing Muhammad and Joseph Smith to relocate.²⁷ According to divine command, Muhammad went to Medina and Joseph Smith to Kirtland, Ohio. Though economic, religious, and socio-cultural factors continued to play a role in persecution, relocation and growth in both religions brought demographic strength and political power that spawned fear and brought more vigorous opposition. Ironically, Mormons and Muslims sought independence and political rights largely to escape persecution, yet that

²⁴ As in the case of Bilāl, slave of Umayyah, chief of Jumah, who was pinned down with large stones in the heat of the day in an effort to make him deny his faith (Lings, *Muhammad*, 79).

²⁵ Hannah Rahman, “The Conflicts between the Prophet and the Opposition in Madina,” *Islam* 62 (1985): 261.

²⁶ Fluhman noted that Mormonism had little theological variation from mainstream Protestant Christianity initially; Mormon theology gradually deviated, “making doctrinal heterodoxy alone an unsatisfactory explanation for anti-Mormon sentiment” (“Anti-Mormonism,” 3).

²⁷ See Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 223; D&C 37; 38:32. It could well be said that Joseph Smith's first exodus was to Pennsylvania, but the first exodus of the Latter-day Saints was to Kirtland (see *HC* 1:19–21).

course served to intensify, rather than mitigate, persecution.²⁸ As Winn wrote of the Mormons, their “exercise of political rights brought them not protection but persecution from their politically insecure neighbors. . . .Had the Saints abdicated their right to political involvement, the course of early Mormon history would have been a good deal less bloody.”²⁹

As early as 1830, rumors had circulated in New York that Joseph Smith and the Mormons planned to overthrow the government.³⁰ That perception became more common in the following years. Winn expressed this transition in persecutory motive: “While revulsion against Joseph Smith as a confidence man and contempt for his followers as credulous dupes continued to typify gentile hostility to the church, by the mid 1830s their distaste for Mormonism was gradually changing into a fear of tyranny.”³¹ The view stems from the perception that Mormon theology or Mormon political influence (or both) threatened the republican, Protestant Christian values on which early American society was based. Fluhman notes that while early Americans considered religion “vital to the health of the young republic,” this only applied to religion as the majority defined it. Movements that fell outside of that narrow paradigm, though having the appearance of religion, were perceived as something other than “real religion” and therefore “worthless or even harmful.” For a variety of reasons (cultural, political, and theological), outsiders often viewed Mormonism as falling outside the realm of true religion and thus a threat to

²⁸ This was less true for Muhammad than Joseph Smith because Muhammad was more successful in obtaining political independence, but in many ways the dangers Muhammad faced in Medina were more threatening than the relatively mild persecution he faced in Mecca.

²⁹ Winn, *Exiles*, 80.

³⁰ Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: the Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 6–7.

³¹ Winn, *Exiles*, 82.

“the vitality of the republic itself” because it was “dangerously un-American and utterly un-Christian.”³²

Muhammad awakened a similar fear among many Arabs. Qurayshi fear of Muhammad’s economic influence was magnified as he gained acceptance and political power in Medina. It was no longer just Muhammad’s theology that threatened the Meccans, but his newly acquired ability to interfere with caravans and trade routes by conducting raids (which he justified as recompense for past treatment of Muslims). And it was not just political power but political structure that Muhammad was changing. In the past, tribes and clans were the political institutions that gave order to society. Muhammad (whether intentional or not) redefined the community along religious lines. The Muslims, who gathered from many tribes, become a tribe of their own, obtaining unity and extending protection on the basis of religion. As Armstrong wrote, “Monotheism is essentially inimical to tribalism: it demands that a people unite in a single community.” To abandon tribal loyalties and unite with a group with no blood connection was “an unprecedented move and was in its own way as offensive to Arab sensibilities as the denigration of the pagan goddesses.” When Muslims (or Mormons) relocated to avoid persecution, it only intensified those views because exodus and relocation tended to make the religious community more exclusive. The religious, socio-cultural, economic, and now political elements of Muhammad’s movement now threatened the foundations and “most sacred, inviolable values of their society.”³³

Initially, Kirtland seemed a promising refuge from persecution for the Mormons; but animosities developed within a year. Local settlers were threatened by the growing

³² Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism,” 27, 5, 2.

³³ Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 117, 150, 119.

Mormon population; by 1838, when the Mormons left Kirtland, their numbers there were nearly double that of the non-Mormon population.³⁴ This growth allowed the Mormons to control many affairs within the community and that influence began to be frightening to locals at the county level. Further, the Mormons were predominantly aligned with the Democratic Party whereas the locals were mostly Whig supporters. Bad press followed the Mormons and their tendency to an exclusive community did not help dispel rumors or antagonism. Such elements created a flammable environment for persecution, but the spark would come from within the Church.

Meanwhile, surging converts and inflated land prices led Joseph Smith to direct some Mormon immigrants to Missouri. Culturally, the Mormons shared even less with the Missourians than they had with their Kirtland neighbors. Like opponents in Kirtland, Missourians feared the political influence of the Mormons. The Missouri gathering, though, possessed theological significance that the Ohio community did not: Joseph Smith's revelations named western Missouri, though currently "the land of your enemies," as "Zion," the land of inheritance for the Latter-day Saints (D&C 52:42; see also 57:2–3). The Missourians claimed they "did not perceive Mormonism as a threat to their own religious views."³⁵ In fact, in a list of grievances, the Missourians had "nothing to say" on the subject of Mormon theology, leaving such things "to God alone," though this statement is somewhat disingenuous because "religion clearly remained in the mix."³⁶ The primary issue Missourians claimed as troublesome was their perception that

³⁴ Much of this and the following information on Kirtland is gleaned from Karl Ricks Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland: Eyewitness Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 21–30.

³⁵ Winn, *Exiles*, 90.

³⁶ Fluhman, "Anti-Mormonism," 85. Fluhman argues that despite claims, the religious beliefs and practices of the Mormons were "troubling enough to prompt anti-Mormon worries about the Saints' mental fitness" (Ibid. See also pp. 83–84).

Mormons believed the Gentiles were “to be cut off, and [their] lands appropriated by [the Mormons] for inheritances.” Missourians believed that many Mormons felt that the land was “to be won from us by the sword.” They feared the day, “not far distant,” when the civil government would be controlled by the Mormons and “the vexation that would attend the civil rule of these fanatics.” Complaints also dealt with inviting free blacks to Zion and the corrupting influence they and the destitute Mormons, who were deemed “little above the condition of our blacks,” would have as they brought “stench, both physical and moral” into the “social atmosphere.”³⁷ Thus, the contention was religious, social, and political—not Mormon religion v. Missourian religion, but Mormon doctrine v. Missourian political security and social stability.

A similar combination of factors is present Muhammad’s story. Although he was placed temporarily out of their reach upon his move to Medina, the Meccans were continually threatened by his raids and affronted by his abandonment of tribal loyalty, and soon pursued him. Muhammad was, for the most part, surprisingly successful in his military confrontations with the Meccans but faced his greatest challenge when external and internal forces combined against him. Muhammad had been called to Medina as an arbitrator between factions in the community. Many accepted him as a prophet, which facilitated his rise to power, but not all believed his prophetic claim. Some Jews in Medina had accepted Muhammad as political leader without accepting his religion, which was perfectly acceptable to Muhammad at that time—the Jews were monotheists who had their own authentic revelation and thus did not need to accept Islam (see Qur'an 3:110). A constitution had been drawn up defining the rights of Jews and Muslims in Medina and binding them together as a community that would protect each other against

³⁷ *HC* 1:396–99.

their enemies. Initially, the masses accepted Muhammad as an arbitrator of local disputes, but as his religious acceptance increased, so did his political power. Soon, Muhammad had more political power than anyone likely assumed he would have (including himself), which led to jealousy and mistrust. Many opponents had converted to Islam because they had been caught up in the fervor or felt it was the expedient thing to do at the time of Muhammad's entry but were standing on the sidelines to see what developed, far from being truly converted. Jews who were once tolerant or even accepting of this new religion began to be critical and hostile to Islam and its prophet as they witnessed the human frailties of Muhammad that they felt were not representative of a prophet. Their concern that economic and political power was being tipped in Muhammad's favor also elicited opposition. Like the anti-Mormons in Missouri, they were not threatened by the new religion except as it interfered with the political or economic status quo, though the radical claims of the new religion intensified their hostility, just as it did for the Missourians. As in Kirtland, the influx of poor Muslim masses (though initially invited) began to stress the society into which they were incorporated. The opposition from within his camp thus developed primarily as "the result of economic or political rivalry... which acquired a religious character."³⁸ Jealousy evolved into opposition and opposition into conspiracy. One of the Jewish tribes, the Banu Nadir, were expelled for an assassination attempt on Muhammad and another, the Banu Qurayza, allied themselves with the Meccans in the battle of the trench after leaders of Banu Nadir had motivated the Quraysh to attack Medina and secretly entered oaths with them in the Ka'ba. Such plots

³⁸ Rahman, "Conflicts," 260.

were the most serious threats to the Prophet's life, which was only saved by loyal supporters, wise tactics, and reported divine protection.³⁹

As with Joseph Smith, Muhammad's greatest danger came from a flammable environment of political jealousy and religious disdain, which was then sparked by discord from within.⁴⁰ Returning to the Kirtland scene, hostile outsiders were motivated by hateful apostates and Joseph, too, found his life in peril. Bitter opponents like Ezra Booth and Symonds Ryder had once belonged to the Church but became disaffected for various reasons, including alleged lapses in the Prophet's character.⁴¹ Muhammad, too, was criticized by disbelieving contemporaries for being "so unmistakably human."⁴² Human imperfections common to man were magnified when enemies examined them through the lens of a prophetic model. The revelations of Muhammad and Joseph Smith admitted their humanity and Joseph repeatedly acknowledged his frailties and asked his followers to be patient with him.⁴³ But many felt Joseph did not measure up to their expectations of a prophet and turned bitterly against him, particularly after the failure of a financial institution organized by the Prophet and church leaders, called the Kirtland

³⁹ For Ibn Ishaq's account of these events, see Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 433–38, 456–69.

⁴⁰ The internal struggle is colorfully illustrated by the fact that violence broke out in the Mormon and Muslim holy places—the temple in Kirtland and the mosque at Medina (see multiple accounts of violence in the Kirtland Temple in Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland*, 220–21; likewise for the mosque at Medina in Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 158).

⁴¹ For examples, see Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 193, 202–06; Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 168–71. These criticisms ranged from his temper to his jovial personality.

⁴² Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 102. Such attacks were less successful on Muhammad, perhaps because he was old enough at the time of his prophetic entry to have a well-established character whereas Joseph Smith was only fourteen and rather unknown.

⁴³ See Qur'an 41:6; D&C 67:5; Joseph Smith—History 1:28–29; Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 132; Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 170. Both men develop a policy that, as Joseph stated, "a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such" (Burton, *Discourses*, 178). Muhammad illustrated this same principle when during a military campaign a hesitant associate asked him if his strategy was a revelation or just his opinion. Muhammad replied that it was only his opinion, at which point the associate offered an alternative plan, which Muhammad followed (Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 296–97).

Safety Society Bank.⁴⁴ Once again, economics factored into persecution and became a driving force for defaming the burgeoning religion. Apostates saw their economic loss as a witness that Joseph Smith was not a prophet; non-Mormons certainly used that argument to discredit Joseph Smith, but were probably more keenly focused on pecuniary and political effects of the Mormon influence in Kirtland, in addition to the awareness of an opportunity to rid themselves of the Mormon influence altogether. Just as economic boycotts had earlier been employed by Muslims in Mecca and LDS persecutors in New York, the Kirtland residents sought to strangle the Mormons economically, eventually forcing many to leave.⁴⁵ In addition, lawsuits plagued the Prophet and, after he was warned of an assassination plot, he fled to Missouri in a box on an ox cart.⁴⁶

Unlike Muhammad, who was on legitimate “legal” grounds in conducting raids (according to Arabic custom), rallying supporters, and battling the Meccans, Joseph Smith was oppressed by a legal system due to the charges of his enemies in Missouri. He spent several months in prison before being allowed to escape, after which he began again to establish a community at what became Nauvoo, Illinois. Although the Latter-day Saints faced many hardships, they began to establish a successful and relatively autonomous community. Having learned from his past, Joseph took precautions to prevent legal and mobocratic abuses, obtaining a charter that granted political power, a militia, and a municipal court. The Nauvoo Charter may be comparable to Muhammad’s constitution in Medina, created largely as a result of the persecution Muslims had

⁴⁴ See Anderson, *Joseph Smith’s Kirtland*, 193–207.

⁴⁵ In New York, the citizens met and agreed to boycott the sale of the Book of Mormon (see Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 236, 248–49). In Mecca, leaders of the Quraysh organized economic boycotts against clans protecting Muhammad and followers of Muhammad (see Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 74; Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 131).

⁴⁶ See HC 3:2–3; Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 366.

experienced in the past and created to provide peaceful relations within the community but also for protection from enemies. Both documents created a local government that would be friendly to believers, and led to increased political power for both prophets and prosperity for the community.⁴⁷ The Latter-day Saints achieved moderate economic independence and success in Nauvoo, particularly when compared with other communities in the state. It was the Nauvoo period (and possibly the Zion's Camp and "Mormon War" episodes of the Kirtland/Missouri era) that most closely resembled the political and military actions of Muhammad. But comparisons of that nature have been vastly overstated, as Green and Goldrup argued: "it would be misleading to suppose that Joseph Smith's political [or military] role closely paralleled that of Muhammad." Joseph served as mayor of Nauvoo, began a campaign for the Presidency of the United States, and was appointed lieutenant general of a sizable militia, but "in practice if not in theory he cautiously remained within American political traditions."⁴⁸ In contrast, Muhammad revolutionized the political and social systems of Arabia, established an empire that would spread through the Near East, and led armies into many notable battles. Moses or Joshua of the Old Testament would be a better comparison to Muhammad in this arena, and even they may pale in comparison when examining the long-term success of the Islamic empire. Yet, the fact remains, and has thus become a subject for comparison, that both religious leaders involved themselves in political and military arenas, a similarity worth mentioning, perhaps, only because of other parallels between them.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ The text of the constitution is preserved in the early sources; see Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 231–34. For the text of the Nauvoo Charter, see *HC* 4:239–48.

⁴⁸ Green and Goldrup, "Joseph Smith, an American Muhammad?" 54–55.

⁴⁹ The comparison may be further justified by the fact that contemporary critics of Joseph Smith saw these very elements as exactly mimicking Muhammad's imperial aims. Once close associate and critic of the Prophet, John C. Bennett, said Joseph claimed that "God intended to save him to chastise this generation" and that "like Mahomet" Joseph "would sway an imperial sceptre over the nations of the earth,

It was this very issue that led to the most severe persecution of both men. Political power was certainly not the objective of either prophet when they began proclaiming divine messages. Perhaps Muhammad had not considered the political implications his preaching would have, but the cultural division of religion and politics in seventh century Arabia was far less developed than in nineteenth century America. For the Arabs to accept Muhammad as a prophet was to accept him as a political leader to some degree, even though he may not have realized it or sought it, but, as Watt wrote, from the time he uttered the monotheistic message of surah 109, “which seems so purely religious,” it became “necessary for Muhammad to conquer Mecca.”⁵⁰ Similarly, when Joseph Smith proclaimed as revelation that Missouri was to be the land of Zion for the inheritance of the Latter-day Saints, he ensured conflict with local settlers.

As discussed, Muhammad’s most menacing opponents consisted of Medinans and Meccans who felt threatened by his political success, particularly because his ideology and practices ran contrary to accepted values and customs of his day. Combine that threat with economic prosperity, a united community, and peculiar religious beliefs and the factors become sufficient enough to engender violent opposition. Likewise, Joseph Smith’s success in Nauvoo in creating a political and economic safe haven roused opponents to action. Old factors that motivated hatred of the Prophet persisted in Nauvoo: claims of fraudulent ambitions, creating wealth through deception, and adamant opposition to religious tenets, particularly claims of exclusive truth and the rumors of

and that Missouri should bow first to the rod of his power.” Bennett viewed the comparison as apparent enough that he felt it “unnecessary to do more than to allude to the well-known history of Mahomet... There is no doubt that Joe Smith would, if he possessed the capacity, imitate that great Arabian imposter, even in his wars and contests” (John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* [Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842], 286, 306).

⁵⁰ Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 109; see also Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 121; and Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God*, 201–02, where he discusses the political implications of a spiritual leader in the Near East.

plural marriage.⁵¹ More central to the opposition, however, was the rapid expansion of a united economic and political movement that had become the “largest single organization occupying the state’s most populous city” by 1843, and had “gained the balance of political power in Hancock County...It was this threat of economic-political control more than any specific religious doctrine that unified the anti-Mormons into vigorous militant groups.” The “liberal terms” of the Nauvoo City Charter “provided for an almost autonomous city-state controlled by the Mormon hierarchy,” not to mention the relatively large and well trained Nauvoo Legion.⁵² It was the fears of Kirtland and Missouri all over again, but magnified.

Although there were plans and discussion for another exodus, it would not occur in Joseph’s lifetime; he would not escape with his life. The final incident that spurred the Prophet’s opponents to violence was the Mormon destruction of a printing press producing a slanderous publication called the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which had been decided by the city council and ordered by Joseph Smith as mayor.⁵³ The opposition was in an uproar and the governor became involved in trying to secure Joseph’s arrest. It was at this critical moment that Joseph drastically departed from the path of Muhammad, for he could have resisted and fought back with the Nauvoo Legion, which was doubtless

⁵¹ See Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism,” 71–72 for examples of persecutors being motivated by the belief Joseph was attempting to “humbly get the easy fools around him out of their wives and property.” Plural marriage is often noted in Joseph Smith—Muhammad comparisons, but like the political/military comparison, this comparison becomes a polemic weapon when in reality there are vast differences. Unlike Joseph, Muhammad was not seeking to reestablish an ancient biblical practice. Instead, he established limitations to a practice that was already culturally accepted. His involvement with plural marriage, then, was never a direct source of persecution or defection as it was with Joseph Smith (though indirect, perhaps, as in the case of Muhammad’s plural wife A’isha being publicly defamed [See Armstrong, Muhammad, 200–03]).

⁵² David E. Miller and Della S. Miller, *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph*, 2nd ed. (Bountiful, UT: Utah History Atlas, 1996), 131.

⁵³ See HC 6:430–58; Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 586–7. For a discussion on the legality of the destruction of the press, see Dallin H. Oaks, “The Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor,” *Utah Law Review* 9 (Winter 1965): 862–903.

willing to follow the direction of a man they viewed as a prophet of God, just as Muhammad's followers went to battle against the odds.⁵⁴ Instead, as he had done with Zion's Camp, he demurred and took the non-violent route, ensuring his own death but also preventing widespread bloodshed and affecting the future of the Church. Like Muhammad, Joseph had crossed a cultural boundary in destroying the press. Although "twenty similar destructions" had taken place in Illinois in the "previous two decades without such a reaction," the combination of anti-Mormon forces brought the wrath of Joseph's opponents who assassinated him while imprisoned at Carthage on 27 June 1844.⁵⁵

Muhammad's story differed greatly. Having withstood the Meccan's attack without and Medinan detractors' within, Muhammad went on to conquer Mecca with little resistance. By the time of his peaceful death on 8 June 632, most of Arabia had converted to Islam and come under Muhammad's authority. He had established his religion sufficiently during his sixty-two years of life to ensure Islam's success in the coming centuries. Although followers viewed his death as catastrophic, they quickly put it into perspective using God's own words from the Qur'an, revealed several years earlier: "Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)?" (3:144). Joseph's death was also interpreted through revelation. As previously mentioned, revelations had hinted towards an eventual martyrdom, but a

⁵⁴ The situations of Joseph Smith and Muhammad should not be overly compared on this point. The tribes of Arabia and the United States government, which would have undoubtedly become involved if Joseph had pursued a combatant policy, are hardly comparable. Nevertheless, Muhammad began in small battles where numbers favored him and went on to engage in conflicts where winning was against the odds while Joseph deferred even though the odds would have initially been in his favor (see Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 99–151).

⁵⁵ *Church History in the Fulness of Times* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 275.

revelation also followed the Prophet's death through his primary successor, Brigham Young: "Many have marveled because of his death; but it was needful that he should seal his testimony with his blood, that he might be honored and the wicked might be condemned" (D&C 136:39). Muhammad had established his religion through consolidation of power, Joseph Smith through his own death. The ensuing years of LDS history would prove Tertullian's observation true: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."⁵⁶

Some notable similarities are found in the succession crises that followed the death of the prophets. The problem confronting the community at the time of the prophets' deaths were similar but for opposite reasons: neither had clearly designated a successor, Muhammad had given no instructions, Joseph had given differing instructions at various points in his life.⁵⁷ In both religions, the majority of followers had no idea what was to happen or who was to take the place of the prophet.⁵⁸ It was as though many believers thought the prophets were invincible, not having anticipated their deaths and some refused to believe it when it happened.⁵⁹ As the deaths became widely known, some

⁵⁶ I have cited this as popularly quoted, although Tertullian's original quote in *Apologeticus* uses "Christians" in place of "martyrs" and lacks "of the church" (*Apologeticus : ad codices MStos & editiones veteres summâ curâ recognitus, castigatus, emendatus ut et perpetuo commentario, in quo non modo variorum auctorum, sed & plura s. scripturae loca strictius vel uberius explicantur, elucidantur, & illustrantur, studio & industria Sigeberti Havercampi, V.D. Ministri. qui, praeter argumenta capitum, indices etiam locupletissimos tres adjecit* [Lugduni Batavorum: Apud Isaacum Severinum, 1718], L). For easy reference to the quote as given above, see Robert Christy, comp., *Proverbs Maxims and Phrases of All Ages*, 2 vols. [New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893], 2:17).

⁵⁷ There are claims by various Muslim sects that assert Muhammad did name a successor. Shi'ites generally believe he named 'Ali on numerous occasions, including his deathbed, and a few prominent scholars insist he had named Abu Bakr as his successor, but the general view is that Muhammad gave no instruction on the matter because Omar, the third caliph, declared as much on his deathbed (see Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A study of the early Caliphate* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 24, 54). For a discussion on the various directions given by Joseph Smith, see D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *BYU Studies* 16, no. 2 (1976): 187-233.

⁵⁸ Quinn, "Succession," 187; Ronald K. Esplin, "Joseph, Brigham, and the Twelve: A Succession of Continuity," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (1981): 321.

⁵⁹ 'Umar compared Muhammad's absence to Moses' forty day journey on Mt. Sinai, insisting that he would return and threatening to "cut off the hands and feet of men who allege that the apostle is dead"

observers raised questions about whether the movements would continue in their founders' absence.⁶⁰ In both cases, there were several options and multiple contestants who competed for authority, calling upon scripture and supposed directions from the prophets to support their views.⁶¹ A strong leader emerged in both religions: Brigham Young as President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles in Mormonism, and Abu Bakr as Muhammad's closest companion (and father-in-law) in Islam.⁶² Although 'Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and Joseph Smith's son, Joseph Smith III, eventually became the most prominent options to Brigham Young and Abu Bakr, they were not the most significant options at the time the prophets' died. Joseph's counselor, Sidney Rigdon, and a prominent Helper, Sa'd ibn Ubadah, posed more immediate challenges.⁶³ Abu Bakr and Brigham Young were both away at the times of death, but upon returning to the city, both maintained an aura of dignity, almost a fatherly-like temperament, and acted as a comforter to the people after the death of the prophet.⁶⁴ In both cases, however, the question was probably not terribly difficult to overcome for Brigham Young and Abu Bakr, who soon gained support of the majority of their faith communities.⁶⁵ Muhammad and Joseph Smith had delegated significant responsibilities

(Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 682–83). For Mormon disbelief of Joseph Smith's death, see Esplin, "Joseph," 319–21.

⁶⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith suggests this with the acknowledgement that few Muslims would do so (*Islam in Modern History* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957], 32). From the Mormon perspective, it was primarily (if not exclusively) enemies of the Church who took this claim seriously.

⁶¹ Lings, *Muhammad*, 361. See, for example, Qur'an 9:40; D&C 107:22–26, 36–37; 112:30–32; 20:65–67; 124:58, 91–95.

⁶² Brigham Young's claims were not for himself, but as the presiding voice of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, who he claimed held the right to succeed Joseph Smith.

⁶³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 683–87; Quinn, "Succession," 187.

⁶⁴ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 683; Esplin, "Joseph," 323–24.

⁶⁵ Not that division in the LDS Church was minor (Esplin notes that approximately half the Latter-day Saints living at the time of Joseph's death did not follow the Twelve through the succession-exodus period) but that there was no terribly viable option to the leadership of the Twelve for the majority of believers and that "institutional damage to the Church was minimal" (Esplin, "Joseph," 333). Opposition to the Twelve under Brigham Young was too divided to present a true "crisis" in terms of optional leadership.

to these leaders in the months prior to their deaths. This was known to the community and was seen as an indication of who the prophets intended as successors.⁶⁶ Part of the reason ‘Ali and Joseph Smith III, the blood relative candidates, were not taken more seriously when the prophets passed was their relative youth and inexperience and their (resulting?) failure to seriously challenge for control.⁶⁷

The question of succession by consensus versus succession by blood has been the impetus for comparison between Mormonism and Islam on this topic and is indeed a notable similarity.⁶⁸ ‘Ali and Joseph Smith III were both discussed as rightful heirs and some claims were put forth immediately after the deaths of the prophets, but they did not act on those claims until years later, asserting on somewhat shaky grounds that their respective prophet had designated them as heir.⁶⁹ Joseph III eventually began a separate church that continues to coexist with the mainstream LDS Church; ‘Ali rightfully came into power as the fourth caliph, after which the Sunni and Shi’a division became pronounced. In both cases, the groups claiming succession by blood are significantly

⁶⁶ Muhammad had appointed Abu Bakr to lead prayers in the mosque after he became too ill to do so himself (Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 680–81). Joseph Smith had given added responsibility and instruction to the Twelve and specific authority to Brigham Young (Esplin, “Joseph,” 319–20). Miraculous elements play into the choice of both Brigham Young and Abu Bakr, Brigham taking on the appearance and sound of Joseph to some Mormons listening to him speak after the Prophet’s death and Abu Bakr gaining support because he was designated in a revelation as “the second” because he accompanied Muhammad during a miraculous manifestation (see Esplin, “Joseph,” 325; Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, ed., “The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Passes to Brother Brigham: A Collective Spiritual Witness,” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 4 (1996-97): 125–204; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 687; Qur’an 9:40).

⁶⁷ Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 42; Esplin, “Joseph,” 333, 336.

⁶⁸ Green and Goldrup, “Joseph Smith, An American Muhammad?” 52–53, 55.

⁶⁹ Claims to Joseph Smith III’s rights as heir to his father were sometimes contradictory and fleeting. Further, Joseph Smith III made it clear that his father had not ordained him as prophet, but designated that he should be such (see Esplin, “Joseph,” 316, n. 49; Quinn, “Succession,” 222, 225–26). It is somewhat unclear whether ‘Ali or his followers and/or later Shi’ites made repeated claims that Muhammad had designated him as his successor (see Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 141–45).

smaller than their counterparts. The division in both faiths continues to be an object of discussion and disagreement today.⁷⁰

Prophetic Response to Opposition

Muhammad and Joseph Smith reacted to persecution in some remarkably similar ways. This reaction served in their follower's minds as a testament to the depth of each man's commitment to his respective divine commission. At other times, the cultural and political dissimilarities of their eras resulted in very different responses. The initial persecution that ensued when they began to disclose their divine experiences brought candid responses. Joseph wrote that he was "greatly surprised" when a confidant treated his "communication not only lightly, but with great contempt." Years later, he reflected on "how very strange it was" that a boy such as he could have stirred up "the most bitter persecution and reviling" (Joseph Smith—History 1:21, 23). Despite the opposition and attempts to persuade Joseph to abandon his mission, "all this did not destroy the reality" of his vision, for, he wrote:

I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying it was true...I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does

⁷⁰ Succession may have been a more important question in Mormonism than in Islam, because there was no belief that Muhammad's successor would have the same rights of revelation or ecclesiastical authority as the Prophet had, but in Mormonism there was a doctrine of continuation of prophetic rights and authority. The contest between Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon may have been profoundly important because Sidney did not seem to claim prophetic authority, only that he would be the "guardian" of the Church (Quinn, "Succession," 189). This is reminiscent of Abu Bakr's title as "Deputy" of the Prophet (Subhash C. Inamdar, *Muhammad and the Rise of Islam: The Creation of Group Identity* [Madison, CT: Psychosocial Press, 2001], 231). Although Inamdar notes there were several claims for prophethood following Muhammad's death, none of these were taken seriously and were shortly put down (Ibid., 232). A different view might argue that the succession question was more important in Islam because the political status of Islam demanded a more united body than the more theological LDS Church. There was more than doctrine at stake. The political power of the Mormons had largely evaporated with the persecution and martyrdom of Joseph Smith, whereas the Muslim community was at the height of political power (see Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 44–45).

the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation (Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25).

Muhammad responded similarly when associates tried to convince him to change his message: “It is not for me to change it on my own accord; I only follow that which is revealed to me. Verily, I fear the torment of the Great Day (i.e. the Day of Resurrection) if I were to disobey my Lord” (Qur'an 10:15). Abū Tālib’s attempt to persuade Muhammad to cease preaching evoked a similar response: “O My uncle, by God, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I abandoned this course, until God has made it victorious, or I perish therein, I would not abandon it.”⁷¹ It was not an easy position for Muhammad to take and he left in tears because such a stand betrayed the core of tribal values that had been engrained in Muhammad. It was a “clear offense against traditional notions of filial piety.”⁷²

Nevertheless, both prophets took comfort in the persecution of past religious figures. Joseph described how he “felt much like Paul” of whom “some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision” (Joseph Smith—History 1:24; see also D&C 127:2). Waraqah’s alarming words that Muhammad would suffer persecution were nonetheless assuaged by the fact that this had happened to all messengers of God, which “added to his confidence and lightened his anxiety.”⁷³ This association with prophets of the past surely influenced their self-perception in addition to giving fortitude during difficult times. In fact, it may be argued that such awareness not only brought comfort, but deepened their

⁷¹ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 119.

⁷² Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 71.

⁷³ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 107.

conviction that their missions were divine because such treatment was interpreted as evidence of divine inspiration. The Qur'an assured Muhammad that "if they reject you (O Muhammad), so were Messengers rejected before you, who came with *Al-Bayyinât* (clear signs, proofs, evidences) and the Scripture and the Book of Enlightenment" (3:184). Or, as an early LDS publication explained, "For this very cause the saints may expect nothing but persecution at the hand of any people; because no other people but them know the Father nor the Son, and for want of this knowledge, they are always ready to persecute."⁷⁴ Thus, whether persecutors were motivated by religious factors or not, those being persecuted interpreted it in religious terms: "the powers of earth and hell" combining against God's people.⁷⁵

The revelations addressed how believers should respond to opposition, often encouraging them to "bear it patiently and revile not against" their persecutors (D&C 98:23; see Qur'an 76:24). Assurance that God would act on their behalf often accompanied such an assurance: "Verily, they are but plotting a plot (against you O Muhammad). And I (too) am planning a plan. So give a respite to the disbelievers; deal gently with them for a while" (Qur'an 86:15–17; see D&C 82:23). Judgment was to be left in the hands of God, who "forgives whom He wills, and punishes whom He wills" (Qur'an 3:129; see D&C 64:10). Initially, both religions were persecuted mildly, primarily verbally. While such persecution was to be born patiently, divine permission for violence was given for more lethal persecution. The Doctrine and Covenants and the Qur'an gave rules of war, as it were, sometimes providing very detailed instruction, such as troop numbers and movement (compare Qur'an 3:200 with D&C 103:32–34). In both

⁷⁴ Sidney Rigdon, "Persecution," *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no.30 (March 1837): 477.

⁷⁵ *HC* 3:164–65.

books, the revelations indicate a continuation of policy given to past prophets (compare Qur'an 3:146 with D&C 98:32). Joseph was told that blessings would follow those who bore persecution patiently, yet reaction was permissible: “thine enemy is in thine hands; and if thou rewardest him according to his works thou art justified; if he has sought thy life, and thy life is endangered by him, thine enemy is in thine hands and thou are justified” (D&C 98:31; see also 105:30). Muhammad was directed, “fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits,” some of which are outlined in the next verses and surah (Qur'an 2:190; see 2:191–94; 3:140). Thus, God approved “killing them (your enemy) with His Permission,” but according to the guidelines He stipulated (Qur'an 3:152).⁷⁶

Permissible violence in response to persecution in Mormonism and Islam was often accompanied by the promise of divine involvement. The Lord told Joseph Smith, “I, the Lord, would fight their battles...until they had avenged themselves on all their enemies,” and assured Muhammad, “I will help you with a thousand of angels” (D&C 98:37; Qur'an 8:9; see also Qur'an 3:13, 121–28). Both prophets reportedly experienced such divine protection on a number of occasions, including witnessing angels assist them in military campaigns.⁷⁷ Facing a potential battle in Missouri, Joseph Smith prayed to the Lord, and then said to his men, “Stand still and see the salvation of God,” promising that

⁷⁶ This is true in Mormonism and Islam. Contrary to common Western misperception, Muhammad was not a violent man when judged by the standards of his day. In fact, revelation sometimes forbade violence in what would have been culturally acceptable circumstances (see Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 115–16). It should be noted that rules of war in the Qur'an and the Doctrine and Covenants vary somewhat. Laws given to Joseph Smith that govern this matter clearly have New Testament tones of patience and forgiveness, whereas the Qur'an often resembles the justice of the Old Testament. Yet Joseph's revelations dealing with war more closely resemble Old Testament practices than many modern Christians might be comfortable with, and, as noted, tie themselves to the war policies of Old Testament prophets (see D&C 98:32). For additional passages in the Qur'an stipulating rules of war, see Qur'an 22:39–40; 90:2; 33:13. For an interpretation of Qur'anic verses dealing with rules of war, see Sayyid Abula'la Maududi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, 7 vols. (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1995) 1:151–52.

⁷⁷ HC 2:73; Qur'an 3:124; 8:9; Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 103.

the Lord would protect them.⁷⁸ As their enemies began an attack, a sudden storm prevented them from crossing a river to get to the Mormons, while Joseph's men found shelter in a church. Joseph commented, "Boys, there is some meaning to this. God is in this storm."⁷⁹ Similarly, in the battle of the trench, perhaps Muhammad's most serious military threat, Medina had been besieged and conditions had grown critical when Muhammad petitioned the Lord to turn their enemies to flight. A fierce storm blew in and pounded the enemy, Muhammad's men being sheltered in their tents, and broke their spirit, prompting them to begin to withdraw.⁸⁰ On other occasions, Muhammad had secretly escaped Mecca and Joseph Smith had secretly left Kirtland but both were pursued by their enemies, who came very near but miraculously did not find, or found but did not recognize, the prophets.⁸¹ Both were saved from an assault by their enemies by using a double: 'Ali slept in Muhammad's bed and William Huntington in Joseph's, pretending to be the prophet to save him from harm.⁸²

The revelations also interpreted persecution as a necessary trial of faith, perhaps even necessary for entrance to heaven. The Qur'an notes the spiritual testing that comes from physical battle when it queries: "Do you think that you will enter Paradise before

⁷⁸ Joseph Holbrook, *History of Joseph Holbrook, 1806–1885, written by his own hand*, ed. Mabel F. Holbrook and Ward C. Holbrook (n.p., 1977), 17.

⁷⁹ Wilford Woodruff, in *HC* 2:104, n. 8.

⁸⁰ Lings, *Muhammad*, 226–27.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 118–19. Muhammad's enemies searched the mountains where he was hiding and came to the mouth of the cave he occupied but did not search it because, according to the traditional sources, an acacia tree had miraculously grown overnight to cover the mouth of the cave and a spider had woven a web, indicating no one had entered. Upon escaping Kirtland, Joseph Smith's enemies pursued him and often were near, but miraculously did not recognize him, though they examined him in a hotel room and saw them in the streets (*HC* 3:3).

⁸² Assailants waiting outside Muhammad's home realized they were waiting for the wrong man the next morning and let 'Ali go unharmed (Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 222–23). Joseph's replacement was not so fortunate. William Huntington switched beds with the Prophet and was drug out, beaten, tarred and feathered, and chased back into the city. When William finally staggered home, the Prophet embraced him and promised him he would never taste of death (diary of Oliver B. Huntington, 2 vols., handwritten ms., Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Special Collections, 2:9; for easy reference see Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989], 40).

Allah tests those of you who fought (in His Cause) and (also) tests those who are *As-Sâbirûn* (the patient)?” (3:142). On another occasion it asks: “Or think you that you will enter Paradise without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were so shaken that even the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, ‘When (will come) the Help of Allah?’” (2:214). Joseph Smith could relate. From the depth of a dungeon in Missouri, he pleaded with God: “O GOD, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? How long shall they hand be stayed... Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart be softened toward them...?” (D&C 121:1–3). Prior to this, the Lord told the Latter-day Saints that “they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham” and that “those who will not endure chastening... cannot be sanctified” (D&C 101:4–5). On another occasion, LDS leaders under Joseph’s direction taught that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.”⁸³ The fact that persecution tested followers is clear from the historical record. In early Islam and Mormon history, trials sowed discord among believers, which caused them to question whether the prophet was divinely inspired and to suspect that he had made judgment errors and may not be a true prophet.⁸⁴

When losses or setbacks occurred, the Lord offered similar explanations to Muhammad and Joseph Smith, sometimes explaining that such were the results of their sins (compare Qur'an 3:165 with D&C 101:2; 105:2), sometimes that they constituted a test or trial through which they must pass (compare Qur'an 3:165 with D&C 101:4), and

⁸³ “Lecture Fifth,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 8 (May 1835): 126.

⁸⁴ See *HC* 2:69, 80, 106–07 where discontent on Zion’s Camp is described. See Qur'an 33:10–15 where similar complaints are voiced among Muslims prior to the battle of the trench.

sometimes simply comforting that those killed were taken to the Lord (compare Qur'an 3:169 with D&C 124:130).⁸⁵ Further, death was portrayed in the revelations as being in the Lord's hands and in the Lord's time, though more strongly in the Qur'an than the Doctrine and Covenants: the former stating that even if those killed in battle had stayed home from the battle they would have died because it was their appointed time (compare Qur'an 3:145, 154, 156 with D&C 122:9).⁸⁶ When enemies escaped justice, the Qur'an and Doctrine and Covenants both assure believers that matters are in the Lord's hands and explain the impunity as a delay, "so that they may increase in sinfulness," until the Lord's indignation would "be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full" (Qur'an 3:178; D&C 101:11).

Revelation gave sharp warnings to persecutors, as did the prophets on a more personal level. The revelations typically warned oppressors that they would one day know their mistake and be accountable. They are informed of the judgment and justice of God and the painful torment that awaits them (see Qur'an 2:104; 9:61; 25:41–42; D&C 10:23, 28; 121:11, 16–24). On a more personal level, while Joseph Smith and Muhammad were very open to help and suggestions, they could be quite intolerant of personal criticism, particularly when it came from within their own camp. They sometimes reacted sharply, verbally condemning persecutors to hell.⁸⁷ While mild persecution was to be born patiently, both prophets felt there were times when verbal persecution justified drastic action: if it was public and inflammatory, as in the case of the

⁸⁵ The concept of martyrdom is much more developed and valued in Islam than in Mormonism, which tends to place a higher priority on living for the Lord (see Qur'an 3:155–158, 195).

⁸⁶ Interestingly, the Qur'an and the Doctrine and Covenants both speak on this matter with direct reference to the potential death of the respective prophet (Qur'an 3:144–45; D&C 122:9).

⁸⁷ See Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 113, 116 for instances of Muhammad doing this, and Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 299 for Joseph.

Nauvoo Expositor. For Muhammad, a parallel is seen in the criticism of poets, who he often dealt with harshly.⁸⁸ Several authors have equated the power of the poets of Muhammad's day to the modern media: they had the power to "ruin a person's reputation as efficiently and thoroughly as the media can today."⁸⁹ Their satire was "deemed an injury as serious as, if not more serious than, a defeat in literal battle" because as "his verses began to be adopted and repeated by others, he became many foes."⁹⁰ This was certainly Joseph's fear with the *Nauvoo Expositor*. The importance of defending one's name in Muhammad's culture finds a thin parallel in what Richard Bushman terms the "honor culture" in which Joseph lived, which "bred deep loyalties to friends and family, while instilling a fierce urge to avenge insults."⁹¹ Despite these flares of temper, Joseph and Muhammad were both quick to forgive (even very serious offenses) when the offending party was contrite.⁹²

Conclusion

Observers may become opponents when they perceive something of value is being threatened. The threat may be familial, monetary, or ideological, and the perception of threat often results from insecurity. It is ironic that while those being persecuted often try to stop the persecution, such defensive action often increases persecution instead.

⁸⁸ See, for example, accounts of Muhammad having poets assassinated in Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 185; Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 106.

⁸⁹ Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 148; see also p. 61.

⁹⁰ Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 106.

⁹¹ Bushman, *Rough Stone*, 295.

⁹² See Jesse, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2:147–48; *HC* 4:162–64 where Joseph forgives offending brethren, even those who had reviled against him and caused him great tragedy. Likewise, after conquering Mecca, Muhammad used the story of Joseph of Egypt forgiving his treacherous brothers to show how he would treat his former enemies. He also forgave (once she had accepted Islam) a bitter enemy who had rejoiced in the death of Muhammad's uncle and even eaten a portion of his liver and mutilated his body (Qur'an 12:92; Peterson, *Muhammad, Prophet of God*, 148, 152).

Further, it is ironic that while persecutors aim to stop the movement, the persecution often results in unifying and strengthening it instead. As Joseph Smith wrote while in hiding from persecutors, “Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!” (D&C 128:22). In Islam and Mormonism, persecution helped early followers define who they were and hastened the formation of a unique community defined in religious terms. While persecution is a common motif for religious figures, it seems to be more severe for restoration prophets (particularly charismatic ones like Muhammad and Joseph) because their innovations are more radical, going from apostasy to restoration rather than guiding an existing system of worship.

Persecution also has the ability to detect the motivation and sincerity of the victim. Would a fraud endure it? Possibly, if they felt the value would be worth it in the end. Would someone who is delusional? Probably, but not likely in a balanced and appropriate way, perhaps being pushed to chaotic self-destruction. An examination of how Muhammad and Joseph Smith reacted to persecution reveals their sincere view that they had been called of God. Their impressive handling of opposition demands that view to be seriously considered, rather than casually dismissing them as frauds or madmen. It has been noted that last words are a telling indicator of one’s heart. Both prophets called to their God as they were dying.⁹³ Watt argued that Muhammad “must have been perfectly sincere in his belief. He must have been convinced that he was able to distinguish between his own thoughts and the messages that came to him from ‘outside himself.’ To carry on in the face of persecution and hostility would have been impossible

⁹³ See Lings, *Muhammad*, 341 and D&C 135:1.

for him unless he was fully persuaded that God had sent him.”⁹⁴ Acknowledging that statement, Stark then noted, “The case of Joseph Smith, Jr., is remarkably similar.”⁹⁵ These were men who believed they were called of God and deserve to be examined in that light.

⁹⁴ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 17.

⁹⁵ Stark, “A Theory of Revelations,” 293.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

Prophetic Typology Considered

Why does prophetic typology exist? Further, why does it exist across cultural and religious boundaries? It may be expected, for example, for biblical prophets to exhibit similarities as products of a shared culture. But why two men from vastly different cultures, with different religious backgrounds, and centuries apart display many common characteristics is a compelling question.

For those who view prophethood as something other than delusion or fraud, there are several possible answers. It may be that prophets such as Muhammad and Joseph Smith intentionally crafted their lives according to typical patterns to gain acceptance. This supposition is problematic, however, because some elements of the prophetic pattern lie beyond the prophet's ability to control, such as forerunners who precede them, prophetic statements about them, and complex forms of persecution that are external to the prophet. Also, several detailed similarities between Joseph Smith and Muhammad that fall outside of a typical prophetic pattern would still go unexplained, unless they are simply a matter of coincidence, which seems very unlikely.¹ Muhammad was probably

¹ For example, both men were tutored by a specific angel, experienced satanic opposition to their revelations, were saved from assassination by switching beds with an associate, were criticized for the quality of their revelations, followed by a divine challenge to write something better, upon which critics attempted to do so but failed. Both families supported their initial claims of revelation, biblical and lineal prophecies were made of the prophets, their names were foretold, they experienced a period of silence following their initial vision, revealed non-biblical details of past prophets, produced a book of scripture given primary (though not exclusive) position in their canon, and produced a book of scripture compiled over time that was based on situational revelations resulting from specific questions the prophets asked.

unaware that various aspects of his life fit a prophetic pattern, and the young Joseph Smith was likely unaware of many parallels he shared with the prophet Muhammad. Muhammad knew nothing of Joseph Smith and Joseph Smith knew very little of Muhammad and, even if he had, vast differences in their theologies rule out the possibility of intentional imitation because Joseph, whose doctrine centered on Jesus Christ, would have had little reason to link himself with a non-Christian religious leader who his society viewed as an imposter. Their lives and theology are certainly not similar enough to make intentional imitation a satisfactory explanation for the similarities that do exist.

Another possible explanation for the typology is that religious experiences are products of the human psyche that occur strongly in certain individuals, who are consequently labeled as prophets. Muhammad and Joseph Smith, in this line of thinking, found themselves in similar circumstances and had similar psychologies (even across boundaries of culture and time), which produced comparable experiences. This explanation seems little more than a feasible alternative to the possibility of actual divine encounters—an alternative created by those who are convinced God is simply a creation of the human mind. Analyses that unnecessarily press naturalistic explanations are themselves little more than ideological statements, which, in turn, fail to adequately explain such striking typological congruencies

Steeped in the presuppositions of the modern secular academy, many scholars have failed to consider the possibility that seems most plausible—divine influence. This influence produces motifs that could (and should) be considered by historians and scholars when examining religious figures. Such a perspective does not necessarily

mandate belief, it simply comprehends men like Muhammad and Joseph Smith on their own terms. Failure to evaluate them in this way promotes a false premise that in turn necessarily (though unconsciously, perhaps) produces false conclusions. This study, in contrast, demonstrates that divine providence remains a viable explanation for the prophetic typological similarities between Muhammad and Joseph Smith.

The Muhammad—Joseph Smith Comparison

Perhaps the comparison between Joseph Smith and Muhammad began largely because both were misunderstood men. Many Westerners viewed Muhammad as “history’s arch-imposter” and therefore thought the comparison to Joseph Smith rather fitting. Critics sought to explain Joseph’s success by pointing to the similar success of an alleged imposter. Thus, Muhammad became the central “explanatory device anti-Mormons chose for Smith” as they blasted away at the new religion.² With the development of time, views of both prophets began to shift. Many modern observers see Muhammad and Joseph Smith as men who were sincere in their professions, and who have been viewed both within and without their faith communities as well-balanced and compassionate individuals. This shift has demanded a new explanation for their unique similarities. I assert that divine inspiration best explains these congruencies.

As the comparison between Muhammad and Joseph Smith was explored in greater depth, details emerged, some superficial and some noteworthy. Despite many fundamental differences between the two prophets, they were men who sought God and received revelation that led to the restoration of a religious system that each believed was

² Fluhman, “Anti-Mormonism,” 35.

rooted in antiquity, the religion of Adam.³ They experienced grand theophanies and were tutored by angels. They produced sacred writings that clarified misunderstood or lost doctrine—both incorporating biblical prophets and their writings while maintaining that corruption had crept into the Bible. They offered their respective generations a prophet and a revelation of their own, as authentic to each community as any biblical revelation had been. They were persecuted not only for their religious beliefs, but because they were viewed as a profound threat to the cultures from which they sprang. Both were forced from their homes, thereafter creating unique societies of worshippers who were often considered peculiar by outsiders. They believed they were establishing God’s word for the final dispensation that would usher in the day of judgment. Profound similarities such as these demonstrate the viability of the Muhammad/Joseph Smith analogy. They also shift the traditional, polemic comparison from comparing content in the lives of these prophets to comparing their form as prophets. John C. Bennett’s claim that Joseph Smith was attempting to “imitate that great Arabian imposter” simply cannot be supported when viewing the content of the prophets’ teachings and lives.⁴ However, there does appear to be an imitation when viewing the prophetic form of these two great men. This imitation, however, is not explicable through Joseph’s intentional imitation of Muhammad, as Bennett suggested, but can be legitimately explained through divine intervention in the lives of both men.

The first comparison of Joseph Smith and Muhammad may have been malicious, but the association of the two has proven to be warranted and enlightening, especially when both are viewed as inspired restoration prophets. Similarities could be found when

³ This need not imply they viewed their religions as institutionally or ritually equivalent with Adam’s, but the same basic belief system consisting of true revealed religion.

⁴ Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 306.

comparing any two religious figures—hence scholarly interest in a “prophetic typology”—but the parallels between Joseph Smith and Muhammad evoke a sub-category suited to those who receive revelation anew and restore true religion in an age of apostasy. Scholarly examination of others who seem to fulfill a similar restorative commission, such as Moses and Jesus, might further illuminate that important, specialized prophetic role.

Sharpening One’s View

Perhaps something has been gained through the comparison, at least for the author. I have been able to understand my beliefs better as I have examined similarities with another religious tradition. It is comparable to hearing or reading something in two different languages: one gains a more comprehensive understanding of the idea being presented. As H. Lazarus-Yafeh stated when speaking of the Muslim-Jewish symbiosis, “One should not think in terms of influences or cultural borrowing only... It has been said that the Near East resembles a palimpsest, layer upon layer, tradition upon tradition, intertwined to the extent that one cannot really grasp one without the other, certainly not the later without the earlier, but often also not the earlier without considering the shapes it took later.”⁵ Perhaps this is also true for those seeking to understand prophets. As various prophets are examined across the spectrum of time, more focused understanding of what a prophet is and what a prophet does begins to emerge. We are also able to see God’s hand in history as He dealt with different peoples and cultures throughout the ages, revealing portions of truth, through which runs a common thread of divine influence. Division may then begin to be replaced by cooperation, hostility by appreciation.

⁵ Goldman, *The Wiles of Men*, xxi.

Undoubtedly, theological differences will remain—Muhammad’s rejection of Jesus as the Son of God, for instance, will never be acceptable to Latter-day Saints. But perhaps they may be set aside for the time being, focusing on common goals and qualities and entering a civil dialogue where beliefs can be discussed with greater appreciation and understanding. In all this, it would be wise to remember God’s instruction to Muhammad: “To each among you We have prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute” (Qur'an 5:48).

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