

THE TRUE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

BY

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Content:

Introduction

Chapter One: The Scriptures

Authentic Manuscripts

Contradictions

Chapter Two: The Person

A Man

"Evidence" For Jesus Divinity

Chapter Three: The Message

Chapter Four: The Way

Conclusion

Bibliography

CHAPTER TWO:

JESUS, THE PERSON

As has been shown in the previous chapter, the Biblical scriptures, both New and Old Testaments, are unreliable sources and cannot, therefore, be used as an authentic means of knowing the truth about the man called Jesus Christ or about his mission and message. However, a close examination of these scriptures in the light of Qur'aanic verses will reveal some of the truths about Jesus that have survived in the Bible.

A Messenger

Throughout the Qur'aan, Jesus is identified fundamentally as a Messenger of God. In Chapter as-Saff (61):6, God quotes Jesus as follows:

“And [remember] when Jesus, son of Mary, said: ‘O Children of Israel, I am the messenger of Allaah sent to you, confirming the Torah [which came] before me.’”

There are many verses in the New Testament supporting the messengership / prophethood of Jesus. The following are only a few: In Matthew 21:11, the people of his time are recorded as referring to Jesus as a prophet: “And the crowds said, ‘This is the prophet Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee.’” In Mark, 6:4, it is stated that Jesus referred to himself as a prophet: “And Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.’” In the following verses, Jesus is referred to as having been sent as a messenger is sent. In Matthew 10:40, Jesus was purported to have said: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.” In John 17:3, Jesus is also quoted as saying: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” 1[1]

1[1] See also, John 4:34, 5:30, 7:16 & 28, 11:42, 13:16, 14:24.

A Man

The Qur'aanic revelation not only affirms Jesus' prophethood, but it also clearly denies Jesus' divinity. In Chapter al-Maa'idah, (5): 75, God points out that Jesus ate food, which is a human act, obviously not befitting to God.

“The Messiah, Son of Mary, was no more than a messenger and many messengers passed away before him. His mother was exceedingly truthful, and they both ate food. See how I have made the signs clear for them, yet see how they are deluded.”

There are numerous accounts in the New Testament which also deny Jesus' divinity.

For example, in Matthew 19:17, Jesus responded to one who addressed him as “O good master”, saying: “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.” If he rejected being called “good”,^{2[2]} and stated that only God is truly good, he clearly implies that he is not God.

In John 14:28, Jesus was saying: “The Father is greater than I.” By stating that the “Father” is greater than himself, Jesus distinguishes himself from God. Also in John 20:17, Jesus told Mary Magdalene to tell his followers: “I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.” Jesus' reference to God as “my Father and your Father” further emphasizes the distinction between himself and God. Furthermore, by referring to God as “his God”, he left no room for anyone to intelligently claim that he was God.

Even in some of the writings of Paul, which the Church has taken to be sacred, Jesus is referred to as a “man”, distinct and different from God. In 1st Timothy, 2:5, Paul writes: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

There are also verses in the Qur'aan which confirm Prophet Muḥammad's humanity, in order to prevent his followers from elevating him to a divine or semi-divine status, as was done to Prophet Jesus. For example, in Chapter al-Kahf (18):110, Allaah instructs the Prophet Muḥammad (e) to inform all who hear his message:

{ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ }

“Say: ‘Indeed, I am only a man like you to whom it has been revealed that your God is only one God.’ ”

^{2[2]} Jesus here rejects being called ‘perfectly good’, because perfection belongs only to God. He was ‘good’, but, being the “Son of man”(Mat. 19:29)—as he liked to call himself—he was capable of error.

In Chapter al-A'raaf (7):187, Allaah also directed Prophet Muhammad (e) to acknowledge that the time of the Judgement is known only to God.

“They ask you about the Final Hour: ‘When will its appointed time be?’ Say: ‘Knowledge of it is with my Lord. None can reveal its time besides Him.’ ”

In the Gospel according to Mark 13:31-32, Jesus is also reported to have denied having knowledge of when the final hour of this world would be, saying: “Heaven and the earth shall pass away but my word shall not pass away, but of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in the heaven nor the Son but the Father.” One of the attributes of God is omniscience, knowledge of all things. Therefore, his denial of knowledge of the Day of Judgement is also a denial of divinity, for one who does not know the time of the final hour cannot possibly be God.^{3[3]}

An Immaculate Conception

The Qur’aan confirms the Biblical story of Jesus’ virgin birth. However, in the Qur’aanic account of Jesus’ birth, Mary was an unmarried maiden whose life was dedicated to the worship of God by her mother. While she was worshipping in a place of religious seclusion, angels came and informed her of her impending pregnancy.

{ إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ }

“When the angels said: ‘O Mary, indeed Allaah gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary. He will be honored in this world and the next and will be of those close to Allaah.’ ” Qur’aan, (3):45

{ قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ }

“She said: ‘O my Lord, how can I have a son when no man has touched me?’ He said: ‘Even so—Allaah creates what He wishes. When He decrees something, He only has to say to it: “Be!” and it is.’ ” Qur’aan, (3):47

However, the Qur’aan clarifies that Jesus’ virgin birth did not change the state of his humanity. His creation was like the creation of Aadam, who had neither father nor mother.

{ إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ }

^{3[3]} It should be noted that, in spite of the Qur’aanic warnings and other statements of Prophet Muhammad himself, some Muslims have elevated him to semi-divine status by directing their prayers to or through him.

“Surely, the example of Jesus, in Allaah’s sight, is like that of Aadam. He created him from dust and said: ‘Be!’ and he was.” Qur’aan, (3):59

The Miracles

The Qur’aanic account of Jesus’ ministry confirms most^{4[4]} of his miracles mentioned in the Bible and identifies some not mentioned in the Bible. For example, the Qur’aan informs that Jesus was a messenger of God **from his birth**, and his first miracle was speaking as a child in the cradle. After Mary had given birth to Jesus, people accused her of fornication. Instead of responding to their accusations, she pointed to her newly born child:

{ فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا قَالَ إِنَّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ أَتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ
وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا }

“[When] she pointed to him, they asked, ‘How can we talk to a child in the cradle?’ He [Jesus] said: ‘Indeed, I am a servant of Allaah. He gave me the scripture and made me a prophet.’ ”

Qur’aan, (19):29-30

Among his other miracles of bringing the dead back to life, healing lepers, and making the blind see, the Qur’aan records another miracle not mentioned in the Bible. Prophet Jesus fashioned birds out of clay, blew on them and they flew away, living birds. But the point which is emphasized throughout the Qur’aan is that whenever Jesus performed a miracle, he informed the people that it was by God’s permission. He made it clear to his followers that he was not doing the miracles by himself, in the same way that the earlier Prophets made it clear to those around them.

Unfortunately, those who claim divinity for Jesus, usually hold up his miracles as evidence. However, other prophets were recorded to have done the same or similar miracles in the Old Testament.

Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fishes.	Elisha fed 100 people with twenty barley loaves and a few ears of corn (II Kings 4:44)
Jesus healed lepers.	Elisha cured Naaman the leper (II Kings 5:14).
Jesus caused the blind to see.	Elisha caused the blind to see (II Kings 6:17&20).
Jesus raised the dead.	Elijah did the same (I Kings 17:22). So did Elisha (II Kings 4:34). Even Elisha’s bones could restore the dead (II Kings 13:21).
Jesus walked on water.	Moses and his people crossed the dead sea (Exodus 14:22).

^{4[4]} The Biblical story of Jesus turning water into wine (John 2:1-10) is conspicuously absent from the Qur’aan.

There are also texts in the New Testament which confirm that Jesus did not act on his own. Jesus is quoted in John 5:30, as saying: "I can of mine own self do nothing..." and in Luke 11:20, as saying, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you." In Acts 2:22, Paul writes: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know..."

"EVIDENCE" FOR JESUS' DIVINITY

There are a number of verses which have been interpreted by the Catholic and Protestant Churches as evidence for the Divinity of Jesus Christ. However, on close examination of these verses, it becomes evident that, either their wordings are ambiguous, leaving them open to a number of different interpretations, or they are additions not found in the early manuscripts of the Bible. The following are some of the most commonly quoted arguments.

1. The Alpha and Omega

In the Book of Revelation 1, verse 8, it is implied that Jesus said the following about himself: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." These are the attributes of God. Consequently, Jesus, according to early Christians, is here claiming divinity. However, the above-mentioned wording is according to the King James Version. In the Revised Standard Version, biblical scholars corrected the translation and wrote: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says **the Lord God**, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." A correction was also made in the New American Bible produced by Catholics. The translation of that verse has been amended to put it in its correct context as follows: "**The Lord God** says: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'" With these corrections, it becomes evident that this was a statement of God and not a statement of Prophet Jesus.

2. The Pre-existence of Christ

Another verse commonly used to support the divinity of Jesus is John 8:58: "Jesus said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.'" This verse is taken to imply that Jesus existed prior to his appearance on earth. The conclusion drawn from it is that Jesus must be God, since his existence predates his birth on earth. However, the concept of the pre-existence of the prophets, and of man in general, exists in both the Old Testament, as well as in the Qur'aan. Jeremiah described himself in The Book of Jeremiah 1:4-5 as follows: " ⁵Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, ⁵ Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.' "

Prophet Solomon is reported in Proverbs 8:23-27, to have said, "²³Ages ago I was set up at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water, ²⁵Before the

mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth; ²⁶before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world ²⁷When he established the heavens, I was there.”

According to Job 38:4 and 21, God addresses Prophet Job as follows: “⁴Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding... ²¹You Know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!”

In the Qur’aan, Chapter al-A’raaf, (7):172, God informed that man existed in the spiritual form before the creation of the physical world.

{ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ }

“When your Lord gathered all of Aadam’s descendants [before creation] and made them bear witness for themselves, saying: ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They all replied: Yes indeed, we bear witness. [That was] so you could not say on the Day of Judgement: ‘We were unaware of this.’ ”

Consequently, Prophet Jesus’ statement, “Before Abraham was, I am,” cannot be used as evidence of his divinity. Within the context of John 8:54-58, Jesus is purported to have spoken about God’s knowledge of His prophets, which predates the creation of this world.

3. The Son of God

Another of the evidences used for Jesus’ divinity is the application of the title “Son of God” to Jesus. However, there are numerous places in the Old Testament where this title has been given to others.

God called Israel (Prophet Jacob) His “son” when He instructed Prophet Moses to go to Pharaoh in Exodus 4:22-23, ²² And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is my first-born son,” ²³and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me.’ ” 5[5]

In 2nd Samuel 8:13-14, God calls Prophet Solomon His son, ¹³ He [Solomon] shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ¹⁴I will be his father, and he shall be my son.”

5[5] See also, Hosea 1:10, of the *King James Version*.

God promised to make Prophet David His son in Psalms 89:26-27: “**26** He shall cry unto me, ‘Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation,’ ²⁷Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.”6[6]

Angels are referred to as “sons of God” in The Book of Job 1:6, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”7[7]

In the New Testament, there are many references to “sons of God” other than Jesus. For example, when the author of the Gospel according to Luke listed Jesus’ ancestors back to Adam, he wrote: “The son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”8[8]

Some claim that what is unique in the case of Jesus, is that he is the only begotten9[9] Son of God, while the others are merely “sons of God”. However, God is recorded as saying to Prophet David, in Psalms 2:7, “I will tell the decree of the Lord: He said to me, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you.’ ”

It should also be noted that nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus actually call himself “Son of God”.10[10] Instead, he is recorded to have repeatedly called himself “Son of man” (e.g. Luke 9:22) innumerable times. And in Luke 4:41, he actually rejected being called “Son of God”: “And demons also came out of many, crying, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.”

6[6] In the *Revised Standard Version*, it states: “*And I will make him **the** first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth.*” See also Jeremiah 31:9, “*...for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first-born.*”

7[7] See also, Job 2:1 and 38:4-7. Other references to sons of God can also be found in Genesis 6:2, Deuteronomy 14:1 and Hosea 1:10.

8[8] Luke 3:38.

9[9] The term “begotten” in Old English meant ‘to be fathered by’ and it was used to distinguish between Jesus, who was supposed to be the literal son of God, from the figurative use of the term ‘son’ for God’s “created sons”.

10[10] In the New Testament Book of Acts, there are several outlines of speeches of the early disciples of Jesus, speeches which date from the year 33 CE, almost forty years before the Four Gospels were written. In one of these discourses, Jesus is referred to specifically as *andra apo tou theou*: “a man from God.” (Acts 2:22). Not once do these early confessions of faith use the expression *wios tou theou*: “Son of God”, but they do speak several times of Jesus as God’s servant and prophet (Acts 3:13, 22, 23, 26). The significance of these speeches is that they accurately reflect the original belief and terminology of the disciples, before the belief and terminology were evolved under the influence of Roman religion and Greek philosophy. They reflect a tradition which is older than that used by the Four Gospels, in which Jesus is not invested with godship or divine sonship. (*Bible Studies From a Muslim Perspective*, p. 12).

Since the Hebrews believed that God is One, and had neither wife nor children in any literal sense, it is obvious that the expression “son of God” merely meant to them “Servant of God”; one who, because of his faithful service, was close and dear to God, as a son is to a father. Christians who came from a Greek or Roman background, later misused this term. In their heritage, “son of God” signified an incarnation of a god or someone born of a physical union between male and female gods.¹¹[11] When the Church cast aside its Hebrew foundations, it adopted the pagan concept of “son of God”, which was entirely different from the Hebrew usage.¹²[12]

Consequently, the use of the term “son of God” should only be understood from the Semitic symbolic sense of a “servant of God”, and not in the pagan sense of a literal offspring of God. In the four Gospels, Jesus is recorded as saying: “Blessed are the peace-makers; they will be called sons of God.”¹³[13]

Likewise, Jesus’ use of the term abba, “dear father”, should be understood similarly. There is a dispute among New Testament scholars as to precisely what abba meant in Jesus’ time and also as to how widely it was in use by other Jewish sects of that era.

James Barr has recently argued forcefully that it did not have the specially intimate sense that has so often been attributed to it, but that it simply meant “father”.¹⁴[14] To think of God as “our heavenly Father” was by no means new, for in the Lord’s prayer he is reported to have taught his disciples to address God in this same familiar way.

4. One with God

Those who claim that Jesus was God, hold that he was not a separate god, but one and the same God incarnate. They draw support for this belief from verse 30 of the Gospel according to John, chapter 10, in which Jesus is reported to have said, “I and the Father are one.” Out of context, this verse does imply Jesus’ divinity. However, when the Jews accused him of claiming divinity, based on that statement, “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said, Ye are gods?”’¹⁵[15]¹⁶[16] He clarified for them, with a scriptural example well known to them, that he was using the metaphorical

¹¹[11] See Acts 14:11-13. In the city of Lystra (Turkey), Paul and Barnabas preached, and the pagan peoples claimed that they were gods incarnate. They called Barnabas the Roman god Zeus, and Paul the Roman god Hermes.

¹²[12] *Bible Studies from a Muslim Perspective*, p. 15.

¹³[13] Matthew 5:9.

¹⁴[14] *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 39 and *Theology*, vol. 91, no. 741.

¹⁵[15] Jesus is quoting Psalms 82:6 “*I have said, ‘Ye are gods: and all of you are the children of the Most High.’*”

¹⁶[16] John 10:34.

language of the prophets which should not be interpreted as ascribing divinity to himself or to other human beings.

Further evidence is drawn from verses ten and eleven of the Gospel according to John, chapter 14, where people asked Jesus to show them the Father, and he was supposed to have said: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.”

These phrases would imply Jesus’ divinity, if the remainder of the same Gospel is ignored. However, nine verses later, in John 14:20, Jesus is also recorded as saying to his disciples, “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” Thus, if Jesus’ statement “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” means that he is God, then so were his disciples. This symbolic statement means oneness of purpose and not oneness of essence. The symbolic interpretation is further emphasized in John 17:20-21, wherein Jesus said, “**20** I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou has sent me.”¹⁷[17]

5. “He Accepted Worship”

It is argued that since Jesus is reported to have accepted the worship of some of his followers, he must have been God. However, a closer examination of the texts indicates both a case of dubious translation, as well as misinterpretation. The term “worship” can be found in the King James Version and The Revised Standard Version accounts of the three wise men who came from the east. They were reported in Matthew 2:2, to have said, “Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.”¹⁸[18] However, in The New American Bible (Catholic Press, 1970), the text reads: “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.”

In The Revised Standard Version, John 9:37-38,: “**37** Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.’ ³⁸He said, ‘Lord, I believe’; and he worshipped him.”¹⁹[19] However, in The American Bible, the scholarly translators added a footnote which read:

9:38 This verse, omitted in important MSS [manuscripts], may be an addition for a baptismal liturgy.

¹⁷[17] See also John 17:11.

¹⁸[18] See also, Matthew 2:8.

¹⁹[19] See also Matthew 28:9, “*And behold, Jesus met them and said, ‘Hail!’ And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.*”

This verse is not found in important ancient manuscripts containing this Gospel. It is probably a later addition made by Church scribes for use in baptismal services.

Furthermore, as a renowned authority on the Bible and its original language, George M. Lamsa, explained, “The Aramaic word sagad, worship, also means to bend or to kneel down. Easterners in greeting each other generally bowed the head or bent down.20[20] ...‘He worshipped him’ does not imply that he worshipped Jesus as one worshipped God. Such an act would have been regarded as sacrilegious and a breach of the First Commandment in the eyes of the Jews, and the man might have been stoned. But he knelt before him in token of homage and gratitude.”21[21]

The final scripture, the Qur’aan, clarifies the issue of worshipping or not worshipping Jesus, by quoting a conversation which will take place between Jesus and God on the Day of Judgement. Allaah states in Chapter al-Maa’idah, (5):116-7:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ... مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ ... {

“When Allaah will say: ‘O Jesus, son of Mary, did you tell people: “Worship me and my mother as two gods instead of Allaah?”’ ...[Jesus will say]: ‘I only told them what You commanded me to say: “Worship Allaah, my Lord and your Lord ...” ’ ”

6. “In the beginning was the Word”

Perhaps the most commonly quoted ‘evidence’ for Jesus’ divinity is John 1:1&14, “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...14And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth...” However, these statements were not made by Jesus Christ, nor were they attributed to him by the author of the Gospel according to John. Consequently, these verses do not constitute evidence for Jesus’ divinity, especially considering the doubts held by Christian scholars about the Fourth Gospel. The Bible scholars who authored The Five Gospels said: “The two pictures painted by John and the synoptic gospels (i.e., the Gospels of Matthew, Mark & Luke) cannot both be historically accurate.22[22]...The

20[20] See, for example, I Samuel 25:23, “*When Abigail saw David, she made haste, and alighted from the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed to the ground.*”

21[21] *Gospel Light*, (1936 ed.), p. 353, quoted in *Jesus*, p. 21.

22[22] The Gospel of John differs so radically from the other three Gospels (the Synoptic Gospels) that its authenticity is in doubt. For example:

The Synoptic Gospels	The Gospel of John
Jesus’ public ministry lasts one year	Jesus’ public ministry lasts for three years
Jesus speaks in brief one-liners and parables	Jesus speaks in lengthy philosophic discourses
Jesus has little to say about himself	Jesus reflects extensively on his mission and his person

words attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel are the creation of the evangelist for the most part, and reflect the developed language of John's Christian community."23[23]

The Greek term used by the anonymous author of the Fourth Gospel for "word" is *logos*.24[24] In doing so, the author identifies Jesus with the pagan *logos* of Greek philosophy, who was the divine reason implicit in the cosmos, ordering it and giving it form and meaning.25[25]

The idea of the *logos* in Greek thought may be traced back at least to the 6th-century-BC philosopher, Heracleitus, who proposed that there was a *logos* in the cosmic process analogous to the reasoning power in man. Later, the Stoics26[90] defined the *logos* as an active, rational and spiritual principle that permeated all reality.27[27] The Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher, Judaeus Philo of Alexandria (15 BC - 45 CE), taught that the *logos* was the intermediary between God and the cosmos, being both the agent between God and the cosmos, being both the agent of creation and the agent through which the human mind can comprehend God.28[28] The writings of Philo were preserved and cherished by the Church, and provided the inspiration for a sophisticated Christian philosophical theology. He departed from Platonic thought regarding the *logos* (Word) and called it "the first-begotten Son of God".29[29]

The identification of Jesus with the *logos*, was further developed in the early Church as a result of attempts made by early Christian theologians and apologists to express the Christian faith in terms that would be intelligible to the Hellenistic world. Moreover, it was to impress their hearers with the view that Christianity was superior to,

Casting out money changers from the temple is the <u>last</u> event of his earthly mission	Casting out money changers from the temple is the <u>first</u> incident of his mission
Jesus defends the causes of the poor and the oppressed	Jesus has little or nothing to say about the poor and oppressed
Jesus is an exorcist	Jesus performs no exorcisms
Jesus is crucified on 15 Nisan	Jesus is crucified on 14 Nisan, the day of the Jewish passover sacrifice

23[23] *The Five Gospels*, p. 10.

24[24] Its plural is *logoi* and it also means "reason" or "plan".

25[25] The concept defined by the term *logos* is also found in Indian, Egyptian, and Persian philosophical and theological systems. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 440).

26[26] Stoics were philosophers who followed the teachings of the thinker Zeno of Citicum (4th-3rd century BC).

27[27] They called the *logos* providence, nature, god, and the soul of the universe.

28[28] According to Philo and the Middle Platonists, philosophers who interpreted in religious terms the teachings of the 4th-century-BC Greek master philosopher Plato, the *logos* was both immanent in the world and at the same time the transcendent divine mind. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, p. 440).

29[29] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 9, p. 386.

or heir to, all that was best in pagan philosophy. Thus, in their apologies and polemical works, the early Christian Fathers stated that Christ was the preexistent logos.^{30[30]}

The Greek word for 'God' used in the phrase "and the Word was with God," is the definite form *hotheos*, meaning 'The God'. However, in the second phrase "and the Word was God", the Greek word used for 'God' is the indefinite form *tontheos*, which means 'a god'.^{31[31]} Consequently, John 1:1, should more accurately be translated, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." Therefore, if the Word was a 'god' in the literal sense, it would mean that there were two Gods and not one. However, in Biblical language, the term 'god' is used metaphorically to indicate power. For example, Paul referred to the devil as "god" in 2nd Corinthians 4:4, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God." Moses is also referred to as "god" in Exodus 7:1, "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.'^{32[32]}

Ancient Thoughts

There was serious conflict between the Pauline and the Jerusalem interpretations of Jesus and his message. This conflict, after simmering for years, finally led to a complete break, by which the Pauline Christian Church was founded, comprising, in effect, a new religion, separated from Judaism. On the other hand, the Jerusalem Nazarenes did not sever their links with Judaism, but regarded themselves essentially as practicing Jews, loyal to the Torah, who also believed in Jesus, a human Messiah figure.^{33[33]}

When the Jewish insurrection was crushed by the Romans and their Temple destroyed in 70 CE, the Jewish Christians were scattered, and their power and influence as the Mother Church and center of the Jesus movement was ended.^{34[34]} The Pauline Christian movement, which up until 66 CE had been struggling to survive against the strong disapproval of Jerusalem, now began to make headway.

^{30[30]} Ibid., vol. 7, p. 440.

^{31[31]} *Christ in Islam*, pp.40-1.

^{32[32]} This is according to the *King James Version* and the *Authorized Version*. In the *Revised Standard Version*, the translation of this verse is rendered, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.'"

^{33[33]} *The Myth-maker*, p. 172.

^{34[34]} Seventy years later a Christian Church was reconstituted in Jerusalem, after the city had been devastated by the Romans for a second time and rebuilt as a Gentile city called Aelia Capitolina. This new Christian Church had no continuity with the early 'Jerusalem Church' led by James. Its members were Gentiles, as Eusebius testifies, and its doctrines were those of Pauline Christianity. (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III. v. 2-3, quoted in *The Myth-maker*, p. 174).

The Jerusalem Church, under the leadership of James, originally known as Nazarenes, later came to be known by the derogatory nickname Ebionites (Hebrew *evyonim*, “poor men”), which some Nazarenes adopted with pride as a reminder of Jesus’ saying, “Blessed are the poor.” After the ascendancy of Graeco-Roman Church, the Nazarenes became despised as heretics, due to their rejection of the doctrines of Paul.³⁵[35]

According to the ancient Church historian, Irenaeus (c. 185 CE), the Ebionites believed in one God, the Creator, taught that Jesus was the Messiah, used only the Gospel According to Matthew, and rejected Paul as an apostate from the Jewish Law.³⁶[36]

Ebionites were known to still exist in the 4th century. Some had left Palestine and settled in Transjordan and Syria and were later known to be in Asia Minor, Egypt and Rome.³⁷[37]

Monarchianism,³⁸[38] a Gentile Christian movement which developed during the 2nd and 3rd centuries continued to represent the “extreme” monotheistic view of the Ebionites. It held that Christ was a man, miraculously conceived, but was only ‘Son of God’ due to being filled with divine wisdom and power. This view was taught at Rome about the end of the 2nd century by Theodotus, who was excommunicated by Pope Victor, and taught somewhat later by Artemon, who was excommunicated by Pope Zephyrinus. About 260 CE it was again taught by Paul of Samosata,³⁹[39] the bishop of Antioch in Syria, who openly preached that Jesus was a man through whom God spoke his Word (Logos), and he vigorously affirmed the absolute unity of God.

Between 263 and 268 at least three church councils were held at Antioch to debate Paul’s orthodoxy. The third condemned his doctrine and deposed him. However, Paul enjoyed the patronage of Zenobia, queen of Palmyra, to whom Antioch was then subject, and it was not until 272 when the emperor Aurelian defeated Zenobia that the actual deposition was carried out.⁴⁰[40]

In the late third and early fourth centuries, Arius (b. c. 250, Libya - d. 336 CE), a presbyter of Alexandria, Egypt, also taught the finite nature of Christ and the absolute oneness of God, which attracted a large following, until he was declared a heretic by the council of Nicaea in May 325 CE. During the council, he refused to sign the formula of faith stating that Christ was of the same divine nature as God. However, influential support from colleagues in Asia Minor and from Constantia, the emperor Constantine’s daughter, succeeded in effecting Arius’ return from exile and his readmission into the church.⁴¹[41] The movement which he was supposed to have begun, but which was in fact an extension of Jerusalem Nazarene/Jewish Christian belief, came to be known as

³⁵[35] *The Myth-maker*, p. 175.

³⁶[36] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 4, p. 344.

³⁷[37] *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 344.

³⁸[38] Also known as Dynamic or Adoptionist Monarchianism.

³⁹[39] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 8, p. 244.

⁴⁰[40] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 9, p. 208.

⁴¹[41] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 556-7.

Arianism and constituted the greatest internal threat to the Pauline Christian orthodoxy's belief in Jesus' divinity.

From 337 to 350 CE, the emperor in the West, Constantine, was sympathetic to the orthodox Christians, and Constantius II, sympathetic to the Arians, was Emperor in the East. Arian influence was so great that at a church council held in Antioch (341 CE), an affirmation of faith was issued which omitted the clause that Jesus had the "same divine nature as God". In 350 CE Constantius II became sole ruler of the empire, and under his leadership the Nicene party (orthodox Christians) was largely crushed. After Constantius the Second's death in 361 CE, the orthodox Christian majority in the West consolidated its position. However, the defense of absolute monotheism and the suppression of orthodox Christian trinitarian beliefs continued in the East under the Arian emperor Valens (364-383 CE). It was not until Emperor Theodosius I (379-395 CE) took up the defense of orthodoxy that Arianism was finally crushed. The unitarian beliefs of Arius, however, continued among some of the Germanic tribes up until the end of the 7th century.^{42[42]}

Modern Thoughts

Today, there are many modern scholars in Christianity who hold that Jesus Christ was not God. In 1977, a group of seven biblical scholars, including leading Anglican theologians and other New Testament scholars, published a book called *The Myth of God Incarnate*, which caused a great uproar in the General Synod of the Church of England. In the preface, the editor, John Hick, wrote the following: "The writers of this book are convinced that another major theological development is called for in this last part of the twentieth century. The need arises from growing knowledge of Christian origins, and involves a recognition that Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts 2.21) 'a man approved by God' for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us."^{43[43]}

There is a broad agreement among New Testament scholars that the historical Jesus did not make the claim to deity that later Christian thought was to make for him; he did not understand himself to be God, or God the Son, incarnate [in the flesh].^{44[44]} The late Archbishop Michael Ramsey, who was himself a New Testament scholar, wrote that "Jesus did not claim deity for himself."^{45[45]} His contemporary, the New Testament scholar C.F.D. Moule, said that, "Any case for a 'high' Christology that depended on the authenticity of the alleged claims of Jesus about himself, especially in the Fourth Gospel, would indeed be precarious."^{46[46]}

In a major study of the origins of the doctrine of the incarnation, James Dunn, who affirms orthodox Christology, concludes that "there was no real evidence in the

^{42[42]} *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 1, pp. 549-50.

^{43[43]} *The Myth of God Incarnate*, p. ix.

^{44[44]} *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*, pp. 27-8.

^{45[45]} *Jesus and the Living Past*, p. 39.

^{46[46]} *The Origin of Christology*, p. 136.

earliest Jesus tradition of what could fairly be called a consciousness of divinity.”47[47] Again, Brian Hebblethwaite, a staunch upholder of the traditional Nicene-Calcedonian Christology, acknowledges that “it is no longer possible to defend the divinity of Jesus by reference to the claims of Jesus.”48[48] Hebblethwaite and Dunn, and other scholars like them who still believe in Jesus’ divinity, argue instead that Jesus did not know he was God incarnate. This only became known after his resurrection.

Most famous among the Church of England bishops, who doubt Jesus’ divinity, is the outspoken Reverend Professor David Jenkins, the Bishop of Durham in England, who openly states that Jesus was not God. 49[49]

The following article, which appeared in The Daily News some years ago, clearly indicates the degree to which there are doubts among the clergy regarding Jesus’ divinity.

<p>Shock survey</p> <p>Of Anglican bishops</p>	
<p>LONDON: More than half of England’s Anglican bishops say Christians are not obliged to believe that Jesus Christ was God, according to a survey published today.</p> <p>The poll of 31 of England’s 39 bishops shows that many of them think that Christ’s miracles, the virgin birth and the resurrection might not have happened exactly as described in the Bible.</p>	<p>Only 11 of the bishops insisted that Christians must regard Christ as both God and man, while 19 said it was sufficient to regard Jesus as “God’s supreme agent”. One declined to give a definite opinion.</p> <p>The poll was carried out by London Weekend Television’s weekly religion show, Credo.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">“DAILY NEWS” 25/6/84</p>

CHAPTER THREE:

47[47] *Christology in the Making*, p. 60.

48[48] *The Incarnation*, p. 74.

49[49] *The Economist*, April 1, 1989, vol. 311, no. 7596, p. 19.

THE MESSAGE

The second issue, 'The Message of Jesus', is perhaps the most important point to consider. For, if Jesus was not God incarnate, but a prophet of God, the message which he brought from God is the essence of his mission.

Submission

The foundation of Jesus' message was submission to the will of God, because that is the foundation of the religion which God prescribed for man since the beginning of time. God says in Chapter Aal 'Imraan, the third chapter of the Qur'aan, verse 19:

{ إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ }

"Truly, the religion in the sight of Allaah is Islaam [submission]."

In Arabic, submission to God's will is expressed by the word 'Islaam'. In the Gospel according to Matthew 7:22, Jesus is quoted as saying: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." In this statement, Jesus places emphasis on "the will of the Father", submission of the human will to the will of God. In John 5:30, it is narrated that Jesus also said: "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me."

The Law

The "will of God" is contained in the divinely revealed laws which the prophets taught their followers. Consequently, obedience to divine law is the foundation of worship. The Qur'aan affirms the need for obedience to the divinely revealed laws in chapter al-Maa'idah, verse 44.

{ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا ... وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ }

"Indeed, I did reveal the Torah in which was guidance and light, by which the prophets, who submitted to God's will, judged (the Jews) ... and whoever does not judge by what Allaah has revealed is a disbeliever,"

Jesus was also reported in the Gospel according to Matthew 19:16-17, to have made obedience to the divine laws the key to paradise: “**16** Now behold, one came and said to him, “Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” ¹⁷So he said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”^{50[50]} Also in Matthew 5:19, Jesus Christ was reported to have insisted on strict obedience to the commandments saying, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Divine law represents guidance for humankind in all walks of life. It defines right and wrong for them and offers human beings a complete system governing all of their affairs. The Creator alone knows best what is beneficial for His creation and what is not. Thus, the divine laws command and prohibit various acts and substances to protect the human spirit, the human body, and human society from harm. In order for human beings to fulfil their potential by living righteous lives, they need to worship God through obedience to His commandments.^{51[51]}

This was the religion conveyed in the message of Jesus; submission to the will of the one true God by obedience to His commandments. Jesus stressed to his followers that his mission did not cancel the laws received by Prophet Moses. As the prophets who came after Moses maintained the law, so did Jesus. Chapter al-Maa'idah, verse 46 of the Qur'aan indicates that Jesus confirmed the Laws of the Torah in his message.

{ وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ }

“And in their footsteps, I sent Jesus, son of Mary, confirming the Torah that had come before him, and I gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirmation of the Torah that had come before it,”

In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus stated: “**17** Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the [way of] the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. ¹⁸For, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” However, Paul, who claimed to be a disciple of Jesus, systematically cancelled the laws. In his letter to the Romans, chapter 7:6, he stated, “But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.”

Unitarianism

Jesus came as a prophet calling people to worship God alone, as the prophets before him did. God says in chapter an-Nahl (16):36, of the Qur'aan:

^{50[50]} *King James Version and The Authorized Version.*
^{51[51]} *The Purpose of Creation*, pp. 42-3.

{وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ }

“Surely, 152[52] have sent to every nation a messenger (saying): ‘Worship Allaah and avoid false gods.’”

In Luke 3:8, the Devil asks Jesus to worship him, promising him the authority and glory of all of the kingdoms of this world, “And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’” Thus, the essence of the message of Jesus was that only God deserves to be worshipped and that the worship of anyone or anything besides God or along with God is false. Jesus not only called people to this message but he also practically demonstrated it for them by bowing down in prayer and worshipping God himself. In Mark 14:32, it states: “And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he [Jesus] said to his disciples, ‘Sit here, while I pray.’” And in Luke 5:16, “But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.”

Jesus called them to worship the one true God who is unique in His qualities. God does not have the attributes of His creation, nor does any creature share any of His attributes. In Matthew 19:16-17, when the man called Prophet Jesus ‘good’, saying, “Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Prophet Jesus replied, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.” He denied the attribution of ‘infinite goodness’ or ‘perfect goodness’ to himself, and affirmed that this attribute belongs to Allaah alone.

The vast majority of Christians today pray to Jesus, claiming that he is God. The Philosophers among them claim that they are not worshipping Jesus the man, but God who was manifest in Jesus the man. This is also the rationale of pagans who bow down in worship to idols. When a pagan philosopher is asked why he worships an idol which was made by human hands, he replies that he is not really worshipping the idol. Furthermore, he may claim that the idol is only a focal point for the presence of God, and thereby claim to be worshipping God who is manifest in the idol, and not the physical idol itself. There is little or no difference between that explanation and the answer given by Christians for worshipping Jesus. The origin of this deviation lies in the false belief that God is present in His creation. Such a belief justifies the worship of God’s creation.

Jesus’ message, which urged mankind to worship one God alone, became distorted after his departure. Later followers, beginning with Paul, turned that pure and simple message into a complicated trinitarian philosophy which justified the worship of Jesus, and then the worship of Jesus’ mother, Mary,53[53] the angels54[54] and the saints.

52[52] Literally “we”, known as the “royal we” or the “majestic we”, refers to Allaah.

53[53] Called Saint Mary, she became an object of veneration in the Christian Church since the apostolic age. She was given the title theotokos, meaning “God-bearer” or “mother of God” in the 3rd or 4th century. Popular devotion to Mary—in the form of feasts, devotional services, and the rosary—has played a tremendously important role in the lives of Roman Catholics and the Orthodox. (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 7. pp. 897-8 and vol. 16, pp. 278-9).

54[54] The angels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael were made saints and the religious celebration known as Michaelmas (called, “the Feast of St.

Catholics have a long list of saints to whom they turn in times of need. If something is lost, Saint Anthony of Thebes is prayed to in order to help find it.^{55[55]} St. Jude Thaddaeus is the patron saint of the impossible and is prayed to for intercession in incurable illnesses, unlikely marriages or the like. ^{56[56]} The patron saint of travelers was Saint Christopher, to whom travelers used to pray for protection up until 1969, when he was officially struck off the list of saints by papal decree, after it was confirmed that he was fictitious. ^{57[57]} Although he was officially crossed off the list of saints, there are many Catholics around the world today who are still praying to St. Christopher.

Worshipping 'saints' contradicts and corrupts the worship of One God; and it is in vain, because neither the living nor the dead can answer the prayers of mankind. The worship of God should not be shared with His creation in any way, shape or form. In this regard, Allaah said the following in Chapter al-A 'raaf (7):194:

{ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ }

“Surely, those whom you call on in prayer besides Allaah are slaves like yourselves.”

This was the message of Jesus Christ and all the prophets before him. It was also the message of the last prophet, Muḥammad—may peace and blessings be upon all of them. Thus, if a Muslim or a person who calls himself a Muslim prays to a saint, he has stepped out of the bounds of Islaam. Islaam is not merely a belief, wherein one is only required to state that he or she believes that there is no God worthy of worship but Allaah and that Muḥammad was the last of the messengers, in order to attain paradise. This declaration of faith allows one who declares it to enter the doors of Islaam, but there are many acts which may contradict this declaration and expel the doer from Islaam as quickly as he or she came in. The most serious of those acts is praying to other than God.

Muslim not “Mohammedan”

Since Jesus' religion, and that of all of the earlier prophets, was the religion of submission to God, known in Arabic as Islaam, his true followers should be called submitters to God, known in Arabic as Muslims. In Islaam, prayer is considered an act of worship. Prophet Muḥammad (e) was reported to have said, “Supplication is an act of

Michael and All Saints” by the Anglicans) was dedicated to them on the 29th of September by the Western churches, and 8th of November by the Eastern Orthodox Church. The cult of St. Michael began in the Eastern Church in the 4th century CE. Because of St. Michael's traditional position as leader of the heavenly armies, veneration of all angels was eventually incorporated into his cult. (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 8, p. 95). He became the patron saint of soldiers.

^{55[55]} The World Book Encyclopedia, vol. 1, p. 509.

^{56[56]} The World Book Encyclopedia, vol. 11, p. 146.

^{57[57]} Ibid., vol. 3, p. 417.

worship.”^{58[58]} Consequently, Muslims do not accept being called Mohammedans, as followers of Christ are called Christians and followers of Buddha are called Buddhists. Christians worship Christ and Buddhists worship Buddha. The term Mohammedans implies that Muslims worship Muḥammad, which is not the case at all. In the Qur’aan, God chose the name Muslim for all who truly follow the prophets. The name Muslim in Arabic means “one who submits to the will of God.”

{ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمْ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا }

“...It is He who named you Muslims both before and in this [scripture, the Qur’aan].”
Qur’aan, (22):78

Consequently, the essence of Jesus’ message was that man should worship God alone. He should not be worshipped through his creation in any way. Consequently, His image cannot be painted, carved or drawn. He is beyond human comprehension.

Images

Jesus did not condone the pagan practice of making images of God. He upheld the prohibition mentioned in the Torah, Exodus 20 verse 4: “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” Consequently, the use of religious images, called icons,^{59[59]} was firmly opposed by the early generation of

^{58[58]} *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 1, p. 387, no. 1474.

^{59[59]} The Iconoclastic Controversy was a dispute over the use of religious images (icons) in the Byzantine Empire during the 8th and 9th centuries. The Iconoclasts (those who rejected images) objected to icon worship for several reasons, including the Old Testament prohibition against images in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:4) and the possibility of idolatry. The defenders of icon worship insisted on the symbolic nature of images and on the dignity of created matter.

In the early church, the making and veneration of portraits of Christ and the saints were consistently opposed. The use of icons, nevertheless, steadily gained in popularity, especially in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Toward the end of the 6th century CE and in the 7th, icons became the object of an officially encouraged cult, often implying a superstitious belief in their animation. Opposition to such practices became particularly strong in Asia Minor. In 726, the Byzantine emperor Leo III took a public stand against icons and by 730 their use was officially prohibited. This led to the persecution of icon worshippers that reached great severity in the reign of Leo’s successor, Constantine V (741-775 CE).

In 787, however, the empress Irene convoked the seventh ecumenical council at Nicaea, at which Iconoclasm was condemned and the use of images was reestablished. The Iconoclasts regained power in 814 after Leo V’s accession, and the use of icons was again forbidden at a

Christian scholars. However, in time, the Greek and Roman tradition of image-making and portraying God in human form eventually won out. The prohibition is to prevent the eventual deterioration of worship of God into the worship of His creation. Once a human being makes a picture in his or her mind of God, the person is, in fact, trying to make God like His creation, because the human mind can only picture the things which it has seen, and God can not be seen in this life.

Christians with a tradition of worshipping through images often question how God can be worshipped without visualizing Him. God should be worshipped based on the knowledge of His attributes which He revealed in authentic scripture. For example, Allaah describes Himself in the Qur'aan as being All-Merciful, so His worshippers should reflect on God's many mercies and give thanks to God for them. They should also contemplate on the nature of His mercy to them and show mercy to other human beings. Likewise, Allaah refers to Himself as being Oft-Forgiving, so His worshippers should turn to Him in repentance and not give up hope when they commit sins. They should also appreciate God's forgiveness by being forgiving to other human beings.

Prophecy

Part of Prophet Jesus' message was to inform his followers of the prophet who would come after him. As John the Baptist heralded the coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus in turn heralded the coming of the last of the prophets of God, Muḥammad. In the Qur'aan, Chapter aṣ-Ṣaff (61):6, God quotes Jesus' prophecy about Muḥammad (e).

{ وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدٌ .. }

“(Remember) when Jesus, son of Mary, said, ‘O Children of Israel, I am the Messenger of Allaah sent to you, confirming the Torah before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger coming after me, whose name will be Ahmad.60[60]”

There are also some references in the Gospels which seem to refer to the coming of Prophet Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessings be on all the prophets. In the

council (815 CE). The second Iconoclast period ended with the death of the emperor Theophilus in 842. In 843 his widow finally restored icon veneration, an event still celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church as the Feast of Orthodoxy. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 6, p. 237)

60[60] “Ahmad” like “Muḥammad” is a derivative from the Arabic root *hamd* meaning “praise; thanks”. Prophet Muḥammad (e) was also known by this name.

Gospel according to John 14:16, Jesus is quoted as saying, “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor,^{61[61]} to be with you for ever.”

Christian laymen usually interpret the “Counselor” mentioned in John 14:16 as the Holy Spirit.^{62[62]} However, the phrase “another Counselor” implies that it will be someone else like Jesus and not the Holy Spirit,^{63[63]} especially considering John 16:7, in which Jesus is reported to have said, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” The term “Counselor” could not be referring to the Holy Spirit here, because—according to the Gospels—the Holy Spirit was already present in the world prior to Jesus’ birth,^{64[64]} as well as during his ministry.^{65[65]} This verse implies that the “Counselor” had not already come.

Jesus’ declaration that the prophet-counselor “will be with you forever,” could be interpreted to mean that there would be no need for additional prophets to succeed this Counselor. He would be the last of the Prophets of God, whose message would be preserved until the end of the world.^{66[66]}

Jesus’ foretelling the coming of Muḥammad— may God’s peace be upon both of them—confirmed the prophesies about Prophet Muḥammad (e) in the Torah. In Deuteronomy 18:18 & 19, it is written that the Lord said to Moses, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren^{67[67]}; and I will put my words in his

61[61] The Greek word paraclete is translated as “Comforter” in the King James Version, and as “Advocate” and “Helper” in other translations. Parakletos means one who pleads the cause of another, one who counsels or advises another from deep concern for the other’s welfare. (Beacon Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 168).

62[62] See John 14:26, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things...” However, in 1st John 4:1, the term “Spirit” is used to refer to a prophet, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

63[63] In English, “another” may mean “one more of the same kind” or “one more of a different kind.” The Greek text of the New Testament uses the word allon, which is the masculine accusative form of allos: “another of the same kind”. The Greek word for “another of a different kind” is heteros, but the New Testament does not use this word in John 14:16. (Jesus, a Prophet of Islam, pp. 15-6).

64[64] John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15); Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41); John’s father, Zacharias, was also filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke:1:67).

65[65] The Holy Spirit was on Simeon (Luke 2:26) and it descended in the shape of a dove on Jesus (Luke 3:22).

66[66] Jesus, A Prophet of Islam, p. 13.

67[67] The brethren of the Jews—who are themselves descendants of Abraham’s son Isaac—are the Arabs, descendants of Isaac’s brother Ishmael.

mouth⁶⁸[68], and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name⁶⁹[69], I myself will require it of him.” In Isaiah 42, Isaiah prophesies about a chosen “Servant of the Lord” whose prophetic mission would be to all mankind, unlike the Hebrew prophets whose missions were limited to Israel. “¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations... ⁴He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law...¹¹Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits.” This particular servant of the Lord is the only one identified with Kedar, ⁷⁰[70] the Arabs.⁷¹[71]

⁶⁸[68] The Qur’aan literally means “the recital”. Prophet Muhammad (e) taught that the Qur’aan was the words of God. His own explanations and instructions are referred to as hadeeth.

⁶⁹[69] Each of the 114 chapters of the Qur’aan begins with the prayer: “In the name of Allaah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful,” except one, chapter 9.

⁷⁰[70] Ishmael’s descendants came to be known as Arabs, a term which, in Hebrew, meant those who inhabited the ‘arabah or desert (Dictionary of the Bible, p. 47). The most prominently mentioned of Ishmael’s twelve sons is Qaydar (Kedar in Hebrew). In some Bible verses Qaydar is synonymous with Arabs in general (Jeremiah 2:10; Ezekiel 27:21; Isaiah 60:7; Song of Solomon 1:5).

⁷¹[71] Jesus, A Prophet of Islam, p. 11.