

Jesus Son of Mary (عيسى عليه السلام): The Noble Prophet of Islam
Between the Vilification of the Pharisees and
the Deification of the Nazarenes



Jesus

in Islam
Christianity
and the Jewish
Talmud



Jesus in Islām, Christianity and the Jewish Talmud

وَإِن مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ ۚ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ ۚ
وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا

And there is none from the People of the Scripture—
[Jews and Christians]—but that he will surely believe
in Jesus before his death [when he returns]. And on the
Day of Resurrection he will be against them
a witness. (Qur'ān 4:159)

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Contents

Introduction.....	5
The Monotheism of the Prophets.....	9
Argumentation with Jews and Christians	13
Jesus in Christianity.....	15
Jesus in Talmudic [Rabbinic] Judaism.....	24
Jesus in Islām.....	32
Jesus and Mary in the Qurʾān	36
A Double Reward for Jews and Christians	59
Closing Notes	63
Useful Scholarly Resources.....	64

Transliteration Table

Consonants

ء	'	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	'	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels

Short	ـَ	a	ـِ	i	ـُ	u
Long	ـًا	ā	ـِي	ī	ـُو	ū
Diphthongs		ـَو	aw	ـَي	ay	

عَزَّجَلَّ The Mighty and Majestic.

صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ May Allāh make good mention of His Prophet in the highest company and grant him safety.

عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام Peace be upon him.

عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام Peace be upon her.

Note: It is impossible to translate the Qur'ān into any other language whilst retaining its full range and depth of meaning. Hence, all verses from the Qur'ān cited in this work, whilst providing an accurate enough rendition of the basic meaning, remain limited due to the limitations of the English language and are unable to convey fully what is in the original Arabic.

Introduction

Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) Son of Mary (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام) was from a line of Israelite Prophets sent to the Jews to proclaim the message of monotheism and to purify and confirm the law of Moses (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). The Children of Israel split into two: believers and disbelievers. The Jewish religious leaders rejected the message of Jesus who challenged their authority and rebuked them for their iniquities and excesses. The factions who believed in Jesus were of two groups: The very first believers were the “**Jewish Christians**” who were monotheists and kept the law. The other group, the **Pauline Christians**, exaggerated his status, deified him and worshipped him alongside Allāh.¹ On account of Pauline Christianity, the religious leaders of the disbelieving Jews vilified the character of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) who is innocent of the excesses of the Christians and the unfounded claims of the religious leaders of the Jews. The conflict between Jews and Christians played out over the centuries and can be observed in the anti-Christian polemics in Talmudic literature and the anti-Jewish sentiment that Christian Europe retained into the 20th century.²

¹ The words, **īl**, **eloh**, **ilāh** and **Allāh** (the only true deity worthy of worship) are synonymous in Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic.

² The writers of some of the Gospels were quite hostile to Judaism and the Jews and provided a basis for vehement attitudes in the early church. Centuries later, this developed into the idea that Jews had been replaced as the “chosen people” by the Christians and as such the continued existence of Judaism was an invalidation of Christianity. In the Middle Ages, Jews were expelled from numerous European cities and the Crusaders on their way to Jerusalem attacked Jews in German and French towns. Jews were also discriminated against following charges of “blood libel” and “host desecration”. Increasingly, Jews were forced to convert or be expelled and were subject to torture and death, often by burning at the stake, such as what happened in the Roman Catholic Inquisitions from the 13th century onwards. Faced with persecution from Christendom, Jews sought refuge in Muslim lands, such as the Ottoman empire. In his lecture, “*How Islam Saved the Jews*”, Professor David J. Wasserstein of Vanderbilt University, stated in a 2012 lecture, [and later published in the Jewish Chronicle as “*So, What Did the Muslims Do For the Jews?*”]: “Islam saved Jewry... Had Islam not come along, the conflict with Persia would have continued. The separation between western Judaism, that of Christendom, and Babylonian Judaism,

The Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions make clear the correct position regarding Jesus to both of these groups—the “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*)—in their disputes with each other: One failed to act by the truth when it came to them and rejected the message of Jesus out of pride and arrogance. The other acted upon ignorance—thereby abandoning and opposing authentic revealed knowledge—and fell into exaggeration by deifying him and worshipping him alongside Allāh. Both of these groups were guilty of excesses and exaggeration in religion as well as **alteration** (*tabdīl*), **distortion** (*tahrīf*) and **concealment** (*kitmān*) of the Book. This is something the Qur'ān rehearses to them and which the learned amongst their priests, Rabbis and historians know to be factual reality as they are well aware of the deeds of their predecessors in taking liberties with scripture.

Allāh (ﷻ) stated:

يَأْهَلِ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ

that of Mesopotamia, would have intensified. Jewry in the west would have declined to disappearance in many areas. And Jewry in the east would have become just another oriental cult. But this was all prevented by the rise of Islam. The Islamic conquests of the seventh century changed the world, and did so with dramatic, wide-ranging and permanent effect for the Jews. Within a century of the death of Mohammad, in 632, Muslim armies had conquered almost the whole of the world where Jews lived, from Spain eastward across North Africa and the Middle East as far as the eastern frontier of Iran and beyond. Almost all the Jews in the world were now ruled by Islam. This new situation transformed Jewish existence. Their fortunes changed in legal, demographic, social, religious, political, geographical, economic, linguistic and cultural terms - all for the better.” The Jewish Chronicle, 24 May 2012 (online). This is not to say that Jews never suffered any oppression at the hands of unjust Muslim rulers at all, but overwhelmingly, they fared much better in the Muslim lands. For more details one can refer to “*A History of the Jewish People*” edited by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, Harvard University Press (1985). It is a comprehensive book written by six Jewish scholars from Hebrew University in Jerusalem for Jewish readers and spans 5000 years of history. A consistent pattern emerges from the book that throughout Islāmic history Jews have fared well and lived in comfortable conditions.

“O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion and nor say about Allāh except the truth.” (4:171).

Regarding their alteration (*tabdīl*):

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِـ

ثَمًّا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

“So woe to those who write the ‘scripture’ with their own hands, then say, ‘This is from Allāh’ in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn thereby.” (2:79).

Regarding their distortion (*tahrīf*):

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ

مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Do you covet [the hope, O believers], that they would believe [in Islām] while a party of them used to hear the words of Allāh and then distort [the Torah] after they had understood it while they had knowledge [of what they were doing]?” (2:75).

Regarding their concealment (*kitmān*):

يَا هَلْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ لِيَمَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبُطْلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“O People of the Scripture, why do you confuse the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth while you know [it]?” (3:71).

Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) invited the Jews and Christians to the truth which they had abandoned, altered or concealed and debated with them regarding matters of divinity, scripture, law and the status of Jesus the Messiah. They were convinced that he was indeed a genuine Prophet because he was mentioned in their scriptures by name as *מהמך* “Muḥammad” and *אחמד* “Aḥmad”: An illiterate prophet from the offspring of Kedar (son of Ishmael) who would appear from the deserts of Paran (Mecca). He would be expelled from his city and migrate to Mount Sela (Madīnah), which would sing his praise upon his arrival and glorify the Lord. He would then return with ten thousand of his companions, victorious against the idolaters without battle and would come with a law. His qualities and the major events of his life were mentioned in their scripture as well as the descriptions of his followers and their rituals and rites. Some

of the Jews accepted Islām, as did many Christians. However, others rejected him and his message on grounds of pride and concealed the truth knowingly.

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ
الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture [Jews and Christians] know him [Muḥammad] as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it].” (2:146).

Jesus the Messiah holds a lofty and honourable position in Islām as does his righteous and chaste mother, Mary (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام). Muslims do not tolerate denigration of any of the Prophets and Messengers and especially the five resolute Messengers: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and Muḥammad (ﷻ).

As for the negative portrayal of the Prophets of Allāh in the Torah and the ascription of reprehensible deeds to them, it is all from the fabrications of the poisoned pens of the scribes. All the Prophets and Messengers were noble, upright, righteous men. They were infallible in matters of revelation and its conveyance. They were secure (*maʿṣūm*) from falling into major sin. As for minor sins (errors), the Prophets may fall into them, but they do not persist upon them after being notified by Allāh and repenting. Further, Prophets and Messengers have a much higher standard of uprightness in character than those besides them. Thus, their “minor sins” may consist of mistakes and errors in judgement—such as choosing the least beneficial of two beneficial options—for which an ordinary person would not be subject to blame. This is the Islāmic position regarding the status of the Prophets and Messengers.

In what follows we present the treatment of Jesus within Christianity, the Jewish Talmud and Islām following a brief primer on the monotheism of the Prophets.

The Monotheism of the Prophets

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

“And We sent not before you any messenger except that We revealed to him [to proclaim] that, ‘There is no deity except Me, so worship Me [alone].’” (21:25).

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطُّغُوتَ

“And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], ‘Worship Allāh and [alone] shun false deities.’” (16:36).

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“[Jesus said], ‘And indeed, Allāh is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him [alone]. That is a straight path’.” (19:36).

The **Monotheism (Tawhīd)** which all of the Prophets called to is not merely to believe in one creator, provider and sustainer because this is already rooted in innate disposition. Every child is born with this predisposition and it is referred to as the *fiṭrah*.

Rather, the monotheism of the Prophets it is to exclusively single out this creator, Allāh, with all forms and types of worship.

These forms and types include love (*maḥabbah*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajāʾ*), reliance (*tawakkul*), bowing (*sujūd*), prostration (*rukūʾ*), prayer (*ṣalāt*), invocation (*duʿā*), seeking aid (*istiʿānah*), soliciting rescue (*istighāthah*) by way of example and include both what is inward (the heart, its belief and its feelings, emotions and states) and what is outward (the tongue and the limbs, utterances and deeds). Thus, claiming to believe in one Creator and one God whilst directing these forms and types of worship to others, be they angels, prophets, saints [pious men whether dead or alive], stones, trees, idols, the sun, moon and stars or any of the elements, forces or intertwined ways and means and causes and effects is a contradiction.

One cannot claim to believe that only God creates, provides, sustains, controls, regulates, gives and takes, and then offer worship to what is besides Him from that which He created. It is a violation of

reason, comprises the greatest injustice and represents the height of folly and shallowness in intellect.

The Islāmic message of all the Prophets is built upon two mighty foundations: **Firstly:** That Allāh is exclusively worshipped alone, no partners are associated with Him in worship. **Secondly:** That He is not worshipped except through what He legislated. The message of the Prophets combines between these two with the second being a means of fulfilment for the first.³

The Jews and Christians swerved from these foundations. They worshipped others besides Allāh and altered, distorted, abrogated or, in the case of the Christians, did away with the law altogether and worshipped Allāh through their own innovations and whatever they absorbed of the rituals of the Pagans.

Acts of worship are founded upon the principles of legislation (*sharʿ*) and faithful observance (*ittibāʿ*) which is imitation of the Messengers of Allāh in what they conveyed of the law. It is not for anyone to worship Allāh except through what His Messengers legislated of obligatory and recommended deeds. He is not worshipped through innovated affairs for which He gave no authority. Thus every act of worship must be founded upon pure monotheistic belief, being directed only to Allāh, done sincerely for His sake, and in compliance with what was legislated.

This is the way of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, the Israelite prophets, Jesus and Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). It is to worship Allāh alone and to worship Him only through what He legislated and ordered.

The treatment of monotheism in the Qurʾān and the Prophetic traditions is vast, comprehensive and complete. It is a completion and perfection of the message of all of the Prophets. The Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, *“Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The prophets are*

³ In Islām, whilst deeds are essential to faith and are required for salvation, none will enter Paradise except through the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allāh. This is because Allāh is the one who created and gave man abilities and strengths to act, sent him guidance, granted him success in following it, and overlooked his sins and shortcomings.

paternal brothers, their mothers are different, but their religion is one.”⁴ Traces of this message of Islām can still be found in what remains of the Torah and the Gospel. In Deuteronomy 6:4 we find: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” In Zechariah 14:9: “On that day there will be [but] one Lord and His name will be the One”. And in Mark 12:29: “‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one’.” The meaning is lost in translation,⁵ but these statements, in the original Hebrew or Aramaic יהוה אחד, יהוה יחיד, יהוה אחד וישמו יהוה *eloheyntu yahúwah ‘echad*⁶ and יהוה אחד וישמו יהוה *yahúwah ‘echad ush’mo ‘echad*⁷ are identical to the statement **ilāhunā aḥād**, “Our Deity is uniquely one” and **qul huwallāhu aḥād**, “Say: He is Allāh [who is] Uniquely One” and the declaration of monotheism in Islām, **lā ilāha illallāh**, which means: “No deity *deserves* or *has the right to be worshipped* but Allāh alone.”⁸

We also read in Matthew, “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ‘All this I will give You’, he said, ‘if You will fall down and worship me.’ ‘Away from me, Satan!’ Jesus declared. ‘For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only’.”⁹

Islām is founded upon this monotheism and upon submission to the will of Allāh, just as Jesus himself taught in what is ascribed to him and whose meaning the Qur’ān corroborates. Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of

⁴ Related by Imām al-Bukhārī in his compilation of Prophetic traditions.

⁵ The words *il*, *eloh*, *ilāh* refer not to a mere creator, lord, but to a deity to whom longing and devotion are shown. Thus, deities are many and varied. The meaning of these statements of monotheism, as originally intended in all revealed books is that nothing has the right to be worshipped in truth but Allāh alone and whatever is worshipped besides Allāh is worshipped in falsehood. This is the meaning of the simple statement (لا إله إلا الله), *lā ilāha illallāh*. It is often incorrectly translated as “There is no god but God” which corrupts the meaning, or “There is no supreme creator but God” which is a deficient translation that eliminates the essence of the meaning.

⁶ Meaning: Our deity (*ilāhunā*), the Lord, is one (*aḥād*).

⁷ Meaning: The Lord is one (*aḥād*), His Name (*ism*) is One (*aḥād*).

⁸ The translation, “There is no god but God” is erroneous and lacks the essence of the meaning since there are many gods in existence.

⁹ Matthew 4:8-10.

heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.¹⁰ On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers’.”¹¹ Doing “the will of the Father in heaven” means submission to the will of Allāh, which is the meaning Islām: to submit oneself to His Oneness (*al-istislām lillāhi bil-tawḥīd*) and to obey him through compliance with the law (*al-inqiyād lahū bil-ṭā’ah*) and to disavow the worship of other deities and those who fall into it (*al-barā’ah min al-shirk wa ahlihī*). This is the same message given by Jesus in the above citation. Further, Jesus disavows those who worship him by invoking him and doing deeds in his name and affirms that only those who worship Allāh, obey Him and perform His will shall attain salvation.

In essence, Jesus was a caller to **Islām** and **Tawḥīd**. He neither called to “Judaism” nor to “Christianity”. Rather, he called to the way of Abraham and Moses (عليهما السلام). The true followers of Jesus and his message were led by **James the Just**, and were pure monotheists. They believed in Jesus as a Prophet and Messiah. They observed the law, did not eat pork or drink alcohol and were circumcised. They considered salvation to be through faith *and* deeds which is a central message of the Noble Qur’ān. This original “Jewish Christianity” was rejected by Jewish leaders out of pride, arrogance and the desire to preserve their standing. It was altered by Paul (Saul of Tarsus) for a Greco-Roman pagan audience. The earliest believers in Jesus were deemed heretical, persecuted and driven out. “Jewish Christianity” became obscure thereafter. Paganised Greco-Roman “Christianity” went on to replace the monotheism and law of Jesus (عليه السلام) through the aid of empire and became the religion of the Gentiles.

¹⁰ Submission to Allāh’s will (which means obeying Him in compliance with His command, upon a pure and strict monotheistic belief) is the meaning of “Islām” and this is what Jesus and all the Prophets called to. It is a simple message devoid of mystery, conflict, confusion and contradiction and is instantly agreeable to intuition and innate disposition.

¹¹ Matthew. 7 :21-22.

Argumentation with Jews and Christians

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا
بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَوَحْدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

“And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, ‘We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him’.” (29:46).

The Qur’ānic exegete, Imām al-Sa’dī (d. 1956) stated: “The Exalted has prohibited disputing the People of the Scripture when it is done without insight and without any pleasingly acceptable principle. [It orders] that they should only argue in a way that is best: with good manners, gentleness and softness in speech; inviting to the truth; beautifying it; refuting the falsehood and censuring it and using the nearest of ways leading to it. [It explains] that the intent should not be mere argumentation in and of itself, desiring to dominate [others] and for the love of exaltation. Rather, the intent should be to clarify the truth and guide the creation.”¹²

Muslims are commanded to engage in dialogue, debate and discussion within certain parameters wherein it is not argument merely for argument’s sake but a sincere desire to know and pursue the truth and to guide others to it. It will become clear to any reasonable, fair-minded, objective, intelligent person that what Islām presents on the subject of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) agrees with authentic scripture, sound reason and an objective analysis of what is left and available of the credible historical record regarding the earliest followers of Jesus.¹³

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) also stated:

¹² *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān* (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 2002) p. 632.

¹³ One can refer to the works of scholars such as James Dunn, Bart Ehrman, E.P. Sanders and Robert Eisenman which cover the *historical figure* of Jesus, how Jesus was turned into God and what the Dead Sea scrolls have added to our knowledge of the early sects and followers of Jesus.

فُن يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا
 نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا
 اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

“Say [O Muḥammad]: ‘O people of the Scripture [Jews and Christians]: Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allāh, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allāh.’ Then, if they turn away, say: ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims’.” (3:64).

Imām al-Sa’dī said: “This means: Let us unite upon this, a word upon which all the Prophets and Messengers were agreed and which was not opposed except by the stubborn and misguided. It is not specific to any one of us but is addressed to all of us and this is from justice in speech and fairness in argument. So let us single out Allāh with worship by singling Him out with our love, fear and hope. Let us not associate a prophet, angel, saint, statue, idol, the animate or inanimate with Him.”¹⁴

This is the basis of dialogue between Muslims and Jews and Christians. The common word of agreement is that we all single out Allāh in worship, exclusive of all other deities devised and invented by men and combine between faith and righteous works through adherence to unadulterated law. This being the way of Abraham, Moses, Jesus (عليه السلام) and of all Prophets and Messengers sent by Allāh.

Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is the last and final messenger whose message is a completion of all previous messages. The Qur’ān is the lasting inimitable testimony to the veracity and truthfulness of his prophethood. It clarifies the truth of that wherein the people of previous scripture differed. The Qur’ān affirms that elements of truth still remain within these scriptures and directs the People of the Scripture to reflect upon these truths. It informs them that they opposed these truths and altered their scriptures, something they know to be factual and true. It then invites them to believe in the Qur’ān and to accept the truths and sound beliefs it has clarified.

¹⁴ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, pp. 133-134.

Jesus in Christianity

The earliest “Jewish Christians”¹⁵—referred to as the Nazarenes and Ebionites—were monotheists, affirmed faith in Jesus as Prophet and Messiah and observed the law, the Torah. However, “Nazarene” is best viewed as an umbrella term. The earliest Nazarenes are the Jewish inhabitants of Nazareth who followed Jesus. They were referred to by the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus as *ha-nozrim*. However, the term was applied more broadly over the next few centuries to include individuals and groups who departed from the purely monotheistic message of Jesus and exaggerated in his status, claiming he was the “Son of God”.¹⁶ The Qur’ān refers to those who exaggerated in Jesus and said he was the “Son of God” as “Naṣārā”:

وَقَالَتِ الْنَّصْرَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ

“And the Nazarenes (Christians) say: Jesus is the Son of Allāh. That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the statement of those who disbelieved [before them]” (9:30).

¹⁵ “Christ” is the Latinized Greek translation of the Hebrew “mashiach”. It is inaccurate to refer to the original followers of Jesus as “Christians”. We employ the term “Jewish Christians” to distinguish them from the Israelite faction who rejected Jesus and the Pauline faction who deified him.

¹⁶ “The evidence provided by the Church Fathers appear to demonstrate that the Nazarenes, a Jewish Christian group orthodox in all respects except for their practice of the ceremonial law, existed as a distinct group from the time of the fall of Jerusalem until the late fourth or early fifth century. They were descendants of the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem, which escaped to Pella after the fall of Jerusalem. They recognized the authority of the Apostle Paul and his mission to the Gentiles, as well as the authority of the greater Church, of which they considered themselves apart. They evangelized their Jewish brethren in the synagogues. They accepted the entirety of the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments. They acknowledged that God was the Creator of all things and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.” Kenneth Howard (1993). *Jewish Christianity in the Early Church*. p. 33.

“The Ebionite Christians... believed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah sent from the Jewish God to the Jewish people in fulfilment of the Jewish Scriptures. They also believed that to belong to the people of God, one needed to be Jewish. As a result, they insisted on observing the Sabbath, keeping kosher, and circumcising all males... An early source, Irenaeus [d. 202], also reports that the Ebionites continued reverence to Jerusalem, evidently by praying in its direction during their daily acts of worship.”¹⁷

“Jewish followers of Jesus included the Nazarenes, or Nazoreans, and the Ebionites (from the Hebrew *ebyonim*, the poor). In their writings, they proclaimed faith in Jesus as the last prophet and as the Messiah of the Israel who had not come to abolish the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:17) but to purify it from false interpretations. They emphasized that Jesus followed the model set by the Prophet Jeremiah who denounced ‘the false pen of the scribes’ (Jer. 8:8) and attacked spurious laws regarding animal sacrifices (Jer. 7:21-26).”¹⁸

The original Jewish Christianity [Jesus as Prophet and Messiah], led by James the Just, was rejected by the Jewish learned elders and—in a fairly short time—was corrupted by the Pauline treatment of Jesus and the Pagan Roman absorption of “Christianity”. This led to the complete loss of its monotheistic character and the essentiality of the observance of law to the actualisation of faith. This made it easier to win converts through a nominal form of Christianity for pagan audiences without the burdens of observance of law. The Christians then differed and disputed as they argued about the nature of Jesus and divinity as noted in the Qur’ān:

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ

“Then the factions differed [concerning Jesus] from among themselves.” (19:37).

After persecuting the early followers of Jesus, Paul [Saul] of Tarsus (d. 67) recast Jesus, the Jewish Messiah of the Children of Israel, into a deified Lord.

¹⁷ Bart Ehrman in *Lost Christianities* (2003) p. 99-102.

¹⁸ Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History: His Presence and Representation in Cyclical and Linear Settings*. Peter Lang GmbH (2009) p. 85.

Paul styled himself an apostle “among the Gentiles” and preached a Jesus doctrine that Greek Gentiles could believe in: a deified saviour, a redeemer of sins, in whom a personalized faith could be held without observance of law. Likewise, Paul taught a bodily resurrection that resembles the deities of the mystery cults such as Isis, Attis and Mithra. Finally, Paul ascribed divinity to Jesus by conferring divine attributes to him, turning him into an “incarnate son”. “Paul’s interpretation of the Christ figure bears the unmistakable stamp of a saviour figure of the Greek mystery religions into whose form Jesus was cast. The statements of Jesus Himself, however, do not support His exaltation to the Godhead... With the gradual demise of the Jewish wing of Christianity Paul’s Christology came to the forefront in the Christian understanding on Jesus. His glorification of Christ’s divinity has played a major role in the deification of Jesus.”¹⁹

In Roman (Constantine) Christianity, Jesus became the “Sun-God”²⁰ and under the influence of Greek philosophy²¹ and its discussions of substance, soul, mind, spirit, as well as influence from pagan myths,²² the Trinity received its complete formulation after

¹⁹ Jack Mclean in *The Deification of Jesus*. World Order, Spring Summer edition, 1980, p. 24.

²⁰ See *Jesus Christ, Sun of God: Ancient Cosmology and Early Christian Symbolism* by David Fideler, Quest Books (1993). Historian Henry Chadwick writes, “Constantine, like his father, worshipped the Unconquered Sun... His conversion should not be interpreted as an inward experience of grace... It was a military matter.” *The Early Church*, (1993) pp. 122-125.

²¹ “Towards the end of the 1st century, and during the 2nd, many learned men came over both from Judaism and paganism to Christianity. These brought with them into the Christian schools of theology their Platonic ideas and phraseology.” McIntock, J. and Strong, J. in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 1891, Vol. 10, “Trinity,” p. 553).

“The use of Greek philosophy in Christian theology had far-reaching consequences for the core of Christology: the ontological terms *ousia*, *physis* and *prosopon* were introduced to explain and safeguard the mystery of Jesus Christ. In the process the Christian faith was deJudaized and Hellenized.” Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History*. (2009) p. 91.

²² Marie Sinclair, Countess of Caithness, in her 1876 book, states: “It is generally, although erroneously, supposed that the doctrine of the Trinity is of Christian origin. Nearly every nation of antiquity possessed a similar

considerable debate had taken place regarding Jesus and the nature of the divine over a couple of centuries.²³

“Through a series of creeds based on theological speculation Jesus the Son was declared to be the very essence of Divinity walking upon the earth, the Godhead Itself united with a deified Holy Spirit in a Trinitarian theology. These creeds, far from descending upon the church fathers as divine revelation, underwent a long historical development that was not uncontested. They were finally elaborated in their present form after four centuries of acrimonious theological quarrelling that necessitated four world councils of the church—those of Nicea, Ephesus, Constantinople, and Chalcedon—that brought in their wake bloody warfare among Christian factions. These Christological controversies resulted in the fragmentation of the churches of Asia Minor from those of Greek Orthodox Constantinople, a fragmentation that has continued to this day.”²⁴

Concepts of *trinity*, *begotten son*, *sun-god*, *resurrection*, *rebirth* and *redemption* were widespread during that era with respect to the deities of the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, and Romans such as Osiris, Horus, Isis, Mithra, Dionysus, Attis and Bāl. Within this climate of ideas and mystery religions, Jesus was deified and worshipped. It became more or less impossible for any ‘Christian’ to know and practice the true way of Jesus less than a few centuries after him, the original “Jewish Christianity” having becoming obscure.

As Christianity spread across the Mediterranean and European lands, local pagan symbols (such as the cross for example), customs, traditions, and festivals (such as the solstices and equinoxes for

doctrine. St. Jerome testifies unequivocally, ‘All the ancient nations believed in the Trinity’.” *Old Truths in a New Light*. (p. 381).

²³ “The Nicene and Constantine creeds (325 and 381) confessed Jesus as being ‘of the same substance’ (*homoousios*) as God the Father. But they failed to put an end to the bitter Christological disputes that divided the early church... the fourth Ecumenical council of Chalcedon (451) produced a new language hoping to solve the Christological problem once and for all...” Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History*. (2009) p. 90.

²⁴ MacLean, J. *The Deification of Jesus*. World Order, Spring/Summer edition, 1980, p. 23.

example)²⁵ were co-opted by the Church to win converts because rural pagan populations were unwilling to let go of these practices. In reality, it was not that pagans adopted Christianity, but more that Christianity adopted paganism.²⁶

“The early Christian saints, bishops, and fathers, confessedly adopted the liturgies, rites, ceremonies, and terms of heathenism; making it their boast, that the pagan religion, properly explained, really was nothing else than Christianity; that the best and wisest of its professors, in all ages, had been Christians all along; that Christianity was but a name more recently acquired to a religion which had previously existed, and had been known to the Greek philosophers... That Christianity is nothing more than Paganism under a new name, has, as we said above, been admitted over and over again by the Fathers of the Church, and others. Aringhus (in his account of subterraneous Rome) acknowledges the conformity between the Pagan and Christian form of worship, and defends the admission of the ceremonies of heathenism into the service of the Church, by the authority of the wisest prelates and governors, whom, lie says, found it necessary, in the conversion of the Gentiles, to dissemble, and wink at many things, and yield to the times; and not to use force against customs which the people were so obstinately fond of... We have seen, then, that the only difference between Christianity and Paganism is that Brahma, Ormuzd, Osiris, Zeus, Jupiter, etc., are called by another name; Crishna, Buddha, Bacchus, Adonis, Mithras, etc., have been turned into Christ Jesus:

²⁵ “Not only were Pagan festival days changed into Christian holydays, but Pagan idols were converted into Christian saints, and Pagan temples into Christian churches.” Doane, T. W. *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*. New York: The Commonwealth Company. 1882. p. 396.

²⁶ “The reign of Constantine marks the epoch of the transformation of Christianity from a religion into a political system; and though, in one sense, that system was degraded into an idolatry, in another it had risen into a development of the old Greek mythology. The maxim holds good in the social as well as in the mechanical world, that, when two bodies strike, the form of both is changed. Paganism was modified by Christianity; Christianity by Paganism” *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*. New York: Appleton and Company. 1875. pp. 50-52.

Venus pigeon into the Holy Ghost ; Diana, Isis, Devaki, etc., into the Virgin Mary; and the demi-gods and heroes into saints. The exploits of the one were represented as the miracles of the other. Pagan festivals became Christian holidays, and Pagan temples became Christian churches.”²⁷

From the above we can summarise the various stages of what eventually became known as “Christianity”:

First: Jesus as Prophet and Messiah was followed by believers from the Children of Israel who observed the law. The multitudes of believers in this time led by the apostle James only knew him as a prophet. They believed that salvation was through faith and deeds. **Second:** Paul (Saul of Tarsus) then cast Jesus as an incarnated divine figure and personal saviour cloaked with mystery-religion language that was familiar to the Greeks. Paul did away with the law. This was “Paulinism”, a big departure from “Jewish Christianity” and was a new, innovated rendition of the figure and mission of Jesus. It was rejected and opposed by faithful adherents of the teachings of Jesus, the “Jewish Christians”. **Third:** Evangelists and storytellers weaved the Pauline version of *belief about Jesus* into their writings of the gospels, whilst neglecting and sidelining the actual *beliefs of Jesus* as preserved in the true Gospel with the movement of James. Paulinism later became “official Christianity” through the aid of empire whilst the original “Jewish Christianity” faded away into obscurity. **Fourth:** The adoption of Greek philosophical and mystery-religion concepts within Roman Christianity, leading to the formulation of the Trinity. **Fifth:** The absorption of other local pagan ideas, customs, rites and rituals during the Church’s use of political power to spread Pauline Greco-Roman Christianity across the Mediterranean and Europe, thereby enhancing its pagan form, flavour and character.

Today, the three primary Christian divisions are:

- a) the **Roman Catholic** division,
- b) the **Protestant** division which broke off from Catholicism in the 16th century and these two are referred to as the “Western Church” and,

²⁷ Doane, T. W. *Bible Myths*, p. 407-413.

c) the **Orthodox** division of the “Eastern Church”.

All of these divisions believe in the Trinity and in the divinity of Jesus, that as the Son “Jesus is consubstantial [of the same substance and essence] with the Father” meaning that “the Son is one and the same God” and that he is “one in substance and triune in three persons”. This, in the teachings and messages of all of the Prophets, including Jesus himself, is associationism (*shirk*) [to associate partners with God in divinity and worship] and contradicts pure monotheistic belief as well as sound reason and common sense.

As for the Protestants, they reject the absolute authority of the Catholic Pope and the belief in his infallibility. They also reject many beliefs and traditions of Catholicism absorbed from Pagan culture after the time of Constantine. They split into many sects differing with each other as to what degree they accept and reject such beliefs and traditions. Protestants claim to have “purified the Biblical faith” by rejecting veneration of Mary, the worship of saints and the rituals, ceremonies and traditions absorbed from Paganism. However, they still believe in Pauline heresies regarding the divinity of Jesus as well as the Trinity, both of which are unsupported by authentic, uncorrupted revelation.

Today, many Christians—the majority of them being women—are converting to Islām because of three main reasons:

a) the overwhelming historical proof that what became known as “Christianity” after Jesus until today is not the religion that Jesus believed, practised and called to. Rather, that it was a later development through accretion and syncretisation²⁸ and,

b) disillusionment with its confusing, contradictory theology that a critical mind is unable to decipher. Mystery does not offer satisfactory answers about divinity and many of these women converts state that they find a clear and intelligible treatment of divinity in Islām.²⁹

²⁸ In other words, the attempts to harmonise and unify the gradually accumulated novel concepts and doctrines pertaining to Jesus and his nature over the first few centuries after Jesus.

²⁹ Refer to “*Women and Conversion to Islām: The American Women’s Experience*” by Elkoubaiti Naoualv, 2010. News headlines over the past

c) the absence of clear guidance in affairs of worship, personal and social dealings and other areas of life, leading to confusing, hazy notions of morality and the absence of moral certitude. Jesus came to affirm the law, not to abolish it, as was done in Pauline Greco-Roman Christianity. Islām provides comprehensive guidance in all of these matters, providing clear direction.

Serious modern scholarship with respect to Jesus, his message and his early followers is now establishing a pictorial framework that increasingly resembles the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions: A Prophet who was not divine, never claimed to be and was followed by Israelites upholding and observing the law. His earliest loyal followers, led by James the Just, believed in him as a Prophet and never understood him to be divine.³⁰ He was given miracles to establish the veracity of his prophethood to the Children of Israel. In contrast, Paul, who never even met Jesus, developed Greco-Roman pagan mystery-religion doctrines in opposition to the beliefs and practices of the true, loyal and direct followers of Jesus.

In Matthew's Gospel we are informed of the following (emphasis added): "When the chief priests and Pharisees heard the parables of Jesus, they knew he was speaking about them. Although they wanted

twenty years abound in this regard: "Fast-growing Islām Winning Converts in the Western World", CNN, 14 April 1997. "Why are so Many Modern British Career Women Converting to Islām", Daily Mail, 28 October 2010. "Europeans Increasingly Converting to Islam", Gatestone Institute, 27 January 2012. "Converting to Islām: British Women on Prayer, peace and Prejudice", Guardian UK, 11 October 2013. "Rise of Islāmic Converts Challenges France", NY Times, 2 February 2013. "Converts to Islām increase after French attack", World Bulletin, 24 February 2015. "More in France are Turning to Islām, Challenging a Nation's Idea of Itself", NY Times, 3 February 2013. "Islām is Ireland's Fastest Growing Religion", International Business Times, 21 February 2014. This article points out that most of the converts are women. "Lifting the Veil on Ireland's Fastest Growing Religion", Independent Ireland, 21 September 2014. "Islām Growing in America", US Department of Defence, 4 October 2001. "Hispanic Islāmic Converts Find Comfort in God and Latino Culture", Huffington Post, 11 September 2012.

³⁰ For further research one can study: Ehrman, B. D. *How Jesus Became God*. HarperCollins, 2014; Eisenman, Robert. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Roots of Christianity and Islam*. Grave Distractions Publications; 2nd edition (2014); Sanders, E. P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Allen Lane: 1st edition (1993).

to arrest him, *they feared the crowds, because they considered Jesus a prophet.*³¹ This provides evidence that the followers of Jesus were monotheists who worshipped Allāh alone and believed Jesus to be a Prophet, a Messiah and nothing more.

His deification took place afterwards and was written into the gospels through the writings of evangelists and storytellers. These gospels have a hypothesised common source for their information on the sayings of Jesus, referred to as “Q”. This was most likely a record or version of the original Gospel (Injīl) of Jesus. No Pauline doctrines can be found in the actual statements of Jesus in “Q”. The anonymous storytellers weaved these doctrines into their writing of the gospels to provide a pro-Pauline depiction of Jesus.

The Christians are cautioned by their Lord and Creator, Allāh—the Lord of Moses and Jesus—and are informed of the enormity of what they have fallen into:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
 اغْبُدُوا لِلَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ
 وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

“They have certainly disbelieved who say, ‘Allāh is the Messiah, the son of Mary’ whereas the Messiah [actually] said, ‘O Children of Israel, worship Allāh, my Lord and your Lord.’ Indeed, he who associates others with Allāh, Allāh has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.” (5:72).

This truth is discernible in what remains of the alleged Gospel as written by the evangelists and storytellers because the hypothesised common source “Q” is likely to have been derived from the original Gospel. Noticeable traces of truth still exist within it. From them is the statement in Mark 12:29: “‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*’” Meaning, He who alone deserves to be worshipped is one. The words *eloh* (אֱלֹהִים), *ilāh* (إله) are identical in Hebrew and Arabic and this statement rejects worship for **everything** besides Allāh.

³¹ Matthew 21:45-56.

Jesus in Talmudic [Rabbinic] Judaism

As has preceded, Jesus (ﷺ) was sent to revive the religion of Islām brought by Moses— *tawhīd*, pure monotheism, in belief and practice—and to purify and confirm his law which had been altered. Also, to clarify the differing which the Children of Israel had fallen into amongst themselves pertaining to matters of belief and law. The Jews—under the influence of nations such as Egypt, Babylon and Persia—had been affected by paganism, idolatry, magic and astrology and had also distorted much of the Torah by their own inventions and interpolations.

The Pharisees who were the elitist religious elders³² of the time asserted another divine law, the “oral tradition”—later put in writing as the Talmud—which they had used to abrogate and distort the Mosaic law in the name of explanation and legal interpretation,

³² The “religious elders” who resided in Babylon from the 6th century BC onwards authored a new doctrine based upon race, nationality and land after a history of conflict and battle over land. This was the foundation of a new religion called “Judaism”—a departure from the “Islām” of Moses— and was no longer centred around calling nations to monotheism, but around race, nationalism and land and protection of the “national identity”. They weaved it into their authorship of the Torah and also claimed a revealed “oral tradition” had been passed on through initiation since the time of Moses. This later became the Mishnah and its commentary, the Gemara, as the Talmud in written form (after the era of Jesus). Despite claims of adherence to monotheism, this oral tradition was a mixture of the dictates of religious leaders, occultism, gnostic-spirituality, magic (matters they had picked up from other nations such as the Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians) and the shackles of invented observances, statutes and laws that became the basis for a despotic micro-management by religious leaders of the lives of ordinary Jews. It superseded the original Torah given to Moses, though it is claimed to be an elaboration of it. The religious leaders assumed divine authority and demanded absolute obedience, even in their distortion of scripture. This religion is known as “Rabbinic Judaism” (God continuing to speak to the Jewish nation through the Rabbis, the religious scholarly elite, who possess a divine character) and has remained the dominant form of religion practiced by most Jews till today. Thus, the religion of Islām of Moses (and of all Prophets) and the task of preaching monotheism to the world that was left with the Children of Israel was turned by the religious elite into a racial, tribal, nationalistic doctrine centred around land.

thereby assuming divine authority for themselves. Jesus's opposition to their doctrine and his severe repudiation of their ancestors' past deeds and their "traditions of the elders" brought him scorn.

Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) is reported in the Gospels to have said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets."³³ As for the mention of tombs and monuments, this is similar to what eventually entered the Muslim nation—as prophesied by Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)—among the grave-worshippers who build mausoleums and tombs and offer worship to the inhabitants who are claimed to provide intercession, fulfilment of needs and removal of calamities. It is what Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) warned against, cursing those [from the Jews and Christians] who had taken the graves of their Prophets as places of worship, an act that lead them ultimately to worship the Prophets themselves. This was a warning to the Muslim nation, lest they follow in the same footsteps.³⁴

According to the Gospels:

"And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him [Jesus], 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the traditions of the elders?'" Jesus replied: "You have disregarded the commandment of God to keep the tradition of men." He went on to say, "You neatly set aside the commandment of God to maintain your own tradition... Thus you make the word of God of none effect by your tradition that you have handed down."³⁵ It is also related that Jesus said: "You hypocrites!

³³ Matthew 23:29-31.

³⁴ In the ḥadīth of 'Ā'ishah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا) who said that the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "*May Allāh curse the Jews and Christians, they took the graves of the Prophets as places of worship.*" Related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Despite these severe warnings, Muslim sects since around the 4th-5th centuries hijrah (11th-12th centuries CE) have followed in their footsteps—as the Messenger also prophesied—and fallen into worship of saints and tombs.

³⁵ Mark 7:5-9. The "traditions of the elders" were not in written form at the time of Jesus, but were later committed to writing as the Babylonian

Isaiah prophesied correctly about you: ‘These people honour Me [God] with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; they teach as doctrine the precepts of men.’”³⁶

The issues raised by Jesus were a) pure monotheism (*tawhīd*), since some amongst the Jews had fallen into associationism (*shirk*) and other grave sins and b) following the law faithfully (*ittibā’*), since the Jewish religious elders had disobeyed the law and innovated their own doctrines. They also distorted the law through clever semantic devices, additions and alterations. Plots were hatched against Jesus. He faced accusations of idolatry and of performing miracles through magic. He was subsequently depicted in Talmudic literature as a madman, idolater and sorcerer³⁷ and his mother, Mary (عليها السلام) was reviled and accused of enormous things.³⁸ The early Jewish believers in Jesus were branded as heretics and referred to as *ha-nozrim*, followers of *yeshu ha-nozri* (Jesus of Nazareth). They were considered more dangerous than Jesus himself because of their threat to the “national existence”.³⁹

With the development of the Pauline Greco-Roman rendition of Jesus, Jews countered the exaggerated status of Jesus in the Gospels by providing a counter-narrative in the Babylonian Talmud. Studies in this contested subject have convincingly established as factual the

Talmud, consisting of two parts: a) the Mishnah, which is the basic oral law that was the subject of contention between Jesus and Pharisees which was put into writing around 200 years after Jesus and b) the Gemara which is the commentary upon the Mishnah and is the essence of the Talmud.

³⁶ Matthew 15:7-9.

³⁷ Refer to “*Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar and the Liturgy of the Synagogue: Texts and Translations*” by Dr. Gustaf Dalman, translated into English by A.W. Streane, Deighton Bell, Cambridge, 1893, and the more academic work by the expert, prolific scholar and Professor of Jewish Studies, Peter Schäfer, “*Jesus in the Talmud*”, Princeton University Press, 2009.

³⁸ In Sanhedrin 106a, she is accused of “playing the harlot with carpenters.” *The Babylonian Talmud*, The Soncino Press, London, (1936). The editors note, “Though no name is mentioned to shew which woman is meant, the mother of Jesus may be alluded to, which theory is strengthened by the statement that she mated with a carpenter.”

³⁹ Refer to Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History*. (2009) p. 83.

negative and vilifying Talmudic image of Jesus (عيسى عليه السلام) and numerous studies exist in this regard.

In his book “*Jesus in the Talmud*”, Professor of Jewish Studies at Princeton University Peter Schafer—on the basis of his studies of manuscripts—writes that the various pieces in the Talmud (often with cryptic references) present, “polemical counter-narratives that parody the New Testament stories, most notably the story of Jesus’ birth and death. They ridicule Jesus’ birth from a virgin, as maintained by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and they contest fervently the claim that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Most remarkably, they counter the New Testament Passion story with its message of the Jews’ guilt and shame as Christ killers. Instead, they reverse it completely: yes, they maintain, we accept responsibility for it, but there is no reason to feel ashamed because we rightfully executed a blasphemer and idolater. Jesus deserved death, and he got what he deserved. Accordingly, they subvert the Christian idea of Jesus’ resurrection by having him punished forever in hell and by making clear that this fate awaits his followers as well, who believe in this impostor.”⁴⁰

Professor Israel Shahak writes: “It must be admitted at the outset that the Talmud and the Talmudic literature... contains very offensive statements and precepts directed specifically against Christianity. For example, in addition to a series of scurrilous sexual allegations against Jesus, the Talmud states that his punishment in hell is to be immersed in boiling excrement—a statement not exactly calculated to endear the Talmud to devout Christians. Or one can quote the precept according to which Jews are instructed to burn, publicly if possible, any copy of the New Testament that comes into their hands.”⁴¹

On a Chabad⁴² sponsored website, the following is stated: “The Talmud (Babylonian edition) records other sins of ‘Jesus the

⁴⁰ *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton University Press, (2007) p. 9.

⁴¹ Professor Israel Shahak such as “*Jewish History, Jewish Religion*” London: Pluto (2002) p. 25.

⁴² Chabad is an Orthodox Jewish movement based around mysticism, [similar to the Sūfīs and their doctrine of the Unity of Existence (waḥdat al-

Nazarene': 1. He and his disciples practiced sorcery and black magic, led Jews astray into idolatry, and were sponsored by foreign, gentile powers for the purpose of subverting Jewish worship (Sanhedrin 43a). 2. He was sexually immoral, worshipped statues of stone (a brick is mentioned), was cut off from the Jewish people for his wickedness, and refused to repent (Sanhedrin 107b; Sotah 47a). 3. He learned witchcraft in Egypt and, to perform miracles, used procedures that involved cutting his flesh—which is also explicitly banned in the Bible (Shabbos 104b). The false, rebellious message of Jesus has been thoroughly rejected by the vast majority of the Jewish people, as G-d commanded. Unfortunately, however, this same message has brought a terrible darkness upon the world; today, over 1.5 billion gentiles believe in Jesus. These lost souls mistakenly think they have found salvation in Jesus; tragically, they are in for a rude awakening."⁴³

The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia states, "The Jewish legends in regard to Jesus are found in three sources, each independent of the others—(1) in New Testament apocrypha and Christian polemical works, (2) in the Talmud and the Midrash, and (3) in the life of Jesus ('Toledot Yeshu') that originated in the Middle Ages. It is the tendency of all these sources to belittle the person of Jesus by ascribing to him illegitimate birth, magic, and a shameful death... The earliest authenticated passage ascribing illegitimate birth to Jesus is that in Yeb. iv. 3.... and here occur also the two expressions so often applied to Jesus in later literature—איש פלוני (= 'that anonymous one,' the name of Jesus being avoided) and ממזר (= 'bastard'; for which in later times איש אורה was used)."⁴⁴ For the charges of worshipping Balaam, questioning religious authority and leading Israel astray Jesus is said to be punished in Hellfire in "boiling hot excrement".⁴⁵

wujūd)]. They rely and draw heavily upon the Kabbalah, a system of magic disguised as spirituality.

⁴³ Refer to <http://www.noahide.com/yesu.htm> (accessed 31/3/2017).

⁴⁴ The Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 7, p. 170.

⁴⁵ Gittin 57a, Gittin, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Volume 21, The Soncino Press, London, (1936), p. 261.

In the Soncino Press translation of the Babylonian Talmud, various footnotes by the editors make clear that the figure of Jesus is being alluded to. The Jewish Encyclopedia also affirms in its entry for “Balaam” that this is a code word for Jesus in Sanhedrin 106b and Gittin 57a.⁴⁶ Numerous interviews can be found on Youtube in which Rabbis are questioned about these beliefs and they respond with either candid affirmation,⁴⁷ justification (stating “maybe he deserved to die”) or evasion.

References to Jesus were obscured by cryptic terms and later medieval versions of the Talmud (and other writings) were edited to avoid reprisals from Christians in Europe.

The Talmudic characterisation of Jesus can be summarised in the following points:

- Jesus was guilty of falsehood and heresy
- He was born an illegitimate child of an immoral woman
- He was foolish and insane
- He was a conjurer and a magician
- He was an idolater
- He was a seducer
- He was killed and crucified for his crimes
- He is in Hell immersed in boiling excrement

It should be noted that there are two broad aspects to the Jewish treatment of Jesus and his followers, both the earlier followers and the later ones:

The first is their rejection of Jesus, the Messiah, their resentment of his challenge to their authority, their excommunication of the early Jewish Christians, considering them a threat to the “national existence”, to their Jewish identity, and to the religious system they had devised and maintained which protected their interests.

The second is their strong reaction to the deification of Jesus in Pauline-Roman Christianity (considering this to be idolatry and

⁴⁶ The Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 469.

⁴⁷ For example, Rabbi Felix Rogan, Director of Temple Mount Centre, Jerusalem, states that “our sources” [referring to the Talmud] indicate that “Jesus was a witch or a sorcerer with an eye for the ladies.” Refer to the following clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouLodOujbbg>

paganism). Since they had already disbelieved in Jesus, they took the opportunity to blame this evil upon him. They used the polytheism and idolatry which appeared afterwards as “Christianity” to justify their continued rejection and vilification of Jesus. Yet Jesus is wholly innocent of his deification and worship and will exonerate himself whilst the Jews remain in manifest error for rejecting him out of pride and arrogance.

In explanation of what took place, Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِّلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ
 أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ فَأَمَنَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
 وَكَفَرَت طَّائِفَةٌ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ

“O you who have believed, be supporters of Allāh, as when Jesus, the Son of Mary, said to the disciples, ‘Who are my supporters for Allāh?’ The disciples said, ‘We are supporters of Allāh.’ And a faction of the Children of Israel believed and a faction disbelieved. So We supported [the proof of] those who believed against their enemy, and they became dominant.” (61:14).

A group from the Children of Israel rejected Jesus and a group believed, the “Jewish Christians” who are the supporters of Jesus the Messiah. These followers later split into groups and differed with each other. A group remained true believers, upon monotheism and the law, they said that Jesus was the slave and prophet of Allāh who was raised up to Heaven. Others exaggerated in Jesus: Some said he was the Son of Allāh, raised by Allāh to Himself and others said he was Allāh incarnate and rose to the heaven.⁴⁸ From here, the path was laid out for further deification and the disappearance of the original message of Jesus.

⁴⁸ Refer to the Qur’ān commentaries of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Baghawī and others. Al-Ṭabarī explains, citing from Ibn ‘Abbās: That [prior to Islām] the Jacobites said Jesus was Allāh and the Nestorians said Jesus was the son of Allāh, and those who remained Muslims (true monotheists observing the law) said Jesus was the slave and messenger of Allāh. These two factions persecuted the believing faction—the true message of Jesus being obscured thereby—until Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was sent whereupon the truth became manifest.

Those mentioned in the verse who were supported and became dominant were the Muslims and those Christians who accepted Islām after the coming of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They were aided by the proof of the Qurʾān which established the truth regarding Jesus the Messiah and his mother Mary⁴⁹ and they were also victorious over Jews and Christians, when Islām became dominant. The proof of any “Christian” who accepts Islām and the Islāmic viewpoint of Jesus and his mother Mary is dominant over those Christians who have strayed from the true message of Jesus, just as it is dominant over those who rejected and reviled him.

In debates between Muslims and Christians on the subject of the nature of Jesus, the strength of argument of Muslims is clear, apparent, agreeable to instinct, natural disposition, common sense and reason and is supported by a correct reading of the available historical record and authentic revelation, the Qurʾān. It is for this reason that large numbers of Western, well-educated though disillusioned Christians are accepting Islām after learning and studying the Qurʾānic presentation of Jesus and his message.

The overwhelming reason given by them for their conversion and accepting the Qurʾānic account of Jesus is the resolution of conflict and confusion created by incoherent Christian doctrine that had been troubling them, primarily, the Trinity, whose true roots lie in pagan mystery religions.⁵⁰ They come to realise that Muslims are the true followers of Jesus the Messiah.

⁴⁹ This is the explanation of the early Qurʾānic commentators

⁵⁰ All of the mental gymnastics used by zealous Christians who believe in the Trinity become irrelevant when one simply reviews the numerous uncontested historical facts relating to how the Trinity, as a doctrine took shape during the 4th to 6th centuries. The actual language of the Trinity is lifted from Hellenic sources—in their philosophical discussions of substance, soul, mind and spirit—and from the language of the already existing and abundant trinities and triads amongst Pagan nations, chief amongst them the Solar or Sun Trinities of ancient Egypt. Thus, we have Nimrod, Tammuz and Semiramis (Babylon); Osiris, Horus and Isis (Egypt); Zeus, Apollo and Athena (Greece); Brahma, Vishnu and Shivu (India). Sun-worship featured heavily in these mystery religions and it should come as no surprise then that the Trinity appeared in the specific empire that it did, sun-worshipping pagan Rome.

Jesus in Islām

The Qur'ān notes the contention between the Jews and Christians regarding Jesus and the differing the Christians fell into regarding the status of Jesus shortly after his ascent. The Qur'ān clarifies the truth of that wherein they differed. In this chapter we provide an overview of the status of Jesus in Islām and next chapter will look in more detail at the mention of Jesus and Mary in the Qur'ān.

Jesus (عِيسَى السَّامِيُّ) Son of Mary (عَلِيَّةُ السَّامِيَّةُ) is a righteous prophet from a line of Prophets including Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon. He was miraculously born of a chaste and righteous woman through Allāh's **spoken word** [of command] ("Be!") which instructed Gabriel to breathe of a **created spirit** into Mary through which Jesus was conceived and born.

إِذْ قَالَتْ أَلْمَلَأْتِكُمْ يُمْرَيْمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ

وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

"[And mention] when the angels said, 'O Mary, indeed Allāh gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary - distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allāh]'. " (3:45).

Hence, Jesus is **the Word and the Spirit of Allāh** in the sense explained: created through Allāh's uncreated word of command for the sending of a spirit to serve as the mechanism for his conception without any male intervention. As confirmation of his prophethood, he spoke whilst in the cradle to defend his mother from calumny, healed the sick and raised the dead. He came to confirm the Torah (the law) and preach the Gospel (the news).

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

"And He [Allāh] will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. And [make him] a messenger to the Children of Israel." (3:48).

The message of Jesus was not new or unique: salvation through worshipping Allāh alone, which is pure monotheism in belief and

deed, and perfection of morals and character through adherence to the law, both inward faith and external deeds. As Jesus stated:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“[Jesus]: Indeed, Allāh is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path.” (3:51).

Jesus is among the greatest of all Prophets and is highly respected in Islām. A Muslim’s faith is invalid without belief in Jesus.⁵¹ Muslims are in fact the true followers of Jesus today, just as they are the true followers of Moses.⁵² Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Both in this

⁵¹ By name, Moses is mentioned over 120 times in the Qur’ān, Jesus around twenty-five and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) four times, indicating the status that Moses and Jesus have in Islām. Had Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) been the author of the Qur’ān his own name would have been mentioned more frequently and made much more prominent. Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) stated:

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَاٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنَّا نَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ

مُبِينٌ

“Say : ‘I am not something original among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I only follow that which is revealed to me, and I am not but a clear warner.’” (46:9).

Meaning, the message of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is a continuation of the message of the previous Prophets, who are given honourable mention, and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) speaks not of his own accord but faithfully conveys what is revealed to him.

⁵² As for what is known as Judaism today, it is not what Moses originally called to, Moses called to Islām (submission to Allāh with pure monotheism, singling Him out with all forms of worship), as did all the Prophets and Messengers. Judaism is named after the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Jewish Encyclopedia makes a distinction between the original Mosaic teachings and Rabbinic Judaism, a later development which has remained the main character of Judaism till today. The Jewish Encyclopedia mentions that the Israelite faith underwent frequent changes throughout the ages. It was strongly affected and moulded by the beliefs and practices of host nations such as Egypt, Persia and Babylonia. The Qur’ān rehearsed to Jews in the era of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) the great favours Allāh had bestowed upon the Children of Israel when they had been upon right guidance and were the best of nations. It reminded them how their religious leaders had departed from the guidance of Moses, altered their scripture and law, entered into the practice of sorcery, fell into

world and the next, I am the nearest of all the people to the Son of Mary, and all the prophets are paternal brothers, and there has been no prophet between me and him (Jesus)."⁵³ The Prophet also said: "Whoever testifies that no deity is worthy of worship but Allāh alone, without any partners, that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, that Jesus is the servant of Allāh, His Word which He bestowed upon Mary, a Spirit from Him, and that Paradise is true and Hellfire is true, then he will enter Paradise through any of the eight gates of Paradise he wishes."⁵⁴

Regarding the statement of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ):

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أُلْقِيَهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَحْدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

"O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion and nor say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allāh and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allāh and His messengers. And do not say, 'Three'. Desist, it is better for you. Indeed, Allāh is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allāh as Disposer of affairs." (4:171).

This verse was revealed in relation to various factions of the Christians. They had sayings such as, "Jesus is Allāh", "He is the son of Allāh" and "He is the third of three."

The commentators of the Qur'ān provide the following general elaboration of the meaning of the above verse, as clarification and admonition for Christians:

O people of the Gospel, do not exceed the true belief and do not exaggerate and say of Allāh except the truth. Do not claim a son and

polytheism, contended with their prophets and distorted the religion of Islām they were ordered to follow.

⁵³ Reported by Imām al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ.

⁵⁴ Reported by Imām Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ.

wife for Him, for Jesus the son of Mary was no more than a messenger like many other messengers before him. He was sent with the message of Islām which is to worship Allāh alone, without ascribing any partners to Him. [The ability to recognize this truth is part of an innate disposition and natural instinct—the *fiṭrah*—which every person is born with]. Just like this truth also attested to by the wonders and signs in creation. So Jesus is the Messenger of Allāh. He is the Word of Allāh, with the meaning that he was created through a Word spoken by Allāh which is “Be!”—not that he, Jesus, in his essence, is the actual Word of Allāh. It was through this Word that Gabriel (*Jibrīl*) was sent and he breathed from the Spirit (*Rūḥ*) of Allāh into Mary (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام). This Spirit is not a part of Allāh’s essence but a created entity which gave rise to life and its reality is unknown. The same Spirit was breathed into Ādam (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) who was born without father and mother. Through this Spirit came the miraculous birth of Jesus. **Hence, Jesus is the Word and the Spirit of Allāh.** He was created through Allāh’s Word of command and the sending and breathing of the created Spirit through Jibrīl. So people of the Gospel, believe in this truth regarding Jesus, the Son of Mary and submit to Allāh alone. Shun the worship of all other deities including Jesus and his mother Mary and do not say “*There are three,*” for Allāh is only one deity who is worthy of worship in truth. You have unjustly raised Jesus from the station of prophethood and messengership to one of lordship (*rububiyah*). Yet Jesus and his mother Mary were mere mortals, they ate, drank and walked the Earth and owned and controlled nothing in the heavens and Earth, save that Allāh bestowed miracles upon Jesus as a sign of his prophethood. Desist from this statement of “Three,” believe in the absolute oneness of Allāh and worship only Him alone. This is the straight path indicated by authentic, uncorrupted revelation and sound reason.⁵⁵

The next chapter looks in a bit more detail at Jesus and Mary in the Noble Qur’ān.

⁵⁵ Refer to the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarī and al-Baghawi.

Jesus and Mary in the Qur'ān

The position of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) and his mother Maryam (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام) is a very lofty one in the Qur'ān. It contrasts with their portrayal in Talmudic literature. One is a Messenger and Prophet of Allāh, and the other, his mother, a *siddīqah* (extremely truthful in intention, word and deed), a title given to those from mankind who attain the best possible rank short of prophethood.

The 19th chapter of the Qur'ān is named after Mary and verses 16 to 36 relate to the conception and birth of Jesus. Any translation—no matter how good and accurate—cannot do justice to the rhythmic beauty, eloquence and power of the Arabic original. Similarly, her story and that of Jesus is mentioned in the 3rd chapter titled “The Family of Īmrān” between verses 35 and 60. Mention is also made of Jesus and his helpers at the end of the 5th chapter titled “The Table Spread”, between verses 110 and 120.⁵⁶

☞ The Honourable Mention of Mary in the Qur'ān.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَدَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا

“And mention, [O Muḥammad], in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place toward the east.” (19:16).

Allāh has honoured Mary the mother of Jesus, tremendously in that she has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. The Muslims have been ordered to remember her and her story. This Qur'ān is read across the east and west by hundreds of millions of people, and within it, they recite and remember the virtues of Mary, her chastity, her piety, her devotion, her being chosen over all other women of the world and receiving tremendous praise and respect.

The mention of Mary and her son Jesus brings tears to their eyes, as they recite or listen to the various heart-wrenching, tear-jerking

⁵⁶ Most of the commentary in this section has been summarised from *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 2002) of Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Nāṣir al-Sa'dī (d. 1956).

accounts in the Qur’ān and they experience these feelings upon sound knowledge, historical truth and justice.

☞ Mary’s Seclusion and Devotion to Allāh.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

“And she took, in seclusion from them, a screen. Then We sent to her our spirit [Gabriel], and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects.” (19:17).

Mary went in seclusion from her family, to a place in the east and took a screen for herself. The reason for this was so that she could focus on worshipping her Lord in a state of sincerity, humility and submission. Due to her intense desire to protect her chastity, Allāh favoured her by bestowing her a son without any male intervention. Thus, Allāh sent Gabriel who appeared to her in the form of a man possessing excellent stature, utmost beauty, and absence of any flaws in appearance to give her glad tidings.

☞ Mary’s Modesty and Chastity.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ نَقِيًّا. قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ

عُلْمًا زَكِيًّا قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلْمٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا. قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ

رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئْ وَلِنَجْعَلْهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا

“She said, ‘Indeed, I seek refuge in the Most Merciful from you, [so leave me], if you do fear Allāh.’ He said, ‘I am only the messenger of your Lord to give you [news of] a pure, righteous son.’ She said, ‘How can I have a son when no man has touched me and nor am I unchaste?’ He said, ‘Thus [it shall be]. Your Lord says, ‘It is easy for Me, and We will make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us. And it is a matter [already] decreed’.” (19:18-21).

When Mary saw him—and she was in isolation, away from her family, and had taken a screen for privacy—she feared that this man may intend evil. So she sought refuge in Allāh, the Most-Merciful and admonished the man, thereby combining between two matters:

holding fast to her Lord by seeking protection and admonishing the man to have fear of Allāh. This is evidence of her utmost modesty and chastity—in that she protected her chastity despite the circumstances which invited to contrary behaviour—and it is also a refutation of the calumny of the calumniators who later attacked her honour. Due to her chastity, Allāh, granted her a son who would be a sign from amongst His signs.

When Gabriel saw her fear and concern, he informed her that he is merely a messenger from his Lord to inform her and convey the message to her that Allāh is going to bestow her a pure [blameless, faultless], righteous child, possessing praiseworthy qualities. This surprised her and she asked as to how she could give birth to a son without being touched by a man. She was informed by Gabriel that Allāh had decreed such a matter because it is easy for Him. This indicates that all natural laws and cause-effect mechanisms do not function independently and are subject to Allāh's creative power, His decree and determination. Allāh is able to alter them or bypass them and in this case, out of His favour and bounty, He granted Mary a son without the intervention of any man.

This was also a display of mercy (rahmah) in that Allāh made this son to be a prophet and messenger, one who would recite His verses, instruct them in the Book and Wisdom, thereby purifying them and leading them to happiness and felicity in both this life and the next.

Allāh makes mention of Mary's chastity in another place:

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

“And (remember) she [the virgin Mary] who guarded her chastity, We breathed into her [through our Spirit, Gabriel], and We made her and her son [Jesus] a sign for the worlds (of men and jinn).” (21:91).

The meaning of this verse is explained by scholars of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr) as follows:⁵⁷

Remember Mary who is being praised, whose lofty status is being explained, and whose nobility is being announced, the one who

⁵⁷ Summarised from the explanations and commentaries of al-Ṭabari, Ibn Kathir, al-Baghawī, al-Sa'dī and al-Muyassar.

preserved her innocence and virginity by maintaining utmost chastity by safeguarding herself from what is unlawful and shunning everything that brings one closer to what is unlawful [in terms of sexual relations]. She even guarded herself from what was lawful, thereby not marrying due to being preoccupied and engrossed in worship, remembrance, chastity and serving her Lord. As a reward for her utmost piety and chastity, Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) rewarded her by bestowing upon her a son without the intervention of any male. Hence, she was able to maintain her chastity which she had piously and diligently guarded. Gabriel was sent to give her glad tidings and he came with the Spirit [a created entity whose reality is unknown] which was breathed into her, leading her to conceive, by the permission of Allāh. Both Mary and Jesus were made a sign for the worlds [of jinn and men]. Mary gave birth without male intervention and Jesus spoke as an infant. Miracles were made to occur through him such that generations after generations would make mention of Jesus (and his mother), and such that they come to know that Allāh is powerful over all things, and that from His far-reaching wisdom is that He creates whatever and however He wills.

☞ The Birth of Jesus.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَتْ بِهِ . فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ
يَلَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَّسِيًّا . فَوَادَّهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ
تَحْتِكَ سَرِيًّا . وَهُزِّي إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسْقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا . فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي
وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ
الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

“So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said, ‘Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten.’ But he [an angel] called her from below her, ‘Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided beneath you a water stream. And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates. So eat and drink and be contented. And if you see

any human being, say, ‘Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to [any] human being.’” (19:22-26).

When she was made to conceive [through Gabriel blowing into her of the created spirit he was sent with], she feared scorn and rebuke from her people, and withdrew to a far place. She suffered numerous types of pain, both physical and emotional: the pains of childbirth and the pains of what the people would say, accusing her of immoral conduct of which she was completely innocent. Unable to bear these pains she wished she had died before this event in her life and had been a thing forgotten. However, an angel comforted her and instructed her not to grieve and to take from the stream and the dates which would provide relief to her. And as for her other pain, the pain of what people would say to her, the angel instructed her to not to speak to anyone, vowing silence. By not speaking to them, she would be saved from the grief created by their speech, since they would not believe her in any case. Rather, she would be exonerated by her own son, which is the greatest testimony of her innocence. Since bringing a son in this manner was out of the ordinary, then evidence of her innocence and her utmost chastity would also have to be out of the ordinary.

☞ Mary Brings Jesus to Her People.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

فَأْتَتْ بِهِ - قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ، قَالُوا يُمَرِّمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا . يَا خَتَّ هُرُونَ مَا كَانَ
أَبُوكَ أَمْرًا سَوًّا وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا

“Then she brought him to her people, carrying him. They said, ‘O Mary, you have certainly done a thing unprecedented. O sister of Aaron,⁵⁸ your father was not a man who used to commit adultery, nor was your mother an unchaste woman.’” (19:27-28).

⁵⁸ Aaron was the name given to righteous people amongst the Children of Israel, because there used to be a man amongst them called Aaron who was very righteous. So when Mary brought the baby, they said to her “O sister of Aaron”, meaning “O one associated with righteousness” because she came from a righteous family. The Muslim scholar of Qur’ānic explanation,

When her postnatal period had ended, Mary returned to her people, carrying Jesus, with her knowledge that she is totally pure and innocent. Hence, she came without care and concern. They told her that she had brought an enormity, something without precedent, and what they really meant was that she was guilty of immorality. They protested to her that her parents were upright people, free and innocent of this immoral act of which she stood accused, indicating the understanding that children generally acquire the ways and behaviours of their parents. So Mary had to exonerate herself from the grievous charge of which she stood accused by her people.

☞ Jesus's Defence of his Mother and Statement of Prophethood.

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نَكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْأُمِّهِ صَبِيًّا. قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ءَاتَانِي
الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا. وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ
حَيًّا. وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ
أُبعثُ حَيًّا

Imām al-Ṭabari (d. 923) mentions this view from Qatādah (an early commentator of the Qur'ān who studied with the Prophet's companions), Muḥammad bin Sīrīn (another early Muslim scholar) and others. Another Qur'ān scholar, Imām al-Baghawi (d. 1122) mentioned that Qatādah and others explained that Aaron was a righteous worshipper and that forty-thousand people followed his funeral the day that he died, all of them called Aaron. This name was associated with piety and righteousness and hence, the phrase "O sister of Aaron" is not referring to blood relationship. This is like the statement of Allāh, "**Verily, the spendthrifts (those who squander wealth) are the brethren of the devils...**" (17:27). Imām al-Baghawi also cites a narration from al-Kalbī that the Aaron referred to here was a brother of Mary through her father, and he was the most righteous man amongst the Children of Israel in that time. Imām Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) supports this view and cites from Imām al-Ṭabari in this regard. And Imām al-Sa'dī (d. 1956) from the contemporary Muslim scholars also supports the view that this statement is referring to an actual brother of Mary called Aaron, and that the Children of Israel used to call their children by the names of former prophets.

“So she pointed to him. They said, ‘How can we speak to one who is in the cradle a child?’ [Jesus] said, ‘Indeed, I am the servant of Allāh. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and charity (zakāh) as long as I remain alive. And [He made me] dutiful to my mother, and has not made me insolent, unblessed. And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive.’” (19:29-33).

So Mary—having already vowed not to speak to the people—simply pointed to her child, hinting that they should speak to the child. Her people were surprised at this and asked as to how could they possibly speak to a child still in the cradle. Thereupon, Jesus spoke and informed them that he is a servant (‘abd) of Allāh who will be given the Book and be made a prophet.

Hence, the first description of himself was that he was a servant and worshipper of Allāh, in servitude to Him, a refutation of those who deified Jesus and made him divine. Jesus denied having any attribute or quality that made him divine in his very first words. He then informed them of a second quality, which is that he will be made blessed wherever he may be. Meaning, that wherever he will be, he will be teaching others, inviting others to Allāh, to worship Him alone, instructing them, purifying them and bringing about benefit through his speech and action such that anyone and everyone who sat with him will acquire benefit and blessing.

Jesus, then informed them that he is commanded with prayer and charity so long as he lives. This is a second refutation of those who made him divine and worshipped him as a deity alongside Allāh. Through his first words, he mentioned that he would be constant in prayer to his Lord, proving that he is a worshipper and not the one worshipped. Thereafter, Jesus informed of a third matter which is that he has been ordered to show beautiful and righteous conduct with his mother, Mary. To show her utmost benevolence and to fulfil her rights.

Then he informed them that he is not one who is arrogant and despotic, unblessed and wretched in this life and the next. Rather, he

is a humble, obedient, servant of Allāh, humble also towards Allāh's servants, pleased in this life and the next.

Finally, Jesus invoked peace upon himself, mentioning the bounty of Allāh upon him in that He granted him safety and peace on the day that he was born, and will do so on the day that he will eventually die [after his return] and the day that he shall be resurrected [along with the rest of humanity].

☞ The Teachings and Miracles of Jesus.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ. وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ
جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا
بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا
تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُم إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ. وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ وَلِأَجْلِ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَأَطِيعُوا. إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ

“And He [Allāh] will teach him [Jesus] the Book and the Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. And [make him] a messenger to the Children of Israel, [who will say]: ‘Indeed I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I design for you from clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird by permission of Allāh. And I cure the blind and the leper, and I give life to the dead by permission of Allāh . And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Indeed in that is a sign for you, if you are believers. And [I have come] confirming what was before me of the Torah and to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you. And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, so fear Allāh and obey me. Indeed, Allāh is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path’.” (3:48-51).

Allāh taught Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) that which was in past revealed books, collectively referred to as “the Book”, made him a messenger to the Children of Israel, and supported him with signs. From those signs was that Jesus designed and formed a bird from clay, breathed into

it, rendering it a living bird by Allāh's permission. He would also cure the blind and the leper, and give life to the dead, all by Allāh's permission. Jesus would also inform them of things only they knew and he could not possibly have known, such as what they ate and stored in their houses [at particular times and occasions]. All of these were signs and Jesus mentioned these signs to them as proof of his messengership, so that they would listen to him and obey him and his teachings, which are not new, but merely a confirmation of that which was taught by Moses (ﷺ) before him, before it had been altered.

Thus, Allāh strengthened Jesus with two types of proof:

- the first, in the form of signs (miracles)
- the second, revelation.

The revelation, the Gospel, was a confirmation of the Torah, a clear indication that he was being truthful. For if Jesus was lying, he would have invented what would be contrary to the teachings of previous prophets, and would have opposed the foundations and branches of the Torah. Rather, he came to affirm the Torah and to make lawful for them what they had made unlawful upon themselves, to release them from the shackles of observance they had invented and imposed, extraneous to the original Torah.

Through these affairs: various signs and miracles, corroboration of the original Mosaic law, releasing them from their self-imposed shackles and teaching wisdom, he called them with the call of all the Messengers: To single out Allāh in worship exclusive to all other deities; to worship Him through what He legislated and commanded; and to abandon all extraneous additions. He informed them that this is the straight path which leads to Allāh, and none other.

However the religious elders and leaders, the chiefs and priests of the Pharisees, resented his challenge to their authority, his rejection of their distortion of the law and his condemnation of their iniquities and excesses. Seeing Jesus as a threat to the "national existence", they plotted to kill him after accusing him of blasphemy, and desecration of the Torah.

These tribulations were like the tribulations of previous Prophets who had been oppressed and harmed in the cause of truth.

☞ **Jesus Was not Killed nor Crucified.**

The leaders of those who rejected Jesus hatched plots to kill and crucify him, and just as they plotted, Allāh too plotted against them.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ إِنِّي فَتَوَّيْتُكَ وَرَافَعْتُكَ إِلَىٰ وَمُطَهَّرْتُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

“[Mention] when Allāh said: ‘O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you [in submission to Allāh alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return, and I will judge between you concerning that in which you used to differ.’” (3:55).

Allāh informed Jesus that He will raise and purify him of those who unjustly claimed he is Allāh’s son. Likewise, He informed him that He will purify him of those who rejected and slandered him and accused him and his mother of enormities. He also informed that those who follow Jesus in pure monotheism and observance of law—and who accept Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) who was foretold by Jesus—that they will be uppermost and dominant against those who reject his prophethood until the Day of Judgement.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) also said:

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا . بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

“And [for] their saying, ‘Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh.’ And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. Rather, Allāh raised him to Himself. And ever is Allāh Exalted in Might and Wise.” (4:157-158).

They did not kill or crucify Jesus. Rather, it was made to appear to them as such. With respect to his alleged death, both the Jews and Christians are in confusion, bewilderment and doubt, speaking on with conjectures and untruths. They do not have sure knowledge in these affairs.

In the Prophetic traditions, Jesus will return prior to the Day of Judgement, clarify the truth and judge by Islām. He will destroy the cross and kill the [unclean] swine and marry and have children. All of the People of the Book will believe in him before his death.

☞ The Truth Regarding the Status of Jesus and his Call.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ . مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ
يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ سُبْحٰنَهُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ . وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“That is Jesus, the son of Mary, [and it is] the word of truth about which they are in dispute. It is not [befitting] for Allāh to take a son, exalted and sublime is He! When He decrees an affair, He only says to it, ‘Be,’ and it is. [Jesus said], ‘And indeed, Allāh is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path’.” (19:34-36).

The reality of Jesus is as he described himself. A humble servant of Allāh, bestowed with prophethood, devoted to prayer and charity, righteous to his mother, a caller and teacher to goodness. This is the undisputed, historical word of truth and as for all other claims—whether those of the Jews or Christians—they are all conjectures, doubts, lies and fabrications. Hence, their disputes with each other on this issue. Thus, some of them say Jesus is Allāh, others say he is the son of Allāh, others say he is the third of three, and all of these are lies. Similarly, what the Jews accused him and his mother of are all calumnies, fabrications.

Allāh refutes the Christians by stating that it is not befitting for Him to take a son as this is from the impossible affairs. He is free of all needs (al-Ghaniyy), worthy of all praise (al-Ḥamīd), the owner and master (al-Mālik) of everything. Thus, He does not take a son from His servants, He is sublime and glorified above that. But

whenever He desires an affair [such as the conception of a child without male intervention], then He simply says “Be!” and it is. Then Jesus informed his people that Allāh is his Lord and their Lord (Rabb) and thus, only He should be worshipped alone, since the two affairs are binding. Whoever affirms Allāh is his Lord—the one who creates, owns, provides, sustains, gives and takes life, heals, guides, misguides and so on—then it is binding upon him to single out Allāh in worship. This is the straight path, the path that all the previous Prophets and Messengers called to, and it is the only path that leads to Allāh and to His mercy and forgiveness.

☞ Jesus Was no More than a Prophet and Messenger.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ
الطَّعَامَ انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ انظُرْ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ

“The Messiah [Jesus, son of Mary] was no more than a Messenger, many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother (Mary) was a *ṣiddīqah* [one who believes and is extremely truthful in intention, word and deed]. They both used to eat food. Look at how We make the signs clear to them, yet look at how they are deluded from the Truth.” (5:75).

Both Jesus and his mother used to eat food, because they were in need of food and drink in order to sustain their bodies. Anyone who consumes food can never be a deity because he or she is dependent upon another and not self-sufficient. All people with sound innate disposition and basic common sense know full well that dependence upon food is a sign of incapacity and he who is not self-sufficient can never be a deity in truth. The Muslim scholar and commentator of the Qur’ān, Imām al-Baghawi (d. 1122), explained in his explanation of this verse that the mention of food here is an indirect expression of the passing of stool and urine, which means that anyone who ate and drank must necessarily pass stool and urine. How can the one characterized as such be a deity in truth? This is a subtle allusion to the futility of the claim that Jesus is divine. Allāh says, “Look at how We make the signs clear to them, yet look at how they are deluded

from the truth.” An indication of how the Christians who deified Jesus and turned him into God are deluded, despite evident signs and proofs being made clear.

☞ Jesus Was not Proud to be a Humble Servant.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ
عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا

“The Messiah will never be proud to reject being a slave to Allāh, nor the angels who are near [to Allāh]. And whosoever rejects His worship and is arrogant, then He will gather them all together unto Himself.” (4:172).

When a delegation of Christians from Najrān [in southwestern Arabia] came to the Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), they said to him, “O Muḥammad, you belittle our companion (Jesus),” and they meant that in the Qur’ān he is referred to as a slave of Allāh (‘Abd Allāh). The Prophet replied, “It is not a shortcoming for Jesus to be a slave of Allāh.” This verse was then revealed. Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) did not scorn being a slave of Allāh, just as the near Angels do not scorn to be in servitude to Him. Jesus, like all the Prophets of goodness, were humble servants of Allāh who bowed and prostrated to Him in humility and worship.

This is in contrast to the Christians who exaggerated and gave him divine qualities, or from another angle, gave Allāh human qualities. Thus Jesus is mentioned in this verse—along with the near Angels who are in humble submission to their Lord—as a slave of Allāh. Jesus was desirous of worshipping his Lord, and this matter is preserved in the Gospels in which it is mentioned that Jesus would kneel, bow and fall on his face in prostration.

There occurs: “And he (Jesus) went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed.”⁵⁹ Falling on his face means he prostrated.

Also: “In those days, Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the night in prayer to God.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Matthew 26:39.

Also: “After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.”⁶¹

The worship of all of the Prophets of Children of Israel who was to bow and prostrate in submission to their Lord. Prostration (*sujud*) is from the greatest aspects of prayer, others being bowing (*rukū*), standing (*qiyām*), sitting (*juḷūs*) and invocation (*du‘ā*). The Muslim prayer is comprised of all of these matters. It is the very prayer of all of the Prophets of Allāh. Some details of this prayer can still be found in the Torah and Gospel, enough to recognize the similarities between it and the prayer of the Muslims who are the true followers of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام).

So this is the example of Jesus, a Prophet, a humble worshipper of Allāh from a line of Prophets sent to the Jews calling them to single out Allāh in worship and to abide by the Torah truthfully and faithfully. He was a mortal, both he and his mother ate and drank. His mother was favoured by Allāh for her utmost chastity, and was granted a son who would be from the greatest of messengers. Jesus and Mary were strict monotheists, given to devotion and worship of Allāh and they shunned the worship of other, false deities. This is Islām, the religion of Jesus and every prophet and messenger sent by Allāh (عَرَبِيًّا). It is why Muslims, of all people, are closest to Jesus and have the greatest right to him.

☞ Jesus Was a Muslim and His Message Was One of Peace (Salām) Through Submission to Allāh’s Will.

All Muslims greet each other with the greeting of peace and safety. This is because Islām is to attain peace, serenity and safety through submission to Allāh’s will upon pure monotheism. Hence, their greeting is one of peace and safety. No Prophet is mentioned except that Muslims invoke peace and safety upon him. The resemblance between Muslims and Jesus is very apparent, because in reality their religion and that of Jesus is one and the same. In Arabic, the word for peace and safety is *salām* and in Hebrew it is *shalom*.

⁶⁰ Luke 6:12.

⁶¹ Matthew 14:23.

Muslims say, “*salām alaykum*” and Jesus would say “*shalom aleykhom*”, both of which mean “*Peace and safety be upon you*”.

We read the following in the Gospels:⁶²

“And as they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, ‘*Peace be unto you*’.” And: “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, ‘*Peace be to this house*’.” And: “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘*Peace be with you!*’” And: “Again Jesus said, ‘*Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*’.” And: “A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘*Peace be with you!*’”

The Christians do not invoke peace upon Jesus because they deified Him and made Him their Lord. But Muslims are true followers of the way of Jesus, in his speech, belief, greeting, prayer, worship and diet, rather even in his appearance and dress. Muslims believe in and worship only one true deity, consider Jesus a Prophet and Messiah and believe that salvation is through inward faith and outward works combined through adherence to the law. They are just as the true followers of Jesus were during his time.

☞ The Split Between the Jews and Christians.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابَ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَّشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ. أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ

وَأَبْصِرْ يَوْمَ يَأْتُوتَنَّا لِكِنِ الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“Then the factions differed [concerning Jesus] from among them, so woe to those who disbelieved from the scene of a tremendous Day. How [clearly] they will hear and see the Day they come to Us, but the wrongdoers today are in clear error.” (19:37-38).

After Allāh explained the true status of Jesus the Son of Mary in which there is no doubt, He informed that the Jews and the Christians differed regarding him. In their various groups and sects,

⁶² Refer to Luke 24:36, Luke 10:5, John 20:19, John 20:21 and John 20:26.

some fell into extremism and exaggeration and others fell into negligence. Hence, some said Jesus is Allāh, or the son of Allāh, or the third of three. Others rejected his prophethood and accused him of being an illegitimate child, born of an immoral woman and an idolator and magician. All of these are false statements built upon lies, conjectures and futile evidences and they are invalidated by the Qur’ān. Those holding such extremist views, at either end of the spectrum, Jews and Christians, are given a severe warning. They are reminded of the Final Day in which they will be resurrected and in which all creatures will be standing, in awe, awaiting judgement for their statements and deeds.

☞ Repudiation of Christians for Deifying Jesus.

The Qur’ān repudiates the Christians for attributing divinity to Jesus, making him one of three, and for worshipping him and his mother—as is done by Catholics— alongside Allāh.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِن لَّمْ يَنْتَهُوا
عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ. أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ
وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لَهُ، وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ. مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ
الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ نَبِيٍّ لَهُمُ آيَاتٍ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرْ أَنِّي
يُؤْفِكُونَ. قُلْ أَنْتَعِبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَاللَّهُ هُوَ
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

“They have certainly disbelieved who say, ‘Allāh is the third of three.’ And there is no god [worthy of worship] except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment. So will they not repent to Allāh and seek His forgiveness? And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful. The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded. Say, ‘Do you worship besides Allāh that which holds for you

no [power of] harm or benefit while it is Allāh who is the Hearing, the Knowing?'" (5:73-76).

The Qur'ān does not ascribe a Trinitarian belief to all Christians, it merely refers to the disbelief of *those* who say "Allāh is one of three". Nor does it specifically define the Trinity anywhere. The formulation of the Trinity took centuries of debate and is an inherently confusing and contradictory idea, having no basis in authentic revelation, only in forged, inserted texts and interpolations.

The Christians are warned from such a saying and invited to repentance and seeking of forgiveness. After showing compassion to them by inviting them to right guidance, Allāh mentions the truth about the Jesus and his mother and gives them rational evidence why Jesus and his mother cannot be deities alongside Allāh. Despite these clear evidences, revealed and rational, and signs being made clear to them, they continue to ascribe divinity to Jesus, worshipping him alongside Allāh. Alongside reason and revelation, the now easily available factual historical record is another witness against them as it makes the evolution of Pauline Greco-Roman religion very clear: It is an obvious departure from the original "Jewish Christianity" led by Jesus's true followers, at the head of them James.

☞ **The Least Amount of Intelligence is Able to Distinguish Between Sound and Corrupt Doctrine.**

The erudite Muslim scholar Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) said: "How can the one who has the least amount of intelligence not distinguish between:

a) a religion whose foundation and building is erected upon worshipping the Most-Merciful [alone]; working for His love and pleasure with utmost sincerity in both secret and open; and behaving with people as He commanded, with [complete] justice and benevolence; whilst preferring His obedience to that of Satan, and between:

b) a religion whose building is erected upon an undermined sand cliff ready to plunge a person straight into the Hellfire; one that is founded upon the worship of crosses and images engraved in ceilings and walls; [upon the belief] that the Lord of the Worlds

descended from His Throne and occupied the womb of a female through which passes menstrual blood; that He remained therein for a period of time, in the darkneses of the womb, beneath the fat layer of the stomach, and then came out as a child suckled, growing gradually, crying, eating, drinking, urinating and sleeping, and meeting with other children; and then placed alongside the children of the Jews to learn what is desirable for a human [to learn]; and alongside this, He was circumcised; thereafter [upon implementing his mission] the Jews expelled Him and chased Him away from place to place and then captured Him, subjecting Him to various types of humiliation; thereafter they placed upon Him a crown of thorns, and carried Him onto a wooden crucifix whilst they were behind, in front of, and to the left and right of Him; then they dragged him in such a manner which makes the hearts quiver; then they tied His hands and feet with ropes and pinned them with nails that break the bones and tear the flesh, the while He is seeking rescue, ‘O people have mercy upon me’ and not a single person shows mercy to Him. And yet, [allegedly] this is the Controller of the universe, the upper and lower parts of it, the One invoked by all who are in the heavens and earth every day, and every day He [rules] by bringing about matters [in His creation], [whilst undergoing these humiliating affairs]! Then He dies, is buried in the dust beneath rocks and stones. He then rises from the dead to ascend back up to His Throne and His dominion after all that occurred. So what then do you think of the branches of the building that is built upon the likes of this foundation?!”⁶³

The Christians claim that Allāh did all of this so that the sins of humanity can be forgiven. But this a revilement of Allāh, the Lord of the worlds, just as it is a revilement of intellect. Allāh forgives on account of repentance, seeking of forgiveness and righteous deeds. A forgiving, compassionate man does not need to throw his son in front of a lorry, or feed him to the sharks, and then say to his neighbours: “So long as you believe that I sacrificed my son’s blood because I love you and that my son died for your wrongs against me, and so that I can pardon you and grant you salvation, then you are

⁶³ *Hidāyat al-Ḥayārā Fī Ajwibat al-Yahūd wal-Naṣārā*. Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id (1429H) pp. 7-8.

pardoned and will receive salvation.” To ascribe this to a rational human is a great insult. To ascribe it to the Lord of the worlds is an even greater insult of unfathomable proportions.

Ibn al-Qayyim also authored a poem titled **“O Christ-worshippers, we have a question”**⁶⁴ which appeals to a Christian’s basic intuition and common sense. It is not subtle, but quite direct—because of the seriousness with which Muslims treat the association of partners with Allāh—and the essence of it can be summarised thus:

“O Christ-worshippers, we have a question! We desire its answer from the one who grasps it [among you]. When the Lord God died through the [intrigue] of a people who put him to death, then what kind of God is this? What they did to Him, did it please Him? If so, then glad tidings to them, for they certainly attained His [good] pleasure! If He was angered by what they did, then their strength overwhelmed His strength, [much to His displeasure]. And how were the hands of His enemies able to reach out and slap Him on the back of His neck? And did Christ bring himself [back to life] or was it a Life-giver, a Lord besides him? How strange it is, a grave that compressed God! And stranger still, a womb that confined Him! He remained therein for nine months, in darkness, nourished by blood! He was delivered as a small baby through the opening of a passage, weak and craving to be breast-fed! Did He eat and drink and do what they necessarily lead to [of passing stool and urine]? Is this a God? Lofty and exalted is Allāh from the lie fabricated by the Christians!

O Cross-worshippers! For what reason is it grave or repugnant to reject [the cross]? And do sound intellects but demand that it be broken and burned? Since the Lord God was carried on it unwillingly and His hands were fastened to it. What a cursed cross to carry in truth. So discard it and do not kiss it whenever you see it! The Lord of creation was demeaned upon it and yet you worship it! If you magnify it because it carried the Lord of all creatures, then He is exalted over that [which you ascribe to Him].”

Christians, both Arabs and non-Arabs, have claimed that this poem mischaracterises Christian beliefs and is based upon ignorance

⁶⁴ In his book *Ighāthat al-Lahafān Min Maṣāyid al-Shaytān*. Dār Ibn al-Jawzī (1420H) pp. 469-470.

regarding them. But these questions remain valid and are unaffected by the creative methods and explanations through which Christians might dismiss the rational and logical absurdities arising out of their conviction that Jesus is God incarnate. Worshipping Jesus as God and venerating the cross do not have any basis in *authentic scripture* nor in *sound intellect*. The earliest believers were “Jewish Christians” as has preceded, and these beliefs were completely unknown to them. They would have, without hesitation, considered them pure idolatry.

☞ Repudiation of the Jews Who Slandered Mary.

The Qur’ān also repudiates the Jews who slandered Mary (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَامُ), rejected Jesus the Messiah, rejected his message and claimed to have killed him.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

وَبِكْفُرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا. وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا. بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا. وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لِيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا.

“And [We cursed them] for their disbelief and their saying against Mary a great slander. And [for] their saying, ‘Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh.’ And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. Rather, Allāh raised him to Himself. And ever is Allāh Exalted in Might and Wise. And there is none from the People of the Scripture but that he will surely believe in Jesus before his death [when he returns]. And on the Day of Resurrection he will be against them a witness.” (4:156-159.)

The status, honour, chastity and dignity of Mary is clarified by the Qur’ān elsewhere, and through it the vile slander against her is

nullified and made of no effect. Mary was purified and chosen over all the women of the world (see Qur'ān 3:42). She was a chaste woman, devout and truthful in intentions, words and deeds.

☞ What Jesus Will Say on the Day of Resurrection.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَ الْهَيْبِينَ مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّكِ إِن كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ
عَلِمْتَهُ تَعْلَمَ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَْلَمُ الْغُيُوبِ. مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ
إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ
فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ. إِن تَعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ
عِبَادُكَ وَإِن تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ أَلْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ.

“And remember when Allāh will say (on the Day of Resurrection): ‘O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say unto men: “Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allāh?” He will say: “Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say. Had I said such a thing, You would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner-self though I do not know what is in Yours, truly, You, only You are the All-Knower of all that is hidden and unseen. Never did I say to them aught except what You (Allāh) did command me to say: ‘Worship Allāh, my Lord and your Lord.’ And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a Witness to all things. If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily, You, only You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.” (5:116-118).

This is a refutation of the Christians who are being informed that Jesus will exonerate and free himself from them on the Day of Judgement. Allāh will ask Jesus about whether he invited the people to worship him and his mother as deities alongside Allāh.⁶⁵ Jesus will

⁶⁵ The Qur'ān does not state that the Trinity consists of Allāh, Jesus and Mary. It simply states that Jesus and Mary have been taken as deities alongside Allāh which is factually true. Catholics invoke and worship Mary. A deity (ilāh), is that which is invoked and given devotion.

glorify Allāh and say that he had no right to say such a thing as it is not from his qualities or rights to be worshipped, just as it is not the quality or right of anyone—be they angels, jinn or men—to be worshipped alongside Allāh. Jesus will state that he only informed them with what he was commanded to say, that he is a mere servant of Allāh, in submission and servitude to Him, and that the people should worship Allāh, who is his Lord and theirs.

☞ The Non-Reliability of the Torah and Gospel.

The Torah and the Gospel, as a matter of undisputable fact, have undergone loss, concealment, alteration and distortion over time and are no longer accurate and reliable representations of what Allāh revealed to Moses and Jesus (عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَامُ), even if some elements of truth can still be found therein.

Rebuking the Jews and Christians, Allāh stated:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ—
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ.

“So woe to those who write the ‘scripture’ with their own hands, then say, ‘This is from Allāh’ in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn thereby.” (2:79). And also:

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُونُ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ
يَعْلَمُونَ.

“And indeed, there is among them a party who alter the Scripture with their tongues so you may think it is from the Scripture, but it is not from the Scripture. And they say, ‘This is from Allāh,’ but it is not from Allāh. And they speak a lie against Allāh while they know.” (3:78).

We find in the Book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament: “How can you say, ‘We are wise, for we have the law of the Lord,’ when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?” (Jer. 8:8). This indicates that tampering with scripture was a known matter and was documented within the scripture itself. Acknowledged specialists in

the writing and history of scripture confirm this truth. That the scribes took liberties, made alterations and inserted things from themselves, is empirically proven by both internal and external analysis. Though credible scholarly research has established these facts, religious figures hide these realities from the average Jew or Christian. As for the Qur'ān its primary transmission route is oral—through large-scale, successive memorisation—and not written. Its preservation and transmission with integrity is established.

☞ The Qur'ān Has Clarified the Truth Wherein Jews and Christians Differ With Each Other.

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ

“And We have not revealed to you the Book, [O Muḥammad], except for you to make clear to them that wherein they have differed and as guidance and mercy for a people who believe.” (16:64)

The Islāmic message regarding Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) agrees with **innate disposition** (fiṭrah), **reason** ('aql) and authentic **revelation** (naql). It establishes the truth of that wherein the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, differed and on the basis of which they developed enmity towards each other, leading them to excesses and crimes.

No Christian can be a true follower of the original, actual teachings of Jesus except by following Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and no Jew can be a true follower of Moses and of Jesus the Messiah whom he was supposed to believe in except by following Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) who came with a perfection of the Islām taught and preached by them both and by all the Prophets and Messengers.

Anyone who desires and seeks the truth, breaks loose from the shackles of blind following and intellectual enslavement, opens his heart, researches, thinks, reflects and considers and then accepts Islām, knowing it is the truth brought by Moses, Jesus (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام) and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) will receive a double reward.

A Double Reward for Jews and Christians

Allāh (ﷻ) said:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ. وَإِذَا يُنزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالَوا أَمَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ
الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ. أُولَئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture before it - they are believers in it. And when it is recited to them, they say: ‘We have believed in it. Indeed, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed [even] before it we were Muslims [submitting to Allāh].’ Those will be given their reward twice for their patience” (28.52-54).

This verse is a reference to the People of the Book who believed in their prophet—Moses or Jesus—and then believed in Muḥammad (ﷺ). For such Jews and Christians who accept Islām after having been faithful to the messages of Moses or Jesus there is a double reward for their patience. This is indicated in the authentic traditions. Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) said: “Three persons will receive a double reward” and from them, “a man from the people of the Book who believes in his prophet and believes in Muhammad.”⁶⁶

The scholars of Qur’ānic exegesis explain that this verse is a reference to Jewish Rabbis and Christian scholars who believed in their scripture and their prophet and then entered Islām. From them were ‘Abd Allāh bin Salām, a learned Jewish Rabbi from the tribe of Banū Qaynuqā, and Baḥīrā a Christian monk. When Ja’far, the Prophet’s cousin, returned from Abyssinia after emigration to flee the persecution of the pagans, thirty-two Christian scholars who had accepted Islām came with him to the Prophet in Madīnah. Another eight Christians came from Syria, they were also leaders and scholars.⁶⁷

These learned men recognized what their scriptures contained of prophecy regarding Muḥammad (ﷺ) and were truthful to the covenant taken from them in their scriptures. After them, many others accepted Islām. The Companion Sa’īd bin Jubayr relates that

⁶⁶ Related by Imām al-Bukhārī.

⁶⁷ Refer to the tafsīr (exegesis) of Imām al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī and Ibn Kathīr by way of example.

he was amongst seventy priests that had been sent by Negus the Abyssinian king. When they came to the Prophet (ﷺ), he recited Sūrah Yāsīn, the 36th chapter of the Qur’ān, from its beginning to its end. The priests began to cry and accepted Islām. The following verse was then revealed regarding them:

الَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَإِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ
إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ

“Those to whom We gave the Scripture before it, they are believers in it. And when it is recited to them, they say, ‘We have believed in it. Indeed, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed we were, [even] before it, Muslims [submitting to Allāh]’.” (28:52-53).

Meaning that previously they were believers, they believed in the first Book (the Gospel) and then the second Book (the Qur’ān). For their patience upon the truth, they were given a double reward.⁶⁸ From the Christians who accepted Islām during the time of the Prophet was Negus (ﷺ), King of Abyssinia.

Negus was the Christian King of Abyssinia, the Aksum empire—a region in present-day Ethiopia and Eritrea—and was described by Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) as a righteous king under whose rule no one is oppressed. When the new converts to Islām were being tortured and oppressed in Mecca, the Prophet (ﷺ) advised the Muslims to emigrate to Abyssinia. A small group of around fifteen emigrated in secrecy and this led the pagans of Mecca to increase their oppression and torture, angry that some Muslims had escaped from their clutches. A second, larger group of over 80 Muslims emigrated later, led by Ja’far bin Abī Tālib, the cousin of the Prophet (ﷺ).

After the second wave of emigration, the pagans of Mecca sent two delegates to King Negus of Abyssinia to convince him to return the Muslims to the Meccans. They argued that the Muslims were not upon the religion of the Meccans and nor the religion of Negus (Christianity) but had innovated a new religion and were nothing

⁶⁸ Refer to the explanation of this verse in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*.

but fools and troublemakers. They also brought gifts for the King and his priests. Negus was a cautious and just man, so he decided to hear the view of the Muslims. He summoned them and asked about this religion which they were practising.

Ja'far bin Abī Ṭālib, representing the Muslims, said: "O King, we were a people of ignorance. We used to worship idols, eat [the meat of the] dead animal, we would perform shameless deeds, cut off the ties of kinship, ill-treat the neighbour and the strong amongst us would devour the weak. This is what we used to be upon until Allāh sent us a messenger from amongst ourselves. We know his lineage, his truthfulness, his trustworthiness and his chastity. He called us to single out Allāh [in His lordship] and to worship Him alone; that we abandon what we and our forefathers used to worship besides Him of stones and idols. He ordered us to be truthful in speech, to fulfil our trusts, to join the ties of kinship, to be good to the neighbour, to withhold from the prohibited sanctities and shedding of blood. He forbade us from shameless deeds, giving false witness, consuming the wealth of the orphan, falsely accusing chaste women [of indecency and lewd conduct] and ordered us to worship Allāh alone and not associate any partners with Him. He ordered us with prayer, obligatory charity and fasting and other affairs of Islām. So we attested to his truthfulness, believed in him, followed that which he came with, worshipped Allāh alone and did not associate any partners with Him. We treated as unlawful what Allāh made unlawful and we treated as lawful what Allāh made lawful. So then our people transgressed against us, they punished us and put us to trial with respect to our religion in order to make us revert to the worship of idols, away from the worship of Allāh, and so that we declare lawful what we used to previously consider lawful of vile things. When they subdued us, oppressed us, made life difficult for us and came in between us and our religion, we left our land and chose you over others. We desired your proximity and hoped that we would not be oppressed in your presence, O King."

When Negus heard this, he requested Ja'far to recite something from the Qur'ān and Ja'far read the opening verses of the nineteenth chapter, called "Mary" which recounts the story of Zacharias, John,

Mary and Jesus (عليه السلام). Upon hearing the Qur'ān being recited, Negus cried profusely until his beard became wet with tears and those around him also cried. Then Negus said, "Indeed this and what Jesus came with has emanated from the same lamp." Then Negus addressed the two delegates of the pagans of Mecca and said to them, "Be off! For by Allāh, we shall not deliver (these Muslims) to you."⁶⁹ Negus, recognising that Muḥammad was the one mentioned by both Moses and Jesus, later accepted Islām after the invitation of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). When hearing of his death, the Muslims performed the funeral prayer for him remotely from the city of Madīnah.

Scholarly research shows that the various "Jewish Christianities" and "Gospels" that existed in the early period after Jesus and which became obscure—being overshadowed by the spread of Pauline Greco-Roman Christianity because of the aid of empire—may have survived and not become completely lost. These communities may have moved and settled in various locations, remaining true to what they knew from their written records of the teachings of Jesus, believing him to be a Prophet and Messiah, sticking firmly to the law, and combining between inward faith and righteous works. These communities could have been the ones that accepted Islām because they recognised it as the truth due to their adherence to the true Gospel. They in fact saw themselves as those who were already Muslims due to adherence to the true Gospel. This also indicates that the Christianity known to the world today came to be because of the role of empire in its spread and acceptance, not because it was what Jesus and his followers were actually upon in faith and practice. This picture is now clearly emerging from the various detailed, rigorous studies published by scholars such as Bart Ehrman, Robert Eisenman, E.P. Sanders, James Dunn and others. These works are not written by Muslims but highly credentialed scholars and academics whose works are published by the most reputable academic publishers. Christians are advised to read these works with an open mind.

⁶⁹ Refer to *Rawḍat al-Anwār Fī Sīrah al-Nabī al-Mukhtār* of al-Mubārakfūrī (pp. 48-49).

Closing Notes

The true status of Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام)—in between the neglect of the Jews and the extremism and excess of the Christians—has been presented. Jesus the Messiah, Son of Mary, was a righteous Prophet who preached monotheism and faithful adherence to the unadulterated Mosaic law which he came to purify and confirm.

The Qur'ān has clarified the truth and has made pointless the differing between Jews and Christians regarding his acceptance or rejection. They are in fact obligated to respond to the Qur'ān and to the message of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in which there is clarification regarding that wherein they differed.

The Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “No Jew or Christian hears of me and does not believe in me except that he will be in the Fire.”⁷⁰

This authentic tradition shows that the message of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is universal and not restricted only to the Arabs. The Qur'ān clearly addresses all of humanity in numerous places, and not just the pagan Arabs or Jews and Christians alone. It also indicates the abrogation of all previous revealed books and messages whose veracity and authenticity has been evidently compromised. It also shows that whoever dies *without* hearing of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his messengership is excused on account of ignorance, though Allāh will test such people on the Day of Judgement. As for those who have heard of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his claim to revelation and messengership but do not seek to learn and grasp the reality of his message in an objective manner so as to ascertain its truth, then the proof is established upon them in the life of this world.

Hence, it is upon every Jew and Christian, to *objectively* learn about Islām, upon a clean slate, devoid of any and all pre-conceived notions and biases built upon their present convictions.

All praise is due Allāh and may peace and blessings be upon the final Prophet, Muḥammad and all the other Prophets including those sent to the Children of Israel such as Moses, Solomon, David, Jesus and John.

⁷⁰ Reported by Imām Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ.

Useful Scholarly Resources

Much modern scholarship is available regarding the *historical* Jesus in contrast to the *theological* or *mythological* Jesus. The research findings presented in the list of academic works below should be evaluated on their strength of argument and not dismissed merely because of the author or his personal beliefs.

1. Akyol, Mustafa. *The Islamic Jesus*. St. Martin's Press (2017).
2. Ehrman, Bart. *How Jesus Became God*. HarperOne Publishers (2014).
3. Ehrman, Bart. *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
4. Ehrman, Bart. *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
5. Ehrman, Bart. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. Oxford University Press (2011).
6. Ehrman, Bart. *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics*. Oxford University Press (2012).
7. Ehrman, Bart. *Forged—Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible's Authors are not Who We Think They Are*. HarperOne Publishers (2011).
8. Eisenman, Robert. *James the Brother of Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls I & II*. Grave Distractions Publications (2012).
9. Eisenman, Robert. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Roots of Christianity and Islam*. Grave Distractions Publications; 2nd edition (2014)
10. Eisenman, Robert. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the First Christians*. Element (1996).
11. Dunn, James. *Christianity in the Making Volume 1: Jesus Remembered*. Eerdmans Publishing (2003).
12. Sanders, E. P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Allen Lane Penguin Press (1993).
13. Schonfield, H. *The History of Jewish Christianity*. Duckworth (1936)
14. Schoeps, H. J. *Jewish Christianity*. Fortress Press, (1969).