

# ANSWERING OBJECTIONS – SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES

Note that many of these points require a serious discussion not a simplistic “soundbite”. Ensure that your friend understands this and will let you speak! These are only suggestions; there are many answers.

## 1. The Bible has been corrupted

When, show me? “Versions” (eg NIV, ESV, RSV etc) are not versions in the normal sense of being deliberately different but are attempts to render Scripture in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic into accurate and understandable translations. Muslims struggle with this idea as Islam considers that the Qur’an is only authentic in Arabic and translations are usually rather inaccurate paraphrases. Remember “.....*the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine*” (FIEC Statement of Faith). Explain how the Bible was written over more than 1,500 years as many authors were inspired by God and it tells a single coherent story of God’s plan of salvation culminating in Jesus. If appropriate point out that in Muhammad’s time (approx. 600AD) the Bible was considered by the Qur’an as God’s reliable word – eg 3:3 “*He has revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ the Book in truth, confirming what came before it, as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel*” and 10:94 “*If you ‘O Prophet’ are in doubt about ‘these stories’ that We have revealed to you, then ask those who read the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so do not be one of those who doubt,*” The Codex Siniaticus (AD 350 – about 250 years before Muhammad) in the British Library contains almost all the NT so this is the “Injil” which was around when the Qur’an was saying if you doubt go to the earlier Scripture. Invite your friend to read the Bible with you as enjoined by the Qur’an!

Numerous historical checks confirm the historical reliability of the Bible (e.g. “Belshazzar” of Daniel 5 & the Philippian officials in Acts were denied by some scholars until more recent archaeological discoveries proved the Bible correct). Try a visit to the British Museum

The Bible has far more in number and more recent manuscripts than other ancient writings considered authentic - NT 5366 copies/portions within 50-250 years of writing; compare to Homer (643 copies/400 years) Plato (7 copies/1,300 years) or Caesar’s Gallic Wars (10 copies /1,000 years).

## 2. How can God have a Son/the Trinity is illogical

Explain that “Son” does not mean the result of a physical union between God and Mary (this idea is as offensive to Christians as it is to Muslims). Rather, it speaks of relationship; we still use the word in this manner as in “a son of the soil” or “a son of somewhere”. Jesus is the eternal, uncreated Word (John 1 can be useful). The translation of *monogenes* (John 3) as “begotten” in older translations is unhelpful. The word means one and only or unique as in newer translations. There is One true God and if He reveals Himself in three persons we should not judge or criticise but should accept. If we accept God as the Almighty Creator outside of time and the physical constraints of created things, we also accept that He is three in one in a manner impossible for created things. The Islamic view of God’s oneness is too small as it is bound by human logic. God is unbound. There are many references that can be helpful – for example Isaiah 9:6 where the Messiah is clearly “Mighty God” in the same words used of “Yahweh” in Isaiah 10:21,23. God confirms it (Matthew 17:5).

## 3. Christians support the oppression of Palestinians

Try not to get bogged down in politics or in the modern history of the Middle East or in your own pet theories of eschatology (if you have any!). Explain that as Christians we abhor all injustice and oppression.

## 4. Muhammad is prophesised in the Bible

- Many Muslims believe he is. E.g.:
  - Deut. 18:18 (but see John 1:45)
  - John 14:16,17 & 26. The Holy Spirit is the “Comforter” (Parakleton). Muslims say this should be a similar sounding Greek word meaning praised one which in Arabic is Ahmad the root of the name Muhammad. But there are no manuscripts to support this!
- Some Christians believe it does (e.g. warnings of false prophets or even the Antichrist). Note that our desire to show love should be greater than our desire to judge or criticise.

## 5. The West is Christian but corrupt and immoral, so Christianity is corrupt and immoral.

Yes, there is much that is corrupt and immoral in western society. But the west is not Christian in the sense of following Jesus. Explain that you humbly seek to follow Jesus, not the immorality of society. Anyway, the Christian faith is not western, it is global and was founded in the Middle East!

6. Jesus didn't say he was God

The Messiah was prophesied to be God (eg Isaiah 9:6, Luke 1:30-35). Until his trial, Jesus was cautious because it wasn't the right time. However, for those prepared to accept He made it clear that he was God. For example, the I am statements, his calming of the storm, his forgiveness of sin etc. Then at his trial he was clear "*Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"<sup>62</sup> "I am," said Jesus*" (Mark 14:61b-62a)

7. Jesus wasn't crucified

Then Jesus is a liar! He said on several occasions that he must suffer and die (eg Mark 8:31). His crucifixion was witnessed by many. The Islamic idea 600 years after the event that God made someone else die instead of Jesus would be a cruel deception if true. This is a good opportunity to explain the plan of salvation and of substitution – perhaps starting with the Passover Lamb.