At the End of the Day...

- There will always be a response or a rebuttal to any argument anyone on any side makes. However, we are creatures capable of possessing flawed reasoning and using honeyed words and we live in a world where it is possible for a good argument to be met with a bad rebuttal. As such, it doesn't make you right just because you're able to respond to argument, and vice versa.

- We need to ensure that our responses stay consistent with each other, regardless of what intellectual challenges are presented to us. If they are not consistent, or if there's a better answer, then there is an error in our reasoning and/or beliefs and we need to research and revise them appropriately.

- No one is perfect, which means that we will all be continuously improving our relationship and understanding of God and the faith that He has prescribed for us (assuming this is actually what we want). We need to ensure that the goal is never our will but God's will, and knowing that it is 100% within reality's capacity for us to be wrong. As such, we need to make sure that we always take steps closer to God, while fully accepting that a previous step we made (which may have been a step in the right direction at the time) may not be perfectly reflective of the Truth.

- We shouldn't need to be specialized scholars in order to identify the Truth: given that the Messengers were sent to preach to everyone regardless if they were working, educated, or elite, people from each of these classes chose to convert from the beliefs they were born into (all the people of Jonah did so), and that the Messengers did not have to be scholars in their field, it stands to reason that the Truth will be formulated in such a way that anyone is capable of understanding it (assuming they acutally want to understand it).

    - This is not implying that scholarly efforts are inherently futile or misleading: in fact, scholarly effort (when presented in the proper context) will only confirm the Truth and affirm the belief of a believer. Rather, this is merely pointing out that the findings from researching a specialized field (such as history during a certain time period) will not be foundational to the Truth, but rather it will be in support of the already clear foundation that anyone can understand.

    - Given that it is possible for scholars and those in power to mislead us (intentionally by any means or otherwise), it is also important to note that we should not blindly trust their results without assessing their validity. However, this is difficult to do if information is being hidden or placed in a wrong context. The blame ultimately goes onto those in power that do this, but the rest of us can challenge this possibility by considering, "where is there room for error? how likely is it that their findings are wrong? if these findings are wrong, how would we know?" and seeking further information about apparent contradictions. It is prudent to remember that the path to Truth is a journey and not a blink of an eye, and that if your heart is in the right place then God will open the right doors for you at the right time.

- To avoid asking bad questions (ie. ones with a fallacious premise), consider the examples of God's Messengers and their message: what were the problems of their people and how were they inspired to respond to it? How would they repond to the discourse following the question? Does it distract from the foundation of the Truth? If you did find an answer, what would it ultimately change?

Quran References

Definitely recommend listening to these from a well-known reciter and follow along the translation, and not just read them in English!

Surahs:

- 2: arrogance vs. humility; mankind's purpose and our relationship with God; setting the Islamic mindset;
- 5: our relationship with God; honoring His covenants; the value of His covenants through time;
- 12: God does as He pleases and does not waste the good done by the righteous; never lose hope from God's mercy, for He is the Most Merciful of anyone, capable of the best of mercy;
- 16: to each community was their own set of rules/traditions set by God and He created everyone different, but what is the same is that God has provided to us from His bounties and continuously offers us a way to His forgiveness and mercy;
- 17: exposition of human nature;
- 19: correcting the Christian mindset;
- 21: all believers and holy people accross time and culture are a single community and God is their Lord;
- 35: God's relationship and power over all creation;
- 56: God's mercy;
- 112: definition of God

Ayahs:

- 2:30-39 - the story of Adam explaining our purpose in life
- 2:195 - God loves those who do good
- 2:245 - who will give God a good loan, for Him to return it back multiplied many times times? He is the one who grants or withholds abundance
- 3:59 - the example of Jesus is like that of Adam: both created from dust and came to life upon God's Word
- 3:103 - hold on firmly to the rope of God and do not become divided, and remember His favor upon you and mercy
- 3:134 - God loves those who do good
- 5:18 - they say they are God's children; why then does He punish you for your sins? We are all creations of God and His servants, to which He punishes or forgives who He pleases
- 5:54 - true believers will love God and will have His love on them
- 5:100 - good and evil are not equal, despite the amount or appeal of evil that may be apparent
- 6:12 - God prescribed/chose/wrote mercy upon Himself
- 6:103 - No vision can grasp God, but His grasp is over all vision: He is subtle/above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.
- 7:156 - God's mercy extends over all things
- 12:56,90 - God shows His mercy on whomever he wills, and whoever is pious and endures patiently, then God does not waste the reward of the righteous
- 16:18 - you can never count the bounties/blessings that God has conferred onto you
- 16:23 - God does not love the arrogant
- 16:110,119 - Those who are patient, repent, and endure in the way of God after sinning, then God is the Forgiver, the Merciful
- 19:75 - God extends His rope to those who are misguided, up until their time
- 39:3-4 - people seek to worship mediators beside God so that they can be closer to Him - if God wanted to have a son, He could have selected from His creation at will
- 39:53 - to God's worshippers who have sinned against themselves: do not depair from the mercy of God
- 50:38 - God created everything in 6 days and weariness did not touch Him
- 53:23 - they are only names that you've named them, names that which God did not send down an authority - they follow nothing but their assumptions when guidance already has come from your Lord
- 57:4 - God sees everything and is ever watchful of what you do
- 112:3 - God "does" not beget nor gets begotten (not "can't")

Similarities	Differences
God - Merciful - Just - "Forgiving" - Majestic - Transcendent - Loving - One - All-powerful/capable - All-knowing - Creator of all things - Including Hell - Consistent basic presence - Created mankind for worship - Progressive revelation - Created the Earth neither as a heaven or hell	**God** - Trinity/3 in 1 vs. One - God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit vs. God the merciful, just, forgiving, etc... - Punished Adam vs. Forgave Adam - Forgiveness by Jesus' suffering vs. Forgiveness by God's will - Evil erases good vs. Good erases evil - Created Earth as a punishment vs. Created Earth as a test - Forgiveness is not a part of justice vs. Forgiveness is a part of justice - Loves all vs. Loves believers - Rested on the 7th day vs. Transcends rest - Progressive fundamental message vs. Consistent fundamental message - Requires fundamental intercession vs. no fundamental intercession - Humans created in God's image vs. Nothing is like God/Humans created from God's spirit
Scriptures - Contain historical references - Contain guidance for believers - Asserts that those who do not follow it will go to Hell - Asserts that whoever follows it will go to Paradise - Claim to contain no falsehood - Contain fulfilled prophesies - Preach faith + works	**Scriptures** - Structured as a history textbook vs. Structured as a guidance textbook - Written from necessity vs. Written as revealed - Secondary/Tertiary source vs. Primary source - Unknown authors vs. known author - Many authors vs. Single author - Canonization at 300 years vs. Canonization at 30 years - Canonization of content vs. Canonization of handwriting - Not Messenger's original language vs. Messenger's original language - Written after Messenger's death vs. Written during Messenger's lifetime - Human authors vs. Supernatural author - Preserved with those in power vs. Preserved in people's hearts - Rising Christology in the Gospels vs. Consistent Tawhīd in the Quran
Messengers - Human - Claimed to be separate from God - Explicitely prayed to God - Depended on God to exist - Preached submission to God's will - Preached to everyone, including both average people and scholars - Had associated miracles - Known for exceptional character - Jesus was the Messiah	**Messengers** - God as human vs. Human sent by God - Jesus son of God vs. Jesus son of Mary - Jesus died on the cross vs. God saved/prevented Jesus from being killed - Muhammad the blasphemer/heretic vs. Muhammad the Messenger - Jesus is the second Adam vs. Jesus and Adam are both creations by the Word
Mindset - Golden rule - Repentence for sins - Organized prayer is encouraged - Overlook and forgive	**Mindset** - Distant from God without Jesus vs. Distant from God without Submission - Children of God vs. Servants/slaves of God - Life is a punishment/suffering vs. Life is a test - Live/pray like culture vs. Live/pray like Messenger - Born with original sin vs. Born pure/with original forgiveness

Defending Falsehood

- Defending contradictions (invalid arguments):
  - "Once you see the whole picture, everything will make sense"
  - "They're not really contradictions, rather they complement each other"
  - "This is a complex idea"
  - "You need to make sure it's placed in its proper context"
  - "If you put your faith in ____, everything will become clear"
  - "The existance of <truth> in a part of this belief proves the belief as a whole is also true"
  - "We aren't capable of understanding the fullness of its truth"
  - "Because of our flawed intellect, all we need to do is believe"
  - "I witnessed <a supernatural event> that led me to believe this"
- Defending weaknesses (unsound arguments):
  - "Look at the wisdom of _____, which means it is true"
  - "_____ had many positive results, which means it is true"
  - "So many people believe in it, which means it is true"
  - "So many people considered to be smart believe in it, which means it is true"
  - "People were willing to die for this belief, which means it must be true"
  - Refusing to compare ideologies to test if there are better alternatives
  - Only looking at the pros while neglecting the weight of the cons
- Attacking truth
  - "They are bad people which means what they believe in is wrong"
  - "That belief doesn't have <some idea in a false belief>, which means it is wrong"
  - "Most people don't follow what you believe"
  - "It is irrational"
  - Comparing it to false standards
  - Taking it out of its proper context

How can you tell the difference between truth and falsehood? How can you be equipped to separate truth and falsehood when they're mixed?

- Trust in your Creator's guidance:
  - If our Creator does not guide us, then we have no authority to believe that we - creatures with very limited persepctive and intellect - can objectively guide ourselves
  - The Truth is clear and distinct from Falsehood, and our Creator endowed us with adequate capacity to tell the difference
  - This is why He sends Revelation through Prophets and Messengers - a revelation that is revealed in the language of its people, core concepts simple enough that lay people can understand and defend, and with power that is enough to out-science the science of the time
- Education and study:
  - The more about reality you know, the better equipped you'll be at looking at the "whole picture"
  - Identify a life purpose that is consistent with reality
  - The more you learn, the better you will be able to comprehend and commuincate more complex ideas and how to break break down
- Establishing core/foundational concepts before dependent ones:
  - Means of equipping oneself to separate truth from falsehood when they're mixed
  - If a core concept is wrong, then all the beliefs that follow will also be wrong
  - A firm understanding of the core concepts will help identify where the problem is

Steak and Fries vs. Christianity

1. God values evil more so than good.

- Original Sin
  - God created mankind with the capability to inevitably sin, and when they did with Adam's sin, God took away the grace He gave them.
  - For some period of time, Adam obeyed God and did not eat from the tree. There was no reward for this choice, but only the punishment when he slipped up and sinned - the punishment of the worldly life. If his dwelling in the Garden was the reward, then God values singular acts of sin more than consistent acts of obedience: if sinning against God is the worst thing a man can do, then obeying God must be the best...
  - When Adam sinned, God chose not to forgive him and keep him in the Garden nor even teach him about repentance (surely this is a choice: nothing can place a limitation on God's attributes, and compare that with the Quran saying that He chose upon HImself mercy).
- God, creating mankind imperfect and knowing Adam would sin, must have created this Earth as a punishment for him.
- The Quran states that good overpowers and replaces evil.
- The Quran states that good and evil are not equal, despite the amount of evil that might be apparent in this world.

2. God does not forgive.

- Original Sin
  - Even if it is argued that God's grace exists through Jesus taking our sin upon himself, this doesn't take away the fact that this life is a punishment for Adam's sin: even after Jesus, God continues to place us in this punishment.
  - In the Bible, God expressed His anger at Adam and blamed Eve for compelling him, and punished both of them with the earthly life. Because they were punished, this means that they were not forgiven. This doesn't mean that God didn't leave them alone: all this is saying is that this life is a punishment for Adam's sin, and if God forgave him, He would have put him back in the Garden.
  - In the Quran, God consoles Adam, teaches him about repentance, and forgives him. If God forgave Adam, then this earthly life is not a punishment - otherwise, God would have kept them in the Garden. This is supported by the fact that, before Adam was created, God said that He was going to place mankind as His representatives on Earth.
- Jesus taking sin upon himself
  - It is not true forgiveness if somebody chooses to suffer for someone else's mistake. True forgiveness is as if the sin was never committed, thus the need for suffering is removed.

3. God is not Just.

- Original Sin
  - For some period of time, Adam obeyed God and did not eat from the tree. There was no reward for this choice, but only the punishment when he slipped up and sinned - the punishment of the worldly life. It is not just to look at the bad while ignoring the good, nor is it just to value singular acts over consistent acts of the same weight.
- Jesus taking sin upon himself
  - It is not true justice for someone innocent to suffer the consequences of another's mistake. Whether someone chooses to take that suffering upon themselves is irrelevant: true justice is everyone getting what they deserve, not just that sins need to be paid for. It is not a concept of justice for an innocent to need/deserve to be punished for others' sins.

4. God is not consistent.

- God is either not all-powerful or all-knowing without control over all things, or He created evil (which is fine, as evil has a good purpose - Isaiah 45:7 - evil is "good" in the same way that all things God creates is "good", which is not the same as the "good" in good vs. evil). If He didn't create evil, and He doesn't love evil, then this means someone superseded God's will and created something God didn't want to exist (as God seemingly isn't capable of stopping its existence). Otherwise, because He is all-powerful and all-knowing, He allowed evil to exist - meaning He had to have created someone capable of doing evil (given that all beings are dependent on HIm). Thus, it is impossible to assert that God is all-powerful AND that He didn't create evil. If this is hard to comprehend, then contemplate: who created Hell? Hell is literally pain in its purest form as nothing is more painful than not being in God's presence and earning His anger and wrath upon you... it is the furthest away from God's grace, which Adam and Eve lost (according to Christianity) when they rebelled against God and ate from the tree. Who facilitated/allowed their loss and created Hell?
- God is all-powerful, yet He finds a need or want to rest after creating the heavens and the earth (ignoring the fact that the order of creation is incompatible with confirmed science). Did God resume creating the universe after the 7th day? Did the universe exist free of God's control on that day? There mere existencce of these questions challenges the validity of such a concept.
- The message given to mankind before Jesus is not the same as the message given after his death.
- The existence of Christology begs the question of how it is necessary in the first place. The Quran has nothing like that...
- Jesus' words in the gospels were not explicit in affirming the identity of God, unlike the scriptures and Messengers sent before him.
- It is not enough to believe in and worship God. Even if you believe in Him and perform good deeds for His sake, you cannot attain His mercy and forgiveness without specifically believing that Jesus died for your sins.
- God is One and yet He wants us to believe the oneness as three.
- God is not a man and yet He becomes a man - similar to what pagans say.
- God does not reproduce and yet we call Him father and He has a begotten son - similar to what pagans say.

5. God is not clear.

- Neither the word "trinity" nor concept is explicit from Jesus' teachings vs. God's Oneness is explicitly clear and repeated throughout the Quran.
- Jesus never explicitly says that he is God - in fact, he almost explicitely refutes that claim when the Jews accused him of it - nor does he use the word "three": there are only implications (of varying strength) made by the gospels' authors.
- The Old Testament explicitly refutes the idea that God is a man or son of man (i.e. not mortal nor mortal progeny).

6. God is better and easier understood as One than a Trinity.

- God is one vs. God is one in three/three in one
- The allegedly fundamental concept of the Trinity is not explicit in the Bible, but God's Oneness is.
- God does not need to be conceptually separated in "persons" in order to perform different actions. Compare this to the Quran's Beautiful Names of God.
- God does not have and has no need for partners, associates, or helpers in anything. Everything and anything that has ever existed or will exist completely and wholly depends on God. Furthermore, it is not befitting of God's majesty to attribute to Him attributes that take away from His transcendence and majesty.
- It is not fair for God to give us the ability to reason and yet tie something that doesn't make sense to our salvation (this is different than something beyond our ability to comprehend).

7. Our relationship with God is more accurate as servants than children.

- God is not a biological being to be attributed biological attributes.
- God's love transends that of a mother.
- The kind of punishment Hell offers is not one a loving parent would inflict upon their child.
- Parents don't create their children to have ownership over them, nor does God give birth to other beings to raise them as His equal or better.
- Children, as they become more mature, become more independent from their parents and their parents may even become dependent on them. This is certainly not applicable to a believer developing their relationship with God.
- Children are not created to worship their parents - their obedience is merely of the sacraments in worshipping God, which is the primary purpose of their creation.

8. This life is more accurately understood as a test rather than a punishment.

- The point of the Adam and Eve story
  - Given that it is inconcievable to consider that God is forgiving and also believe that this Earth was created as a punishment, then the Garden experience was to teach Adam what to do when he sins as well as who his enemy is, as before administering a test the effective teacher is supposed to teach his students the necessary material beforehand in a safe environment so that they have a hope of successfully passing in the harsher one.
- Before Adam sinned, he needed to have an inclination to sin - otherwise, he wouldn't have done it. Therefore, he also had "*concupiscence*" before he sinned (i.e. he was created with it) and was not magically created afterwards.

9. There is more reason to doubt the historical validity of the Bible than the Quran.

- Secondary/tertiary source (to Jesus' teachings) vs. primary source (to the revelation given to Muhammad)
- Multiple authors vs. single author
- Unknown authors vs. known author
- Multiple versions vs. single version (multiple dialects)
- Preserved with scholars vs. preserved with everyone: people and scholars
- Not preserved in the language of Jesus vs. preserved in the language of Muhammad
- Gospels were written out of need vs. Quran was memorized exactly as it came (even if it didn't make sense)
- 300 years to canonize vs. 30 years to canonize
  - Canonization of content vs. canonization of style
- History of deleted verses vs. no history of deleted verses
- Many ambiguous prophecies vs. Few clear prophecies
- Not as easy to memorize as the Quran

10. There is more reason to doubt the logical validity of the Bible than the Quran.

- Not as easy to be historically validated by the common person as the Quran
- Book of history with guidance in it vs. book of guidance with history in it
- Quran is more consistent (demo: comparing random chunks of both scriptures in isolation)
- Easy to prove human authorship of the Bible vs. impossible to prove human authorship of the Quran
  - Too consistent for multiple independent authors
  - Too eloquent for the Arab society at the time
  - Too quick for the Arab society at the time
  - Too foreign to the Bible and Arab society at the time
  - Too unchanging over time
  - Too much emphasizing on God's power, justice, forgiveness, kindness, and mercy for an evil author
  - Too much emphasis on rights, freedoms, and responsibilities for a power-hungry author
  - Too aware of the science of the world and mankind's true nature for a 7th century author
  - Too many easter eggs for a human author

Steak and Fries for Islam

1. God values good more so than evil.

- Original Sin
  - God created mankind with the capability to inevitably sin and inevitably do good, and when they did with Adam's sin, God taught him how to repent, forgave him, and accepted his repentance.
- "Original Forgiveness" would be more accurate
- God, creating mankind imperfect and knowing Adam would sin, did not punish him for his first transgression nor facilitate the weight of sin to be greater than the weight of good, but rather used it as a lesson to prepare Adam and the rest of mankind for the test to come.
- The Quran states that good overpowers and replaces evil.
- The Quran states that good and evil are not equal, despite the amount of evil that might be apparent in this world.

2. God openly forgives.

- Original Sin
  - God is Merciful/Loving and does not place a burden on us that is too great to bear for Him to facilitate an infinite weight of sin.
  - What was given to the believers of old will also be given to the believers of now.
  - God forgave Adam with the only "price" being his sincere repentance.
  - God forgave Jonah and his people when they changed their ways.

3. God is Just.

- Original Sin
  - God did not punish Adam when he first sinned without first making him capable and teaching him about repentance.
  - It is written that no one shall bear the burden of sin of another, for innocents will not suffer for another's actions.
- Jesus taking sin upon himself
  - It is not true justice for someone innocent to suffer the consequences of another's mistake. Whether someone chooses to take that suffering upon themselves is irrelevant: true justice is everyone getting what they deserve, not just that sins need to be paid for. It is not a concept of justice for an innocent to need/deserve to be punished for others' sins.

4. God is consistent.

- God's Mercy and Love is consistent through each step of mankind's progression, from the Garden to the Day of Judgement, and this does not change: what was given to those before us is also given to us now and we are all one community under God, and this gift from the infinitely Merciful and Loving God is enough for us to be admitted into His favor.
- God's attributes are consistent with His actions and does not present Himself to be remotely similar to that of His creation.

5. God is clear.

- When it comes to foundational beliefs, the Quran is explicitely clear and leaves no room for argument or interpretation and clearly draws lines between what we can conveive of and what we cannot.

6. God is easily understood as One.

- See Quran 112 (*Al-Ikhlas*): it is clear that this chapter is concise in its definition of God and states what is important and comprehensible for us to know.

7. Our relationship with God is best understood as servants to their master.

- God's control over us and the universe is absolute: even our wills are limited by what God wills.
- Under the justice that He administers over us will He choose to place us in Paradise or Hell, and we will have no choice in the matter if we willed otherwise (this is not referring to the will we have in this life but rather the wrongdoers who wish to escape Hell).

8. This life is best understood as a test.

- The point of the Adam and Eve story
  - God wanted us to be placed on Earth: the point of the Garden experience was for us to learn about what our relationship with God is like, who our enemy is, and the extent of the consequences of our actions.
- This world is neither a heaven (due to all the pain that exists) nor a hell (due to all the pleasure that exists), and God uses both to test us.

9. There is little reason to doubt the historical validity of the Quran.

- Primary source with a single known author
- Single version with multiple dialiects
- Written as revealed in the language of its people
- Too many people who memorized it for it to have changed over time or for corrupt people in power to change the fundamental message
- Earliest manuscript of the Quran dates within two decades after the Prophet's death (the Birmingham Quran), without alteration to what is recited today
- The apparently chaotic and non-chronological structure of the Quran alonside with the historical contexts behind each verse and the deep knowledge of Arabian culture affirms the fact that it was revealed over a period of time while the Prophet was still alive, and that it was revealed to the people that it claims to have been revealed to

10. There is little reason to doubt the logical validity of the Quran.

- It can be easily validated by the common person due to the amount of people who memorize it
- It is constructed as a textbook of guidance, and uses history and science as a means to teach that wisdom and guidance
- If you open any page of the Quran and compare it to another page, the message and voice will all be the same
- Impossible to prove human authorship of the Quran
  - Too consistent for multiple independent authors
  - Too eloquent for the Arab society at the time
  - Too quick for the Arab society at the time
  - Too foreign to the Arab society at the time
  - Too unchanging over time
  - Too much emphasizing on God's power, justice, forgiveness, kindness, and mercy for an evil author
  - Too much emphasis on rights, freedoms, and responsibilities for a power-hungry author
  - Too subtly structured for a mentally-challenged author
  - Too high caliber Arabic for a non-Arabian author
  - Too knowledgeable of Arabian culture for a non-Arabian author
  - Too subtly (and sometimes explicitely) different than the Bible for someone who copied earlier scriptures
  - Too aware of the science of the world and mankind's true nature for a 7th century author
  - Too subtly accurate prophecies for a human author
  - Too many easter eggs for a human author

Steak and Fries vs. Christian Analogies

Imagine you break your neighbor's window while playing baseball. Even if the neighbor forgives you and pardons the price of the replacement, there will still be a legal punishment because you broke its laws, and at the end of the day someone has to pay the price for the window - even if it was an accident.

- The legal punishment in this case **is** the window replacement (as you lost the right to spend money and labor how you please) - especially if the court is fair and they know it was an accident. It would be unjust to impose further punishment, as the consequence of the sin (the broken window and whatever inconvenience that caused) has been brought back to its original state.
- At the end of the day, the window is not going to be resurrected on the Day of Judgement but rather your sin regarding that window. Given that this analogy intends to analogize sin with the window and God with the neighbor (and the court), it becomes important to mention that **the window does not have to get fixed if the neighbor forgives you,** as **it isn't everlasting and will not be resurrected**. In this scenario, God created that window to test your response and see if you will return to Him: after that, the window has served its purpose. It is relevant to mention that God created this universe from nothing (ie. without previously created materials): there is no need for God to pay the price of the broken worldly window - a creation that requires (quite literally) no effort, sacrifice, or even materials from God whatsoever to recreate if He so chooses.

Who do we need to Trust?

Catholic Claims		Islamic Claims
God inspired the authors of the Bible as well as the Church in their canonization of these texts, and they all claim to contain the true account of history and guidance.	**God**: there is some revelation out there that is aware of and speaks to how mankind contemplates and validates information - otherwise, due to our being blind to the true nature of the world, we would be lost and incapable of having certainty in the unseen	God is the author of the Quran, which claims to contain guidance, teach wisdom, and is without error.
The Bible (at least with certain authors) claims its writings to be true and the Church's canonization of its texts confirms this.	**The Revelation's Content**: for God is all-knowing, wise, and consistent, it needs to correctly reflect the nature of the world and mankind while presenting the best possible way to attain His favor without containing errors or inconsistencies - for if it is not consistent, then it would be indistinguishable from false Revelation or human interpretation.	The Quran claims to be consistent and without error - reflecting the consistence and perfection of God - and claims that it will stay preserved.
The New Testament was written by many authors (which modern scholarship claims to reasonably challenge their alleged identities) over many decades, and despite being written for different reasons, they all agree with each other due to the Church canonizing them and the fulilling of Old Testament prophecies.	**The Revelation's Author(s)**: they must present a consistent mindset throughout the scripture and must present some means of validating their authenticity - otherwise, the case could reasonably be made that the author(s) do not agree with each other or present a changing belief system, or possibly even being written by someone else entirely.	The Quran is written by a single author (God) and claims its message is consistent - both within the 23 years it was revealed in different contexts, and with the message given to other prophets and messengers before Muhammad.
Rather than Jesus when he was on earth, it was the New Testament authors (which are reasonably unknown according to modern scholarship) and future Church councils that facilitated the construction and canonization of the New Testament. All these people are considered to be righteos and pious.	**The Messenger by whom the Revelation's was Revealed**: as one chosen by God to be His representative, his qualities and mindset must match that of the Revelation and must have a precense in history - otherwise, we would be unable to invalidate the argument that he created it himself and spread the world for some worldly gain.	Muhammad was known as being very trustworthy and honest even before his prophethood and was also illiterate, uneducated, and intelligent. Examining the Quran's lanugage, message, and contexts of revelation, and comparing all that to his language, experience, and 7th century Arabian culture, he could not have reasonably produced this text.
The books and letters of the New Testament were incrementally circulated starting by the mid-first century until the last book (the Gospel according to John) was circulated in the late second century. Archeological evidence discovered manuscripts with the earliest being a parchment dating to the second half of the second century (P52).	**The Revelation's Means of Preservation**: it must present a reasonable means of knowing and validating how the Revelation was preserved - otherwise, a reasonable case could be made to shed doubt over whether God's words were tainted by falsehood or not.	The Quran was originally revealed to and memorized by the common people and remained unchanged as a result, which can be proved by the amount of people that have memorized it in history and archeological evidence dating 30 years after the Prophet's death. More precise details can be found in the several collections of Hadith.
Because of the amount of apocryphal texts, the New Testament's language not being Jesus' spoken language, and the timing of writing was at least decades (at most, a century or two) after Jesus' time, the Church scholars (who were inspired by God) canonized the books that completely aligned with Jesus' message and the earliest preserved writings of the Church Fathers.	**The Work of Scholars**: taking their biases into consideration, the conclusions of their work must align with the Revelation's content and Messenger and must be reasonably understood by the average person - otherwise, we would not be able to identify if scholars are using Revelation for worldly gain or if they are misinterpreting it: maliciously or unintentionally.	Because the Quran was originally revealed to and preserved by the average person in their language, Muslims themselves are the primary means of preserving the true message of the Revelation. The collections of Hadith were compiled starting from more than a century after the Prophet's death and ending over two centuries later by various scholars, and used specific methodologies that validate both the content and chain of a narration.

Gospel Sources

Name	Biblical Order	Chronological Order	Date Written	Earsliest Manuscript	Author	Original Language	Christology Rating	Intended audience	Purpose for Writing	Notes
Mark	2	1	65-75 AD, or (less likely) 34-45 AD	Papyrus 137, 150-250 AD	Unknown	Greek	Low	Gentile converts	- Announcing a message - Strengthen faith of believers - Counter believers who saw Jesus as a "miracle worker" - Emphasizing the messiah's suffering, emphaisizing "Son of Man" - Explains Jewish customs (for a gentile audience)	- The "Messianic Secret" - The "Synoptic" Problem - Not a reliable guide to the chronology of Jesus' mission - Earliest manuscripts end at 16:8, with verses after being understood to have been added later - Does not identify Jesus as God or claim his pre-existence, nor mentions Mary being a virgin; only gospel to contain "son of Mary" - **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**
Matthew	1	2	80-90 AD, 70-110 AD, or (less likely) before 70 AD	Papyrus 104, 100-200 AD	Unknown Christian Jew	Greek	Medium Low	Greek-speaking Jewish Christians in Syria	- Emphasizing Jewish tradition, which shouldn't be lost in an increasingly gentile church	- The "Five Discourses of Matthew" - Many of the same narratives as Mark (almost verbatim in some areas) with slight differences that increase the amount of divinity involved - **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**
Luke	3	3	80-90 AD, or (less likely) 80-110 AD, with likely revisions in the 2nd century	Papyrus 4, 150-200 AD	Unknown, or (less likely) Luke the companion of Paul	Sophisticated Greek	Medium High	Read aloud to educated Greek-speaking believers in Jesus	- Encouraging and affirming faith - Define the Christian position in relation to the Roman Empire and Judaism	- Two-volume work, with Acts of the Apostles being the second part - Takes the written model from Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Josephus - No completely identical manuscripts of Luke - Contains more of Jesus' teachings than Mark - No reference to Jesus' pre-existence or a believer's union with Christ - Ambiguous/contradictory on when Jesus becomes Christ: likely due to scribal revisions - Emphasizes the Holy Spirit more so than Mark or Matthew - Creates parallels between Old Testament's Yahweh and Jesus, emphasizing his lordship over all people - **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."**
John	4	4	90-110 AD, or (less likely) before 70 AD	Papyrus 52, 125-175 AD	Unknown	Sophisticated Greek	High	Everyone, including Jews and Gentiles	- Evangelizing Jews and gentiles - Strenthening faith of believers	- Written almost independently from the synoptic gospels, and uses direct quotes from Hebrew scriptures -Debate regarding if chapters 8 and 21 were added later - Highly schematic structure - Jesus is divine and pre-existing - More emphasis on one's relationship with Jesus than the nature of the Church - Does not identify John as "The Baptist" and elevates Jesus' rank in comparisson - Mary is not named, with Jesus being known as the "son of Joseph" - Less hisotrical than the synoptic gospels - allegedly, the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas has more historical authenticity - **"It is finished."**

Comparative Preservation

How do you know that your faith is perfectly preserved? What are the checks and balaces against potential corruption of faith?

Catholicism is preserved in 3 "deposits of faith"

- **Scripture**: Depends on St. Paul and (at least) 4 unknown authors decades after Jesus' death and preserved by the clergy
- **Magisterium**: Depends on the clergy and preserved by their theological and political leadership
- **Tradition**: Depends on the clergy and preserved by their historical and contemporary support

Corrputed preservation if certain men of power are not divinely inspired, or if the true faith was suppressed or changed by those in power or over-valuing tradition

Checks and balances are faith in God that these men are divinely inspired

Islam is preserved in 2 sources

- **Quran**: Depends on Muhammad and preserved by the its inimitability and memorization from 1000's of people
- **Sunnah**: Depends on Muhammad and Companions and preserved by the Quran and written accounts of their actions from 1000's of witnesses

Corrputed preservation if Quran is not miraculous and if it is different than the original

Checks and balances are faith in God that the Quran is true, its inimitability can be tested, and the character of the Prophet is well documented

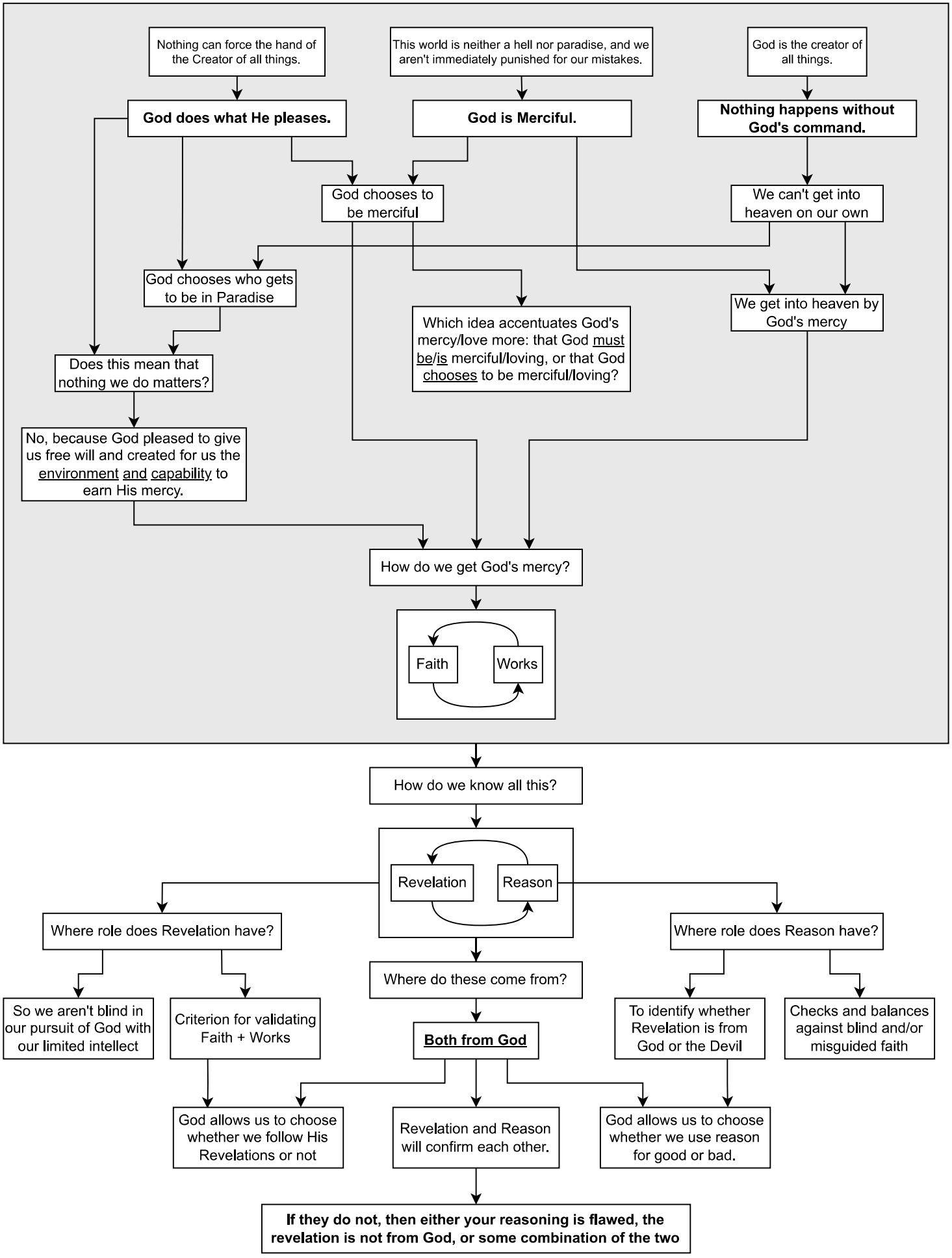
	Catholicism	**Islam**
Relationship to Messenger	Secondary/Tertiary	Primary
Miraculous revelation	No	Yes
Number of authors	5+	1
Names of authors	St. Paul, unknown	Muhammad, or single author (God)
Preserved in the language of the Messenger	No	Yes
Writing oversaw/written by Messenger	No	Yes
Number of people qualified to identify scriptural errors in revelation (who witnessed the Messenger's lifetime)	Clergy/Magisterium	1000's
Primary form of preservation	Clergy/Magisterium	Inimitability
Secondary form of preservation	Tradition	Memorization by lay people and scholars
Development of understadning core values	Yes	No
History of revisions	Yes	No
Official canonization/standardization (number of years after Messenger's death)	393 (if not a little earlier)	30 (at most)
What was canonized/standardized	The gospels and epistles	Diacritics (pronounciation)
Earliest manuscripts (number of years after Messenger's death)	100 (at least)	25 (at most)

Considerations for the Christian

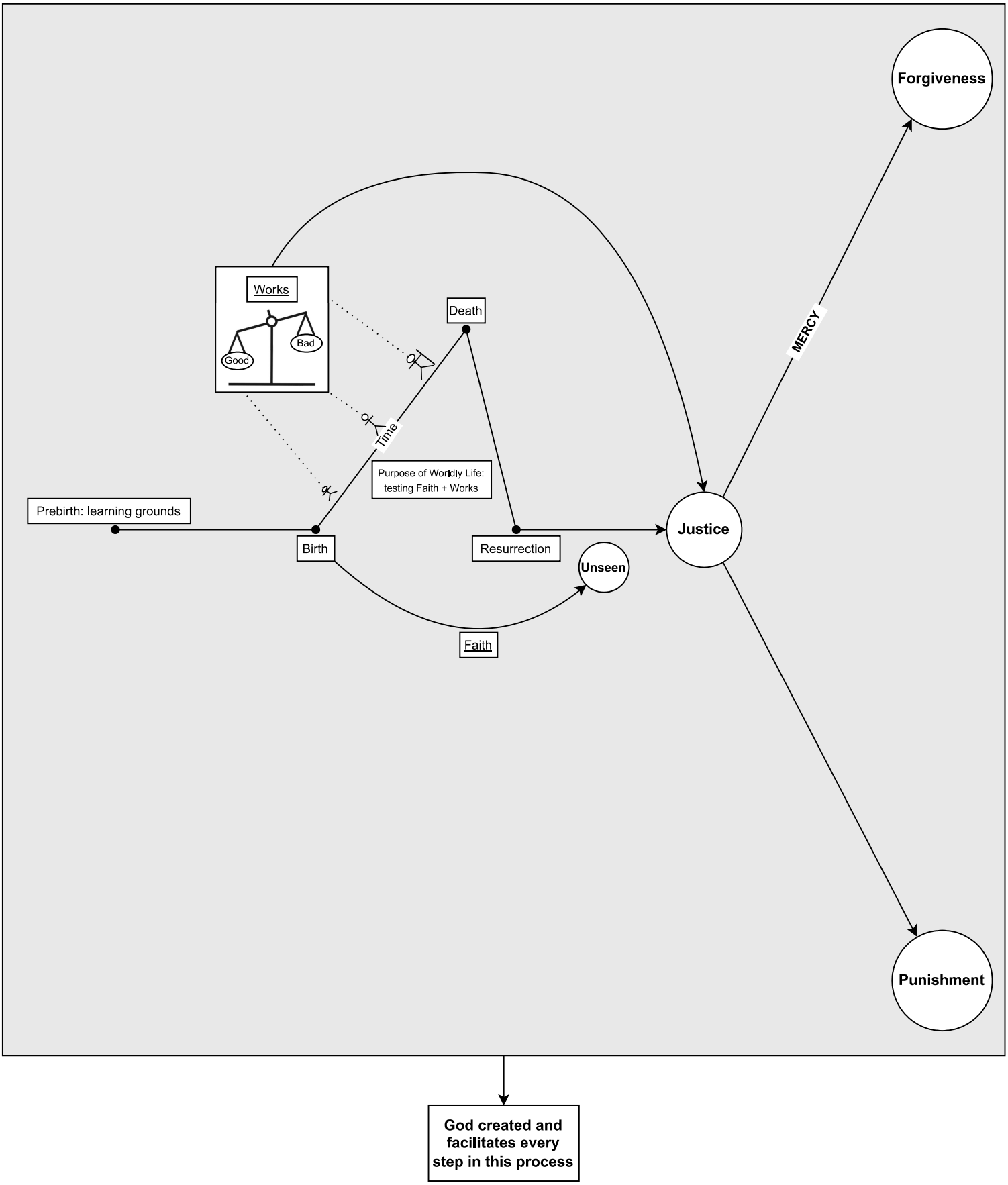
These questions are appropriate for any believer or non-believer who is curious about the Truth. When applicable, also ask the questions' double negatives and opposites for further perspective!

- Who better reflects the "spirit" of worship in their actions: Christians or Muslims? Which of them resembles Jesus and the Messengers more closely in their actions?
- Is it easier to distort/mess up somebody's message before or after their death?
- If you were wrong about your faith, how would you know?
- If you can't tell the difference between something that is beyond our comprehension vs. something contradictory/doesn't make sense, how are you qualified to tell the difference between something coming from God or the Devil?
- Assuming the contrast between good and evil is crystal clear, how would you tell the difference between good and good mixed with evil? How would you tell the difference between something from God and something from God that the Devil distorted?
- With both of the above questions, doesn't Jesus address them in Matthew 7:15-27? How similar is Jesus' message and commands to that of the Quran's? What "fruits" does the Bible have that the Quran doesn't?
- Which is the better environment for cultivating corruption regarding scriptures: if they are primarily preserved with scholars and those in power, or primarily preserved in the people the Messengers preach to?
- Which is the better environment for cultivating corruption regarding scriptures: preserving the exact words from the Messenger in the original language, or the approximate paraphrasing of their words in a different language (assuming both of them were unbiasly preserved)?
- Which is the better environment for cultivating corruption regarding scriptures: them being written as revealed or them being written according to a social or political goal by the authors?
- Which is the better environment for cultivating corruption regarding scriptures: having them being written decades later by many unknown authors as secondary/tertiary sources, or being immediately written by a single author as a primary source?
- Which is the better environment for cultivating corruption regarding scriptures: having their content being canonized after 300 years, or having the handwriting style being canonized after 30 years?
- Which idea contains language closer to paganism (and thus the Devil's misguidance): God having an only begotten son, or God trascending/being far above having a son?
- Which idea is closer to something the Devil would want us to believe: God revealing His mercy/love and forgiving Adam when he ate from the tree, or God revealing His wrath and punishing Adam instead, being unable to "just" forgive?
- If "forgiveness" must be accompanied by suffering, of what value does "forgiveness" offer? If I say, "I forgive you but you still need to be punished", what did my "forgiveness" change? Either way, the consequence of sin is painfully purging the sinner... Considering God's love and omnipotence, which concepts are more appropriately contrasted/made opposite with each other: forgiveness and justice, or forgiveness and punishment? Considering that the Devil wants us to lose faith in God and His love and mercy, which is more reflective of what he would want us to believe?
- If "justice" encompasses the idea that an innocent can suffer the consequences of others' sins, of what power does "justice" really have? The definitions of "evil must be punished", "good must be rewarded", and "everyone being held accountable for their own sins" should not contradict... Considering God's love and omnipotence, what is this situation that He permitted to exist where the only viable solution is the suffering of an innocent in order for sinners to avoid the consequences of their sins? Considering the Islamic God's response to mankind's sin and that the Devil wants us to lose faith in God and His love and mercy, which faith presents a narrative the Devil would rather support?

Faith and Works with Reason and Revelation



Life: the Full Picture



God and Goodness: The Euthyphro Dilemma

Are things good because God wills it, or does He will what is good?
i.e. Did God create the standard of "goodness", or is it a standard He follows?

Good: something desirable in its purpose

1. **Efficiently Good**: serves the purpose by which it was intended, or efficient means to achieve desired result (like a tool)
2. **Befittingly Good**: possesses perfections proper to its nature
3. **Selfish Good**: of a nature to produce something desirable (independent of what's morally desirable)
4. **Moral Good**: pure intentions and actions (rotio of will)
5. **Necessary/Sovereign/Supreme/Existential/Essential Good**: "nature" of God by the befitting of God's being, as everything He created is necessarily efficiently good and perfect (by definition of God being the Creator and nothing happens except by His Will - the opposite of "arbitrary") - and as such, all creation is necessarily "good" in that it acts perfectly according to God's design (independent of moral evil and what's desirable to us)

Has opposite? (**Evil:** something undesirable)

1. **Yes**: it is evil if a something does not act upon the purpose it was created for
2. **Yes**: it is evil if something freely acts in a way unbefitting of its intended nature
   No: a creation without free will has no choice but to act perfectly befitting of its nature - it has no capacity to be evil (this includes free will itself, as free will has no choice but to be free)
3. **Yes**: it is evil if something produces undesirability
4. **Yes**: it is evil to act on impure intentions or actions
5. **No**: God's being is necessary (by definition) and His will is not arbitrary (in that He does something "randomly" or without will) - whatever God creates or wills has a purpose (by definition of will or creation), and because His will is absolute, it has no choice or capacity to do anything except the purpose it was created for

A. Premises

- Goodness refers to desirability and purpose
- There are many different kinds of "good"
- God is Good (necessarily and befittingly good)
- God wills whatever He wants, and whatever God wills (His creation) is good (necessarily and efficiently good)

B. Test: "Good" seems to have the same meaning in both its uses in this question

1. **Efficiently Good**: (yes/no) things are efficiently good because God wills them - God is the [necessary] standard for "goodness" here
2. **Befittingly Good**: (no/no) bad question, as God **is** befittingly good and whatever He creates must "be" according to its purpose
3. **Selfish Good**: (yes/yes) not a contradiction, as whatever God wills is desirable to Himself, by definition (this includes moral evil, as it has a [good and necessary] purpose)
4. **Moral Good**: (kind of/kind of) bad question, as God allowed beings with free will the capacity for both moral goodness and evil, but He commands them to act on moral goodness - so yes, God defined the line between moral goodness and evil AND He commands to do what is morally good, but moral evil has the freedom to thrive under His will as well
5. **Necessary Good**: (yes/no) things are necessarily good because God is the one who willed them - which means that whatever God wills must be efficiently good according to His design

C. Conclusions

1. This question is ill-formed and has a huge potential to be philosophically contextualized* because its terms aren't clear and, once those terms are defined, the answers will differ
2. The first question is "yes" and the second is "no" as God is necessarily the standard for goodness and does not follow some external standard, but He does only command what is morally good
3. This question was originally intended to apply to a pantheon of gods, as their wills differed from each other and they were not even consistent - unlike the consistency and absolute control of a monotheistic God whose will cannot be challenged by anything among His creation

D. Notes

- **Philosophically Contextualized***: a fallacious form of reasoning where apparent complexity conceals logical errors - a reference to Fr. Gabriel's comment to how confessing Christians often provide "context" for their sins as a form of justification and alleviating their severity
- "God willing whatever He wants" is not synonymous with the idea that "His will is arbitrary" - these are actually two very conflicting concepts, as whatever God wills is **necessarily good** and He is in absolute control over everything in existence, and so He does as He pleases and whatever He pleases is necessarily good

God and Love

Christianity: God loves all because in essence He is Love and He created everything

Islam: God loves those who desire a relationship with God and love Him, and His mercy encompasses everything

Equivalent Language
"Children of God" = "God's Love"
"God's Love" = "God's Mercy"

Rahman and womb → r•h•m

The Islamic God is no less "loving" than the Christian God, as the same concept in the two faiths is described using different terminology. Similarly, the intimate title of "Child of God" is only given to believers, which is functionally equivalent to how God's love works in Islam

It cannot be a coincidence that the beautiful name of God "The Most Merciful" appears the most amount of times in the 19th chapter "Mary"...

If God "is Love", how could He create Hell from Love? The eternel punishment that Hell provides is not one a loving parent would administer to their child.... Would a father or mother throw their child into a fire? Why does God punish you for your sins without hope of redemption?

Considering the existence of Hell and the absolute power God has over us, which is more accurate when speaking about our relationship with God: children to their father, or servants to their master?

God loves those who do good and does not love those who are arrogant. God loves those who love Him and not those who do not. Love in Islam is a choice, for there is no value in loving someone who does not love you in return. In Islam, "love" is a two-way relationship, while "mercy" does not have to be.

Because God does not love evil or corruption, and because when God loves you it is by His choice, Islam does not say that God loves disbelievers: rather He is merciful towards them, and extends them the opportunity to enter into that relationship of love.

A relationship between God and a believer can be described as a beautiful loan: we give the good of what we're capable to Him, and He returns it to us multiplied many times over.

Original Sin

Adam's Sin

Original Forgiveness

Mankind becomes impure, inheriting original sin and being ineligible to be in God's presence, and thus mankind is punished with the worldly life

God becomes a man (Jesus), gets painfully killed by other men but the pain is actually from bearing the full weight of human sin, and brings Himself back to life ("defeating death" - the consequence of human sin)

Given that God suffered/bore the punishment for the weight of mankind's sin and "defeated" it, He can now "forgive" mankind for their sins - satisfying the "justice" in that "every sin must be punished"

Reminder that God is permitting and facilitating all of this

Given that Adam pursued the opportunity God gave Him for repentance, He forgave him - satisfying the "justice" in that "God accepts anyone's sincere attempt at repentance" - and placed him on Earth in a positive role

If "justice" encompasses "those who do good will be given good in return", why doesn't God reward Adam for all the time he didn't sin and obeyed God? If sinning is the worst thing we can do, isn't obeying God the best thing we can do? If Adam's dwelling in the Garden was the reward, how can God value a singular act of sin over consistent acts of obedience? And isn't disbelieving in God worse than Adam's sin, given that the latter caused the Fall while the former will lead to Hell?

God is not a human nor an aspect of creation, rather He is mankind's creator and is capable over all things - and so in order to be able to forgive mankind, He <u>needs</u> to turn Himself into a human and be subjected to mortality, such as eating, defecating, being temtped, and feeling pain? Do any of these images befit the majesty and trascendence of God?

How can God "just forgive" a sin without punishment, if sinning against God is the worst thing anyone can do and nothing can make up for sinning against the infinite God?

Because God, out of His infinite mercy, did not create sin as a burden too great for us to bear

Because God, out of His infinite mercy, values good over evil; He allows good to erase evil

The purpose of placing Adam (a creature capable of sin without knowing it yet) in the Garden was not to punish him for his sin, but to teach him about repentenance, God, and mankind's relationship with Him - this is primarily a teaching moment, as what was given to Adam is also given to all of us: the purpose of a worldly life in which we sin is to give the space for repentance and return to God

Justice also encompasses, "no bearer of burdens shall bear the burdens of another" - and this is specifically in the divine sense, because when a human does that then God will reward him **more** for his extra sacrifice.

How is God suffering/bearing the punishment for mankind's sin an act of "justice", if we consider the definitions of "everyone gets what they deserve", "every sin must be punished", and "every act of good must be rewarded"?

If we don't deserve God's forgiveness, how is anything God does to make us "deserving" an act of justice?

If God taking the burden of our sin allows us to be deserving of His "forgiveness", how is it that the suffering of an innocent for the consequences of our actions is considered an act of justice?

If we "deserve" God's forgiveness, why didn't God forgive Adam, or at least teach him about repentance? If He did forgive him, why not put him back in the Garden?

Isn't the idea that "we aren't worthy of being forgiven by God" something the devil would want us to believe?

Isn't the idea that "something else can take the burden of sin from me" something the devil would want us to believe?

Isn't the idea that "forgiveness wouldn't be just" something the devil would want us to believe?

Doesn't the Devil want us to lose faith, hope, and reason in God's mercy and forgiveness?

Because God does as He pleases, rewarding whom He wills and punishing whom He wills - and whoever is pious and endures patiently, then He does not waste the reward of those who do good.

God is not of this world to need to pay for anything, nor is this world's tainted/fallen application of justice a befitting equivalent to God's justice - far is He above needing to be subjected to worldly problems to simply will something, which can be brought into existence merely by the utterance of His Word.

God is so merciful, just, forbearing and capable over all things, that He "just" forgave Adam and the believers for their sins and admitted them into His Paradise and into His Love.

Islam and Original Forgiveness

Quran 2:30-39	Exegesis
[Remember] when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a successive [human] authority on earth." They asked [God], "Will you place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" [God] responded, "I know what you do not know."	• God always intended for man to reside on Earth • The Angels' question is under the context that mankind will not perfectly worship God and directly cause corruption, whereas the Angels perfectly obey God and spend all their existence worshipping Him • In other words, the Angels are asking, "Why would God create mankind for worship when they will pursue evil and disobey God while He already has the Angels perfectly obeying and worshipping Him?" ∘ An atheist might be tempted to ask this question in a different way: "Why doesn't God just create us perfectly obeying Him? Why do we have to suffer?" • While God doesn't seem to answer the question here, He does so in the following verses
He taught Adam the names of all things, then He presented them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these, if what you say is true?"	• From the very beginning, God is presented to be explicitely involved in mankind's intellectual development, unlike the Biblical narrative where Adam simply names them (Genesis 2:19-20) • God is referring back to the Angels' question, indicating that something about Adam's knowledge/intelligence is related to the answer
They replied, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are truly the Knowing, the Wise."	• The Angels do not possess the same level of intelligence that Adam does • It is being explicitily emphasized that God is the one who teaches knowledge - as He is the possessor of Knowledge and Wisdom

[God] said, "O Adam! Inform them of their names." And when he had informed them of their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?"	• It is being emphasized again that Adam has knowledge that the Angels do not have
	• God is emphasizing His knowledge again, knowing even what is not said or concealed
	• God is speaking to the Angels here. What did they reveal and conceal?
	  ∘ They clearly revealed mankind's capability to pursue tremendous evil
	  ∘ They had to have concealed the opposite, that mankind also has the capability to pursue tremendous good and righteousness - which can be obviously seen
	  ∘ This means that God knows, created, and recognizes both natures in mankind, and not just the capability/weight of evil as the Angels falsely did
	  ∘ Free will is also being touched on in this answer, as there is something about mankind that allows them to worship God in a way the Angels cannot

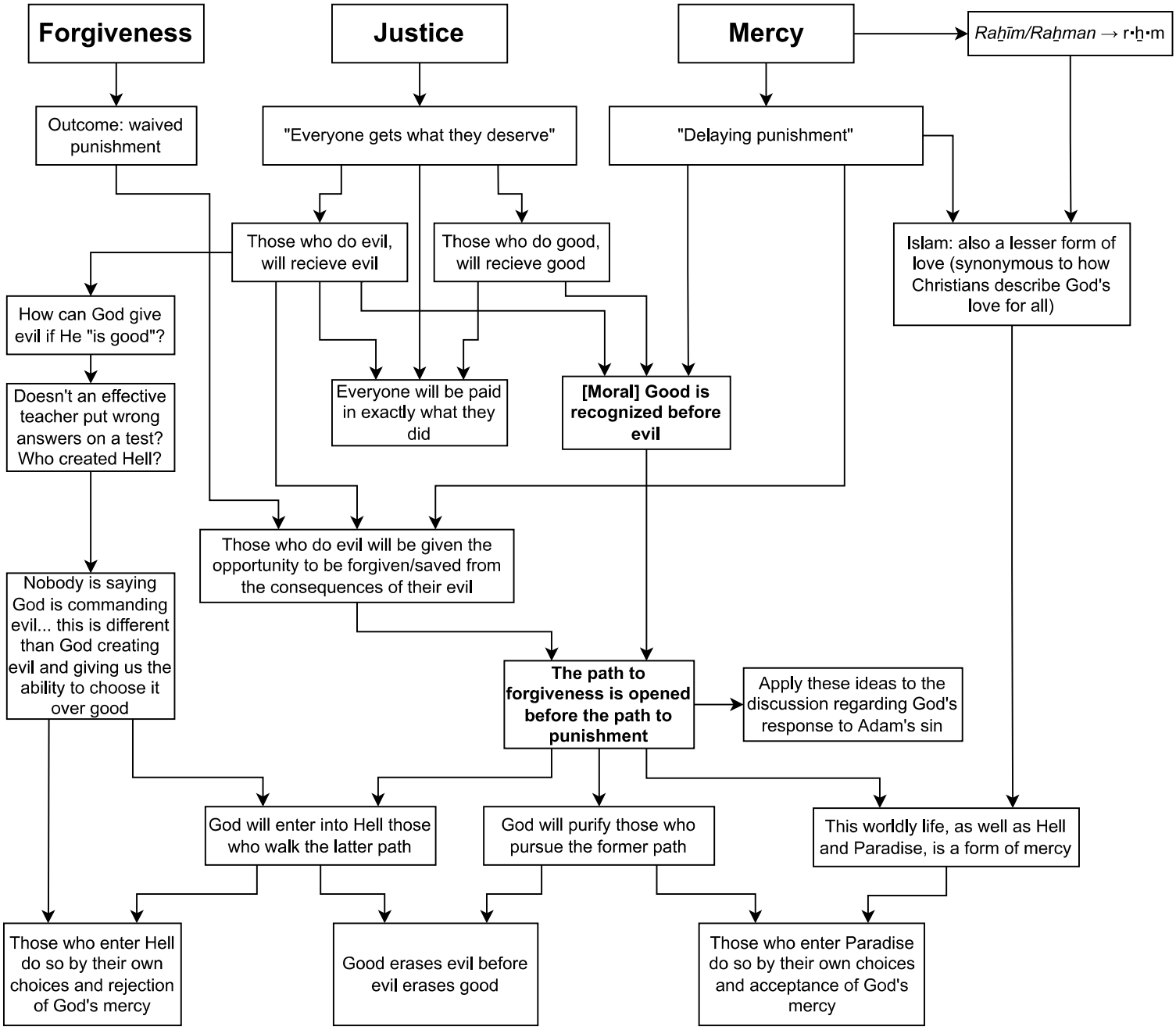
And [remember] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam," so they all did - but not *Iblis*, who refused and acted arrogantly, becoming of those who reject faith.	• Free will is being brought up here again, as the Devil makes the independent choice to reject God's command • According to the Quran (18:50), the Devil is identified as being a Jinn, not a fallen Angel • This story of prostration is different than the ones that appear in the Book of Revelation • It is interesting to note that the Arabic word use here for the Devil is the same one used for disbelievers (they all deny or reject faith), and yet he can see God in a way we can't

We continued, "O Adam! Live with your wife in Paradise and eat as freely as you please, but do not approach this tree, or else you will be of the wrongdoers."	• The language regarding the tree is very dispassionate: there's nothing special about the tree (unlike the Biblical narrative, where it's the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil")
	  ∘ In fact, Quran 20:120 (with added context from 14:22) shows that the Devil lied to Adam about the qualities of the tree, promising him that it would grant him immortality and an everlasting kingdom - things he already had
	  ∘ In the Bible, it seems like the Devil actually told the truth about the tree: see Genesis 2:9, 2:17, 3:4-7, and 3:22

But Satan caused them to slip - and removed them from the [blissful] state they were in, and We said, "Descend from the heavens [to the earth] as enemies to each other. You will find in the earth a residence and provision for your a time."	• Unlike the Christian narrative, where Adam's sin caused him to fall out of God's grace, his sin here is described as a "slip"
	  ∘ This brings light the fact that Adam was consistent in his free choice to obey God, and this sin of his (also a free choice) was only a hiccup among that consistency - this understanding is supported by the earlier conclusion made in Quran 2:33, where God knows and recognizes mankind's capability to do good
	  ∘ As such, it is important to note that the Fall from the Garden is described here very dispassionately, like an understanding teacher explaining their student's first mistake - unlike the Biblical narrative where God's wrath is revealed in Genesis 3:14-19

Then Adam was inspired with words [of prayer/repentance] by his Lord, so He accepted his repentance. Surely He is the Accepter of Repentance, the Merciful.	• God responds to Adam in two ways:
	  ∘ Teaching/inspiring him about repentance, which is consistent with the earlier narrative that God is directly involved in the knowledge we have: how could Adam have known about repentance if God didn't teach him about it?
	  ∘ Accepting his repentance and forgiving him, which supports the previous verse's understanding God is not angry at Adam but rather understanding and merciful
	• Unlike the Biblical narrative when God's wrath and anger is emphasized, the Quran emphasizes God's forgiveness and mercy here as a response to Adam's sin

We said, "Descend all of you! Then when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows it, there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve.
 	
But those who reject faith and give lie to Our signs, they will be the companions of the Fire. They shall abide therein.
	• The Garden experience was primarily a teaching moment to prepare for life on Earth: mankind learns about his intelligence, who his enemy is, about God's mercy and forgiveness, and what his relationship with God could look like
	  ∘ The first verse here describes about those with a positive relationship with God, emphasizing their free will to choose that path, and the benefits they gain from that choice - the same benefits given to Adam when he made that choice
	  ∘ The second verse describes what happens to those who reject the opportunity for guidance that God gives them and what their response will look like: rejecting faith just like the Devil did and giving lie to God's signs - it is they who will truly suffer
	• There is no room in the Quranic narrative for the Christian concept of "original sin", and this narrative is sufficiently described in only 10 verses at the very beginning of the Quran
	• Compare the Quranic motif of God teaching mankind here with the first verses revealed in the Quran (96:1-5): it is clear that this revelation is consistent in its narrative


Forgiveness
Justice
Mercy
Raḫīm/Raḫman → r•ḫ•m
Outcome: waived punishment
"Everyone gets what they deserve"
"Delaying punishment"
Those who do evil, will recieve evil
Those who do good, will recieve good
Islam: also a lesser form of love (synonymous to how Christians describe God's love for all)
How can God give evil if He "is good"?
Doesn't an effective teacher put wrong answers on a test? Who created Hell?
Everyone will be paid in exactly what they did
[Moral] Good is recognized before evil
Those who do evil will be given the opportunity to be forgiven/saved from the consequences of their evil
Nobody is saying God is commanding evil... this is different than God creating evil and giving us the ability to choose it over good
The path to forgiveness is opened before the path to punishment
Apply these ideas to the discussion regarding God's response to Adam's sin
God will enter into Hell those who walk the latter path
God will purify those who pursue the former path
This worldly life, as well as Hell and Paradise, is a form of mercy
Those who enter Hell do so by their own choices and rejection of God's mercy
Good erases evil before evil erases good
Those who enter Paradise do so by their own choices and acceptance of God's mercy

Jesus vs. Christians vs. Muslims

While these can be used to make arguments, these statements are primarily observations I see as food for thought.

- Prostrated while praying vs. Do not prostrate while praying vs. Prostrate while praying
- Mary wore headscarf vs. Only wear headscarf in religious events vs. Women wear headscarf
- Against idolatry or likenesses (Exodus 20:4) vs. Statues in churches vs. No statues or images
- "Jew" vs. "Christian" vs. "Muslim"
- "Son of man" vs. "Son of God" vs. "Son of Mary"
- Prayed directly to God vs. Pray to God through Jesus vs. Pray directly to God
- God is not a man (Numbers 23:19) vs. God became a man vs. God is not a man

Language

Means by which information is communicated

It is possible to inductively communicate the difference between a contradiction and a paradox: while they both are a result of a lack of full understanding, contradictions will have reasonable alternatives while paradoxes will not. Additionally, is would be within reason to explain why paradoxes do not apparently make sense, while it would not be reasonable to defend a contradiction. As such, it is possible for us to communicate the limits of our reason, such as explaining how we are unable to comprehend existence outside the space-time continuum while also asserting that the universe was brought into existence by an "outside" creator.

No worldly language can truly encompass God as He is in the realm of the Unseen (try to have a blind person describe light and colors), especially since our reason cannot encompass the fullness of God's existence

Our language and reason can encompass God in relative terms, as in how He is related to something (ex. the Creator of the Universe, Loving believers, etc.)

What Befits God

Something of God that perfectly reflects and is consistent with all His attributes, especially His majesty and transcendence

It is not befitting to describe a circle with "square", and vice versa

Majesty: in a state of being in which respect is inherently required/demanded from those under His power

Transcendence: in a state of being that is beyond the attributes, similtudes, and comprehension of His creation

Given our capacities and limitations in reason, our language must reflect what befits God while also communicating in terms that we're capable of understanding (otherwise, we would be communicating in gibberish - using placeholder words that have no communicable or comprehensible meaning).

The language and terms we use must not explicitely nor implicitely contradict reason nor what we relatively know about God, lest we fall into the trap of introducing contradictory concepts under the guise of a paradox

The language we use is an implicit reflection of our mindset.

St. Thomas Aquinas:

- Q[29],A[3]: "Person" in God is "the incommunicable existence of the divine nature."
- Q[32],A[1]: it is impossible to attain to the knowledge of the Trinity by natural reason.

"Person" is not a word that has a meaningful definition, and our reason cannot attain the concept of the Trinity. In terms of our language, do these terms best befit God when there are alternatives that actually have comprehensible and reasonable meaning? Isn't Majestic, Eminent, and Transcendent truly befitting?

Which is more befitting of God: to say He loves us because He wants to, or that He must/needs to be a Trinity in order to love?

Which is more befitting of God: to say that He forgives whom He wills, or that He can't approach/forgive us without a mediator?

Which is more befitting of God: to say that, if He wills our salvation, He only needs to say, "Be" and it is - and actively taught mankind about repentance so that we can be saved (by His will), or that He needs to suffer for mankind's sins in order to save us?

It is possible to over-emphasize one of God's attributes, and doing so will either diminish or contradict His other attributes. What would over-emphasizing God's wrath look like? What would over-emphasizing His mercy or love look like?

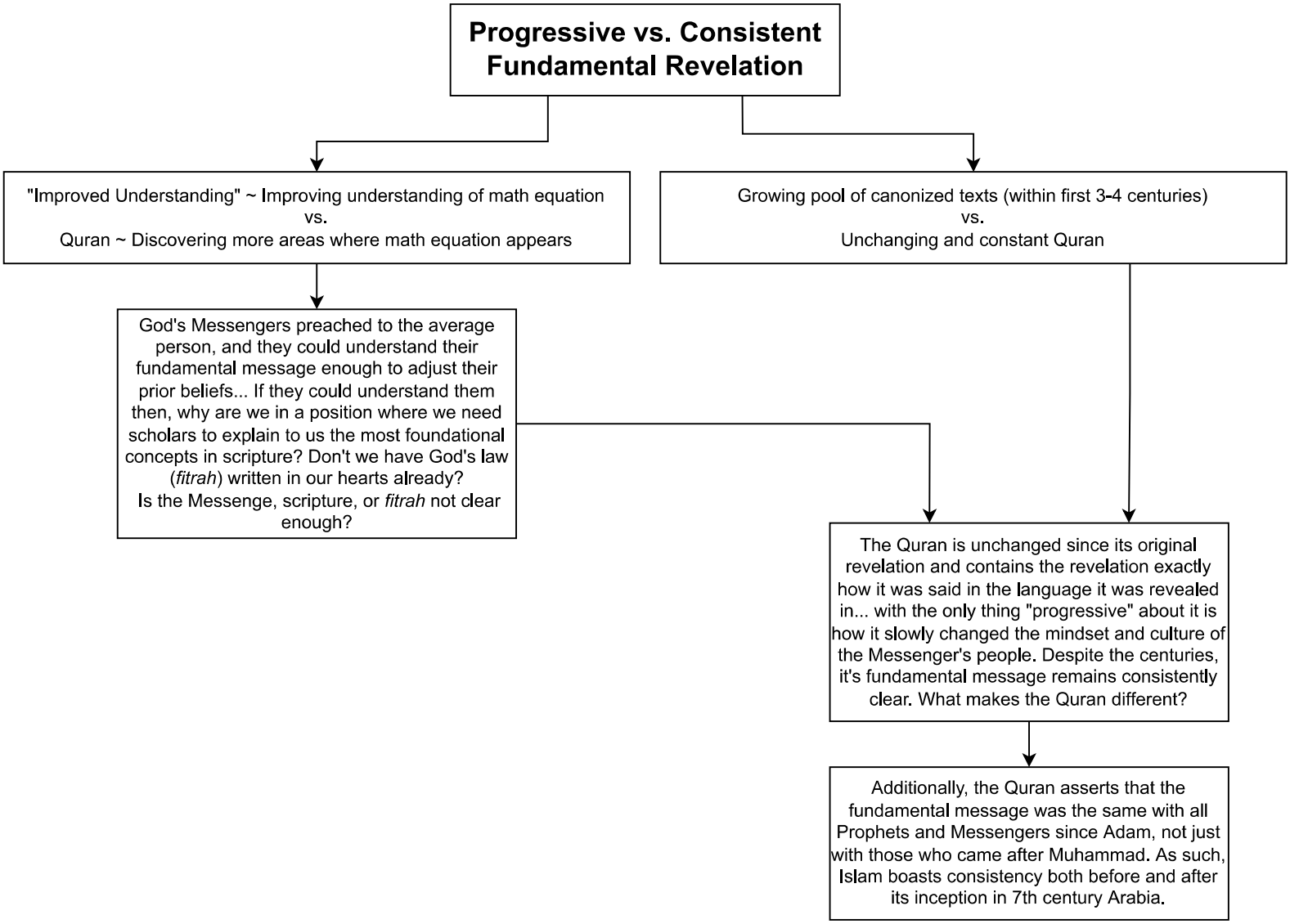
With respect to Catholicism, this is analogous to saying "God was punished for the sins of mankind", as this implies that God is somehow deserving of the punishment. As such, to avoid this problem, the more approriate phrasing would be, "God bore the punishment".

Example: asserting that God is all-powerful while also asserting that God cannot do impossible things. "Can" is a term for one's capacity or ability, thus we are suggesting by our language that God is not capable of doing something - a clear contradiction with God's attribute of being all-powerful. While "impossible things" isn't "something" by definition, this introduces the image of a limitation on God's power. This is a fallacious idea given that God is the one who created the line between possible and impossible, and so it would be more accurate to say that God does not do impossible things. In this way, no statement is being made on the capacity of God's power while also having the additional benefit of emphasizing God's will, which is a better overall reflection of God's attributes.

If someone actually believed that God was limited in His power or has needs, they would use similar language.

Interestingly, this is the same language the Quran uses when describing God: it never states that God "can" or "cannot" do something. Rather, it either uses the words "is", "did/does", or "willed/wills"

The Quran actively rejects concepts or phrases such as God "rests", "regrets", or "changes". God always does as He pleases.


Progressive vs. Consistent Fundamental Revelation
"Improved Understanding" ~ Improving understanding of math equation
vs.
Quran ~ Discovering more areas where math equation appears
Growing pool of canonized texts (within first 3-4 centuries)
vs.
Unchanging and constant Quran
God's Messengers preached to the average person, and they could understand their fundamental message enough to adjust their prior beliefs... If they could understand them then, why are we in a position where we need scholars to explain to us the most foundational concepts in scripture? Don't we have God's law (*fitrah*) written in our hearts already?
Is the Messenge, scripture, or *fitrah* not clear enough?
The Quran is unchanged since its original revelation and contains the revelation exactly how it was said in the language it was revealed in... with the only thing "progressive" about it is how it slowly changed the mindset and culture of the Messenger's people. Despite the centuries, it's fundamental message remains consistently clear. What makes the Quran different?
Additionally, the Quran asserts that the fundamental message was the same with all Prophets and Messengers since Adam, not just with those who came after Muhammad. As such, Islam boasts consistency both before and after its inception in 7th century Arabia.

Quotes from St. Aquinas:

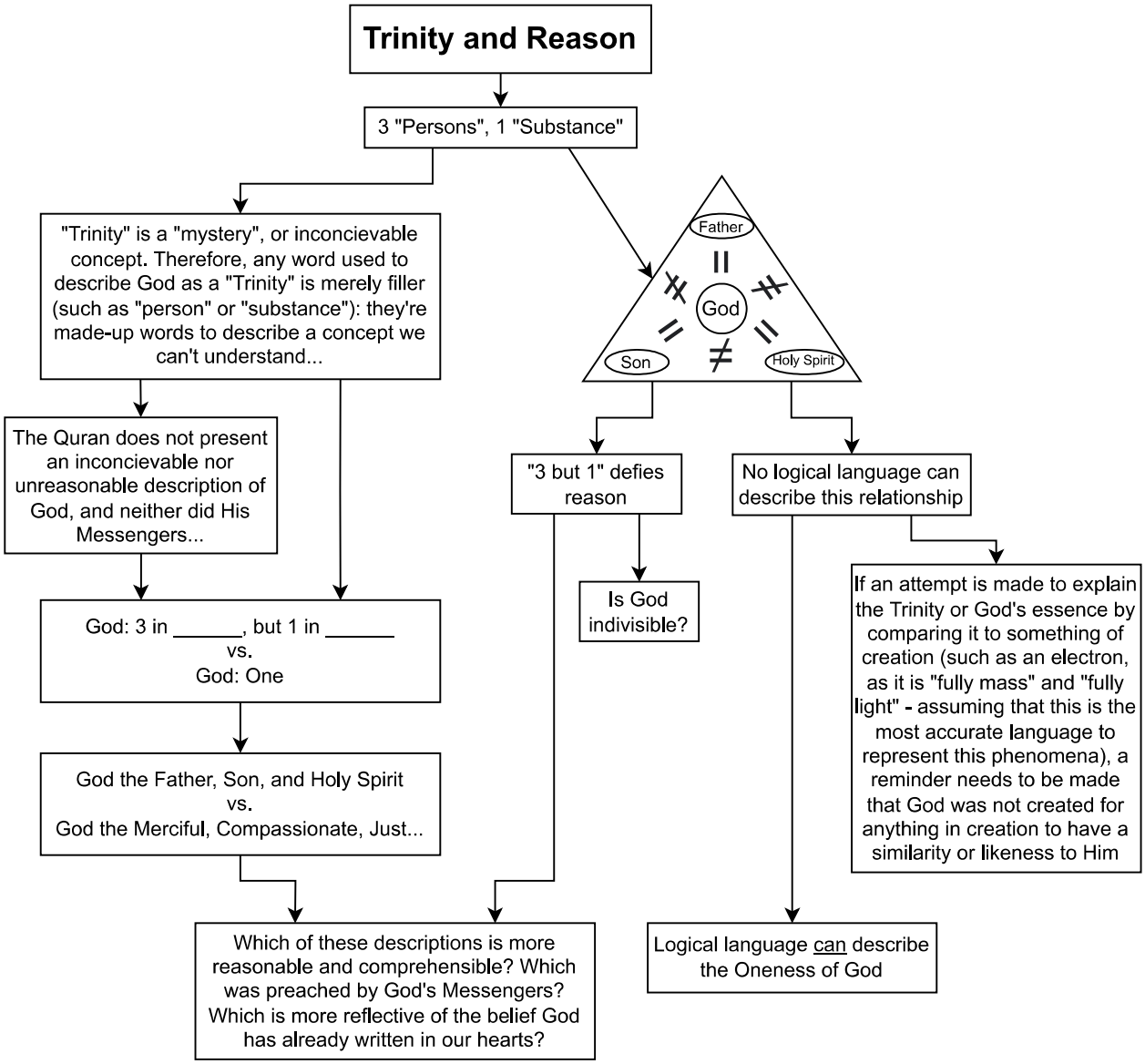
- Q[29], A[3]
  - **"Person" signifies what is most perfect in all nature---that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature.** Hence, since everything that is perfect must be attributed to God, forasmuch as His essence contains every perfection, **this name "person" is fittingly applied to God; not, however, as it is applied to creatures, but in a more excellent way**; as other names also, which, **while giving them to creatures, we attribute to God**; as we showed above when treating of the names of God (Q[13], A[2]).
    - **1. Applying "person" to God is synonymous with identifying Him as "transcendent" and "majestic" - where did this defintion come from? Who made it up?**
    - **2. This definition of "person" being applied to God is similar to how God is described in the second verse of Surah al-Ikhlas, but without an inconcievable "mystery"**
  - It may be said that God has a rational "nature," if reason be taken to mean, not discursive thought, but in a general sense, an intelligent nature. But God cannot be called an "individual" in the sense that His individuality comes from matter; but only in the sense which implies incommunicability. **"Substance" can be applied to God in the sense of signifying self-subsistence.** There are some, however, who say that the definition of Boethius, quoted above (A[1]), is not a definition of person in the sense we use when speaking of persons in God. Therefore Richard of St. Victor amends this definition by adding that **"Person" in God is "the incommunicable existence of the divine nature."**
    - **3. When defining how a "substance" is applied to God, St. Aquinas uses the same word in the defintion...**
    - **4. The definition of "Person" cannot be communicated/described!**
- Q[29], A[4]
  - **A difficulty arises concerning the meaning of this word "person" in God**, from the fact that **it is predicated plurally of the Three in contrast to the nature of the names belonging to the essence**; **nor does it in itself refer to another, as do the words which express relation**.... The term "what" refers sometimes to the nature expressed by the definition, as when we ask; What is man? and we answer: A mortal rational animal. Sometimes it refers to the "suppositum," as when we ask, What swims in the sea? and answer, A fish. **So to those who ask, Three what? we answer, Three persons.**
    - **5. "Person" is difficult to define because of 2 reasons:**
      - contrast between three and one**???**
      - **it has no meaningful comparison (which is how we learn new concepts), and so we are unable to comprehend its meaning (try to describe colors to someone who was born blind)**
    - **6. "Person" has no meaningful definition - the word itself is the limit in describing "what" the Trinity is**
- Q[30], A[1]
  - For it was shown above [Q[29], A [4]) that **this word "person" signifies in God a relation as subsisting in the divine nature**. It was also established (Q[28], A [1]) that there several real relations in God; and hence it follows that **thre are also several realities subsistent in the divine nature; which means that there are several persons in God**.... **The definition of "person" includes "substance,"** no as meaning the essence, but the "suppositum" which is made clear by the addition of the term "individual." To signify the substance thus understood, the Greeks use the "hypostasis." **So, as we say, "Three persons,"** They say "Three hypostases." **We are no, however, accustomed to say Three substnaces**, lest we be understood to mean three esseences or natures, by reason of the equivocal signification of the term. The absolute properties in God, such as goodness and wisdom, are not mutually opposed; and hence, neither are they really distinguished from each other. Therefore, although they subsist, nevertheless they are not several subsistnet realities-- that is, several persons. **But the absolute properties in creatures do not subsist, although they are really distinguished from each other, as whiteness and sweetness; on the other hand, the relative properties in God subsist**, and are really distinguished from each other (Q[28], A [3]). Hence the plurality of persons in God.... **if number be taken as it is in the things numbered, in that sense as existing in creatures, one is part of two, and two of three, as one man is part of two men, and two of three, but this does not apply to God, because the Father is of the same magnitude as the whole Trinity**, as we shall show futher on (Q[42], AA[1], 4)
    - **7. All the first part is saying is that "person" maintains/self-supports God's divine nature**
    - **8. The definition of "person" includes "substance" in terms of an "individual", and yet, despite there being "three persons", we can't say "three substances"...**
    - **9. Why is St. Aquinas comparing God's relative properties with creatures' absolute properties, and not both of their relative or absolute properties?**
    - **10. If the Father has the same "magnitude" as the whole Trinity, and yet each of the 3 "persons" are co-equal and co-eternal and are all "God", does that mean the other two "persons" also have the same "magnitude" as the whole Trinity? What does "magnitude" even mean (Q[42] doesn't use this word - see 22 if "magnitude" and "quanitity" are the same)?**
- Q[30], A[2]
  - **It is said: "There are three who bear witness in heaven, the father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost" (1 Jn. 5:7). To those who ask, "Three what?" we answer, with Augustine (De Trin. vii, 4), "Three persons."** Therefore there are but three persons in God.... Although **there are four relations in God**, one of them, spiration, is not separarted from the person of the Father and the Son, but belong to both; thus, although it is a relation, it is not called a property, because it does not belong to only one person. **The three relations---paternity, filiation, and procession---are called personal properties, constituting as it were the persons**; for **paternity is the person of the Father**, **filiation is the person of the Son**, **procession is the person of the Holy Ghost proceeding**.
    - **11. St. Aquinas is using an invalid verse, as 1 John 5:7 is now considered foreign to the original text...**
    - **12. The only distinction between a "property" and "relation" is that the latter is unique to one "person"**
- Q[31], A[2]
  - I answer that, Since as Jerome remarks [*In substance, Ep. lvii.], **a heresy arises from words wrongly used, when we speak of the Trinity** we must proceed with care and with befitting modesty; because, as Augustine says (De Trin. i, 3), **"nowhere is error more harmful, the quest more toilsome, the finding more fruitful."** Now, in treating of the Trinity, **we must beware of two opposite errors**, and proceed cautiously between them---namely, **the error of Arius, who placed a Trinity of substance with the Trinity of persons**; and **the error of Sabellius, who placed unity of person with the unity of essence**
    - **13. If the identification of God is the most toilsome quest (in the context of intelligence, not humility), how is it that God's Messengers could communicate the revelation to normal people and they could understand the message? How does this compare with the idea that God instilled in all of us His natural law (*fitrah*) - especially if it is claimed that mankind was created in His image?**
  - Thus, to avoid the error of Arius **we must shun the use of the terms diversity and difference in God**, lest we take away the unity of essence: **we may, however, use the term "distinction"** on account of the relative opposition. Hence whenever we find terms of "diversity" or "difference" of Persons used in an authentic work, these terms of "diversity" or "difference" are taken to mean "distinction." But lest the simplicity and singleness of the divine essence be taken away, **the terms "separation" and "division," which belong to the parts of a whole, are to be avoided**: and lest quality be taken away, **we avoid the use of the term "disparity"**: and lest we remove similitude, **we avoid the terms "alien" and "discrepant."** For Ambrose says (De Fide i) that "in the Father and the Son there is no discrepancy, but one Godhead": and according to Hilary, as quoted above, "in God there is nothing alien, nothing separable."
  - To avoid the heresy of Sabellius, **we must shun the term "singularity,"** lest we take away the communicability of the divine essence. Hence Hilary says (De Trin. vii): "It is sacrilege to assert that the Father and the Son are separate in Godhead." **We must avoid the adjective "only"** [unici] lest we take away the number of persons. Hence Hilary says in the same book: **"We exclude from God the idea of singularity or uniqueness."** Nevertheless, **we say "the only Son,"** for in God there is no plurality of Sons. Yet, **we do not say "the only God,"** for the Deity is common to several. **We avoid the word "confused,"** lest we take away from the Persons the order of their nature. Hence Ambrose says (De Fide i): "What is one is not confused; and there is no multiplicity where there is no difference." **The word "solitary" is also to be avoided**, lest we take away the society of the three persons; for, as Hilary

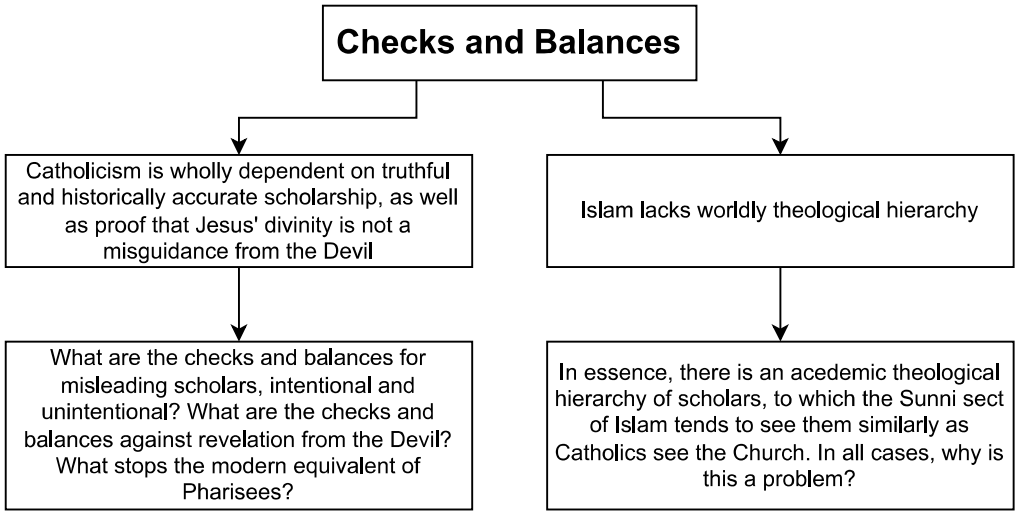
says (De Trin. iv), "We confess neither a solitary nor a diverse God."

- **13. In describing God we need to avoid the words "separation", "division", "singularity" (but "one" is ok), "only", and "uniqueness" (but "distinction" is ok). Instead, we can say "property" and "relation", which both depend on whatever a "person" is...**
- **14. We can't say God is the "only" God...** because God is the god of many beings? because God contains many "persons"?

- Q[32], A[1]
  - I answer that, **It is impossible to attain to the knowledge of the Trinity by natural reason.** For, as above explained (Q[12], AA[4],12), **man cannot obtain the knowledge of God by natural reason except from creatures.** Now creatures lead us to the knowledge of God, as effects do to their cause. Accordingly, **by natural reason we can know of God that only which of necessity belongs to Him** as the principle of things, and we have cited this fundamental principle in treating of God as above (Q[12], A[12]). Now, the creative power of God is common to the whole Trinity; and hence it belongs to the unity of the essence, and not to the distinction of the persons. Therefore, **by natural reason we can know what belongs to the unity of the essence, but not what belongs to the distinction of the persons. Whoever, then, tries to prove the trinity of persons by natural reason, derogates from faith** in two ways. Firstly, as regards the dignity of faith itself, which consists in its being concerned with invisible things, that exceed human reason; wherefore the Apostle says that "faith is of things that appear not" (Heb. 11:1), and the same Apostle says also, "We speak wisdom among the perfect, but not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery which is hidden" (1 Cor. 2:6,7). Secondly, as regards the utility of drawing others to the faith. **For when anyone in the endeavor to prove the faith brings forward reasons which are not cogent, he falls under the ridicule of the unbelievers: since they suppose that we stand upon such reasons, and that we believe on such grounds.**
    - **15. The Trinity cannot be understood through reason... but the Oneness of God can? Didn't He instill in all of us His natural law (*fitrah*) - especially if it is claimed that mankind was created in His image? How is it that the *fitrah* includes the Oneness of God without His 3 "persons"? "Confusion" is a concept related to "reason"... isn't God *not* the author of confusion?**
    - **16. What are these selctions of St. Aquinas' writings, if not trying to prove/explain the Trinity through reason?**
- Q[32], A[2]
  - I answer that, **A notion is the proper idea whereby we know a divine Person.** Now the divine persons are multiplied by reason of their origin: and origin includes the idea of someone from whom another comes, and of someone that comes from another, and by these two modes a person can be known. Therefore **the Person of the Father cannot be known by the fact that He is from another; but by the fact that He is from no one; and thus the notion that belongs to Him is called "innascibility." As the source of another, He can be known in two ways, because as the Son is from Him, the Father is known by the notion of "paternity"; and as the Holy Ghost is from Him, He is known by the notion of "common spiration." The Son can be known as begotten by another, and thus He is known by "filiation"; and also by another person proceeding from Him, the Holy Ghost, and thus He is known in the same way as the Father is known, by "common spiration." The Holy Ghost can be known by the fact that He is from another, or from others; thus He is known by "procession"; but not by the fact that another is from Him, as no divine person proceeds from Him.** Therefore, **there are Five notions in God: "innascibility," "paternity," "filiation," "common spiration," and "procession."** Of these **only four are relations, for "innascibility" is not a relation, except by reduction**, as will appear later (Q[33], A[4], ad 3). **Four only are properties. For "common spiration" is not a property; because it belongs to two persons. Three are personal notions---i.e. constituting persons, "paternity," "filiation," and "procession." "Common spiration" and "innascibility" are called notions of Persons, but not personal notions**, as we shall explain further on (Q[40], A[1], ad 1).
    - **17. A "notion" is an idea by which we can properly understand a "person", and encompasses "properties" and "relations".**
    - **18. St. Aquinas presents a new definition of "person" as "personal notions"**
- Q[40], A[1]
  - **Person and property are really the same, but differ in concept.** Consequently, **it does not follow that if one is multiplied, the other must also be multiplied.** We must, however, consider that in God, by reason of the divine simplicity, a twofold real identity exists as regards what in creatures are distinct. For, since the divine simplicity excludes the composition of matter and form, it follows that in God the abstract is the same as the concrete, as "Godhead" and "God." And as the divine simplicity excludes the composition of subject and accident, it follows that **whatever is attributed to God, is His essence Itself**; and so, wisdom and power are the same in God, because they are both in the divine essence. According to this twofold identity, **property in God is the same person.** For **personal properties are the same as the persons because the abstract and the concrete are the same in God**; since they are the subsisting persons themselves, as paternity is the Father Himself, and filiation is the Son, and procession is the Holy Ghost. But **the non-personal properties are the same as the persons according to the other reason of identity, whereby whatever is attributed to God is His own essence.** Thus, **common spiration is the same as the person of the Father, and the person of the Son; not that it is one self-subsisting person; but that as there is one essence in the two persons, so also there is one property in the two persons**, as above explained (Q[30], A[2]).
    - **19. "Person and property are really the same, but differ in concept" ??? According to 12, isn't this synonymous to saying "a square and a rectangle are really the same, but differ in concept"?**
    - **20. From 18, both "personal property" and "personal notion" are equivalent to a "person"**
- Q[42], A[1]
  - **We must needs admit equality among the divine persons.** For, according to the Philosopher (Metaph. x, text 15,16, 17), equality signifies the negation of greater or less. Now we cannot admit anything greater or less in the divine persons; for as Boethius says (De Trin. i): "They must needs admit a difference [namely, of Godhead] who speak of either increase or decrease, as the Arians do, who sunder the Trinity by distinguishing degrees as of numbers, thus involving a plurality." **Now the reason of this is that unequal things cannot have the same quantity. But quantity, in God, is nothing else than His essence. Wherefore it follows, that if there were any inequality in the divine persons, they would not have the same essence**; and thus the three persons would not be one God; which is impossible. We must therefore admit equality among the divine persons.... In the divine persons there is nothing for us to consider but the essence which they have in common and the relations in which they are distinct. Now equality implies both --- namely, distinction of persons, **for nothing can be said to be equal to itself**; and unity of essence, since **for this reason are the persons equal to one another, that they are of the same greatness and essence.** Now it is clear that the relation of a thing to itself is not a real relation. Nor, again, is one relation referred to another by a further relation: for when we say that paternity is opposed to filiation, opposition is not a relation mediating between paternity and filiation. For in both these cases relation would be multiplied indefinitely. Therefore **equality and likeness in the divine persons is not a real relation distinct from the personal relations: but in its concept it includes both the relations which distinguish the persons, and the unity of essence.** For this reason the Master says (Sent. i, D, xxxi) that in these "it is only the terms that are relative."
    - **21. If each of the 3 "persons" have the same "essence" or "what", how can St. Aquinas say that they are "equal" while also saying that nothing can be equal to "itself"?**
    - **22. From 10, how can the Father have a "magnitude" equivalent to the whole Trinity if each of the "persons" are equal in greatness and essence?**
    - **23. What is the difference between a "real relation" and "personal relation"/"person"?**

Points 1-7 and 15 clearly identify the relationship between the Trinity and reason.


Trinity and Reason
3 "Persons", 1 "Substance"
"Trinity" is a "mystery", or inconcievable concept. Therefore, any word used to describe God as a "Trinity" is merely filler (such as "person" or "substance"): they're made-up words to describe a concept we can't understand...
Father
God
Son
Holy Spirit
The Quran does not present an inconcievable nor unreasonable description of God, and neither did His Messengers...
"3 but 1" defies reason
No logical language can describe this relationship
Is God indivisible?
If an attempt is made to explain the Trinity or God's essence by comparing it to something of creation (such as an electron, as it is "fully mass" and "fully light" - assuming that this is the most accurate language to represent this phenomena), a reminder needs to be made that God was not created for anything in creation to have a similarity or likeness to Him
God: 3 in _____, but 1 in _____
vs.
God: One
God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
vs.
God the Merciful, Compassionate, Just...
Which of these descriptions is more reasonable and comprehensible? Which was preached by God's Messengers? Which is more reflective of the belief God has already written in our hearts?
Logical language can describe the Oneness of God


Checks and Balances
Catholicism is wholly dependent on truthful and historically accurate scholarship, as well as proof that Jesus' divinity is not a misguidance from the Devil
Islam lacks worldly theological hierarchy
What are the checks and balances for misleading scholars, intentional and unintentional? What are the checks and balances against revelation from the Devil? What stops the modern equivalent of Pharisees?
In essence, there is an acedemic theological hierarchy of scholars, to which the Sunni sect of Islam tends to see them similarly as Catholics see the Church. In all cases, why is this a problem?