

About the Author:

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I am a 38 year old agnostic humanist born in the UK, and of Indo-Pakistani descent.

I have produced these videos from this letter to my cousin because I dont want anyone else to go through the same feelings of guilt and sadness that I experienced during my process of re-evaluation. I hope that it provides the other side of the story in a balanced fashion, and saves others on the years of research that lead me to my present day conclusions.

I regularly fasted, used to pray 5 times a day, I even kept a tally on the wall for the kaza prayers I had missed in case I forgot to do them later. All in all I tried my best to remain a good muslim.

However I could never rid myself of my doubts. I felt bad and alone, as I had never come across a muslim apostate befor., There had to be something evil and wrong with me. I kept quiet and became insular and with great sadness, the more I looked into it, the greater my doubts grew.

That was right up till the day that my cousin said that I could not keep interpreting Islam to taste. I had to accept everything in the Quran was perfect or face the fact that I was not a Muslim. I decided I could no longer continue this charade, so I accepted it to him, but more importantly to myself.

From that day my mind was finally set free from my self-imposed exile.

I later wrote a letter in reply to further questioning from him, and the videos were created from it.

I dont expect Muslims to agree with me, but at least it goes in part to demonstrate there are 2 sides to every story.

If you would to discuss any of the issues raised here, then please visit me at the forum for the Council of Ex-muslims (my member name is Islame at <http://www.councilofexmuslims.com/index.php?action=forum>) and you will find a friendly group of people for a chat, irrespective of whether you are Muslim or not. Here I will also be pleased to answer any questions you may have about me or challenges you wish to present.

Until then...

Respectfully

Saif

Letter follows..

Letter to my religious cousin (updated)

There are 2 sides to every story..

Hi

As requested, please find some of the things that have led me to my thoughts today.

As you are aware it was not a simple process that just happened overnight, and has involved a lot of carefully considered thought and is now probably more of a result of an 'evolutionary' process to where I am today. I have tried to be concise, but this might not be as short as you might have hoped! I don't really want to be involved in a debate regarding the merits of Islam as I personally feel I have gone full circle and have reached a comfortable & robust conclusion with my thoughts, however given its contentious nature, should you wish to reply I promise to read it. All I ask of you is to read this without any precursory prejudice.

As you know when I was in my teens I had a lot of questions and there were things in the religion that sat uncomfortably with me. I remember having (yet another) discussion with you when you told me that to be a Muslim you have to accept that everything in the Quran is right, it is just our understanding that is limited. Otherwise I had to admit I was not a Muslim.

I thought about this for a long period, as I did not want to disappoint my parents, and more to the point Allah, by accepting this point of view. But I also felt just because they, and previous generations before them may have felt an innate ancestral obligation to follow the religion, it did not necessarily have to be that way with me. After all they were brought up in a different time and place, and had we been idol worshippers as most of India still is, then I am sure they all would have been following that today (but hopefully I would still be in the same position as I am now). I was happy to be convinced by Islam on its own virtues, not for any other reason.

I will not spend much time discussing the more commonly cited arguments as you will have heard them before, such as:

A sons right to twice a daughters inheritance; its acceptance of men having four wives (but not vice versa) yet the prophet having 'special dispensation' from Allah to have 7; divorce being easier for a man to do than a woman; a female witnesses testimony being worth half that of a man; its attitude towards gay people; hijab and the covering of a women's face (although clearly the issue lies with man); prophet marrying a 6 year old & being intimate with her at 9 years of age; as I believe it would be all too easy to come and find some argument that would "justify" all these points i.e.

- i) The Quran was misquoted/ Its a mistranslation
- ii) Its out of context, and was only meant to apply to that day & age
- iii) You have misunderstood it, read more and you will find an explanation
- iv) I don't know, God works in mysterious ways / You should not question God, he created you, and your understanding is nothing compared to Gods

However you could reply to each point in turn -

- i) God would not have allowed his book to be misquoted otherwise innocent people would unwittingly do the wrong thing. Why did he not correct them when errors were made? Or even just produce the book without fallible humans having to do it?

- ii) Islam and the prophet set a code of life to apply to all ages, not just for one generation. Given that it was put to us by a superior being then it would have had the foresight to be able to apply to all generations, unless of course it was written by man (as a way to control the populace in a day when legal and policing structures were not prevalent or someone wanting power e.g. another type of David Koresh)
- iii) Many Muslim scholars that have read more than I could ever hope to, have since denounced the religion. Which scholars do those who advocate this position think I should go to? Perhaps Hassan Radhwan, who taught at Cat Steven's Islamia school for many years and 5 years ago closed the doors of Islam as a work of fiction. Or Abbas AbdulNoor, a former Imam and Egyptian Islamic scholar, who studied Islam at the prestigious Al-Azhar University, who after many years of doubt and currently 80 years of age has recently come to the same conclusion.
It does not necessarily follow that the more you read about Islam, then the more you will be convinced by its virtues.
- iv) If we allowed this to occur, then we would all be still worshipping clay idols and still be none the wiser.

Nevertheless these were the type of questions I had not, and now realise will never, find an acceptable answer for. It sowed the seeds of doubt and forced me to take a closer look at its contents and to read the translation of the Quran without blinkered vision, but this time without wishing, trying or even forcing myself to believe in it.

Yet the more I looked, the more I struggled...

A few interesting quotes from Islamic Scriptures

1) Slavery

The Abrahamic religions never had any major issues with slavery, and Islam was not alone; I'm sure you are aware that even the prophet comprehensively practised it.

The Quran also explicitly gave Muslim men the right to have sex with their female slaves:

Quran 33:52 "It is not permitted thee to take other wives hereafter, nor to change thy present wives for other women, though their beauty charm thee, except slaves whom thy right hand shall possess."

In fact the prophet's son Ibrahim, was born from Maria al-Qibtiyya, not one of his 7 wives but his slave.

Maria was actually an Egyptian Coptic Christian who was a slave gift from Muqawqis, a Byzantine official, to the Islamic prophet Muhammad in the year 628.

2) Racism

"The master does not have the right to force the female slave to wed to an ugly black slave if she is beautiful and agile unless in case of utmost necessity" (Ibn Hazm, Vol. 6, p. 469)

Ishaq:243 - "I heard the Apostle say: 'Whoever wants to see Satan should look at Nabtal!' He was a black man with long flowing hair, inflamed eyes, and dark ruddy cheeks.... Allah sent down concerning him: 'To those who annoy the Prophet there is a painful doom.' [9:61] "Gabriel came to Muhammad and said, 'If a black man comes to you his heart is more gross than a donkey's.'"

It goes on in the weak hadith:

Tabari IX:69 - "Arabs are the most noble people in lineage, the most prominent, and the best in deeds. We were the first to respond to the call of the Prophet. We are Allah's helpers and the viziers of His Messenger. We fight people until they believe in Allah. He who believes in Allah and His Messenger has protected his life and possessions from us. As for one who disbelieves, we will fight him forever in Allah's Cause. Killing him is a small matter to us."

Or its general mistrust of Jews as illustrated by these points below:

Quran 5:51 "O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people."

Sahih Muslim 26:5389 Or as the prophet said: "Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it".

Sahih Muslim Book 041, Number 6981 "Come here, Muslim, there is a Jew hiding himself behind me; kill him" Talking rock

Quran 5:70 "As you can clearly see the Jews are cursed, till the end of time, Allah tried to help them"

If they are cursed then it is certainly not their fault. Why not lift the curse, instead of treating them as inferior human beings, and also punishing them in the after-life? Why should people be judged and punished on the actions of their forefathers, and not on the actions of themselves?

3) Rape

Maududi, vol. 1, p. 319 (See also Quran 4:3 and 33:50) And forbidden to you are wedded wives of other people except those who have fallen in your hands as prisoners of war

It rather shockingly shows that Muslims jihadists actually had sex with captured & enslaved women, whether married or not.

In the following passage, Khumus is the war booty, a tax that is one-fifth of the spoils of war.

Bukhari 5:59:No.637 Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, just finished a relaxing bath. (Why?)

Ali had taken a bath after a sexual act with a slave-girl from the war booty, and the Prophet's response to the person who hated Ali for this sexual act, 'Do you hate Ali for this? . . . Don't hate him, for he deserves more than that from the war booty'

According to Shariah law four men are required to have witnessed & to testify to a rape, in order for a women to convict her rapist. In areas

Sadly the effects of the Quran and hadith will get translated in Muslim countries. According to a report by Pakistan's National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), an estimated **80%** of

women in jail in 2003 were there because "they had failed to prove rape charges and were consequently convicted of adultery."

4) Violence

The Quran is filled with many threats thrown at non-believers but the Quran says that it is Allah who causes people to believe or not believe

Quran 7:177 "He whom God guideth is the guided, and whom he misleadeth shall be the lost."

Quran 76:5 "We have prepared chains, collars, and a blazing fire for the kafirs"

Quran 16:95 "Had God pleased, He could have made you one people: but He causeth whom He will to err, and whom He will He guideth: and ye shall assuredly be called to account for your doings."

So, if God can cause people to not believe, then why would he punish them when they didn't?

Quran 9:5 "And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush: but if they shall convert, and observe prayer, and pay the obligatory alms, then let them go their way, for God is Gracious, Merciful."

Sura 8:12

SHAKIR: I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them.

This is another quote from the scriptures of what some might describe as the most peaceful religion.

Quran 9:29 "Make war upon such of those to whom the Scriptures have been given as believe not in God, or in the last day, and who forbid not that which God and His Apostle have forbidden, and who profess not the profession of the truth, until they pay tribute out of hand, and they be humbled. Yet if they turn to God and observe prayer, and pay the tax, then are they your brethren in religion. We make clear our signs to those who understand."

Quran 9:11-12 "But if, after alliance made, they break their oaths and revile your religion, then do battle with the ring-leaders of infidelity - for no oaths are binding with them - that they may desist."

This following quote was used to justify the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Quran 8:39-40 Say to the infidels: If they desist from their unbelief, what is now past shall be forgiven them, but if they return to it, they have already before them the doom of the ancients! Fight then against them till strife be at an end, and the religion be all of it God's

These directions from the Quran are effectively encouraging followers to coerce others into following Islam, even if they do not want to - either by tax or by force. Some might even argue that this is how Islam grew from desert Arabia to the rest of the world.

i) The Banu Qurayzah Massacre

Once the prophet was banished from Mecca, he took a band of followers onto Medina. Upon reaching Medina he made a non war pact with the Jews as his followers continued to grow. However this peaceful treaty was broken when the Medinan Jews surrounded themselves in a compound as Meccan soldiers advanced into their territory. The prophet took this opportunity to surround their compound and then decided to siege & fight them.

After the siege was lifted Muhammad relaxed to have a bath when the angel Gabriel appeared to him indicating that the battle had not been completed while pointing to the direction of the Banu Qurayzah tribe. Muhammad promptly marched with three thousand men against the Qurayzah Jews. The besieged Jews who were wary of this eventuality surrendered. The men were rounded up and the women and children placed with the spoils of war. To distinguish between man and boy Muhammad had all those on the cusp of manhood checked for the existence of pubic hair. He then placed the decision on the plight of the tribe in the hands of one of his chiefs, Sa'd, who had been wounded in the battle. His judgment was that the men should be put to death, the women and children sold into slavery, and the spoil divided among the Muslims. Muhammad responded 'Truly, the judgment of Sa'd is the judgment of the Lord, pronounced on high from above the seventh heaven.'

During the night, trenches were dug in the marketplace. As the day dawned Muhammad commanded the male captives to be brought out in groups of five at a time. They were made to sit in a row at the edge of the trench while the women and children witnessed the downward swing of the sword through the necks of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers; their bodies then being cast into the trench. The slaughter lasted all day and continued by torchlight into the night. An estimated 800 to 900 men met their demise on that faithful day.

As part of his one fifth share of the booty Muhammad selected the beautiful teenage bride, Rehana, daughter of the Qurayzah chief, for himself. A strong headed woman she refused to convert to Islam or marry the prophet. Muhammad's options were either to kill her or add her to his list of concubines of which he chose the latter.

From Sirat Rasul Allah

At noon of the same day Gabriel came to the apostle, wearing a silken turban and riding on a mule saddled with brocade. He said, 'Hast thou put away thy arms, apostle of Allah?' He replied, 'Yes', and Gabriel said, 'But the angels have not yet put away theirs. I have come here to call the people to follow the command of Allah and march against the Banu Qurayza. I go myself to make them tremble.'

Therefore the apostle of Allah ordered it to be proclaimed that none should hold afternoon prayers until they reached the Jewish stronghold. {Prayers were put on hold for the more important task of battle.}

The apostle of Allah besieged the Qurayza for twenty five days until they were distressed, and Allah struck fear into their hearts.

In the morning the Qurayza came down from their fort to surrender to the apostle of Allah.

Said pronounced the following sentence, 'I decree that the men be killed, the property be divided, and the women with their children be made captives.' The apostle of Allah said, 'Thou hast decided according to the will of Allah, above the seven firmaments.'

Trenches were dug in the market place. Then he sent for the men and had their heads struck off so that they fell in the trenches.

Aisha, the wife of the apostle, said, 'Only one of their women was killed. By Allah! She was with me, talking and laughing, while the apostle slaughtered her countrymen in the market place; and when her name was called, I asked, 'What is this for'' and she replied, 'I am going to be slain!' I asked why and she answered, 'For something I have

done!' Then she was taken away, and her head was struck off. But I shall never cease to marvel at her good humour and laughter, although she knew that she was to die.'

The apostle distributed the property of the Banu Qurayza, as well as their women and children, to the Muslims, reserving one fifth for himself.

The apostle dispatched an emissary to Najd with some prisoners, to barter them as slaves in exchange for horses and camels.

The apostle of Allah selected one of the Jewish women, Re'hana, for himself, and she remained with him as his slave (concubine) until she died.

Relevant Hadiths:

Sahih Muslim 19:4368 ' The people of Qurayza surrendered. The Messenger of Allah said to Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: These people have surrendered accepting your decision. He (Sa'id) said: You will kill their fighters and capture their women and children. Hearing this, the Prophet said: You have adjudged by the command of Allah.

Sahih Muslim 19:4370 ' Sa'd was wounded on the day of the Battle of the Ditch. When the Messenger of Allah returned from the Ditch and laid down his arms and took a bath, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and said: You have laid down arms. By God, we haven't yet laid them down. So march against them. The Messenger of Allah asked: Where' He pointed to Banu Quraiza. So the Messenger of Allah fought against them. They surrendered at the command of the Messenger of Allah but referred the decision about them to Sa'd who said: I decide about them that those of them who can fight be killed, their women and children taken prisoners and their properties distributed among the Muslims.

Sunan Abu Dawud 38-4390 - Narrated Atiyyah al-Qurazi: I was among the captives of Banu Qurayzah. The Muslims examined us, and those who had begun to grow pubic hair were killed, and those who had not were not killed. I was among those who had not grown hair.

5) Pillaging

After fighting, believers have a right to the infidel's houses.

Quran 33:27 "And He made you heirs to their land and their dwellings and their property, and to a land which you have not yet trodden, and Allah has power over all things."

Islamic apologists will comb the Quran for "good" quotes and take it as proof that the Quran is peaceful. There is a quote in the Quran which says Muslims can have their religion and other people can have theirs. This is fine until you find in the Quran it says other religions may exist with Muslims, but they are to live as second class citizens by in effect paying taxes to Muslims.

Quran 9:29 "Fight those who do not believe until they all surrender, paying the protective tax in submission."

It makes me wonder how Muslims would feel if they had to pay a separate tax to the Christians for living in the West?

6) Women

According to the Quran, Hadith and Sharia Law,

- i) (Quran 2:228 - Pickthall translation) "and the men are a degree above them (women)"
- ii) (Quran 4:34 - Pickthall translation) "Men are in charge of women"
- iii) Women have to follow a modest dress code and should 'cast their outer garments over their persons' Quran 33:59, yet men do not have to.
- iv) A woman according to Quran 43:18 'is a creature who in dispute cannot make herself clear

Prophet Mohamed felt women are lacking in brains, and the majority of Hell's residents are women (Bukhari 1:301 and also 2:541).

- v) When it comes to testimony in courts, women testify in pairs, as one man testimony is equivalent to 2 women in Islamic courts (Bukhari 1:301)
- vi) Also women inherit half as much as their male counterparts. (Quran 4:11-12)
- vii) They are not allowed to travel without a male companion (Bukhari:1763)
- viii) Women can only marry muslims and have a single partner (Quran 4:22 to 24), men on the other hand don't have to marry muslims and can marry up to 4 women (Quran 4:3)
- ix) A woman should not fast without the permission of her husband nor can she marry someone without the permission of her father, brother or male guardian. (Bukhari 5192)
- x) A nation headed by a woman will never succeed, and the worst sin and distraction from virtue is by women (Bukhari 4425)
- xi) According to the Quran in certain circumstances it is ok to beat your wife. Quran 4:34: Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in their sleeping places and **beat** them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is great.

"Hang your whip where your wife can see it." (Hadith Musannaf, Abdul Razzaq)

In Quran 38:15 'Thy wife; - on whom he had sworn that he would inflict an hundred blows, because she had absented herself from him when in need of her assistance, or for her words. The oath was kept, we are told, by his giving her one blow with a rod of a hundred.'

Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 7, #132 The prophet said, "None of you should flog his wife as he flogs a slave and then have sexual intercourse with her in the last part of the day."

And sadly even the prophet is claimed to have hit his wife. When sleeping with Aisha, Muhammad surreptitiously left his bed and went to the graveyard at Baqi.

Aisha followed and watched what the prophet doing; when the prophet found out, according to Sahih Muslim Book 4:2127, 'He struck me on the chest which caused me pain'

7) The Prophets marriages

i) Aisha

The prophet's first wife was Khadija, a wealthy business woman and initially his employer. She was 15 years senior to him when she asked for his hand in marriage. When she died aged 70, the prophet remarried the same year to Aisha who was a young girl. There are claims that Abu Bakr initially approached Muhammad asking him to marry his daughter. This is not true:

[Sahih Bukhari 7.18](#)

The Prophet asked Abu Bakr for Aisha's hand in marriage. Abu Bakr said "But I am your brother." The Prophet said, "You are my brother in Allah's religion and His book, but she is lawful for me to marry."

At the time of the marriage Aisha was just 6 years old and the prophet consummated his marriage with her when she was 9. He was then 54 years old.

There are numerous hadiths that explicitly reveal the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage. Here are just some of them.

Sahih Bukhari Bk. 62, No. 64

the Prophet married her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old

Sahih Muslim Bk. 008, No. 3310:

Aisha reported: Allah's Apostle married me when I was six years old, and I was admitted to his house when I was nine years old".

Sahih Bukhari Bk. 62, No. 88

The Prophet wrote the (marriage contract) with 'Aisha while she was six years old and consummated his marriage with her while she was nine years old

[Sahih Bukhari 5.236.](#)

Khadija died three years before the Prophet departed to Medina. He stayed there for two years or so and then he married Aisha when she was a girl of six years of age, and he consummated that marriage when she was nine years old.

This evidence is further supported by the following events:

[Sahih Bukhari 5.234](#)

*Narrated Aisha: The Prophet engaged me when I was a girl of six. We went to Medina and stayed at the home of Bani-al-Harith bin Khazraj. Then I got ill and my hair fell down. Later on my hair grew (again) and my mother, Um Ruman, came to me while I was playing on a **swing** with some of my girl friends. She called me, and I went to her, not knowing what she wanted to do to me. She caught me by the hand and made me stand at the door of the house. I was breathless then, and when my breathing became alright, she took some water and rubbed my face and head with it. Then she took me into the house. There in the house I saw some Ansari women who said, "Best wishes and Allah's Blessing and a good luck." Then she entrusted me to them and they prepared me for the marriage. Unexpectedly Allah's Apostle came to me in the forenoon and my mother handed me over to him, and at that time I was a girl of nine years of age.*

In the above hadith we read that Ayesha was on a swing.

Sahih Muslim Bk. 008, No. 3311

*Aisha reported that Allah's Apostle married her when she was seven years old, and she was taken to his house as a bride when she was nine, and her **dolls** were with her; and when he died she was eighteen years old*

Sahih Bukhari Volume 8, Bk. 73, No. 151

*I used to play with the **dolls** in the presence of the Prophet, and my girl friends also used to play with me. When Allah's Apostle used to enter home they used to hide themselves, but the Prophet would call them to join and play with me.*

The above quote is also interesting because she playing with her dolls. Incidentally playing with dolls and similar images was forbidden, but it was allowed for Aisha at that time, as she was a little girl having not yet reached the age of puberty (Fateh-al-Bari page 143, Vol.13)

ii) Polygamy & his daughter Fatima

Muhammed married his daughter Fatima to her first cousin. Allah revealed that Muslim men are permitted to marry up to four women,

Qur'an 4:3 *"marry other women of your choice, two or three, or four but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or (the captives and the slaves) that your right hands possess."*

yet despite this he only allowed one wife for his son-in-law Ali, who was married to his daughter. When Ali desired to take a second wife, Muhammad insisted he first divorce Fatima before taking a new wife.

Sahih Bukhari 7:62:157 *I heard Allah's Apostle who was on the pulpit, saying, "Banu Hisham bin Al-Mughira have requested me to allow them to marry their daughter to Ali bin Abu Talib, but I don't give permission, and will not give permission unless 'Ali bin Abi Talib divorces my daughter in order to marry their daughter, because Fatima is a part of my body, and I hate what she hates to see, and what hurts her, hurts me."*

iii) Saffiya

This young and beautiful 17-year-old, was a newly widowed young Jewish bride and was among those captured women and children at the war of Khaybar. She was the daughter of the leader of Bani Nadir Huyay Ibn Akhtab.

Her father was executed by the Prophet, and she had just lost her brother, husband and all other male relatives in that war.

Ibn Hisham (Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya) writes about Kinana ibn al-Rabi, Safiyya's former husband.

Kinana al-Rabi, who had the custody of the treasure of Banu Nadir, was brought to the apostle who asked him about it. He denied that he knew where it was. A Jew came (Tabari says "was brought"), to the apostle and said that he had seen Kinana going round a certain ruin every morning early. When the apostle said to Kinana, "Do you know that if we find you have it I shall kill you?" He said "Yes". The apostle gave orders that the ruin was to be excavated and some of the treasure was found. When he asked him about the rest he refused to produce it, so the apostle gave orders to al-Zubayr Al-Awwam, "Torture him until you extract what he has." So he kindled a fire with flint and steel on his chest until he was nearly dead. Then the apostle delivered him to Muhammad b. Maslama and he struck off his head.

Torture is ok when there is treasure at stake?

Saffiya had suffered a great tragedy and was weeping but she had been selected as the booty (spoils) for the Prophet.

According to Sahih Hadith, prophet asked for sex the same day but she did not allow because of her period and on the second day prophet had married her and consummated her on the way back to Medina.

By what yardstick can we measure the mercifulness and compassionateness of the Prophet?

iv) **Zaynab (his adopted son's wife)**

Whilst Zaynab was still married to Zaid, his adopted son, the prophet paid a visit to his house, but he was not at home. Not expecting Prophet Muhammad to be at the door, Zaynab answered the door instead, and from this moment the prophet decided he wanted to marry her.

When Zaid learned of the prophet's desire, and he divorced Zaynab.

However, the prophet was already married to the limit of four wives. So Allah then sent him a revelation which set an exemption for him alone:

Qur'an 33:50 "O Prophet (Muhammad)! Verily, We have made lawful to you your wives, to whom you have paid their Mahr, and those (captives or slaves) whom your right hand possesses -- whom God has given to you, and the daughters of your paternal uncles and the daughters of your paternal aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncle & the daughters of your maternal aunts who migrated from Mecca with you, and a believing woman if she offers herself to the Prophet, and the Prophet wishes to marry her; a privilege for you only, not for the rest of the believers."

Upon this revelation prophet Muhammad married her.

At the time this turned into quite a scandal among the Arabs, who equated Muhammad's actions with incest.

Also Aisha, the wife he was closest to, noted that these new revelations from Allah appeared to be very convenient

Sahih Muslim - Book 008, Number 3454:

Allah revealed: " You may defer any of them you wish and take to yourself any you wish." Aisha said: "It seems to me that your Lord hastens to satisfy your desire "

Undeterred the prophet married again up until he had fulfilled Allah's remit of seven wives.

Sahih Bukhari Vol. 1, Book 5, No. 268

Anas bin Malik said, "The prophet used to visit all his wives in a round, during the day and night and they were eleven in number." I asked Anas, "Had the prophet the strength for it" Anas replied, "We used to say that the prophet was given the strength of thirty men."

7) Heaven

Apparently stones we offered heaven & earth too but didn't want the responsibility "Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he hath proved a tyrant and a fool" Quran 33:72

This how Allah the Almighty describes heaven in the Quran:

Quran 78:31-33

*But, for the God-fearing is a blissful abode,
Enclosed gardens and vineyards;
And damsels with swelling breasts, their peers in age."*

*"But the pious shall be in a secure place,
Amid gardens and fountains,
Clothed in silk and richest robes, facing one another:
Thus shall it be: and we will wed them to the virgins with large dark eyes." Quran 44:51-54*

Also husbands get 72 virgin girls in heaven (Tirmidhi:2562), women get their husbands.

If we are being intellectually honest and objective do these quotes above sound more like being written by 7th century Arab man, or by a supreme omniscient being?

But it is not just the content that I struggled with, it was the general tone throughout its entirety.

In youth, many people are judgemental in their thinking. Generally speaking, it is only as they get older & wiser that their thinking becomes more blurred.

The general tone and language shown here or when the Quran refers to Jews & Christians (Quran 2:65 and 5:60), as 'Sons of Apes and Pigs' does little to promote integration & racial harmony nor further the fact that it had to have been put together by an all knowing being.

8) Homosexuality

In accordance with Shariah Law and Al-Azhar university, homosexual practise is a religious crime that carries the death sentence *SAD 38:4447 [b]If you find anyone doing as Lot's people did (homosexual acts), kill the one who does it, and the one to whom it is done.[/b]*

*"Allah the Almighty revealed: The people of Lot (those dwelt in the towns of Sodom in Palestine) belied the Messengers when their brother Lot said to them: "So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. No reward do I ask of you for my Message of Islamic Monotheism, my reward is only from the Lord. Go you unto the males, and leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your wives? Nay, you are a trespassing people!"
They said: "If you cease not, O Lot! Verily, you will be one of those who are driven out!"
He said: "I am indeed, of those who disapprove with severe anger and fury your over this evil action of sodomy. My Lord! Save me and my family from what they do.. So we saved him and his family, all except an old woman (this wife) among those who remained behind" Quran26:160-171*

The whole village was wiped out, but how could this race of people been self-sustaining if everyone, as claimed (apart from Lot's family & an old woman), had been practising in 'sodomy'.

If everyone wasn't then God accepted the 'innocents' were just collateral damage. With all Gods powers and in order to achieve what he wanted, he could at least killed those who he set out to eliminate?

(Quran 7.080) And Lot! (Remember) when he said unto his folk: Will ye commit abomination such as no creature ever did before you ? Ye come with lust unto men instead of women.

(Quran 4:16) If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, Leave them alone; for God is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

The following hadith passage says that homosexuals should be burned alive or have a wall pushed onto them:

Muhammad said, "*Cursed is he who does what Lot's people did.*" *In a version on the authority of Ibn Abbas it says that Ali had two people burned and that Abu Bakr had a wall thrown down on them. (Mishkat, vol. 1, p. 765, Prescribed Punishments)*

The punishment of toppling a wall onto those guilty of homosexuality was used by the Taliban in Afghanistan. However, currently in Islamic states hanging, usually from a crane in a public square, is the preferred method.

9) Apostates & Non-believers

Those who disbelieve, among the People of the Scripture and the idolaters, will abide in fire of hell. They are the worst of created beings.(Quran 98.6)

There are 3 stories which I distinctly remember from childhood that I was told by my parents, their friends, and Maulana's at the mosque. They were:

- i) *'Educate yourself even if it means you have to go to China'*
- ii) *'The prophet's cat Muezza fell asleep on the robes he was wearing whilst he was awake. In order not to disturb it, he cut up his garment so that his cat could remain asleep'*
- iii) *'A Jewish lady used to throw garbage over the prophet on his usual route every day. One day she didn't and he went to check up on her to see if she was well, and she thanked him and later converted to Islam'*

I have been unable to put a source to any of these; I now know that it's because there is none. They are stories which are not in the Quran nor hadith, not in any Islamic literature. In fact the second one about the prophets sleeping cat has actually found its way into Islam through the Bahai faith!

They are all myths & legends we were brought up on after being repeated generation by generation, and show what we & our parents always assumed to be the truth, is not always as it seems until we investigate it with open minds.

Our beliefs are a combination of our genetic and socio-environmental factors we were given. By genetic I mean the congenital factors, such as intelligence, we inherited from our parents. By socio-environmental factors I mean the country we were born in, the media, the schools we went to, the subjects we studied, the friends we had, our siblings, our uncles etc.

As this is the case, then isn't it a little unfair to punish us for what follows as a result of these?

In other words if God or your parents gave you your gene pool along with your environment, and we are a product of these, e.g. if a baby was born to caring & loving idol worshipping parents in a neighbourhood that discouraged free-thinking, then it would be no surprise that most children brought up in this environment would follow in the footsteps of their parents. Yet according to numerous references in the Quran they will all inevitably go to hell.

Quran 4.56 *"Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins..."*

How can God punish me for the brain he gave me which thinks the evidence of an Abrahmic Gods existence is next to zero? Particularly when he says in *Quran 7:177* "He whom God guideth is the guided or "Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing" in *Quran 2:7* . Then whose fault is that, do we not have free-will or are these verses a contradiction?

"You did not kill them; it was Allah who killed them; and you did not throw, when you threw; it was Allah who threw: so He might test the believers with this excellent trial from Him. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (*Quran 8: 17*)

The Quran says that Allah already knows what our actions will be and whether we will go to heaven or hell. In that case why not just send us to hell from the beginning?

What is the point of striving towards anything if our destiny and the eventuality is already ordained from the beginning?

I feel a better lesson for human beings to learn is that you bear the consequences of your actions, not that the outcome is preordained and that you can do little about it.

Yet in accordance with Islam apostates or people who have left the religion should not be debated with, but killed?

Please don't take this as signing my own death warrant but it does say in:

Sahih Bukhari 4:260

The Prophet said, 'If a Muslim discards his religion, kill him.'

Under Shariah Law, apostasy (either advocating the rejection of Islamic belief or announcing such rejection by word or deed) is not permitted and for a man is punishable by death. The punishment for a woman is more lenient - she must stay in prison until she reverts, however long it takes.

Is there much point in killing people who just sceptical by nature? They are not *all* inherently bad people, and do not deserve to be murdered just because they do not believe in something they have not seen? By the same token, why reward those that are more easily convinced by something they cannot see - is it a meritable act worthy of reward?

It just does not seem like a religion that I believe is a good code of life to follow, and I believe might help to partly explain why Muslims are where they are today.

9) The Quranic challenge

"Oh people, if you doubt the heavenly origin of this Book which We have sent down to Our servant, the Prophet, produce one surah like it" (Quran 2:23)

One of the things I hear regularly is that it is impossible to produce another Surah like it, which proves that its not man-made, so here is one I helped produce without any divine intervention, its manmade.

But can you spot the difference?

Surat al ByManat Noon

حقا ، وهذا الكتاب هو كأي

رسالة واضحة للراغبين في الاعتقاد
ولقد قلت لكم اننا لا قصة الخضر
حقا ، كان لقمان الحكيم وو كذلك
يا أيها النبي! تخبر المرأة على البقاء في منازلهم
لحقا ، وأنه من الأفضل بالنسبة لهم ، إلا إذا كانوا يعلمون
وأنه لا ينبغي خلق اهتمام لا لزوم لها
مع الضحك والكلام
وما هو مثل النجوم؟ سأقدم لك والإضراب المشابهة
، النجوم هي علامات بلدي الرحمة والعظمة
وأنها ترضخ لللي في العبادة
ولكن تذكر عند وفاة زوجها دون أن المسألة ثم نصف تركته يذهب إلى إخوته
وشهادتها هي مساوية لنصف رجل
بالنسبة لك ويكون الخوف من الرب وأتذكر جيدا
له الخير لحقا ، والله هو السميع العليم ، ونراه جميعا
، وأولئك الذين لديهم الصبر والسريع الذي قدم في لطريق الرب
حقا ، يجب يأكلون العنب مستلق على الكراسي إلى أبد الأبد
، ولكن قلوبهم الله هات صلابة
حقا ، يجب أن تكون مظلمة وجوههم من الرصاص المنصهر وسوف
شرب مغلي الكبريت باعتباره العذاب الأبدى ، على الرغم من انها صرخة
ربنا! سيكون لدينا يعتقد إذا كنت قد بينت لنا الأدلة'
لكن حقا ، أنا لم تظهر لهم ولكن كان الوقت قد فات بالنسبة لهم الآن
هوذا أنا لم يكن يقدم لهم هذا الممر الذي هو واضح

Alif Lam Mim

1. Verily, this book is unlike any other
2. A clear message for those willing to believe.
3. And have we not told you the story of Khidr?
4. Verily, he was wise and Luqman and Bulayman as well.
5. O Prophet! Tell your women to stay in the homes
6. For verily, it is better for them, if only they knew.
7. And that they should not create undue attention
8. with laughter and talk.
9. And what is like the stars? Shall I strike you a similitude?
10. For the stars are the signs of my mercy and greatness,
11. and they bow to me in worship
12. but remember if her husband dies without issue then half his estate goes to his brothers
13. and her testimony is equal to that of half a man
14. For you shall have fear of the lord and remember well
15. his benevolence. For verily, Allah is all knowing, and all seeing.
16. And those who have patience and who fast gave in to the way of the lord,
17. verily, they shall eat grapes on reclining chairs for ever and ever.
18. But those whose hearts Allah hath hardened,
19. verily, their faces shall be darkened by molten lead and shall
20. drink boiling sulphur as an everlasting torment, though they cry
21. 'Our lord! We would have believed if you had shown us evidence!'
22. But verily, I did show them but it's too late for them now.
23. Lo, did I not present them with this passage which is clear?

(Saifhالل translation)

10) Hadith - The Quran in itself is too small to make a religion, it does not contain enough information to even explain itself e.g. how to pray, fast, perform hajj, even the definition of zina, or fahisha, or noshooz etc. This is why, Islam relies on books other than the Quran.

Even The cornerstone of Islam would not exist without the Hadith. Out of the 5 Pillars of Islam - at best you could justify one pillar according to the Quran. The truth is Islam has been largely constructed out of the hadith via the tales about the prophet, not the Quran.

You dont have Islam without the hadith, you mostly have a creator who sent a postman called Muhammed. Without the hadith, you lose the 'mailbag'.

For the purposes below we will list mainly from the authenticated strong Hadith, which Muslims accept as the truth, unlike the weaker hadith.

Here's an example of a weak hadith that I love:

Tirmidhi: *"Take advantage of five things before five others: your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you become occupied, and your life before your death."*

Here follows some good examples of where it begins to sound a little too far-fetched, in some cases ludicrous, or just plainly wrong:

Sahih Bukhari 1:11:582: *Allah's Apostle said, "When the Adhan is pronounced Satan takes to his heels and passes wind with noise during his flight in order not to hear the Adhan"*

Sahih hadeeth of Hammah bint Jahsh: *According to the prophet the monthly menstruation for a woman is "a kick from the shaytaan"*

Sahih Bukhari 1:6:301: *Once Allah's Apostle went out to offer prayer and he passed by the women and said, "O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you women.*

They asked, "Why is it so, O Allah's Apostle ?" He replied, "You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you."

The women asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?"

He said, "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?" The women replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her religion."

Sahih Muslim Bk. 023, Number 5008: *Ibn 'Umar reported Allah's Messenger as saying: When any one of you intends to eat, he should eat with his right hand. And when he (intends) to drink he should drink with his right hand, for the Satan eats with his left hand and drinks with his left hand.*

(currently 7 to 10% of the human population is left handed)

Islam doesn't just tell you how to eat, but the actual Quran tells you to not outstay your welcome if you're a guest in the prophets house

Quran 33.053 *Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you. But if ye are invited, enter, and, when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. Lo! that would cause annoyance to the Prophet, and he would be shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of the truth.*

Bukhari Volume 5, Bk. 58, Number 188: During the pre-Islamic period of ignorance I saw a she-monkey surrounded by a number of monkeys. They were all stoning it, because it had committed illegal sexual intercourse. I too, stoned it along with them.

Muslim, Bk. 026, Number 5562: on the authority of his father that Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) commanded the killing of geckos, and he called them little noxious creatures... He said he who killed a gecko with the first stroke for him is such and such a reward, and he who killed it with a second stroke for him is such and such reward less than the first one, and he who killed it with the third stroke for him is such and such a reward less than the second one.

In the weaker As-Sunan hadith it also forbids the killing of frogs, because their croaking is praise to Allah

Bukhari 21:245 Those who keep on sleeping till morning and did not get up for Fajr, Satan urinates in their ears.

Bukhari Vol 4:55:543: The Prophet said, "Allah created Adam, making him 60 cubits tall" (which is approximately 90 feet!). Apparently also the people of that time were giants compared to the rest of us -but where is the archaeological evidence?

Bukhari 1:7368 The Prophet forbade laughing at a person who passes wind.

Bukhari Vol 1:5:277: The Prophet said, The (people of) Bani Israel used to take bath naked (all together) looking at each other. The Prophet Moses used to take a bath alone. They said, By Allah! Nothing prevents Moses from taking a bath with us except that he had a scrotal hernia. So once Moses went out to take a bath and put his clothes over a stone and then that stone ran away with his clothes. Moses followed that stone saying, My clothes, O stone! My clothes, O stone! till the people of Bani Israel saw him and said, By Allah, Moses has got no defect in his body. Moses took his clothes and began to beat the stone.

11) Quranic Contradictions

If the Quran was sent down by an almighty, omnipotent and omniscient being, then surely one would expect the Quran to be perfect and flawless or if it was written man then we would expect it to contain errors.

Here is a list of some of the 6 simple shorter contradictions, but there are many, many more should you wish to look into this subject more deeply..

Quran 41:9-12 teaches that it took God eight days to complete his creation, while **Quran 7:51, 10:3** and **11:6** say it took six days.

Quran 11 says that one of Noah's sons didn't make it onto the ark and drowned.

Quran 21 says that Noah and all his kin were saved from the flood

Iblis is an angel is confirmed here **2:34, 7:11, 15:28-31, 20:116, 38:71-74**, Iblis is a Djinn is confirmed here **7:12, 18:50, 38:76**

Quran 2:29 says Earth was created before heaven, but **79:27-30** says heaven was created and then earth ?

Will Christians enter Paradise or go to Hell? **Quran 2:62** and **5:69** say Yes, **Quran 5:72** (just 3 verses later) and **3:85** says No.

12) Grammatical errors in the Quran (courtesy of Hassan)

This is similar to saying "here are many peoples coming to the show today."

The verse is Verse 5:69, **إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَالنَّصَارَى**

The mistake is the word **الصَّالِحِينَ**

It is in the Nominative Case (الرفع) when it should be in the Accusative Case (النصب).

It is a very basic rule of grammar that the particle **إِنَّ** makes the nouns that it is referring to Accusative Case (النصب).

A simple example that you will find all over the Qur'an is: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ** The noun Allah (اللَّهُ) has the Fatha () at the end to denote it is in the Accusative Case, rather than the Damma () that would denote the Nominative Case.

When it comes to plural nouns the Nominative case is denoted by a long "oona" vowel (ون) and the Accusative Cases by a long "eena" vowel (ين).

Here are some examples from the Qur'an:

إِنَّ الْمُتَافِقِينَ is in the Accusative because it has **إِنَّ** **يَقُولُ الْمُتَافِقُونَ** is in the Nominative

It is a simple and basic rule of grammar. Not only that, but two other verses that are almost identical have the correct Accusative case:

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَالنَّصَارَى 22:17)
(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّالِحِينَ 2:62)

It is clear to me Muhammad (or a scribe) just made a simple - and easy to make.

All the great scholars of the past then had to rush to explain it away to preserve the integrity of what they believed was the "Perfect" word of God. Just as they did with all the other many anomalies in the Qur'an.

13) Origins of Quran & Islam

According to Islam, Angel Gibrial recited the Quran to the prophet from Allah and he was ordered to remember it because he could not read nor write.

The prophet later taught the Quran to the followers he gained shortly after, and they wrote these teachings on anything they could find, such as camel bones (shoulder blades), bark & leaves. After the prophets death, Abu Bakr compiled these teachings to make the original Quran which was copied and spread by the Muslims.

After a little time different copies of the Quran appeared. This was a huge issue because the word of God was not supposed to be corrupted so some 30 years later, and the 3rd caliph, Uthman, ordered that all copies be gathered. They studied each text, and what was deemed as original was compiled to make the current version.

All of the manuscripts and parchments or bark and leaves were destroyed to prevent further corruption.

The only issue being that now we have no way of doing a textual study to see how accurate the final version was to the original. In fact the weaker hadith show that parts of the Quran (the ones to do with stoning women for adultery) were devoured by a goat! This might just be a coincidence, but some say it was because Aisha was afraid as she had already been accused by Ali of becoming overly-friendly with some men from her local village in these hadith.

Sunan Ibn Maaja, Book of Nikah, (Hadith # 1934) The verse of stoning and of suckling an adult ten times were revealed, and they were (written) on a paper and kept under my bed. When the Messenger of Allah expired and we were preoccupied with his death, a goat entered and ate away the paper.

Actually if you study the Quran and Arabic History, much of the Quranic and Islamic rituals were based around ancient Arabic folklore and the many prevailing pagan rituals at the time.

In fact to take it one step further much of Islam was borrowed from Christianity, Judaism & Arab paganism. Arabia at that time was crying out for monotheism. Arabia was viewed as a disparate Godless region. Arabs saw Christianity and Judaism as more sophisticated than their own, given their advanced societal structure, culture and education and cohesion at the time.

From Arab paganism it borrowed Hajj, tawaf, stoning of the pillars of Mina, the zamzam well, djinns, slavery and polygamy. The Qur'an was written in the same style as the most popular form of entertainment at the time, poetry. In fact the infamous crescent and star of Islam was borrowed from the pagans at the time, along with the name of God, as prior to the Quran, the pagans were also worshipping something called Allah.

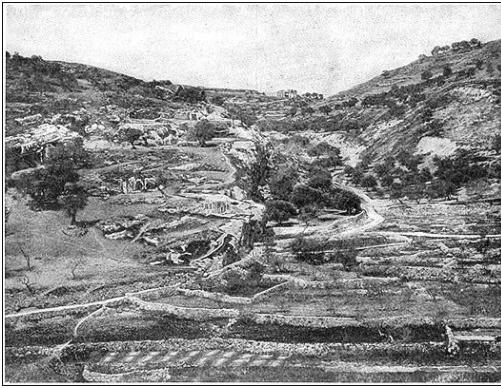
From the then widespread idolatrous Sabeian faith it took the main pillars of Islam: monotheism, prayer, fasting, zakat. Also a special form of baptism which was very similar to Wudu which was practiced often and was supposed to cleanse the souls of believers and wash them of their sins.

They used the sun for Qiblah facing the equator at mid day; their fundamental teaching is La'ilahah il'Allah; have five daily prayers (though Zuhr can join Asr while Maghrib can join Isha) and they also fast for 30 days.

From Judaism it the actual method of salat (see youtube video reponse to this video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlmaFLmv0jQ&feature=player_embedded)

I was shocked when I first saw the similarity, it seemed Islamic prayer was just a Chinese whispers version of ancient Jewish prayer. They even prayed on mats to overcome the problem of stone floors of the time. In fact it is rumoured that Judaism was just an adaptation of Akhenaten of Amarna's new found monotheistic faith (Cult of Aten) in ancient Egypt, of whom Moses (this came as no surprise) was a high priest off!

From Judaism it also borrowed the concept of Hell. Gehinnom (Arabic/Urdu) for hell, Ge Hinnam (in Hebrew) in English means the valley of Hinnom.



(1st photo Valley of Hinnon c.1900. 2nd photo you will see hell has finally frozen over!)

Gehinnom is cited in the New Testament and in early Christian writing to represent the final place where the wicked will be punished or destroyed after resurrection. It is actually a valley in Jerusalem, where idolatrous Jews sacrificed their children to the god Molech, the valley later became the common wasteyard for all the refuse of Jerusalem. Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and rubbish, were cast and consumed by a constant fire. In time it became the image of the place of everlasting destruction in Jewish tradition

As you can see it appears Islam is a mixture of different religions. The prophet was also hugely influenced by his grandfather's Yemeni religion, Hanafis (not to be confused with the 'Hanafi Mazhab'). He lived with him from childhood and was taken into care by him since being an orphan. We know his grandfather was considered an elder from that religion, so we can expect that he absorbed some of these teachings.

Hanafis was a monotheistic religion, believing in Prophet Abraham (although distorted versions of the original story) and they prayed 3 times a day, went to Haj in a specific month, carried out ablution, cutting the hands of thieves, stoning, banning pork & alcohol and banning of killing of daughters.

Interestingly enough, they were also distinguished by their beards.

14) Quranic pseudo-science

A few of the correct claims in the Quran were already extant among the prevailing religions (such as Christianity) and philosophers of the earlier times.

For example in the prophet's account of embryology, we can easily determine its scientific inaccuracy (which we will address later) in addition to its obvious plagiarism from earlier works by Greek philosophers and scientists such as Galen, Hippocrates and Aristotle, or Indian theses on the subject by Charaka and Susruta.

The four stages of embryology shown in the Quran is actually described by the Greek physician Galen, writing around 150 CE, some 500 years earlier. It should also be noted that one of Muhammad's companions, Harith Ibn Kalada, studied at the school of Jandi-Shapur in Persia and would have been well acquainted with the teachings of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen.

On occasion the Quran or hadith may have postulated things that turned out to be right - I see this coincidence can be explained in the same way that Darwin explained evolution i.e. given that there have been thousands of religions since the dawn of man, only the "strongest" survive i.e. those that got something's right, or indeed proliferated by conquering or fear of the unknown

such as eternal torment in hell, will survive today. Dawkins writes in detail the way in which cultural traits and patterns evolve and become the norm by describing them as 'memes'.

"Originally, Hawaiian culture had lots of taboos about food, but none about sex. Married individuals could have sex outside marriage without much fuss. When religion came along, it invented and taught sex guilt: it became suddenly forbidden to walk around naked, and God would punish those who did not listen. Of course, the missionaries brought with them smallpox and other diseases, which did kill numerous natives" Darrel Ray.

Nevertheless I am yet to be convinced by some of the wisdom of the Quran. With inheritance the son has the right to twice the inheritance as the son.

What if a man dies and leaves two children: a wealthy son and a blind, disabled daughter who is not married, and has no one to provide for her. It seems rather unreasonable that the son should get twice that of the daughter, who really needs it.

Let alone any claims that are postulated as miracles in the Quran. Basic mathematical mistakes exist in the Quran regarding inheritance such as in 4:11, 12-176

The share of the inheritance of the-

Wife (1/8) is: = 3/24
Daughters (2/3) = 16/24
Father (1/6) = 4/24
Mother(1/6) = 4/24
Total = 27/24

This is larger than the total funds available!

However for arguments sake, let's say the Quran is miraculous and did predict things in advance things that it could not possibly have known at the time.

There are many other historical figures who claim to have done so, does that also make them prophets of God if they claimed they were. Were scientists such as Epicurus divinely inspired?

The best example is a famous Latin poem summarizing Epicurean philosophy (341 B.C to 270 B.C some 1000 years earlier), which in my opinion far outdoes the Koran in both clarity and quantity of marvellous scientific predictions.

Here are some of them :

- the existence of the atom and the molecule (the binding of two atoms to produce a different chemical)
- earthquakes are caused by slipping fault lines
- sound is a pressure wave of air molecules whose shape determines the sound
- the law of inertia (unless retarded by a blow, objects are in constant motion--not proved until Galileo)
- the principal of universal natural law (the same principles of behaviour that apply on earth apply the same everywhere in the universe--a theory denied by Aristotle, and by the Christian Church until Galileo challenged the Church's view and Newton proved him right)
- the rain cycle
- smell is caused by the shape of molecules fitting the shape of receptors in the nose
- lightning is caused by friction between storm fronts and consists of rapidly-moving particles (which we now call electrons) that are smaller than the atoms that comprise visible matter

- the Nile rises every year because of snow melting at its source
- animals, including humans, evolved by natural selection
- matter is mostly empty space
- magnetism is the result of a constant discharge and absorption of particles between magnetic objects
- there is no centre of the universe but many different solar systems with their own planets
- the speed of light is finite.
- he also predicted relativity, arguing that motion is relative, and time does not exist except as the relation of objects and events to each other, and time is also relative to the observer..."

Should anyone say divine intervention help explain these findings in 300 B.C and was Epicurus inspired by God? I would say a firm 'No', he just got lucky.

He knew nothing of Wave Mechanics, the Compton Radius, or Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. He was simply trying to solve what he saw by drawing largely on empirical observation.

So too, the prophet was simply trying to state what was obvious to him: that God is the one who made both the earth and the heavens so vast.

This is quite probable, since Mohammed demonstrated he knew nothing about the difference between stars and galaxies, for example, and only the latter are expanding away from each other. The stars within our galaxy, which comprise by far most of what Mohammed would have imagined as the visible 'heavens' , are not expanding, but are held in place by gravity.

Just imagine the lost opportunity here: Allah could have given Mohammed the most incredible proof of scientific prescience by having him describe the difference between star systems and galaxies, or even stating Hubble's Law of expansion, perhaps with exact figures or at least the added point that this rate of expansion is accelerating.

But no, all he gave him was the incredibly vague such as *Quran 51, 47-49 'we are the ones who make it vast.'* There is nothing scientific about that.

Then, of course, claims that have since been proved wrong by religions, are often swept under the carpet when claims of "I do not understand" or "we cannot question God" or "it's a mistranslation" are made.

Although the Qur'an describes a flat earth we find Muslims today adamant that the Qur'an portrays an ostrich-egg shaped one (although this claim is made by what I call "text mAssaging"). Some 20 years ago the very same people said it meant spherical, and 1400 years ago some claimed it meant flat - note the evolving definition of the word 'daha' to fit with our understanding of science at the time!

The word *Daha* that is used actually means 'to spread out/flatten.'

As science has proved this to be wrong, some muslims have managed to miraculously circumvent this definition and say the Quran says otherwise. If tomorrow the earth was proved to be flat, I am sure they would revert back to the original & correct definition of the word "Daha". To underscore this point, there was a time when Muslims clerics would establish fatwa's against those claiming the earth to be spherical.

It is known simply as 'confirmation bias' - the way someone will interpret into a situation in accordance with their pre-existing view, and is in stark contrast to objectivity.

Other religions such as Christianity also make claims which their followers say can only be inspired by “divine” knowledge e.g. the Bible does say the earth is round. Without wishing to get involved too deeply about these claims, they are all wrong in any case. The earth is in fact oblate shaped (i.e. watermelon shaped, a sphere with flatter ends at the poles).

Another example of ‘confirmation bias’ is the way in which many Muslims will resort to only looking at Islamic scholars’ writings for explanations, whereas most scientists will look across a range of sources and conduct their own investigations, test and then re-test after eliminating control factors, before even attempting to reach any hard-found conclusions.

In the last 250,000 years since man has existed, science has largely played little part in finding out the answers, and only in the last 100 years has science made this exponential rise.

Application of true scientific method, the sharing of knowledge & free-enquiry have brought about this change and is the only true way to avoid error.

Darwinian evolution in academic circles is now popularly accepted over & above the Muslim & Christian myth of Adam & Eve, and carbon dating of skeletons now contradicts the age of man according to the biblical scriptures.

Replacing a human heart with a pig’s heart, travelling to outer space, manufacturing of artificial limbs are all recent successes, but what will the next 1000 years bring? We will certainly further our understanding and continue to answer the remaining unanswered questions, and it really would not surprise me where this may eventually lead?

Artificial creation of human beings?

15) The scientific miracles of the Quran

Did a Bedouin split the moon 1400 years ago, are there really things like talking snakes and a flying donkey (Quran 17:1)?

i) How is man created?

There are many contradictory accounts of how this occurred.

It tells us "*we are created from earth (11:61), sometimes from dry clay (15:26,28,33, 17:61, 32:7), sometimes from nothing (19:67), sometimes not from nothing (52:35), sometimes from wet earth (23:12), or from mire (38:71), sometimes from water (25:54, 21:30, 24:45), sometimes from dust (3:59, 30:20, 35:11) or even sometimes from the dead (30:19, 39:6)*".

The beauty of such multifaceted philosophy is no matter what scientists discover, Muslims will have a verse to refer to that verifies the miraculous knowledge of the Qur'an.

ii) Earth & the Galaxy

2:22: "*Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens?;*

Rain is sent from the heavens, as opposed to being part of a natural process called the water-cycle.

21:31-32 *And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should quake with them, and We have made therein broad highways between mountains for them to pass through. And we have made the sky a roof withheld from them. 18:86 Until, when he reached the setting of*

the sun, he found it set in a spring of murky water: Near it he found a People.

Reading these verses together provides an image of a very primitive understanding of the cosmos. A heaven that is raised with pillars that we cannot see, a sky put as a roof above our heads, mountains placed as pegs to hold the earth down thereby preventing earthquakes, a sun that sets in a muddy spring with people living nearby; all nonsensical concepts having no alignment with modern science. There is no description of a great explosion and the formation of solar systems with orbiting planets around centric stars, no black holes, no corona, no ionosphere or quasars, but a heaven on invisible pillars.

The Quran also gives the impression that we live in a geocentric universe, namely that the earth is at the centre of the universe, and the sun & moon orbit around the earth at set intervals, thus giving us night & day. This is what one would expect at the time, as it was the common understanding of the day, and made popular by the ancient Greeks and embraced by both Aristotle & Ptolemy. There are many verses that support this primitive understanding, here is one example

(Quran36:40) It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in an orbit.

In fact the the sun does not orbit the earth, it doesn't orbit anything. The moon correctly orbits the earth, and the earth orbits the sun.

A miracle carried out by Allah is Surah 50, is the splitting of the moon. Muhammed claimed this to be a miracle and a sign for the Meccans. In fact a quick search on NASA's records show there was a solar eclipse at July 23, 613AD at 8.13am for 2.5 hours, and sceptics believe this is in fact what was really happening.

Also according to the Quran, Allah may not even have known about more hours of daylight at the northern/southern hemispheres, because at the equator the length of the day doesn't change . What were Eskimos at the poles supposed to do during the month of Ramadhan where the sun rises and then sets after six months - starve to death or did the writer not know? The prophet never had to wake up in the middle of his sleep to pray Fajr. Sunrise in Mecca was always between 5:30-6:30am throughout the year for him.

iii)Human Reproduction

This quote from the Sahih hadith requires no further elaboration.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 4, Bk. 55, Number 546: "When Abdullah bin Salam heard the arrival of the Prophet at Medina, he came to him and said, " Why does a child resemble its father, and why does it resemble its maternal uncle?"

Allah's Apostle said,": If a man has sexual intercourse with his wife and gets discharge first, the child will resemble the father, and if the woman gets discharge first, the child will resemble her." On that Abdullah bin Salam said, "I testify that you are the Apostle of Allah."

As mentioned earlier, starting with Muhammad's account of embryology, we can easily determine its scientific inaccuracy in addition to its obvious plagiarism from earlier works by Greek philosophers and scientists such as Galen, Hippocrates and Aristotle, or Indian theses on the subject by Charaka and Susruta.

The account that follows shows the same four stages of the embryo as described by the Greek physician Galen, writing around 150 CE. It should also be noted that one of Muhammad's

companions, Harith ben Kalada, studied at the school of Jandi-Shapur in Persia and would have been well acquainted with the teachings of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen.

Quran 23:12-14 says God created man from "wet earth, then placed him as (a drop of) sperm (nutfah) in a safe lodging; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood (alaqa); then out of that clot We made a (foetus) lump (mudghah), then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature."

'Nutfah' (semen) is mentioned in verse 86:6, *is the fluid issued from between the loins and ribs*, not, as we know today, from the testicles. This reflects the mistaken view of Hippocrates still prevalent at the time of Muhammad.

Nowhere in this description, nor the Quran, is the female's egg mentioned. As the quotes shows, it says a baby is born by a sperm turning into a blood clot, and then into a lump. Out of the lump, bones are formed and then on the bones flesh is placed.

In fact organs and flesh are the first that begin cellular division and formation. Later, as the child grows, bone structures begin to develop along with organs and flesh.

Another particularly lauded example is where it states in the Quran that the embryo behaves like a leech and looks like a "piece of chewing gum".

Having read these quotes without bias then leech-like behaviour would be inherently obvious during birth as the umbilical cord bleeds when it is removed. Regarding chewed gum, I wonder if any small organism not yet fully-formed could be described in this way?

None of these facts would be considered as miraculous events if they were read with the same integrity as you would expect from a serious piece of research.

iv) Spirits

Can there really be a spirit inside us that will rise when we are dead. Certainly scientifically there appears no proof that they exist. In fact if ghosts/invisible beings/magic are real and acceptable notions, then why in the real world are they derided and seen as a sign of lunacy when taken out of context of religion?

Muslims are supposed to believe in invisible spirits called jinns, which influences their daily lives.

There is even a non-Muslim jinn that causes trouble to followers of Islam.

The Kafir jinni influences the abnormal behaviour of patients with psychiatric disorders. The Arabic word for a mad man is majnoon which means ridden by a jinn. With this knowledge the treatment now becomes straight forward, to beat the jinni (by beating the patient) and the jinn will leave!

Psychiatric disorders are still treated this way in many Islamic countries. Its sounds particularly harsh when it is Allah who in the first place created them "And the jinn He created from a smokeless flame of fire." (Quran 55:15) and as it may be down to the simple fact that they had not eaten enough dates Number 663: Saud: The Prophet said, *"If somebody takes seven 'Ajwa dates every morning, he will not be affected by poison or magic on that day till night."*

v) Food and prevention of disease

A believer eats in one intestine whereas a non-believer eats in seven intestines. Muslim Vol. III, Nos. 5113

Pork & alcohol consumption are forbidden in Islam but what really is so wrong with eating pork and alcohol. The West eats pork and suffers no more long term damage from it than it does with beef or other meats. In fact the BMA are yet to issue guidelines against the eating of pork, as they did with beef after BSE. Provided alcohol is consumed sensibly then it can be enjoyed as it is by the majority of the worlds population, and certainly no more dangerous than uncontrolled usage of any other dangerous substances by a minority e.g. drugs, guns etc. In fact, scientific research has demonstrated an association between moderate alcohol consumption and a lower risk of some cancers & cardiovascular disease.

Prophet Mohammed also believed that certain types of food provide protection against all types of diseases. This applied to his favourite foods, in particular honey, dates and black seed. *Bukahri 592: I heard Allah's Apostle saying, "There is healing in black seed for all diseases except death."*

Here the Prophet Mohammed advocated using camel's urine and milk as medicine:

"Some people from the tribe of 'Ukl came to the Prophet and embraced Islam. The climate of Medina did not suit them, so the Prophet ordered them to go to the (herd of milch) camels of charity and to drink, their milk and urine. They did so, and after they had recovered from their ailment (became healthy) they turned renegades (reverted from Islam) and killed the shepherd of the camels and took the camels away. The Prophet sent (some people) in their pursuit and so they were (caught and) brought, he ordered that their hands and legs should be cut off and that their eyes should be branded with heated pieces of iron, and that their cut hands and legs should not be cauterized, till they die" According to Anas, Volume 8, Bk 82, No794

The Quran has mentioned fruits for food & medicine, but again strangely enough the fruits mentioned for were only the ones available in 7th century Arabia.

A man came to the prophet & said, "My brother has got loose motions. The Prophet said, Let him drink honey. The man came again & said, "I made him drink honey but that made him worse?" The Prophet said, "Allah has said the Truth, & the abdomen of your brother has told a lie". Bukhari Vol 7, Number 614

Additionally why are no exotic passion fruits, kiwi fruits or pineapples available in heaven, you will note that only 7th Century Arab fruits are available there?

Why is there not a single verse in the Quran that gives us something medically useful like a cure for cancer or even condemning rape or telling us infant marriage was wrong, or even something far more simple like telling us to boil water to kill of harmful bacteria.

Yet it finds it necessary to tell us how to clean our backsides with sand & grit when water is not available, or more usefully 17 different ways of how boiling water is used for torture by Allah.

This erroneous discovery of the healing properties of fly's wings is described in this Sahih hadith, but sadly it fails to specify which one of the fly's wings to eat for the miracle cure from disease.

Allah's Apostle said, "If a fly falls in the vessel of any of you, let him dip all of it (into the vessel) and then throw it away, for in one of its wings there is a disease and in the other there is healing (antidote for it) Bukhari No 673

I am sure many scholars could find ways to attempt to justify these clauses as I am sure that I could if I felt obligated to try. But would it be justification for justification's sake?

However it remains to be said, that if the Bk. was not a conspiracy/vision created by the need of rulers or individuals to find order and peace in an otherwise unruly and uncivilised society of the time, but actually written with divine knowledge and really was a Bk. of God, then such oddities & inconsistencies surely would just not arise?

That would be left for the fair & honest reader to decide.

16) Philosophical Questions

“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? - Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing? - Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing? - Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?”

Epicurus 300 B.C

I list some of the deeper philosophical questions that further compounded my views on religion, and are some of the questions we discussed up until 4am when you were here.

- i) What was the point for God in creating the human race? Are we just for a bit of fun - a type of game or thought experiment for him?
- ii) Why did he send all the named prophets from the Quran i.e. Adam, Idris, Noah, Hud, Abraham, Lot, Isma'il, Is'haq, Imam, Jacob, Joseph, Jethro, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Jesus, Muhammad to just one relatively tiny & under-populated part of the world, namely Arabia. Were no others across the globe worthy of receiving this message direct from the messengers, rather than relying on a book produced from hearsay contained on leaves & bones?

Every year hundreds of fresh new self-proclaiming prophets flock to Jerusalem. They suffer from a condition called the Jerusalem complex, and there is a special psychiatric hospital Kfar Shaul set up specifically for their needs & treatment for this condition. Doctors normally prescribe them with mild antipsychotic medications or a dose of tranquilizers.

- iii) How could an all loving god, who is kinder and more compassionate than us, send anyone to burn in hell for eternity?

We sin for, at most, for a lifetime so how can a finite sin be punished with infinite suffering? Where is the justice when we've only sinned for a certain number of years? As a fallible human being, I certainly would not wish that on anyone, not even my worst enemy - shouldn't the punishment fit the crime, and where is God's much celebrated mercy?

And don't the wrong people according to the scriptures have a greater tendency to go to heaven? Would those who were more selfishly disposed allocate more of their freetime to devotion in order to reap their personal rewards in heaven. And those who were more carefree spend a lesser proportion of their lives dedicated to being subservient and have a greater chance of going to hell? Should it not be the other way around?

- iv) Why doesn't God just eliminate the devil, as it is the devil that is partly the cause of our problems, particularly in the case of weaker-minded individuals. Why did he create us imperfect, with such psychological and physical imperfections (e.g. providing men with a foreskin, and then request that we surgically remove it at birth)? Particularly when he says in Quran 95:4 Certainly We created man in the best make?

What kind of intelligent designer gives humans and other animals a set of genes for Vitamin C production that don't actually work? See Vitamin C Biosynthesis.

There is no intelligent designer? Skin diseases - see Ichthyosis (limited life expectancy)



Certainly not: see Charlotte Cleverley-Bisman disease (life is a few months usually)



Absolutely not: see Anencephaly disease (usually don't survive birth)



Why would God allow some perfectly good & honest people to starve or suffer grave misfortune, and other bad people to lead perfectly happy and rewarding lives? Why not punish and/or reward us during our lifetimes so we learn from our actions and improve! This would make the human race more inclined to believe in an invisible God and his powers of justice, make them better Muslims, and be a means of encouraging a better society.

I remember people falling ill, sometimes even dying on Haj, and was another thing I remember struggling with when I was child and a Muslim. At the very least, you would have hoped God would intervene and stop people suffering because they decided to go on a pilgrimage as their duty towards him?

- v) If he really wanted us to believe in him then there would be no reason for him to be invisible. Why not show some evidence for example by ensuring all copies of the Quran levitated and magically flipped over their pages, in which case people like me would revert back to Islam in an instant.
- vi) Let's take the 2 commonly cited arguments by Muslims, that is a by-product of humanism or lack of religion, is that it will lead to an increase in crime & immorality. Regardless of whether this statement is true or not, it still does not make Islam true. In any case, let's take each point separately:

Crime

Federal Bureau of Prisons, 1997 -

Christians make up approx 75% of the United States population, and 75% of the prison population.

Atheists make up 10% of the United States population, yet only make up 0.2% of the prison population

Incidentally some statistics also show that secular nations (such as Scandinavian countries) have less crime, give more charity and are more at peace with one another, than other religious countries; even the commonly cited Saudi Arabia.

Morality

A quick search on Google's search trends will show the highest traffic looking for the words "nude pics" actually comes from Pakistan, which is about twice as many as the next country down the list, India, which has six times its population!

The highest traffic looking for online porn in the U.S. comes from the overtly religious and conservative Utah.

My point is not that religion promotes this behaviour, but that restricting freedoms does not suppress human nature and only serves to camouflage or drive it underground, thus making it even harder to control.

- vii) Let's make the assumption that all human beings around the world are equal at birth, some born in a Christian family, some Hindu, some Buddhist etc. If you were to analyse these groups of people across the globe and segmented them by religion, you will find certain characteristic traits emerge. These traits, positive or negative, can only be down to the cultures that have resulted often as a direct consequence of the religions themselves.

This is an important point as followers often blame Muslims for not following the religion correctly, thus insinuating that Muslims are less capable as a people of following a good code of life than other human beings and therefore not equal? This cannot be the case, we are all equal to begin with and this can only be down to the religions, and their resultant cultures, that have created these differences in the first place.

- viii) Let's take the hypothesis that there was no religion on the planet. Firstly there would be less reason for people to argue and fight over. Like Steven Weinberg (Nobel Laureate in physics) said

"Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it, you'd have good people doing good things and evil people doing bad things, but for good people to do bad things, it takes religion".

Secondly religion would again breed, probably quicker in the developing world than elsewhere, given the human requirement for an infallible crutch to believe in. To some it

gives hope; to others it provides a purpose. This can be proven by the fact the multitude of different religions, worshipping anything from stone Gods, to human Gods, to animal Gods, to invisible Gods yet all claiming, and their followers being convinced, that they are the one & only true religion.

This is all highlighted by other cults that became so popular, even in recent times in the developed world when David Koresh from the United States, whilst claiming he was a prophet, and caused the death of over 70 followers who fought to the end against the FBI. They were just a group of disenfranchised individuals before they met him.

- ix) If we were to invent another god, lets say it was the 'fairy at the bottom of my garden' as popularised by Dawkins and we are asked to have faith in its existence, or face eternal torture upon death. Then lets put together a 'sacred text' surrounding the exploits of this fairy (and call it something other than fairytales), perhaps even more convincing and robust than some of the other religious texts around at the moment.

Then 10 generations down the line and with 1000 adherents, the members of this cult would no longer be classified as foolish but as 'followers' who need to have their 'religion' respected (and by the way do not mock this fairy because if you don't believe that it created the universe then I am sorry, you also will be burned in hell).

This may seem a little far-fetched but lets not forget people in recent times followed David Koresh in the USA and burned themselves alive after he claimed prophecy. Or the Bakuba tribe in Africa believe that the Giant God Bumba vomited out the world upon feeling a stomach ache (the Big Bumba Theory?). Or in ancient Egypt where they believed that the Sun Atum-Ra created twin Gods by masturbating!

The point is this, serious debate about religion should not start with any religious text, Christian, Muslim or any other flavour, it should start with logic, reason and rational thinking.

- x) I have heard it is impossible to prove that there is no God; as an argument against my insistence of proof for a God. Admittedly its not possible, but only because it is impossible to prove that something, that shows no tangible sign of existence (i.e. cannot be seen, touched or heard) and defies all scientific logic, can actually be proven to exist by scientific means. In the same way as it is impossible to disprove that the fairy at the bottom of my garden created us, and will banish to hell those who do not believe in it.

It is however possible to categorically disprove several myths that are quoted by Muslims particularly in terms of the age and origin of the Man, Earth and Universe - though this is far too complicated to go into here.

Religionists will gleefully point to the First Cause and ask who created the universe, yet fail to answer the same question when put to them as to the creator of God. If a magical God has been around for eternity, then couldn't we say the same about a magical universe?

Nevertheless in respect to proving/disproving, the burden of proof is on the believer to prove - not the agnostic/atheist to disprove, as this being has never been seen or heard by anyone, nor has science ever demonstrated its presence. There are so many different versions of religion around, how is anyone supposed to know that they are following the right one, or even the right version of that religion? God could at least have provided us with some real evidence, in which case I would be the first to jump on board. Particularly when a lifetime is expected to be devoted to believing and sacrificing for it.

- xi) Even if we were able to prove that there was a creator, it still takes a huge leap of faith to believe this creator sent his words through the Quran. After all why would he allow the fallibility of humans to remember it, and then write it down reliably & accurately 30 years after the prophet's death? Apparently the chosen prophet could not remember the verses sent down by Allah

Narrated Aisha: Allahs Apostle heard a man reciting the Quran at night, and said, May Allah bestow His Mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such Verses of such-and-such Suras, which I was caused to forget. (Sahih Bukhari Vol6, Bk. 61, No 558)

- xii) Most religions with the possible exception of Buddhism say that their god wants to receive devotion by praying, going to places to worship & making day to day sacrifices for them.

I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me - Quran 51:56

If a being is omnipotent and an important thing to them is to receive unquestioning devotion, then surely there are better ways to go about it? Would he not prefer us to spend that time by helping those that are blind, old, handicapped and less fortunate than ourselves, rather than spending that time in servitude towards his already almightiness on a prayer mat?

A good way to prove if whether Allah occasionally answers prayers, would be to check to see if Muslims have a higher cancer survival rate than atheists.

In general Muslim cancer sufferers would pray more to the monotheistic God than an atheist would, and thus as a whole be more likely to have their prayers answered and survive, than a Kaffir would.

I am sure it would be fairly easy to prove this by comparing the cancer survival statistic of a largely atheist nation (the largest being Sweden which is 80% irreligious, or others like Denmark, Russia or Switzerland) vs. any Muslim nation.

This would prove that prayers do not work, or Allah does not listen/care/ exist - take your pick!

Surely such a god would be more concerned with how we live our lives and want us to treasure the little time we have been given. At the end of the day, as a parent I do not expect, nor do I want, my kids to spend the rest of their lives thanking me for the sacrifices I have made for them, nor do I expect a greater being which is infinitely kinder than myself to do so. Existentialism and Humanism are worth looking at, but generally speaking if you have any spare emotional and intellectual energy then I think its best devoted to our children or those in need, and not to any possible fairy tale. I too would desperately like to believe in an afterlife so I could see people who I loved and have passed away - but wanting it to be true, does not make it true.

I have heard "Just read the Quran, it's a beautiful Book that will provide you with all the answers" many times - I did so, but this was not the case with me. If I am honest, I found it repetitive & uninspiring and that it just provoked more questions and doubt.

The way it oversimplified often very complex issues, its general aggressive tone, its forthrightness, the way it pigeon holed, were all hallmarks of what some might even go as far as to argue as being written by an uncivilised male human being, and not by any superior being.

Here are some statistics I found regarding the content of the Quran, and although i appreciate it's not an exact science, I can corroborate as being broadly similar to what I found when I read it...

- (52%) - over half of these verses is vitriol aimed at infidels.*
- (17%) - deal with Allah*
- (15%) - deal with believers/non-believers*
- (12%) - deal with Day of Judgment or Day of Doom*
- (4%) ... is a good verse. (Do not steal from the poor / Give to the poor etc)*

It appeared to me that the Book just wants to railroad its message into peoples thoughts', beliefs & subconscious, and when this code of life is followed it is unsurprising to many non-believers why Muslims are where they are today.

I just wonder how many Muslims would convert to Islam based on its merits, had they not been born into the religion.

My personal belief is that I should try my best to lead a good life, and not to treat others in a way that I would not expect to be treated myself - the Golden Rule. Then the rewards will not only be available to me by whatever, if anything, is out there, but during my lifetime also. I have found it leads to a richer existence as the rules you follow are those that you think are right, and not prescribed by some randomly gathered parchment scribblings from the 7th century. And I will leave the religion to all those people who wish to follow it.

A true religion would be faultless and immediately awe inspiring, as it would be put together by an all knowing, all seeing, creator - this one sadly has missed the mark by a long way for me.

Appendix

Gods' Graveyard

Agdistis, Ah Puch, Ahura Mazda, Alberich, Amaterasu, An, Anansi, Anat, Andvari, Anshar, Anu, Aphrodite, Apollo, Apsu, Ares, Artemis, Asclepius, Athena, Athirat, Athtart, Atlas, Atum-Ra, Baal, Ba Xian, Bacchus, Balder, Bast, Bellona, Bergelmir, Bes, Bixia Yuanjin, Bragi, Brahma, Brigit, Camaxtli, Ceres, Ceridwen, Cernunnos, Chac, Chalchiuhtlicue, Charun, Chemosh, Cheng-huang, Cybele, Dagon, Damkina (Dumkina), Davlin, Dawn, Demeter, Diana, Di Cang, Dionysus, Ea, El, Enki, Enlil, Eos, Epona, Ereskigal, Farbauti, Fenrir, Forseti, Freya, Freyr, Frigg, Gaia, Ganesha, Ganga, Garuda, Gauri, Geb, Geong Si, Hades, Hanuman, Hathor, Hecate (Hekate), Helios, Heng-o (Chang-o), Hephaestus, Hera, Hermes, Hestia, Hod, Hoderi, Hoori, Horus, Hotei, Huitzilopochtli, Hsi-Wang-Mu, Hygeia, Inanna, Inti, Iris, Ishtar, Isis, Ixtab, Izanaki, Izanami, Jesus, Juno, Jupiter, Juturna, Kagutsuchi, Kartikeya, Khepri, Ki, Kingu, Kinich Ahau, Kishar, Krishna, Kukulcan, Lakshmi, Liza, Loki, Lugh, Luna, Magna Mater, Maia, Marduk, Mars, Mbombo, Medb, Mercury, Mimir, Minerva, Mithras, Morrigan, Mot, Mummu, Muses, Nammu, Nanna, Nanna (Norse), Nanse, Neith, Nemesis, Nephthys, Neptune, Nergal, Ninazu, Ninhurzag, Nintu, Ninurta, Njord, Nut, Odin, Ohkuninushi, Ohyamatsumi, Orgelmir, Osiris, Ostara, Pan, Parvati, Phaethon, Phoebe, Phoebus Apollo, Pilumnus, Poseidon, Quetzalcoatl, Rama, Re, Rhea, Sabazius, Sarasvati, Selene, Shiva, Seshat, Seti (Set), Shamash, Shapsu, Shen Yi, Shiva, Shu, , Si-Wang-Mu, Sin, Sirona, Sol, Surya, Susanoh, Tawaret, Tefnut, Tezcatlipoca, Thanatos, Thor, Tiamat, Tlaloc, Tonatiuh, Toyo-Uke-Bime, Tyche, Tyr, Utu, Uzume, Venus, Vesta, Vishnu, Voltumnus, Vulcan, Xipe, Xi Wang-mu, Xochipilli, Xochiquetzal, Yam, Yarikh, Yhwh, Ymir, Yu-huang, Yum Kimil, Zeus

.. and lastly, for me at least, Allah.

R.I.P