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efficacy. For the confessing community, there is the clear conviction that Graham is anointed, that, as MR put it:

> I could preach the same sermon, using the same words and the same gestures, and nothing would happen. He is anointed.[71]

Similarly, for the BGEA there is no great secret. As RW put it:

> We don't have any special secret. People ask me and there isn't one. I just keep telling people the same thing. If people pray, if the local church does its job and invites people that they have prayed for, then, in his grace, God moves.[72]

In communication terms, perhaps the answer lies in the man not the words, which are, after all, just 7% of the total message.[73] Graham is no actor but he is, to many people, a riveting speaker. Perhaps, through voice tone and inflection, through gesture and stance, Graham succeeds in communicating at a non-propositional level the total conviction of his beliefs.

Although I would never wish to cut back on the teaching of homiletic technique or exegetical analysis, it is, nevertheless, a *person* who preaches. And this particular person spent a month in spiritual preparation. Perhaps, though it is unmeasurable and unprovable, this is indeed the source of Graham's authority, self-effacing and humble though he is; the source of a compassion that people sense in his very lack of manipulative wiles and pyrotechnic oratory; the source of a conviction that always points away from himself.

James Morris described Graham 'as a person who can be believed. In a world that seems to have lost its moorings for many people, a world bursting with confidence men, charlatans, false advertising and law suits, his simple but forthright message is eminently believable'.[74]

Graham certainly believes it. And therein, in tandem with the Holy Spirit, lies the power of his preaching.

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71 MR Telephone Interview.
72 RW Telephone Interview.
73 So, e.g., RW argued in the Telephone Interview.
74 Morris, *The Preachers*, 376.

PREDESTINATION, PAULINE AND ISLAMIC: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS[1]

COLIN SEDGWICK

Islam, at least as popularly viewed, is among the most deterministic of religious systems. Indeed, its determinism seems sometimes so pronounced as to justify the term 'fatalism'. Guillaume, in his standard work, cannot resist a wry note in commenting on this:

> When a European reads the Qur'an text, 'Place your reliance on God', on the windscreen of a motor-bus which is driven full speed round a hair-pin bend with a precipice on the near side he is only too ready, if he is a religious man, to obey the injunction; but at the same time he wishes the driver would exercise common prudence. But the attitude of the local population is characteristic of Islam, the religion of complete and absolute resignation to what is believed to be the will of Allah.[2]

Rippin and Knappert likewise emphasise this characteristic of 'popular' (as opposed to scholarly) Islam:

> Since nothing exists which God did not create and nothing happens which he does not do, people have no option but to follow the direction of God's will. This is the popular philosophy of Islam; not all Islamic scholars agree with it but a vast majority of the common people in Islamic countries do.[3]

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1 This paper grew out of a research study of predestination in the Pauline tradition, with special reference to Ephesians 1. It was found illuminating to survey the Islamic tradition, noted for its predestinarian emphasis, as a foil against which to set Paul's teaching. Given that Ephesians is generally regarded as thoroughly Pauline in character even if not certainly Pauline in authorship, a working assumption is made of authenticity. The paper is presented here with minimal revision. I would like to express my thanks to Dr Peter Riddell and Dr Steve Motyer for their generous help and encouragement in this project.
2 Alfred Guillaume, *Islam* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956 2nd edn.), 134.
3 Andrew Rippin and Jan Knappert, *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 20.

It would appear, then, that while there may be arguments about the inherently deterministic nature of Islamic theology, there can be no argument that Islam as a religion has a strong tendency to breed fatalism. This in turn gives rise to a characteristic in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Qur'an: superstition. If people feel that their lives are largely in the hands of an impersonal and inscrutable force, they will naturally tend to have recourse to methods which they believe will return to them some measure of control over their circumstances – divination, talismans, astrology, sorcery and so on. It is striking and instructive to notice the many points of contact between these features of the Islamic world and the portrait of first-century pre-Christian Ephesus drawn for us by Clinton Arnold in his recent study of the provenance of the letter to the Ephesians.[4] The emphasis on predestination, especially in Ephesians 1, can well be seen as a Christian counter to an essentially superstitious worldview.

Part of the purpose of this essay is to explore why this fatalistic tendency should have arisen in Islam. Primarily, however, we aim to discover what areas of similarity and difference there are between Islamic determinism and the determinism to be found in Pauline thought, especially as represented by Ephesians.

The very idea of predestination sticks in the throat of many Christians. It can conjure up clinical and mechanical associations, especially as refracted through the tradition associated with 'Reformed' or Calvinistic thinking. It is therefore especially illuminating to view it again in the light of a different religious tradition altogether. A look at the predominantly harsh and unremitting predestinarianism of Islam enables us to see the teaching of the New Testament in general, and of Paul in particular, in a new light. Such a comparison may not enable us to resolve the theological and philosophical questions to do with divine sovereignty and human responsibility; but it may at least help us to view them in a new context, and to start to appreciate what heretofore we have only found puzzling and difficult. Ultimately no theistic faith can avoid the issue of God's sovereignty as against human freedom; but it is our hope that by focusing on the theme in Islam, and then by setting it against the backdrop of the New Testament as represented by Ephesians, we may be able to see that the New Testament offers it to us

in a rich, varied and subtle context which invests it with warmth and divests it of the clinical associations we have mentioned.[5]

The Qur'an, needless to say, is the obvious source for any such inquiry. A large part of the essay will accordingly be devoted to an examination of its teaching on predestination. We will endeavour to elucidate its general teaching on the sovereignty of God, to discover if it contains any notion of 'election', and to assess its emphasis on human free will and responsibility, and the extent to which this sits easily with deterministic ideas.

But in order to set the teaching of the Qur'an in its historic context it will be necessary first to pay some attention to pre-Islamic beliefs in the Arabian world. Just as Paul inherited a large pool of ideas and doctrines from the Old Testament, the inter-testamental period, and the teaching of the rabbis, so too Muhammad grew up in a strongly religious milieu, and one of which we need to gain at least some understanding if we are to make sense of the thought of the Qur'an.

As we do this, however, we will need to keep in mind that in recent years western scholarship on Islam has undergone considerable changes, so much so that it is no longer possible to speak *tout court* of Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an. A process has begun in Islamic studies with which students of the Bible are well familiar; the questioning of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians is only one feature of the kind of thing with which scholars of Islam must now come to terms. The notion of single authorship of the Qur'an is discounted by many western scholars (Muslims, of course, believe that the only 'author' who can properly be mentioned is God himself), being replaced by the view that the Qur'an developed and evolved over the course of many decades. Baldick, for example, writes: 'The internal evidence of the Qur'an is one of the most marked confusion. Widely disparate teachings, at considerable variance with one another... point to a long period of development.'[6]

Just as Islamic theology did not simply begin with the Qur'an, so neither did it end with it. The teachings of the Qur'an, in common with those of all other great religious traditions, sparked off an enormous amount of debate and controversy. So it will be necessary also to survey at least some of the chief developments in subsequent Islamic

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4 See Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting*, SNTSMS 63 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For detailed documentation drawn from Muslim beliefs and practices around the world, see Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (Eastbourne: MARC, 1989).

5 For an account of the doctrine as reflected in Ephesians, see my MTh Thesis: 'Predestination in the Letter to the Ephesians' (Brunel University, 1996).

6 J. Baldick, 'Early Islam', in P. Clarke (ed.), *The World's Religions: Islam* (London: Routledge, 1988), 11.

history, in order to see how the debates settled down into what might be called (for want of a better term) 'Islamic orthodoxy'.

Finally, we shall endeavour to make some concluding observations, and to view what we have found in the light of the Pauline teaching in Ephesians.

I. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

Muhammad was born into a melting-pot of religious beliefs. If we may assume (in the light of our foregoing discussion) that he had at least a major influence on the teaching of the Qur'an, its many references to the Old Testament make it clear that he was acquainted with Jewish beliefs and practices, and it is clear that he also had a certain familiarity with Christian teachings – albeit, one senses, often in a garbled and inchoate form.

But the pagan beliefs of his own people had obviously made a deep impression on him. Hints of this frequently come through in the Qur'an. In Q 53:19, for example, chastising the pagans of Mecca, the question is asked: 'Have you thought on Al-Lat and Al-Uzzah, and thirdly, on Manat? Is He [God] to have daughters and you sons?'[7] Such references to the gods and goddesses of the time (believed, in this case, to be daughters of Allah) bring the religious ethos vividly to life. Watt is of the opinion that 'some of the more thoughtful men in Mecca were moving towards a kind of monotheism',[8] but it would seem that the supreme god, however he might have been viewed, was a remote and inaccessible figure, and that the various lesser gods occupied a more important place in people's thinking. Muhammad Asad, commenting on Q 53:19, says that the trio of female deities 'were worshipped in most of pre-Islamic Arabia, and had several shrines in the Hijaz and Najd'.[9]

It was against this kind of polytheism, of course, that Muhammad vigorously rebelled. But it was a polytheism that carried with it a strong sense of fate or destiny, and this Muhammad would appear to have absorbed to a considerable degree. Drawing largely on Ringgren, Watt says: 'Pre-Islamic poetry is full of references to the determination or control of human life by "time"... All that happens to a man is

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7 Qur'an 53:19, trans. N.J. Dawood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968 3rd edn.), 113.
8 W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 89.
9 Qur'an, trans. Muhammad Asad (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1984), 814.

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brought about by Time.'[10] Time is 'an abstract, impersonal force... like gravitation'.[11]

It would be wrong to imagine that there was no flexibility at all built into this kind of belief. Watt suggests that 'it was primarily the outcome of a man's acts that was fixed, not the particular acts themselves. He might decide to take part in some fighting or keep aloof from it, but, whatever he decided, he would die if it was the predetermined day of his death'.[12] In other words, man has a measure of freedom in deciding his own individual actions, but there is no way he can escape from the iron hand of ultimate destiny; on matters such as span of life and provision of 'sustenance' (the word occurs frequently in the Qur'an) there is a rigid fixedness.

Watt suggests that such a view has a particular relevance to desert existence, where life is extremely uncertain: 'If one tried to guard against every chance of misfortune one would become a nervous wreck; but if one cultivates the attitude of accepting what "the days" bring, one had some hope of success. Thus fatalism helps the nomad to succeed in his attempt to live in the desert.'[13] In short, this kind of conviction is not so much a thought-out belief as a kind of defence mechanism against the vagaries of life.

The Qur'an may have substituted for 'Time' the idea of the one supreme God – and a God, of course, who is characterised by mercy and compassion – but it suggests strongly that, however unconsciously, pre-Islamic pagan ideas had soaked their way into Muhammad's psyche. It may be, indeed, that the idea of a degree of 'play' in individual decisions which are nonetheless built into a fixed overall framework is not a bad summary of the Qur'an's teaching on this issue.

II. THE TEACHING OF THE QUR'AN

Precisely how deterministic is the teaching contained in the Qur'an? We have already seen that to the ordinary Muslim the answer to that question will probably be 'entirely'. But closer examination reveals a

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10 Watt, *Formative Period*, 88, citing Helmer Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism* (Uppsala: Almquist, and Wiesboden: Harrassowitz, 1955).
11 Watt, *Formative Period*, 88.
12 Watt, *Formative Period*, 89. One is reminded of the soldier in the trenches comforting himself with the belief that 'if the bullet's got your name on it there's nothing you can do'.
13 Watt, *Formative Period*, 89.

measure of complexity and subtlety. Various aspects of Qur'anic teaching on this issue are worthy of notice.

1. The overall sovereignty of God

There can be no doubt of the Qur'anic emphasis on this. Its overwhelming insistence on the oneness and omnipotence of God seems to leave little room for any hint of contingency. It would be possible to quote an abundance of verses to demonstrate this, but a couple will suffice. In Q 3:26 we read:

> Say: 'O God, Lord of all dominion! Thou grantest dominion unto whom Thou willest, and takest away dominion from whom Thou willest; and Thou exaltest whom Thou willest, and abasest whom Thou willest. In Thy hand is all good. Verily, Thou hast the power to will anything.'[14]

It would be difficult to imagine a more uncompromising statement of the sovereignty of God. Again, the idea of God's 'decree' is repeatedly found, sometimes in the form of a 'book' which has been with God from all eternity: 'No misfortune has befallen either the land or yourselves, but it was in a Book before we brought it to be; that for Allah is easy...' (Q 57:22).[15]

For all that God is consistently introduced as 'the Compassionate, the Merciful' (the formula appears before all but one of the 114 suras), there can be little doubt that the strongest emphasis is on his sheer power and sovereignty. This sovereignty necessarily covers every aspect of life, from the destinies of individual human beings to the destiny of the universe itself. The very word 'Islam', of course, means 'submission', and the true Muslim is the person who willingly submits himself to the unknowable purposes of God; a total obedience and an unquestioning faith are fundamental requirements. The sovereignty of God may not unfairly be described as the core of the Qur'an.

2. Divine predestination of individual lives

In the light of what has just been said, it would appear logical to think that individual destinies are simply part of God's fixed overall scheme. And there is no shortage of Qur'anic texts to reinforce such an idea.

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14 Qur'an, Asad, 70.
15 Qur'an, trans. Richard Bell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937), 560.

The notion of what has become known in Christian theology as 'double predestination' is frequently to be found. Again, we select almost at random, from Q 14:4: '...but Allah sendeth astray whomsoever He willeth, and guideth whomsoever He willeth; He is the Sublime, the Wise...'[16] Q 24:35 is similar, though here the negative side is not highlighted: 'Allah guideth unto His light whom He will.'[17] The implication of such passages is clear: what happens to individual men and women has nothing to do with their own decisions, and everything to do with God's decisions on their behalf. It is not difficult to see how such verses, taken out of context, can breed the kind of fatalism we have noted.

A reading of the Qur'an as a whole, however, makes clear that such a representation of its meaning is over-simple. A number of points need to be made in order to give a fuller picture.

(a) A linguistic ambiguity

The Arabic of the Qur'an often lends itself to not only more than one interpretation, but also to more than one translation. The quotations we have cited in the previous paragraphs are taken from the translations of Bell and Pickthall. In each of these the deterministic sense is conveyed with unremitting regularity. The same can be said of the more popular translation of Dawood. But a striking contrast is to be observed when we turn to the translation and commentary of Muhammad Asad. One gains a distinct impression that Asad is uncomfortable with, not to say embarrassed by, the predestinarian tone of the Qur'an as generally translated, and his rendering may be said systematically to cleanse it of determinism. In Q 14:4, for example, he makes the text mean precisely the opposite of the other translators: '...God lets go astray him that wills [to go astray], and guides him that wills [to be guided]...'[18] The Arabic original allows the possibility that the subject of the verb 'will' is either God or the person in question: and Asad consistently opts for the latter.[19] In effect, the 'will' of the individual person takes precedence over the 'will' of God. It would be hard to imagine a more glaring conflict with other translations.

Asad justifies his translation by reference to Q 2:26-27, a passage on which the commentators are in basic agreement: 'Thereby He sendeth

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16 Qur'an, Bell, 230.
17 Qur'an, trans. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1930), 462.
18 Qur'an, Asad, 371. The square brackets give Asad's interpretative interpolations.
19 Q 16:93 is just one other passage we might cite.

many astray and guideth many, but He doth not send any astray but the reprobate'[20] (Bell's translation; for 'the reprobate' Asad has 'the iniquitous', Dawood 'the evil-doers', Pickthall 'miscreants'), the point being that in these verses the responsibility for their lost condition rests fairly and squarely upon those who refuse to believe. Asad makes his position clear in a footnote to Q 14:4: 'All Qur'anic references to God's "letting man go astray" must be understood against the background of 2:26-27... that is to say, man's "going astray" is a consequence of his own attitudes and inclinations and not as a result of an arbitrary "predestination" in the popular sense of this word.'[21]

Whether or not Q 2:26-27 should be allowed to exercise such a controlling influence on so many other Qur'anic passages is, no doubt, open to question. Clearly, this is a matter on which different scholars will take different positions. Watt, for example, appears to embrace a determinist view: 'In the Qur'anic perspective the greatest fortune and misfortune are for men to be assigned to heaven and hell respectively, and the decision follows on what a man deserves, and *this in turn depends on whether God guides him or leads him astray.*'[22] But the very existence of such an ambiguity in the Arabic text – albeit an ambiguity exploited by only one translator – is sufficient to give us pause. Translation is anything but a precise art; as is so often the case, the rendering with which a translator comes out appears to depend to a considerable degree upon the presuppositions with which he goes in!

(b) A stress on human responsibility

Quite apart from the linguistic ambiguity upon which we have been focusing, there can be no doubt that the Qur'an presents us with a strong emphasis on human responsibility as well as on divine predestination. Indeed, if Asad's understanding is correct, this is by far the chief burden of its message.

One of Muhammad's main concerns was to persuade his hearers that a final judgment awaited them at the end of time; this is something of which the Qur'an warns repeatedly. And there can be little doubt that in this context it is the deeds of men and women which are to the fore rather than any inscrutable divine destiny. Sura 82, for example, is devoted almost entirely to this theme. When the 'Rending asunder' of the heavens ultimately takes place, 'A soul shall know what it has sent

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20 Qur'an, Bell, 5.
21 Qur'an, Asad, 371.
22 Watt, *Formative Period*, 90, emphasis added.

forward, and what kept back' (82:5). 'Nay, but ye count false the Judgment. But over you are guardians, noble, writing, knowing what ye do. Verily, the virtuous are in delight; and verily, the scoundrels are in a Hot Place, in which they shall roast on the Day of Judgment...' (82:9-15).[23] The mention of 'guardians... writing' conveys strongly the prominent Qur'anic notion of judgment according to a credit-debit balance; as, for example, in Q 101:6-9: 'And then, he whose weight [of good deeds] is heavy in the balance shall find himself in a happy state of life; whereas he whose weight is light in the balance shall be engulfed by an abyss.'[24]

Much of the Qur'an is concerned – using the words, without any flippant intent, in the most literal sense – to put the fear of God into its readers' hearts; there is no suggestion whatever of encouraging people to sit back with a resigned shrug of the shoulders and await their inescapable destiny – notwithstanding the famous passage, Q 18:23-24, where it is generally considered that God delivers a personal rebuke to Muhammad for failing to say *in sha'allah*, 'God willing'. Such an attitude of resignation may be the perceived outcome of Muslim faith for many; but it is certainly not the intention of Qur'anic teaching. The way a person behaves, and the decisions he or she makes, are presented as if decisive for their eternal destiny. There is no need to labour a point which could be illustrated by numerous references.

(c) An unresolved tension

It is striking how frequently the idea of human responsibility is juxtaposed with that of divine sovereignty. Dawood who, as we have seen, consistently permits the determinist understanding to take precedence, captures this juxtaposition nicely in Q 9:127: 'Yet they [the unbelievers] neither repent nor take warning. Whenever a Chapter is revealed, they glance at each other, asking: "Is anyone watching?" Then they turn away. Allah has turned away their hearts, for they are senseless men.'[25] '*They* turn away... *Allah* has turned away their hearts.' The writer seems to have been unaware of the charge of logical inconsistency to which he might be exposed in such passages – or perhaps he was aware of it, but was happy to allow the two strands to stand side by side. Another example is Q 6:125 where, in the space of

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23 Qur'an, Bell, 640-41.
24 Qur'an, Asad, 972.
25 Qur'an, Dawood, 325.

just a few words we read of those whom God 'wills to let go astray' and 'those who will not believe'.[26]

Having surveyed these factors which tend to modify a strictly deterministic understanding of the Qur'an, it is hard to resist the feeling nonetheless that ultimately it is determinism which, so to speak, wins the day. The doctrine of predestination is, of course, a function of the doctrine of God; and so focused is the Qur'an on the unity and might of God that little or no scope is left for human freedom, for all the Qur'an's plethora of moral exhortations. It may well be right to allow Q 76:29-30 to have the last word: 'This is indeed an admonition. Let him that will, take the right path to his Lord. Yet you cannot will, except by the will of Allah.'[27] That 'Yet' may be seen as an eloquent summary of the Qur'an's stance.

3. Election in the Qur'an

In Pauline teaching the idea of election constitutes a major part of the doctrine of predestination. While the idea is not totally absent from the Qur'an, its purport is very different. Almost invariably it relates to those regarded in Qur'anic belief as 'prophets' of God. It is said of Jonah, for example, that 'his Lord chose him and set him among the upright' (Q 68:50).[28] Similarly, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob we read, 'Lo! in Our sight they are verily of the elect, the excellent' (Q 38:47).[29] And in Q 3:42 the message of the angels regarding Mary is recorded: '"O Mary, verily Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee, and chosen thee above the women of the world".'[30] A possible exception to this very restricted use may be found in Q 42:13: 'Allah chooseth for Himself whom He will, and guideth unto Himself him who turneth...'[31] But an occasional isolated reference does not, of course, amount to anything like an articulated doctrine.

In brief, the idea of election is generally reserved in the Qur'an for those specially chosen by God to be prophets and messengers to their fellow men and women. There is no doctrine of an 'elect people' such as we find in the Old Testament of the nation of Israel, no notion of Muslims as a 'covenant' people, nor of the election of all believers such

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26 Qur'an, Asad, 192.
27 Qur'an, Dawood, 19.
28 Qur'an, Bell, 598.
29 Qur'an, Pickthall, 601.
30 Qur'an, Bell, 49.
31 Qur'an, Pickthall, 639.

as we find in the teaching of Paul. The idea is of only slight significance.

III. POST-QUR'ANIC DEVELOPMENTS

A book, even one regarded as a holy book (perhaps *especially* one regarded as a holy book!) which contains the kind of ambiguities and seeming inconsistencies that we have highlighted was bound to become something of a battle-ground for later interpreters; further developments in interpretation were inevitable. Indeed, one of the factors leading scholars to posit multiple authorship is the evidence of development within the pages of the Qur'an itself. If read in something like the chronological order in which it is believed to have been written – the three Mecca periods and the Medina period[32] – it is hard to avoid the impression that the tone hardens somewhat towards the end of Muhammad's life. This opinion would seem to be shared by a majority of scholars of Islam. Seale, for example, writes: 'D.B. Macdonald as well as A.S. Tritton... maintain that there is a growing emphasis in the later parts of the Qur'an on the control of man by God.'[33] Bell likewise speaks of 'the hardening of the doctrine of predestination which took place in the Medinan days'.[34] If we are right in thinking that predestination is indeed the fundamental idea underlying the Qur'an, it is hardly surprising if in later developments it comes to ever-increasing prominence.

Three distinct groupings may be taken as embodying the evolution of the Islamic doctrine of predestination in the period after Muhammad's death in 632. The first, the Umayyads, were a clan who rose to political prominence, while the other two, the Qadarites and the Mu'tazilites, may more fairly be described as like-minded ideologues and theologians.

For some thirty years after 632 a struggle for power took place within the Islamic community; there were assassinations and wars. The upshot of the struggle was the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty in 661. Whether for reasons of genuine theological conviction or of

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32 See the list in Richard Bell, rev. W. Montgomery Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an*, Islamic Surveys 8 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 110-11. See also, however, the comments of Baldick, *Islam*, 11: 'As for the practice of assigning some parts of the Qur'an to a Meccan period, and others to a Medinan one it must be said that some contemporary scholars would find this procedure somewhat arbitrary.'
33 Morris S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac & Co., 1964), 22.
34 Qur'an, Bell, 95.

political expediency, the Umayyads laid great stress on predestination. Their position is presented poetically in the *Diwans* of Jarir and al-Farazdaq: 'The earth is God's; he has entrusted it to His *khalifa*; he who is head in it will not be overcome'; and 'God has garlanded you with the *khalifa* and guidance; for what God decrees (*qada*) there is no change'.[35] The more cynical view would be that such a stress simply suited their desire to hold onto power, as if to say: 'If God pre-ordains all things, and if we hold the reins of power, then it can only be that God has pre-ordained that we should hold those reins. To oppose us is to oppose God!' In effect: Whatever is, is right. Even if this characterisation of the Umayyad position is crudely over-simplified, there can be no doubt that the doctrine of predestination was extremely convenient for them; as Watt mildly says, their position was 'to some extent an abuse of predestinarian views'.[36]

The claims of the Umayyads raised at least two serious issues. First, such a stress on predestination tended to encourage a passive attitude towards life. Second, and more important, it implicitly made God the author of evil; for, in the eyes of many, the actions of the Umayyad regime were by no means always in conformity with Qur'anic principles.

Thus it was that 'the Qadarite heresy' (as Watt refers to it) came into being. Its 'reputed founder' was Mabad al-Juhani, about whom little is known except, in general terms, that 'he gained the reputation of being the first to discuss the question of God's *Qadar*'; and, more specifically, that he 'denied that the wrong acts of the Umayyads were determined by God'.[37] Such a view necessarily involved a belief that such acts proceeded from human free will. We see once again how it could appear that a theological stance has arisen out of a political position – though it should be said that there is a long-standing scholarly tradition, albeit not undisputed, which maintains that Qadarism arose out of contact with and influence by Christians, and that Mabad 'learnt it from a Christian named Sausan'.[38] The Qadarites were in essence the active opposition to Umayyad rule (Mabad was executed c. 704).

Qadarite belief is by no means a simple homogeneous system. And the fact that much of it has come down to us refracted through the refutations of its opponents renders it all the more difficult to pin down

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35 Quoted by Watt, *Formative Period*, 83.
36 Watt, *Formative Period*, 114.
37 Watt, *Formative Period*, 85.
38 Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 26-27.

precisely. Certainly, it seems to have contained some quite startling divergences not only from Umayyad rigidity, but also from the plain sense of the Qur'an: for example, the idea that God's appointed time for a man's death may in fact be pre-empted by murder; or the denial that God's knowledge 'exists antecedently to what men do and what they become'.[39] The very fact that such opinions could be held at all makes clear the extent to which human free will had become a matter for debate within Islam: as Sweetman puts it, 'the debate about free will was almost perennial.'[40] However, the fundamental teaching of Qadarism is that while all good and noble actions emanate from God, the responsibility for wrong deeds must be attributed only to those who perform them.

The dominant figure in the debate is also a somewhat shadowy one – al-Hasan al-Basri, who lived from c. 642 to 728. Whether or not he was indeed a Qadarite is debated by the scholars, but he was certainly opposed to the Umayyads – 'the enemies of God lie', he said of them – and his views are very close to those of the Qadarites. His prominence results partly from the fact that he has left a virtually intact document, his Letter (*Risala*) on free will and predestination, regarded by Rippin and Knappert as 'likely to be one of the earliest theological treatises in Islam'.[41]

On reading Hasan's *Risala*, two features are particularly noticeable: the number of quotations from the Qur'an, and the application of a strictly rationalist approach to theological issues. It is these two features in conjunction which give the document its cogency. Understandably, Hasan tends to focus on those Qur'anic quotations which stress the human responsibility side of the argument. Determinist passages are understood in the light of the priority of human faith and obedience; for example: 'He [God] has also said in Qur'an 61:5: *When they went astray, God led their hearts astray*, so it is because they have gone astray that God led their hearts astray.'[42] A further example makes use of Q 14:28-29: 'Have you not considered those who traded God's favour for disbelief and caused their people to descend into the house of the fires, Hell'; on which Hasan comments: 'Thus favour was from God and the trading was done by man because they omitted what He commanded them to do and did what they were

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39 Watt, *Formative Period*, 94, reflecting the views of the Shabibiyya.
40 J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology: A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas in the Two Religions*, Part 2, Vol. 2 (London: Lutterworth, 1967), 174.
41 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 17.
42 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 119.

forbidden to do.'[43] Responsibility for their actions is laid fairly and squarely at the feet of those who do not believe. The rationalist basis of Hasan's approach is evident throughout the *Risala*. For example: 'If disbelief was from God's decree and determination (*qadar*), He would approve of the one who did it. God would not decree something and then disapprove of His own decree.'[44] Likewise: 'God would not openly prohibit people from something and then destine them to do it secretly as the ignorant and the heedless say.'[45]

Hasan seems happy to concede that what happens to a man or woman in the course of their life is decreed by God, but he insists that their responses – their moral decisions especially – are within their own hands. For, example, quoting Q 57:22, a notorious *crux interpretum*, 'No affliction falls on the earth or on yourselves unless it is in a book before We created it', he comments that his opponents 'interpret this... as concerning unbelief and faith, and obedience and disobedience. That is not so. Rather, this "falling" concerns possessions, souls, and fruits'.[46] Watt summarises the point as follows: 'Hence he emphasised human responsibility, especially in the moral sphere, and held – or at least implied – that man was in general capable of fulfilling God's commands.'[47]

Hasan's essential position is perhaps best summed up in the epigrammatic sentence: 'Guidance is from God, error is from His servants.'[48] The two parts of the sentence encapsulate his understanding. First, the stress is upon God's *guidance*, an infinitely softer conception than his predestination. And second, the responsibility for error is laid fairly at the feet of man. Whether he was strictly a Qadarite or not, that is the essence of the Qadarite position.[49]

Important though they were for the evolution of Islamic theology, for our purposes it is not necessary to say much about the Mu'tazilites ('Secessionists'), a 'speculative theological group'[50] who emerged out of the Qadarites. They were responsible for importing into Islamic thinking Greek philosophical ideas, thus placing an emphasis on

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43 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 116-17.
44 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 117.
45 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 118.
46 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 120.
47 Watt, *Formative Period*, 115.
48 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 118.
49 In passing, one might observe that it is after reading the *Risala* that one senses where Asad, whose consistently free will interpretation of the Qur'an we have noted, has his theological roots!
50 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 18.

reason: God, being God, must always act rationally. They were concerned too, as had been the Qadarites, to preserve God from any possible charge of acting immorally.

Immediately we can see the genesis of a cleavage which has characterised theological debate in most religious traditions – in essence, Scripture versus reason. Rippin speaks of 'the scripturalism of the Traditionalists and the audacious rationalism of the Mu'tazilites'.[51] To some extent this is what led to their downfall – or, at least, their failure to gain wide acceptance in the Islamic world; they were open to the charge that they made God subject to human reason. Inevitably they were seen as soft-pedalling the Qur'anic verses which seemed to stress predestination, and sometimes the suspicion was felt that this was due to their dependence on philosophical ideas from outside the Islamic world. There has been a tendency in western scholarship to regard the Mu'tazilites as the 'liberal theologians of Islam', but Watt regards such a characterisation as 'definitely misleading',[52] preferring Nyberg's verdict that they were 'strictly theologically-minded and practically active theologians and missionaries',[53] operating fully within the world of Muslim ideas.

An attempt was made to forge a middle way between the two schools of thought, most notably by Abu'l-Hasan al-Ashari (died 942). The Asharite sect believed, according to the Creed of Adud ad-Din al-Iji (died 1353), that they alone of the 'seventy-three sects' of Islam were saved. This creed contains the following paragraph on predestination: 'What God willed came to be, and what He did not will did not come to be. Unbelief and sins (in human beings) are by (God's) creating and by His willing but not by His approval.'[54] To speak of God *willing* something without *approving* it is obviously fraught with difficulties; it smacks of sophistry.

Possibly it was for reasons such as this that the weight of opinion settled down to a largely determinist position. Islamic orthodoxy, drawing on the authority of the 'Traditions' (*hadith*) as well as the Qur'an, largely rejected the notion of free will. 'Tradition is unequivocally on the side of determinism', writes Seale; and he goes on

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51 Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Vol. 1: The Formative Years*, Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices (London: Routledge, 1990), 69.
52 W. Montgomery Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London: Luzac & Co., 1948), 1, citing Max Horten, *Die Philosophischen Systeme der spekulativen Theologen im Islam* (Bonn, 1912).
53 Watt, *Free Will*, 66.
54 Trans. W. Montgomery Watt, 'Al-Iji', in *Islamic Creeds: A Selection*, Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 87.

to quote *The Muslim Creed* by A.J. Wensinck: 'Tradition has not preserved a single *hadith* in which *liberium arbitrium* is advocated.'[55] Watt also draws attention to a strand of what he calls atheism in the *hadith*: 'The Traditions, though they mention God, at times tend to be atheistic.'[56] He accounts for this by saying that the pre-Islamic pagan ideas, which we discussed earlier, maintained their vitality even in the face of the Qur'an and thus remained entrenched in Islamic thinking.

Guillaume regards this hardening of predestinarian ideas as inevitable, though he sees it as largely arising out of loyalty to the Qur'an: 'the orthodox party had the Qur'an on their side when they asserted that God's predestination was absolute.'[57]

It would seem, then, that we have arrived at what might be called 'Islamic orthodoxy'. Rippin and Knappert reproduce two documents which are generally regarded as representing this; one comes from the twelfth century and the other from the nineteenth. Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi (1146-1223) writes in uncompromising terms: 'The decree of both good and evil, sweet and bitter, little and big, loved and detested, is from God. What comes to you of the decree could not have come by mistake, nor could what has missed you have been intended for you.'[58] And Ibn Muhammad al-Fadali (rector of the prestigious Islamic University in Cairo, who died in 1821) likewise writes: 'God's will relates to every event in the universe: nothing happens that he does not will... God creates faith in one man, infidelity in another. Both good things and evil things are the result of God's decree.'[59]

In retrospect, therefore, it would appear that the views of the Qadarites and Mu'tazilites amount essentially to an aberration from the mainstream Islamic position. A reaction set in which, while theoretically insisting on human responsibility, acted like a compass needle swinging inexorably back to the absolute decree of God. Predestination wins the day.

IV. EPHESIANS 1 AND THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

We have travelled a long way from Ephesians 1! And it is not unfair to suggest that we have found ourselves in a very different theological

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55 Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 24, citing A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1932), 51.
56 Watt, *Free Will*, 20.
57 Guillaume, *Islam*, 132.
58 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 121-22.
59 Rippin and Knappert, *Textual Sources*, 129, 133.

landscape. Yet one common feature of the terrain is plain to see: the emphasis upon the sheer greatness of God. In our final section we need to ask what points of similarity and difference are to be seen as we view these very different worldviews. Had the writer of Ephesians been able to look into the future and read the Qur'an, had he had the opportunity of surveying the development of Islamic theology, would he have found himself in any degree of sympathy with what he found? Or, putting it the other way around, if the writer (or writers) of the Qur'an had known more of the New Testament and the Pauline writings (the Qur'an suggests almost total ignorance), would he/they have been able to produce the Qur'an in the form in which we know it?

Before looking at the points of convergence and divergence, however, it is of some interest to contrast the milieus into which Paul and Muhammad were born. We have seen that Muhammad from birth breathed an atmosphere full of ideas of destiny and fate, an atmosphere which he partly absorbed and against which he partly rebelled. But what of Paul? He too found himself forced to engage painfully with his Jewish background in the light of his experience of Christ.

Carson surveys this world and paints a picture of considerable variety. In relation to the non-apocalyptic apocrypha and pseudepigrapha he speaks of a 'progressive exaltation of God... at the expense of meaningful divine personality'.[60] Language concerning God is stripped of its 'anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms' – 'the Most High God' becomes a frequent title, and 'divine transcendence is... stressed at the expense of divine personality'.[61] In the apocalyptic inter-testamental literature 'God's rule is conceived in distinctly deterministic categories'.[62] And in the rabbinic literature, so great is the emphasis on divine sovereignty that God is implicitly held to be responsible for evil; he created even the 'evil inclination' (*yeser*) with which man must struggle.

This emphasis on divine sovereignty is not a complete picture, however. Carson also charts a growth in what he calls 'merit theology', God rewarding those who are faithful, with its inevitable stress upon human actions. There is, says Carson, 'an absolute freedom of the will'.[63] A sense arises of man meriting God's blessing; almost, in fact, of

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60 D.A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981), 53.
61 Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 54.
62 Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 61.
63 Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 103.

God owing his people his mercies, that 'human goodness eventually pays'.[64] God is still seen as gracious, yes, but his grace is interpreted as a kind but nonetheless fair response to human goodness.

The picture that emerges is of a steadily increasing bifurcation of these two conceptions of God's dealings with men and women. They are held together, but in a tension that seems brittle and uneasy. Carson summarises as follows: '...[the] twin poles of the Old Testament tension are being forced apart'.[65] While a rigid determinism is upheld in terms of history and providence, the necessity of human achievement is maintained in terms of personal decisions. It is difficult here not to see resemblances in the Qur'anic position, and to view Islam therefore as a kind of 'switchback' religion, leap-frogging over the New Testament Gospel which resolves this tension into the thought-world of first-century Judaism. May not the psychology of dramatic conversions to Christianity – Paul on the Damascus road, the monk Martin Luther in his 'Tower' experience – be attributed to the final snapping of the tension after years of struggling to contain it? A measure of strain is only to be expected in the minds of those who endeavour to hold together such diverse beliefs.

1.   Points of convergence between Pauline and Islamic determinism

In spite of these last comments, it would be surprising if the writer of Ephesians and the Islamic tradition had nothing in common.

For one thing, a strict monotheism underlies every aspect of their thinking, and they are at one in their insistence upon the overall sovereignty of God. Paul would have yielded nothing to the Qur'an in this respect: God is the one who will 'bring all things in heaven and on earth together', the one 'who works out everything in conformity to the purpose of his will' (Eph. 1:10-11) – words not entirely out of step with Q 3:26, quoted in the early part of this essay. The eulogy of Ephesians 1:3-14 is full of words suggestive of God's supreme control over the affairs of the universe: words like 'good pleasure', 'will', 'purpose'. The Qur'an's strong emphasis on the Day of Judgment, a day to which all history moves, is present also, implicitly at least, in Ephesians (e.g. 5:5-6). The sense of history building to a climactic consummation is common ground.

Secondly, the two traditions share a common emphasis on human responsibility. One of the chief things we notice when we look at

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64 Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 66.
65 Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, 74.

Ephesians 1 in the context of the letter as a whole is the way in which the determinist strand fails to eclipse the element of moral exhortation and command. Paul has some solemn things to say both to his Christian readers and also regarding unbelieving outsiders. The latter have only themselves to blame for their lost condition, while the former are called upon to make every effort to bring their lives into line with the will of God. The Qur'an likewise repeatedly lays a heavy weight of responsibility upon those who regard themselves as submissive to God; there is no sense of complacency or arrogance.

Thirdly, and following on from this, it is not surprising that the unresolved tension of which we spoke earlier is evident in both Islam and Ephesians. As we have already suggested, predestination and human free will is bound to be a problem (though Paul and Muhammad would probably not have used the word that might naturally occur to us) to all who believe in a monotheistic universe: if there is indeed only one God, and if he is truly almighty and sovereign, at what point should the line be drawn between his will and his creation's freedom? Indeed, should it be drawn at all? Common sense as well as scriptural authority tells us very clearly that man is not a puppet or a robot, so at some point this most intractable of questions rears its head.

So it is not surprising that both the Pauline and the Islamic tradition are perfectly capable of seeming to speak with two voices. There are a number of verses in both Ephesians and the Qur'an where seemingly irreconcilable statements sit side by side; and the fact is that it was left to later commentators and theologians in both religions to attempt to bring them into some kind of harmony. Bell makes this point explicit when he writes:

> In the end... the Qur'an simply holds fast to the complementary truths of God's omnipotence and man's responsibility without reconciling them intellectually. This is basically also the position of the Bible, though many western Christians have placed the chief emphasis on man's responsibility where most Muslims would have placed it on God's omnipotence.[66]

On occasions we even find verbal parallels, as between, for example, Romans 9:18 ('God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and

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66 Bell, *Introduction*, 152.

whom he wills he hardens') and Q 16:93, ('[God] sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will...').[67]

2. Points of divergence between Pauline and Islamic determinism

On such broad issues, then, the two traditions have much in common. But once we begin to dig beneath the surface we find that many major discrepancies are to be found; Christianity and Islam are very different religions, a measure of common origins and presuppositions notwithstanding, and the impression of agreement is largely superficial. We have already noted in passing that election, which bulks large in Paul's understanding of salvation, is virtually absent from the Qur'an and Islamic theology, except in terms of the choosing of individuals to serve as prophets. But other even more significant differences demand our attention.

(a) The nature of God

At risk of stating the obvious, it needs to be pointed out that the Pauline and Qur'anic conceptions of the being of God are hugely different. We have suggested in relation to the Qur'an that Muhammad took over a concept of Fate or 'Time' from his pagan contemporaries and invested it with new significance, substituting for it an idea of God as the supreme being. Though this God is constantly referred to as 'merciful and compassionate', there can be no doubt that he is both a distant and also a fearsome God (the descriptions of hell, for example, are plentiful, vivid, and couched in highly materialistic terms, more so than anything we find in the New Testament in general or Paul in particular). God is the Judge of men's actions and the decider of their fates; certainly, he is glad to show mercy to those who truly seek to please him; but by no stretch of the imagination can he be described as the *Father* of those who obey him. Yet this idea is central to Paul's thought; indeed, it is a truth in which he glories: 'Grace and peace to you from God our Father...' he says at the very outset of his letter (Eph. 1:2). And though he speaks of his 'kneeling' before God (3:14) – the Qur'an would approve of that – he is quick to insist that it is nonetheless *the Father* before whom he kneels. In short, there is a warmth and tenderness in the God of whom Paul speaks – God is deeply personal; God is *love*. An orthodox Muslim (the Sufis might provide an exception here) could never make such statements.

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67 Qur'an, Pickthall, 358.

This most fundamental of Christian beliefs has enormous ramifications for the doctrine of predestination. Whatever problems Christians may have with divine predestination, they can be assured that it is not to be viewed as arbitrary or mechanical. Any sense of a cold sternness or aloofness in God is immediately removed. Paul assures us (taking the most likely reading of Ephesians 1:4-5) that '*In love* God has predestined us' – and he goes on to say that this predestination is 'to adoption as sons'. A true Muslim is a submissive servant of God; he would never consider himself a son.

(b) The scope of predestination

If it is true to say that Pauline ideas of predestination have a far deeper and warmer feel to them than those of Islam, it is also true to say that Pauline predestination is, in a sense, a more circumscribed idea. We have seen that in Qur'anic teaching the decree of God covers all aspects of human life, most notably such matters as length of life and material prosperity (the provision of 'sustenance'). But such considerations, largely, do not enter into the Pauline scheme of things. When Paul speaks of predestination he is not thinking so much of earthly or material things, as of eternal salvation. Perhaps this is why the charge of fatalism which is so often thrown at Islam sticks less well when applied to Paul. The Pauline note would always be 'Rejoice in your salvation', whereas the Islamic note would be 'Submit yourself to your destiny'. The notorious lines of the Christian hymn, 'The rich man in his castle,/ The poor man at his gate,/ God made them high and lowly,/ God ordered their estate', could with some justice be said to reflect an Islamic rather than a Pauline view of things.

(c) The centrality of Christ

To speak of God's love and tenderness leads us inevitably to speak of Christ, the one in whom, for Christians, that love and tenderness are embodied. If it is true to say that God has predestined his people in love, it is also true to say that he has elected them 'in Christ' (Eph. 1:4): Christ is the focal point of God's dealings with men and women. Jesus ('peace be upon him') is, of course, accorded a measure of honour in the Qur'an. He is spoken of as chosen by God to be a prophet to his people; but in this he is not differentiated in kind from Abraham or Noah, Jacob or Jonah. Indeed, the Qur'an repeatedly insists that any idea of divine sonship is blasphemous. This – of course – is the point at which Paul and Muhammad part company most decisively. Paul wants to insist that God does indeed have an elect people, a people whose

election is focused in Christ his Son; but to Muhammad any such conception would be anathema.

(d) Grace and works

We have seen how the Qur'an, not least when it deals with divine judgment, embraces a 'balance sheet' view of salvation. To borrow the language of Christian theology, the doctrine is very much one of 'justification by works'. But such a view cuts at the very roots of the Pauline gospel: 'In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us...' (Eph. 1:7-8). Elsewhere Paul stresses the essentially gratuitous nature of salvation: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast' (Eph. 2:8-9). The notion of God freely forgiving the sinner purely on the basis of his or her faith would make little sense to the Muslim. At the heart of the difference is the belief that men and women can only do what is right and good when they are changed from within; any other improvement can be at best merely cosmetic. And the Qur'an seems to hold out little prospect of such inner change beyond that of a determination of the will to be obedient to God.

V. CONCLUSION

It is, of course, extremely difficult for a Christian to comment on another religious faith without appearing predictably negative or unbearably patronising. To believe in a body of teaching is, after all, to believe that that body of teaching is right, and that other bodies of teaching that contradict it are therefore wrong; neutrality is not an option for the religious believer when he comes to view his faith in the light of other beliefs. But we can at least try – *per impossibile!* – to stand back from our enquiries and ask what a neutral outsider investigating the texts we have surveyed would fasten on as the chief point of contrast between the two systems. It may well be that he or she would pinpoint the essential difference somewhat as follows.

Given that the doctrine of predestination is a sub-section of the doctrine of God – for who but God can be the predestining one? – the distant and fierce God of Islam tends to inspire fear rather than love and trust. His decree is hidden and inscrutable, to be submitted to rather than rejoiced in. The God of Paul, on the other hand, for all his perfection, power and holiness, is characterised chiefly by love and

mercy, and his dealings with men and women find their focal point in the flesh and blood figure of Christ, the perfect embodiment of divine love. The two traditions invite their hearers to totally different responses to the reality of God – to submit to him in obedience out of fear on the one hand, or to submit to him in gratitude out of love on the other. Whether experience shows this to be the actual outcome of belief in the two faiths is open to question: there have been many Muslims who have demonstrated great love and humanity, just as there have been many Christians who have portrayed a hard and fearsome God. But the internal logic of the two faiths would seem to point inexorably in these opposing directions. And to seek a middle way would seem a fruitless exercise.