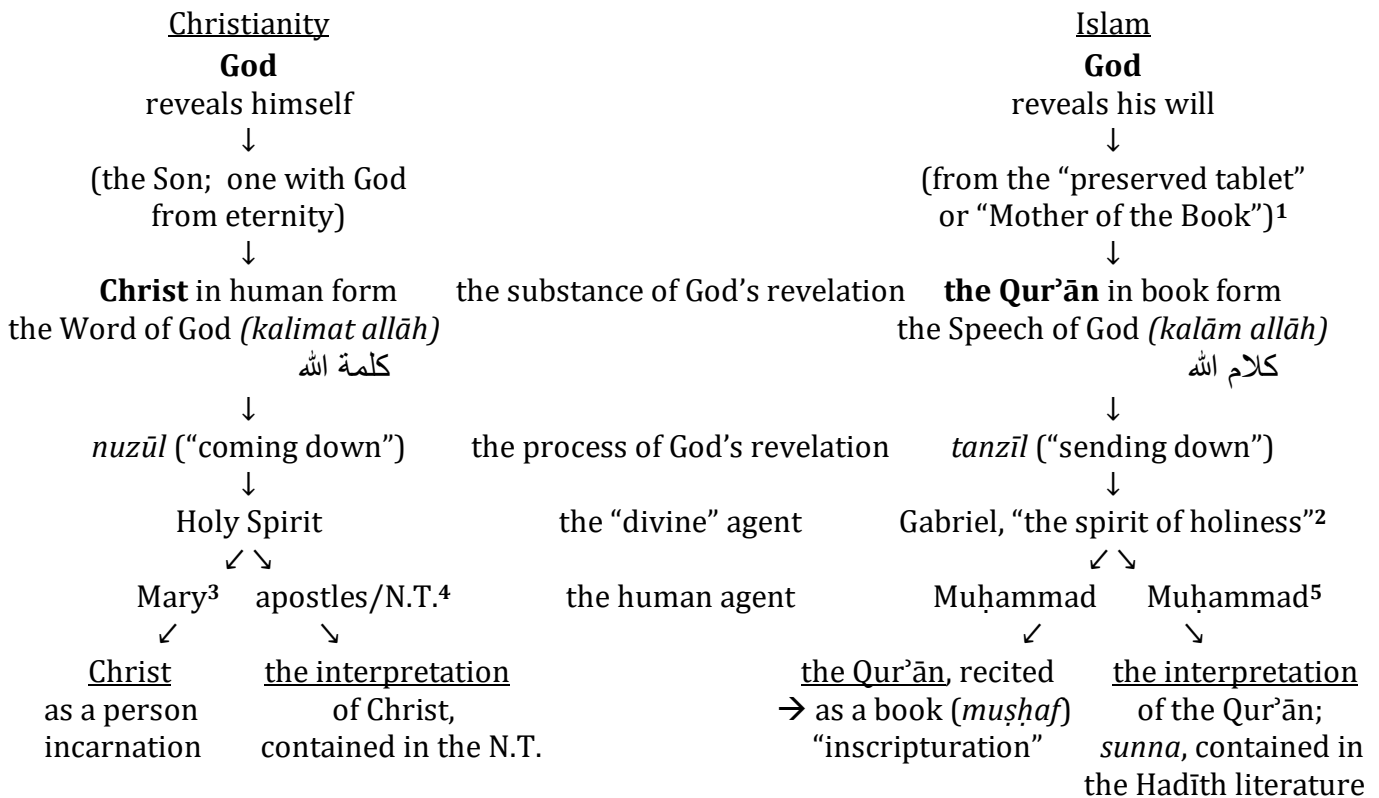


God's Final Revelation
a comparison between Christianity and Islam
revised November 2018



- ¹ “This is a glorious Qur'ān in a preserved tablet (لوح محفوظ *lawḥ maḥfūz*)” (85:21-22). “Indeed it [the Qur'ān] is in the Mother of the Book (أم الكتاب *umm al-kitāb*) in our presence” (43:4). The phrase *umm al-kitāb* is also found in 13:39, with the same meaning; and in 3:7, where it more likely refers to “the essence of the Qur'ān” in relation to its clear and unambiguous verses.
- Some Muslims say the Qur'ān is eternal, that it always existed; others say it was created at some point in time, before the earth and humans were created.
 - Arabic is thought to be the language of the preserved tablet. “The language of Paradise is Arabic” (a *ḥadīth* or traditional saying from Muḥammad).
- ² The agent of revelation to Muḥammad (and to previous prophets) is identified as Gabriel (Jibrīl). He is never referred to in the Qur'ān as an “angel” but only as a “spirit” or “the spirit of holiness” (روح القدس *rūḥ al-quḍus*; Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* [1980], 95-96). “It is probable that the Spirit is the highest form of the angelic nature and the closest to God” (ibid., 96). In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is considered to be fully divine; this term in the Arabic Bible is الروح القدس *al-rūḥ al-quḍus*.
- ³ In Christianity, Mary is said to have been a virgin. In Islam, Muḥammad is said to have been illiterate (أمي *ummī*), to show that what comes forth is from God, not from human origin. Also, in the later tradition (only) of each religion, each one is considered to have been sinless.
- ⁴ In Christianity, the New Testament interprets Christ within the human context. Its writers were inspired, but they provided their human input as well. The result (the New Testament) has both divine and human elements.
- ⁵ In Islam, there is a similar role for Muḥammad in interpreting the Qur'ān; his own genius was at work in applying the divine text to everyday life. But as the Prophet, he was given divine guidance to prevent him from error. As a result, his example (*sunna*) is considered to be the best pattern for behavior. “Certainly, in the Messenger of God you have an excellent model” (33:21). Reports of his *sunna* were transmitted orally and eventually written and collected in the various volumes of the Ḥadīth literature.

These ideas have been elaborated by similar suggestions in the following sources:

Kateregga, Badru D. and David W. Shenk. *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2011), p. 155, concerning the concepts of *nuzūl* and *tanzīl*.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: ABC International Group, 2000), pp. 31-33 (first given as a lecture in 1964).

Schuon, Frithjof, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1984; originally published 1953), pp. 111-113. He was perhaps the first to propose the parallel between Christ and the Qur'ān.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 17-18, note 13; and *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), ch. 13: "Some Similarities and Some Differences Between Christianity and Islām," pp. 233-246.

Waddy, Charis. *The Muslim Mind*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: New Amsterdam Books, 1990), p. 14; she quotes a Muslim professor in Beirut named Yusuf Ibish, whom she interviewed on January 16, 1969.