



Ancient Prophets for a Modern World - The True Story of Jesus (P)

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Introduction

Of all the major religions in the world, Islam is the only non-Christian faith that recognises Jesus (peace be upon him). Within the pages of the Quran is a distinct Islamic portrayal of Jesus. Three of its Surahs (Chapters); Aale-Imran (Family of Imran), al-Ma'edah (The Table Spread With Food) and Maryam (Mary) are so named because of their references to Prophet Jesus. There is only one woman whose name is specifically mentioned in the Quran and that is 'Mary'; the mother of Jesus.

According to a census some 75% of adults in Australia, Canada and the United States of America are Christians. Thus, it is really essential for Muslims living in these countries to have a clear understanding of today's Christianity and how and why it was perverted away from the true teachings of Prophet Jesus.

The story of the birth of Jesus is so eloquently and passionately described in Chapter Nineteen (Surah Maryam) of the holy Quran that it brings one to tears. There are approximately ninety Ayaat spread across fifteen Surahs of the Quran which refer to Prophet Jesus.

The second source of Islamic teaching is Hadith. It may be seen that there are numerous Ahadith from the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w) reflecting and narrating the teachings and the words of wisdom of Prophet Jesus.

Both Muslims and Christians believe in the advent of Jesus on the Last Day. This doctrine is one of the major issues that relate this ancient great prophet to our modern world.

Nonetheless, in spite of the general similarities between these two religions, there are ample differences between Islam and Christianity regarding the personality of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). However, it is worthy of note that from before the time of the revelation of the holy Quran until today, there have also been ongoing debates among differing Christian sects, as with the Jews, about the personality of Jesus and his mother.

The Omniscient and All-Knowing Allah, through transmission of the holy Quran received verbatim by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w), revealed this previously-obscure information to mankind. In Surah 3 Ayah 44 the Almighty states to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w): "This is a part of the news of the unseen which We reveal to you. You were not with them." [3:44] This statement was to remind the people during the time of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w), just as for we who live today, that none of them had witnessed the life of Jesus, and thus for them all it was an unseen story. It is Allah Alone Who is ever present, The Possessor of both authority and knowledge whereby the actual story may be narrated.

"Then surely, We shall narrate unto them (their whole story) with knowledge, and indeed We have not been absent." [7:7] Thus, Almighty Allah in concluding the story of Prophet Jesus states: "Verily, this is the true narrative (about the story of Jesus), and there is no deity but Allah." [3:62]

For this reason, the objective of this paper is in relating the narration of the true version of the life of Jesus (a.s) as described by the holy Quran. However, to enhance the understanding of my dear readers, I shall also refer

to some main Christian perspectives with which to compare to the Islamic view of Jesus.

Due to the significant role of Lady Mary (peace be upon her), the story of Prophet Jesus begins in the Quran with the record of the life of his mother, Mary, and so also shall this paper.

Mary; the Mother of Jesus not the Mother of God!

Of the twenty-five texts in the Quran where Jesus is mentioned, in sixteen of them he is called ‘the son of Maryam (Mary)’, whereas only one text in the Gospels, has referred to Jesus as ‘son of Mary’ (Mark 6:3). Quranically the appellation ‘son of Mary’ is added to the name of Jesus to denote the humanity of Jesus on the one hand, and to acknowledge his miraculous birth without a father, on the other. The biblical text in Mark, however, reports that it was scathingly used by those who rejected his prophethood.

Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, however, pay a special homage and veneration to Mary. They refer to Mary as ‘the Mother of God’ (Theotokos). They not only believe that she is the mediatrix (a female mediator) of all graces, but they also believe in Mariolatry, a term used since the Reformation to mean the worship of Mary. Thus, recitation of the rosary has been among the most popular expressions of Marian devotion.

The internet encyclopaedia of Encarta explains the history of the divinity of Mary as follows:

“As early as the 2nd century, Christians venerated Mary by calling her Mother of God, a title that primarily stresses the divinity of Jesus. During the controversies of the 4th century concerning the divine and human natures of Jesus, the Greek title theotókos (Mother of God) came to be used for Mary in devotional and theological writing. Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople (present-day İstanbul), contested this usage, insisting that Mary was mother of Christ, not of God. In 431, the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorianism and solemnly affirmed that Mary is to be called theotókos, a title that has been used since that time in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.”

It is nearly impossible to find a Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Church wherein it is not filled with carved or molten images and/or statues of Jesus and Mary. Most of these images and statues are placed in the prominent places of the Prayer Halls of the churches for veneration and worship. The majority of the congregation will kneel, worship, venerate and pray before these images as an inherited tradition. They refer to Jesus as their God and to the Virgin Mary as the ‘Mother of God’! Many devoted Catholics also have statues of Mary in their homes for her veneration.

The Protestants, however, who separated from the Church of Rome in the 16th century, do not believe in the divinity of Mary.

Almighty Allah in denying the divinity of Jesus and his mother narrates some of the human aspects of their lives, such that “They both used to eat food” [5:75] while God does not eat.

Almighty Allah, also, in a rhetorical question narrates the renunciation of such titles from Prophet Jesus himself. “And when Allah will (on the Day of Judgement) say: O Jesus; son of Mary! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah? 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, only You, are the All-Knower of all that is hidden. Never did I say to them aught except what You did command

me to say: Worship Allah, 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.” [5:116-117]

As indicated in the above Ayaat, Prophet Jesus begins his answer firstly with the glorification of God as an expression of monotheism and then affirms that never would he countenance such sacrilege - stating that he spoke only that which Allah had commanded; that he, while living with his community would ensure that they did not worship other than the Almighty God. Moreover, even the present Bible quotes from Jesus in his response to the devil: “It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him alone.” [Luke 4:8]

However, some four centuries after his ascension, deviation occurred among his followers.

In general, the Jews and the Christians have all confused the position of the holy Mary in their own peculiar ways. The Jews accused her of committing illegal sexual intercourse. The holy Quran with reference to their horrible accusation states: “And because of their (Jews) disbelief and uttering against Mary a grave false charge.” [4:156] Whilst among the Christians, the Catholics have exalted her, calling her The Mother of God! They have also pronounced worship of her as an article of faith.

However, she holds no special status for the Protestants other than being the mother of Jesus.

The Virtues of Mary in Islam

1. One of the Four Best Ladies

Of all ladies of the world, Mary is one of the four most honourable. It is narrated from the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w): “Verily, Allah has chosen from among women four ladies: Asiyah the daughter of Mezahim, the wife of Pharaoh; Maryam the mother of Jesus; Khadijah the daughter of Khowaylid, and Fatima (s.a) the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w) who is the most honourable of them all.”

2. Her Name

Maryam (Mary in English) is the only female name mentioned in the entire Quran. Her name is repeated sixteen times in the Quran and Chapter nineteen of the Quran is named after her. Mary is a Hebrew name (Miriam) which literally means a female worshipper and devotee.

3. The First Female Divinely Chosen

Holy Mary’s spiritual status, although she was not a prophetess, was actually higher than some of the prophets such as her guardian Prophet Zachariyah insomuch as she had been chosen by Almighty Allah for an immaculate task, in the same way in which He had chosen His messengers.

4. Virgin Mother

Mary was also uniquely chosen over all the women of the world for the miraculous birth of her holy son whilst still a virgin, never having been touched by any man. It is with reference to this virtue that the Almighty God states, “O Mary! Verily Allah has chosen you, purified you, and chosen you

above the women of mankind.” [3:42] Mary is the only lady in history who, without human male intervention in any form, became pregnant with Jesus.

5. Pure

Mary was also the first ‘Batool’ meaning pure from menstruating. God had made her pure from menstruating so that she could devote her entire time to the service of the temple. Among Christian sects, most of the Protestants do not believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary.

6. The First Sinless Female (Ma’soomeh)

Almighty Allah had purified her from any sin inasmuch as Prophets were purified and hence, she was the first impeccable or immaculate female in human history.

7. The Devout Female

As we shall learn from her biography, Mary’s mother had made a vow before her birth to dedicate her to the service of the temple and hence she was named Maryam. She herself fulfilled the vow throughout her entire life being the person she was. According to a Prophetic tradition, Jesus resurrected his mother and asked if she would like to live on earth again. Holy Mary replied, “Yes but only if I may offer prayers during the cold nights of winter and fast the long days of summer.”

8. Fostered by the Almighty Through Prophet Zachariah

According to the holy Quran, Almighty God made Mary grow in a goodly manner under the care of Prophet Zachariah. [3:37] Her sustenance had also been provided from heaven as witnessed on many an occasion by Prophet Zachariah. “Every time he (Zachariah) entered her praying place to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: O Mary! From where have you got this? She said, this is from Allah, verily Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills, without limit.” [3:37]

9. Al-Mohadatheh (A female spoken to by Angels)

The Holy Quran clearly states that the angels would descend and communicate with the Virgin Mary. Thus, on more than one occasion quoting from the angels addressing her we read in the Quran, “When the angels said O Mary...”[3:42,45]

10. Mostajabatul Da’wah (a female whose prayers are granted)

Her Titles

Mary is also referred to in the Quran as the Sign of Allah (23:50), Siddiqeh (a very truth telling female) [66:12, 5:75], Qaniteh (an obedient lady to Allah) [66:12], Mohsineh (a chaste woman) [66:12], Mohadatheh (spoken to by Angels) [3:42], Ma’soomeh (divinely protected and immaculate from sin) [3:42].

Her Biography

According to Islamic traditions Hannah (Anna) and Ashyaa’ (Elizabeth) were two sisters. The first married Imran who was one of the outstanding figures among the Israelites. Some traditions suggest that he was even a prophet or a saint. Her sister Ashyah was married to Prophet Zachariah. Hannah was barren and for several years after her marriage, did not fall pregnant. One day, while sitting under a tree, she observed a bird on the top

of the tree feeding her chicks. The scene brought her to tears and maternal love brought pain to her heart. Simultaneously, from the depth of her soul she invoked Almighty God to grant her a child. Her sincere invocation was accepted and soon after she fell pregnant with Maryam. At the same time Almighty God revealed to her husband Imran that there would be a blessed boy in his family who would heal the terminally ill and would revive the dead by the permission of God. He will also be a Messenger of God to the Israelites.

In fact, the inspiration was referring to their grandson, Jesus, but once Imran shared the inspiration with his wife she assumed that she was pregnant with a baby boy. Thus, as a gesture of thanksgiving she made a vow to free her baby for the cause of God and to be the servant of God in His House. "When the wife of Imran said, O my Lord! I have vowed to You what is in my womb to be dedicated for Your services (free from all worldly work), so accept this from me. Verily You are the All-Hearer the All-Knower." [3:35]

The service of the temple was a masculine task and therefore when the baby born was a girl, she was baffled as to what she should do. She had already made a vow to free her baby for the service of the temple and at the same time no girl would be accepted by the temple authorities for any type of service. Nevertheless, she called her baby girl Maryam (a devout female) and prayed to God to keep her and her offspring aloof from Satan the Outcast.

Maryam's father had died prior to her birth and therefore once she was old enough her mother took her to the temple and offered her as a gift to be the servant of the House of God. She also requested that one of the Rabbis or the Saints should look after her upbringing. Her beauty and innocence provoked competition amongst the Rabbis as to who should be her guardian. Finally, they agreed that they would cast lots with their pens as to which of them should be given the position of the carer of Mary. By the will of God it so happened that Zachariah won the lot and he became the custodian of Maryam. In fact, he was the most suitable person to look after the Virgin Mary for not only was he a Prophet but he was also her uncle.

Prophet Zachariah enjoyed a special high respect in the temple and hence Maryam's devotion to the temple by his request was accepted by other authorities. "So her Lord accepted her with goodly acceptance. He (Allah) made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Zachariah." [3:37]

Thus, Maryam grew up in the temple indulged in the worshipping of God and engulfed in her devotion. Maryam was only nine years of age when she was fasting throughout the days and praying throughout the nights. She soon became renowned for her devotion, chastity and piety more so than all the men and women of her time.

During this period of her life her sustenance was provided from heaven. The holy Quran with reference to this blessing states: "Every time he (Zachariah) entered her Mehrab (Worshipping room) to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: O Mary! From where have you got

this? She said: This is from Allah. Verily, Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills without limit.” [3:37]

Her devotion elevated her to such a height that soon she was in the presence of angels. In the holy Quran we read, “And when the angels said O Mary. Verily Allah has chosen you, purified you, and chosen you above the women of the worlds. O Mary! Submit yourself with obedience to your Lord and prostrate yourself, and bow down along with those (angels) who bow down.” [3:42-43]

The Miraculous Virgin Conception

One day as she was praying in her isolated place of worship, suddenly angels appeared addressing her; “O Mary! Verily Allah gives you the glad tidings of a Word from Him, his name shall be the Messiah Jesus the son of Mary held in honour in this world and in the hereafter and will be one of those near to Allah. He will speak to the people in the cradle and in manhood, and he will be one of the righteous.” [3:45-46]

The term ‘Word’ in the above ayah refers to the miraculous birth of Jesus by the divine command of “Be” as will be quoted from the Quran.

Nonetheless, the amazing news of having a baby whilst a virgin and having never been touched by any man was overwhelming. She invoked the Almighty and said, “O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me?!” [3:47] Allah revealed to her, “So (it will be) for Allah creates what He wills. When He has decreed something, He says to it only ‘Be’ and it is.” [ibid] The Almighty then revealed to her that her son would be a Messenger of Allah to the Israelites and he will be empowered with the miracles of healing those born blind and the lepers and bringing the dead back to life. At the time of this inspiration, Mary would have assumed that the glad tidings would be a far prophecy and she would be the mother of a Messenger of God after her possible marriage.

Time went by and the fulfilment of the promised glad tidings arrived. As a normal practice she had withdrawn into seclusion from her family to a place facing East for worship where she had also placed a screen to hide herself from people for her private devotion. In absolute privacy and seclusion, whilst immersed in an ocean of adoration, the Almighty sent His angel to Mary thus informing of her conception of Jesus.

“Then We sent to her Our Ruh (angel), and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects.” Upon seeing the strange man at her private place, the resemblance of chastity and modesty felt overwhelming. She immediately said to him, “Verily I seek refuge with the Most Gracious (Allah) from you, if you do fear Allah.” The strange man (the angel) responded “I am only a messenger from your Lord to gift you a righteous son.” Mary then felt at ease, however, she immediately developed another fear as to how she could have a child whilst she was not married. Thus she said to the angel, “How can I have a son when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?” Mary at that stage was thinking of the natural way of conceiving which could be either legitimate or illegitimate. She knew that she would not fall into either of the two categories and at the same time no one had ever heard of a girl conceiving without being touched by a man. The angel of God calmed her down with his response, he said, “So (it will be), your Lord said ‘That is easy for Me and We wish to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah), and it is a matter already decreed (by Allah).’” [19:17-21]

Mary was convinced that this was another miraculous intervention of the Almighty. The same God who had made her barren mother pregnant and has been feeding her with heavenly fruits has now decreed to miraculously make her conceive a baby boy who would be a Messenger of God. Mary

had previously experienced communication of the angels with her and thus had no doubt of this divine communication.

Mary in the Furnace of Trials

Soon after the incident, Mary felt that she was pregnant and withdrew to a far off place away from people where she could be alone with her child. While she was away, the term prior to birth was completed. "The pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date palm." Mary was alone in the wilderness with no relatives or midwives around her, nor yet any food or water. She said to herself, "Would that I had died before this and had been forgotten and out of sight." The anxiety of what was to follow this most unusual of births on the one hand, and the pains of labour on the other, overwhelmed her.

At the threshold of her trial, divine Mercy showered upon her. Suddenly, she heard a voice cry unto her from beneath her saying, "Grieve you not! Your Lord has provided a water stream under you." The heavenly voice also asked her to look at the dried tree above her how it has turned into a fruit bearing date palm. The voice continued, "And shake the trunk of the date palm towards you, it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you. So eat and drink and be happy."

As with regard to the social consequences of her childbirth the voice said that she did not need to talk rather that her child will defend himself. "If you see any human being say (motion), verily I have vowed a fast unto the Most Gracious so I shall not speak to any human being on this day." [19:23-26]

On seeing this beautiful child, foretold and gifted by the Almighty, Mary was pleased that she had become the mother of a Messenger of God. However, at the same time she was worried about the reaction of her people. "Who will believe me that no man has touched me?" thought this most virtuous of women. "How can I explain this to the Rabbis of the temple and even Zachariah and his wife? I have been, all my life known as the most chaste and modest lady. What if people accuse me of being unchaste?" Mary whispered to herself.

A Talking New Born

Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and finally returned to her people. Upon her arrival people were stunned to see her with an infant. Those who knew about her chastity and modesty were struck with awe and others who were jealous of her began to sneer. They said, "O Mary, indeed you have brought a strange thing." It was customary among the Jews that when they wanted to praise the virtues of a person they would refer to them as the brother/sister of Aaron, therefore they addressed Mary, "O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a man who used to commit adultery, nor was your mother an unchaste woman!" Accusations and questions were thrown at her from all directions. She quietly pointed to her baby, meaning that the infant would explain himself. People were all the more outraged and assumed that she was mocking them, thus, with contempt they questioned, "How can we talk to one who is a child in the crib?" To everyone's amazement the infant began to speak. He said, "Verily, I am a slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet. And He has

made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. And dutiful to my mother and made me not arrogant, unblessed. And peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive. Such is Jesus son of Mary. It is a statement of truth about which they dispute.” [19:27-33]

The Miraculous Virgin Conception in Judo-Christian Tradition

The Jews have denied, entirely, the miraculous virgin conception of Prophet Jesus. They have, even further, accused the Virgin Mary (peace be upon her) with unchastity.

Christians hold various stands with regard to this miracle. Disbelief in the virgin-birth has been referred to by many early Christian writers such as Origen as ‘madness and blasphemy’, and ‘heresy’ by St. Augustine. Modern liberal Christian theologians, however, have generally rejected the virgin conception and classify it as a religious myth. They argue that St. Paul has never mentioned the virgin birth anywhere in his writings. Also the genealogy of Jesus according to Matthew, it is stated that he is of the seed of David (Matthew 1) and this is confirmed by St. Paul in Romans 1. Though in both Matthew (1) and Luke (3) it is shown that he is from the line of David, but through Joseph, not Mary. Among the Gospels only Matthew and Luke dealt with the story of the virgin birth, though with some differences. Some theologians argue that the original text of the third Gospel (Luke) began with our present third chapter, the first two chapters being a later addition. The same is suggested for the first chapter of Matthew. Most Catholics, however, still believe in the doctrine of the virgin conception of Jesus.

Once again, thanks be to the Almighty Allah that in His Glorious Quran He revealed the true story of the miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) with no obscurity.

Science & the Miraculous Virgin Conception

The concept of the miraculous virgin-birth of Prophet Jesus is an article of faith for the Muslims. Faithful people acknowledge the fact that the laws of nature are created by the Almighty and are subjugated to His Might. Thus, miracles occur in nature by the Will of Allah. The creation of Jesus without a father is easier to comprehend than the creation of Adam from soil. Thus, the holy Quran states: “Verily, the likeness of Jesus before Allah is the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then (He) said to him: “Be!” and he was.” [3:59]

Nonetheless, modern embryology has proven this so-called ancient fable to be a possible fact. The term for the virgin birth is referred to in biology as ‘parthenogenesis’. Parthenogenesis is the production of new individuals from virgin females by means of ova which have the power of developing without the intervention of the male element. It is the production, without fertilization. This type of production occurs naturally in some insects and reptiles. Until the new discovery in April 2004 embryologists used to believe that it does not naturally occur in mammals. On 22 April 2004 ABC broadcasted news of the world’s first mammalian virgin birth. A team of

Japanese and Korean scientists announced that their laboratory mouse, reproduced without the aid of a father. The detailed news was also printed in the 22 April 2004 issue of the renowned scientific journal of Nature. The Australian embryologist, Professor Patrick Tam, who co-wrote a commentary in the same issue of the journal said: “I was amazed because this hasn’t been possible before.”

The Immaculate Conception

The Roman Catholic Church has proclaimed a dogma called ‘Immaculate Conception’ since the 19th century. According to this dogma Mary was conceived without original sin. They further teach that Mary was also freed from actual sin by a special grace of God. Catholics confirm their dogma with a couple of Israelite Ahadith narrated in Bukhari and Muslim. According to these Ahadith Abu-Hurayrah allegedly narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w): “No children of Adam are born but Satan has touched them save Mary and her son!” The finger print of Satan is so obvious in these Ahadith. The implication of the above forged Hadith is that all the Messengers of God including Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w) as well as any other human being are all born sinful except Prophet Jesus and his mother.

This narration is in absolute contradiction of various Ayaat of the Quran as well as that of common sense. It is also obviously the cultivation of the Christian dogma of Original Sin. I refuted the dogma of ‘Original Sin’ in the story of Prophet Adam.

The Date and the Place of the Birth of Jesus

According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary and Joseph left Galilee for Bethlehem to register for tax. “While they were in Bethlehem her days were completed to give birth, and she bore her first-born son, whom she wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” [2:7]

A ‘Manger’ is a trough or a container usually in a barn or stable from which cattle or horses feed. Although Luke is not explicit as to whether or not they were accommodated in a stable, for two reasons this is the most likely. Firstly, Luke indicates that there was no room for them in the inn and secondly the baby is placed in a trough. Therefore, according to Luke Jesus is believed to be born in a stable beside the cattle!

The Quran, as is its usual style, does not mention any details of the place and the date of the birth of Prophet Jesus. The place of the labour, however, according to the Quran was under a dried date-palm tree that miraculously became a fruit-bearing tree for Mary. Thus, the birth of Jesus must have been in an outdoor place somewhere away from the town, out of sight of her people. The holy Quran mentions no human companion with Mary at the time of her delivery.

The Date of Jesus’ Birth

The Gospels date the birth of Jesus somewhat 10 years apart. Matthew in his second chapter states that Jesus was born when Herod (the King of Judea) was still alive, no later than 3 or 4 BC. Luke, on the other hand, in

his second chapter states that Jesus was born when Quirinius was the governor of Syria, which did not take place until at least ten years after Herod's death. Christians in justification of the above contradiction suggest that Quirinius was appointed twice as a governor. Unfortunately, history does not support this suggestion. Thus, historically there is no evidence that so far 2004 years have passed since the birth of Prophet Jesus.

Was Jesus Born on 25 December?

Most Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on the 25 December of every year except the Armenian Christians who celebrate it on 6 January. Unfortunately, neither of the above celebrations have biblical proof.

According to Luke at the time of the birth of Jesus, the shepherds tended their flocks in the fields at night. "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields." [Luke2:8] December in Bethlehem is in the middle of a freezing, cold and rainy winter and no shepherds would have kept their flock outdoors. Keeping the flocks in the field would be more possible sometime in August or September. The holy Quran also confirms that the birth of Jesus could not be in the winter season, due to the fact that Mary gave birth outdoors under a date-palm. According to a Tradition narrated from Imam Redha (a.s) Prophet Jesus was born on 25 of Thol-Qa'dah which will be on 26 June. The month of June in Bethlehem is the middle of the summer season and hence the above date in the Hadith of Imam Redha (a.s) is in accordance with the Quran and the Biblical record.

In the northern hemisphere the last days of December are the longest nights of the year, the most suitable time for parties. The celebration of the birth of Jesus on 25 December and the New Year five nights afterward would give the best opportunities for the Christians to get caught up in parties, drinking, driving and an increase of the death toll. At best, Christmas is mainly a period of celebrations and a family time. This, it must be acknowledged, has made Christmas more of a holiday than a holy day!

Jesus; the Messenger of Allah

Both the Christians and the Jews exceeded the limits with regards to Prophet Jesus by uttering grave false charges about him. The Jews not only denied him as a Prophet, but also accused him –May God forgive- of being an illegitimate son! The Christians on the other hand, exaggerated about Jesus and believed in his deity and sonship to God! The dogma of the Trinity and the crucifixion of Jesus as a ransom are the bedrocks of Christian ideology. All other concepts in Christianity stem from, and rotate around, these two doctrines.

To this end, the main emphasis in the Quran is given to verification, clarification and correction of these two dogmas. The holy Quran places blame on both groups for their blasphemous dogmas. Therefore, a good understanding of the Ayaat with reference to Prophet Jesus definitely requires a good understanding of the Judo-Christian doctrines with regards to the personality of Jesus.

Jesus son of Marry was no different than other Prophets and Messengers of Allah. He was selected by the Almighty God as His Messenger to the Israelites. Jesus is one of the five law-giving and great Prophets and Messengers. The Almighty God revealed a Scripture to him called ‘Injil’ or Gospel.

1. Jesus’ Appellations in the Quran

The first approach of the Quran for correction of the false Jewish and Christian doctrines about Jesus is with reference to the appellations given to him.

1. Son of Mary

The most commonly used title for Jesus is ‘son of Mary’. Of the 25 places in the Quran where Jesus is mentioned, in 16 of them he is called ‘son of Mary’. In the present Gospels, however, only in one place is Jesus referred to as ‘the son of May’ (Mark 6:3) although not with favour. The reason why this appellation is added to his name in the Quran is a hint that he was not son of God!

2. Al-Maseeh (The Messiah)

The second most common appellation of Jesus in the Quran is ‘al-Maseeh’. Prophet Jesus is eleven times referred to as al-Maseeh in the holy Quran. Commentators of the Quran and Muslim lexicographers have given various etymological explanations of the word ‘al-Maseeh’. Some suggested that the name is given for Jesus when he was travelling in the earth as he was a mobile preacher. Others say that Jesus was the Messiah because he healed the ill by touching their bodies.

With all respect to these explanations, I believe none of them are actually reflecting on the purpose of the usage of the term ‘al-Maseeh’ in the Quran.

The title of ‘the Messiah’ is very important to the Jews and the Christians.

We need to bear in mind that the term al-Maseeh is the Arabic form of the Hebrew word m îa (Mashiach). The Greek equivalent is Christ. Thus, the etymology of the term must be sought in its original language, i.e.

Hebrew not Arabic. 'al-Maseeh' in Hebrew means 'anointed one'. In the Jewish tradition the term was a dignified title. Al-Maseeh was used for the ceremonial induction into leadership. Three types of leaders were anointed:

1) Prophets; representing God among people as in the case of Abelmeholah to be the prophet in place of Eliha. (1 King 19:15-17)

2) Priests; representing the people before God through sacrifices and prayers. (Ex. 28:40-41)

3) Kings; to defend and rule over the people on God's behalf. (1 King 19:15)

In general, the anointing meant that someone was authorized to serve God in a position of honour and responsibility. Although many people in the Old Testament were called Messiah, there was only one referred to as 'the Messiah,' whose coming the Israelites were both hoping for and expecting as "The Deliverer" of the Jewish people. (Daniel 9:25)

The term 'al' in Arabic is a definite article similar to 'the'. 'al-Maseeh' therefore is equivalent to 'the Messiah, the Anointed one' as used in the Hebrew language.

It seems when Almighty Allah states: "Indeed, the Messiah; Jesus son of Mary, was a Messenger of Allah" [4:171] He thus refers to this belief of the Messiah that the Jewish people were expecting, confirming that this was, indeed, Jesus son of Mary; the Messenger of God.

In short, both the Jews and the Christians exceeded the limits with regards to Christ. The Jews went astray by denying Jesus as 'the promised Messiah and the Prophet of God', and the Christians of later centuries also erred in misinterpreting Jesus as the Messiah who forgives their sin. It is with reference to this explanation that Almighty Allah states: "O people of the Book (Jews and the Christians) do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah; Jesus son of Mary, was a Messenger of Allah." [4:171]

3. The Messenger of Allah

The third appellation used in the Quran for Jesus is 'the Messenger of Allah'.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition an apostle or a prophet meant no more than an upright spiritual leader. Paul was regarded an apostle and so was Barnabas. In the Acts of the Apostles [21:8-9] four girls are mentioned who prophesied. Thus, for the Christians it is not a very impressive title to call Jesus a prophet. Nonetheless, even according to the present Gospels Jesus has called himself a prophet. (Mark 6:4, Luke 13:33)

In Islam, however, prophet-hood is a divine position. Prophets are sinless and divinely protected from any error or sin. They are empowered by the will of God to conduct miracles as proof of their position. A Messenger of Allah is one who also came with a new Scripture. Thus, every Messenger was also a Prophet, although not all prophets were Messengers. It is to this effect that the holy Quran introduces Jesus as 'a Prophet' [19:30] as well as 'a Messenger of Allah' [4:171, 61:6]

4. The 'Word' of Allah

John, the alleged author of the fourth Gospel of the present Bible, contrary to the synoptic Gospels and under the influence of the Alexandrian school of ancient Greek philosophy, declares Jesus to be the 'Word' (Logos) who in the beginning was with God and was God, by whom all things were made. A similar doctrine was laid down by Paul in his epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians. This pagan Greek concept laid a foundation for the heretical concept of Trinity according to which Jesus was allegedly the son of God!

This false doctrine is corrected and clarified in the holy Quran.

Prophet Jesus is twice referred to in the Quran as 'a Word from Allah' [3:45], and 'His Word' [4:171].

The term 'word' in the Quran is commonly used for a 'Divine Decree' [10:33, 11: 119] as well as 'the creatures' of God. [18:109, 31:27] All the creatures of God are 'the words of God' and the most perfect of them all are 'the complete words of God'.

The miraculous creation and birth of Jesus was brought about by the divine decree, 'BE'. It is to this effect that when Mary surprisingly asked her Lord as how she could conceive a child whilst she was unmarried, Almighty Allah answered her: "So (it will be) for Allah creates what He whilst. When He has decreed something, He says to it only: 'Be' - and it is." [3:47] Thus, the Quranic expression, 'the Word of God' is a confirmation of the creation of Jesus, not his divinity as portrayed by Christians.

5. A 'Spirit' from Allah

Another appellation used for Jesus in the Quran is that he is 'a spirit from Him (Allah)'.

"Indeed the Messiah; Jesus son of Mary, is the Messenger of Allah and His Word which He bestowed upon Mary and a spirit from Him." [4:171]

"And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity. And We breathed into it from Our Spirit." [66:12]

Christian theologians quote the above Ayaat to support their dogma of Trinity, to allege that even Qur`anically Jesus is part of God and from God and God!

The Arabic term 'MIN' which is generally translated to 'from' has fifteen different meanings. In this context 'MIN' is used to explain the source of its creation not to be part of something. Therefore, the meaning of 'a spirit from Him' is a spirit that is created by God and He is the source of it. A similar usage of the term 'MIN' can be noted in Ayah 13 of Chapter 45: "And He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth from Him." If Jesus is literally from God and part of God, then according to the above Ayah, all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth must also be part of God! Also, the holy Quran refers to the she-Camel at the time of prophet Saleh 'the She-Camel of God' [91:13] does it mean that God has a camel or she is part of God?!

Moreover, the expression of 'a Spirit from God' is used in the Quran with reference to the creation of Adam. "So I have fashioned him and breathed into him from My Spirit, then you fall down prostrate to him." [38:72] Similarly, regarding the believers, the Almighty Allah states: "For

such people He has written faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with a Spirit from Him.” [58:922] Thus, one should also claim that Adam, the believers and the whole of humanity are all part of God!

The expression of ‘a spirit from Allah’ therefore is meant to explain that God is the source of the life of Jesus and all other creatures.

6. Supported by ‘the Holy Spirit’

Of the appellations of Jesus in the Quran is that God has supported and protected him by the Holy Spirit.

In Christian theology the Holy Spirit is regarded as part of the Godhead, or the third person of the Trinity, and hence is regarded as synonymous with God! In essence, even though the "Holy Spirit" has been referred to in earlier writings, as at the time of the baptism of Jesus, and has been spoken of in the New Testament as being in previous times: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51) it is generally accepted that the work of the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost came into play after Jesus was taken up into heaven (Acts 11:28). Therefore while it may appear to be logical that the Holy Spirit in Christian theology is the angel Gabriel or another of the Messenger angels, this is not in keeping with today's dogma of Christianity.

There are two famous meanings for ‘the Holy Spirit’ from the Islamic point of view.

One is that it's meant for Gabriel; an angel whose main task –though surely not the only one- is to bring the revelations to the Prophets. This meaning is supported by Ayah 102 in Chapter 16 wherein the Almighty Allah states: “Say: the Holy Spirit (Gabriel) has brought it (the Quran) down from your Lord with truth.” Gabriel is called ‘the Spirit’ for as an angel he is not physical and is ‘holy’ in his purity and infallibility.

Another suggestion for the meaning of ‘the Holy Spirit’ is that it is a spirit greater than Gabriel by whom Almighty Allah supported His Messengers and their successors. It is by possessing this spirit that they are safeguarded from any sin or error and can gain an intuitive knowledge of the reality of the universe. The Messenger of Islam (s.a.w.w) was bestowed with this spirit. “And thus We have sent to you a Spirit of Our Command.” [42:52]

Jabir al-Jo’fi asked Imam Baqir (a.s) about the knowledge of the Imams. The Imam explained: “O Jabir! Verily there are five types of spirits in the Prophets and their successors; the holy spirit, the spirit of faith, the spirit of life, the spirit of power, and the spirit of desire. It is by the Holy Spirit that they know what is in the kingdom of God. O Jabir! All the other four spirits can be afflicted, but the Holy Spirit will not amuse or entertain.”

Thus it is explained that the Holy Spirit is accorded the nature which Almighty God has bestowed upon His Messengers and their successors to protect them against sinning. We should however bear in mind that whatever the meaning of the Holy Spirit may be, it is undoubtedly a creature of God subjugated by His Will.

The Scripture of Prophet Jesus

Prophet Jesus is one of the five great Messengers of God to whom Almighty God had revealed a Scripture. Thus, they had come with a new divine law for people. The Scripture of Jesus was called the 'Injil' (Gospel) which means a glad tiding. Almighty God, twice, in the Quran (5:46 & 57:27) has mentioned that "We gave him (Jesus) the Injil". The name of this Scripture is mentioned 12 times in the Quran always in a singular form.

It seems from the present Bible that Jesus had a Scripture called 'the Gospel'. Luke in the beginning of Chapter 20 says: "One day as he (Jesus) was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came up with the elders and said to him..." This passage is the clear evidence that Jesus had a Scripture which he was preaching in the temples. Luke also narrates that Jesus was asking his disciples to go around from village to village and preach the Gospel. (Luke 9:6)

Christians however do not recognise any written Gospel for Jesus. They claim he did not consign to writing his own teachings and directed his apostles not to write, but to preach the Gospel verbally to their fellow-men. In justification of their belief, they offer a literal interpretation for the abovementioned Biblical quotations. Thus, they assert the term 'Gospel' in those passages has a literal meaning, i.e. glad tiding.

This claim is an attempt to conceal an historical fact about the original Gospel. Unfortunately, the Gospel of Jesus was lost or destroyed by the Jews. Though it is expressed by a number of historians that divisions between early sects of Christianity also encouraged the destruction of writings of which they did not approve. Subsequently, many people's hands were employed in the rewriting of the Gospel.

Historically, there have been a large number of narratives connected with Jesus' life called 'Gospel'. Luke in the beginning of his Gospel with reference to this says: "Now that many have put their hands to the composition of a narrative regarding the events that have certainly taken place amongst us, transmitted as they were to us by those who were from the first eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, it seemed fitting for me as well..."

The testimony of Luke indicates that many gospels before and after composition of his Gospel had been compiled. Today Christian scholars acknowledge this in at least some fifty historical gospels such as the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel according to Barnabas, the Gospel according to Peter, the Gospel according to Philip, etc. The Christians however have only recognised four Gospels, i.e. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Dating the Gospels

When were the Gospels written? Our Christian friends commonly preach that the present Gospels were compiled by those whose name they bear - all of which would place them within a short period of time of Jesus. A number of scholars believe that they were compiled between the years 50 to 100 AD which would make the first assumption impossible. The truth is that the

physical manuscript evidence of the Gospels does not start until early mid 2nd century with the famous P52- a tiny piece of papyrus with fragments of only 7 verses. The full manuscripts of the present four Gospels were completed in the 4th century. There are also many scholarly debates about the authenticity of some chapters and the verses of the present Gospels. For instance, New International Version of the Bible warns the reader:

“The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20”, and “The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11”

The Language of the Gospels

Circa 400AD, Saint Jerome translated the Bible from Greek into Latin. This translation is called the "Vulgate" and is still in use by those still interested in Latin and is used in a revised form as the Roman Catholic Authorized Version. But in what language were the Gospels originally written, in Greek or Hebrew or even Aramaic? There is an ongoing debate as to whether the earliest Gospels were written in Aramaic or Greek. Some scholars have proposed that they were written in Aramaic. But then again, no one has ever seen an Aramaic Gospel predating the fourth century which had to be translated from Greek to Aramaic.

Titles of the Gospels

The present Gospels are supplied with the title the Gospel ‘according to’ Matthew, Mark, etc. Many Biblical scholars have taken it to mean not ‘written by’, but ‘drawn up according to the conception of Matthew, Mark, etc. In the same way, the Gospel according to the Hebrew, or the Gospel according to the Egyptians, does not mean that they would have been written by the Hebrews or the Egyptians, but that peculiar from Gospel which either the Hebrews or the Egyptians had accepted. Therefore, the Gospel of Matthew is no more than a Gospel according to the school of Matthew and his view of Christ whether it is really written by him or not. (an impossibility due to time frame)

Divergence of the Gospels

The existence of numerous differences between the present four Gospels is a fact which has long been noticed and admitted by Christian scholars. The Gospels differ in many instances from the narration of the genealogy and the birth of Jesus to his so-called crucifixion. I shall refer to some of the differences in due courses.

Original Gospel

The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) which share content, style and order of events and which differ largely from John are called synoptic Gospels. The similarity between the three Gospels has urged the scholars to believe in an original Gospel. Scholars believe there can have been an original source for the Gospels that they call ‘Q’. The name comes from German for ‘source’ “Quelle”. What has led them to this assumption is that there must be a written source whereby mainly the three synoptic Gospels used in their efforts of writing.

The Miracles of Prophet Jesus

Prophet Jesus like many other Prophets had proved the authenticity of his mission by miracles he demonstrated with the Permission of God.

The wonders performed by the Prophets that we call 'miracles' are referred to in the Quran (3:49, 5:114) and the Bible (Act2:43) as 'the Sign of God', because it verifies and confirms the claim of the Prophets. Miracles also mean 'wonders' because they made the observers marvel.

In Arabic a miracle is called 'al-Mo'jezah' which means an act that humans are incapable of doing. No human including the Prophets could ever perform the miracles independently and without the Leave of God.

The holy Quran in a general rule states that no miracle can ever take place without the Permission of God. "And it was not given to any Messenger that he should bring a Sign (Miracle) except by the Leave of Allah." [40:78, 13:38]

The purpose of demonstrating the miracles was mainly for people to be able to verify and confirm the claim of the Prophets and to increase their faith. Thus, Jesus after performing miracles said to his people: "Surely, therein is a Sign for you, if you believe." [3:49]

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus were also of the opinion that miracles are the works of the Prophets by the Leave of God. Thus, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin who, while visiting Jesus by night for the purpose of learning more of his teachings, said to him: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can work the Signs you work unless God is with him." (John3:1-3) Similarly, according to the Gospel of John, when Jesus miraculously fed five thousand people with a little food, people who saw that Sign said: "This surely is the prophet who is to come into the world." [John 6:14]

The holy Quran has mentioned many miracles performed by the Prophets. Although they all did take place by the Permission of God, the phrase of the 'Permission of God' is mentioned only with regard to the miracles performed by Prophet Jesus. For instance, the great miracle of splitting the sea by Moses is mentioned in the Quran. "Then We revealed to Moses: Strike the sea with your stick, and it parted." [26:63] Also, the amazing miracle of the conversion of Moses' stick to a serpent is mentioned in the Quran. "He cast it down, and behold! It was a snake, moving quickly." [20:20] With reference to the miracle of Prophet Yusuf (a.s), the holy Quran narrates that he said to his brothers: "Go with this shirt of mine, and cast it over the face of my father, he will become clear-sighted." [12:93] and once his brothers reached home and cast the shirt of Yusuf on their father's face "he became clear-sighted." [12:96]

In none of the above examples the phrase of 'by the Leave of Allah' is added, although they have undoubtedly occurred by His Leave. It is only with reference to the miracles performed by Prophet Jesus that the Almighty God deliberately adds the expression of 'by the Leave of Allah' [5:110, 3:49].

Interestingly, this phrase is repeated six times in the Quran only with reference to the miracles of Jesus. Even in one Ayah (3:49) two miracles are

related to Jesus and as such the phrase 'by the Leave of God' is repeated twice. Why?

This is because the Almighty God aims at correcting the false and blasphemous dogma of the Trinity.

Traditional Christians say: "One way to establish Jesus' deity and sonship to God is by the miracles he performed. Jesus' life was characterized by undeniable miracles. He was born of Virgin Mary, was resurrected and ascended to heaven. He also performed many miracles. A miracle is the act of God. Thus Jesus had power over nature. This upholds the belief that Jesus is the son of God!"

Many modern Christian scholars on the other hand are very sceptical about any miracle related to Jesus. The Jews also regarded him no more than a magician.

The holy Quran, whilst acknowledging the miracles of Jesus, emphasises that they all occurred 'by the Permission of God'.

In short, regarding the miracles of Jesus, all, other than Muslims, have gone astray. Traditional Christians although they believe in the miracles of Jesus as reported in the Gospels, wrongly conclude from them the deity of Jesus. Liberal Christians and the Jewish people also have gone astray by either denying his miracles or accusing Jesus of being a magician.

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s) that Jesus was once on the peak of a mountain called 'Ariha'. Satan appeared to him in the form of the King of Palestine and said to him: "O Ruhullah! You revived the dead and healed those born blind and cleaned the lepers. Can you drop yourself down from the mountain without being hurt? Jesus replied: "I was given Permission for those miracles and for this I do not have the Permission."

The Gospel according to John also quoting from Jesus with reference to the healing of the man who had suffered from an infirmity for 38 years, states that Jesus could do nothing independently. [John 5:30]

If Jesus be the son of God because of the miracles he performed, then Moses must have been the son of God before him, and so are Abraham, Jacob, Muhammad and all other Prophets peace be upon them. "Be He (Allah) Glorified and Exalted above all that (evil) they attribute to Him." [6:100]

Thus, according to the sublime teachings of the Quran performing miracles is a sign of being a Messenger of God not of being God or son of God!

The Holy Quran has narrated six different types of miracles performed by Prophet Jesus, all by the Leave of God.

1. Speaking in the crib

Before a human baby learns how to talk, he has to learn the rules of language and how adults use it to communicate. He begins with babbling, then will pick up some simple words from his mum and those around him, and then between the age of one or two years he will begin to form two to three word sentences. This is a normal development of the human ability of speaking.

The first miracle of Prophet Jesus was demonstrated when he was only a few days or even few hours old. When he was just a new born babe in the crib he fluently spoke out and introduced himself. [19:30-33]

The purpose of this miracle was to safeguard Mary from false charges. Without this miracle, Mary would have been persecuted for adultery. It is, however, astonishing that none of the Gospels have narrated such an important and vital miracle.

2. Creating a living bird

Creation is the marvellous act of God. The Almighty God in the holy Quran refers to the creation of man: “So, when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him from My Soul.....” [15:29]

Another miracle related to Jesus in the Quran is the creation of a living bird out of clay. “I create for you out of clay, a figure like that of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah’s Leave.” [3:49, 5:110]

Referring to the above Ayah, some Christian evangelists attempt to confirm the divinity of Jesus according to the Quran! The main point they miss or ignore is ‘by Allah’s Leave’. None of the creatures of God are capable of creating anything without his Leave. “Those whom they invoke besides Allah have not created anything, but are themselves created.” [16:20]

3. Bringing the dead to life

The act of causing living creatures to die or reviving the dead to life is a divine act. The Almighty God reveals in the holy Quran: “And that it is He (Allah) Who causes death and gives life.” [53:44]

One of the miracles of Jesus was that he was, by permission from God, bringing the dead to life. [3:49] The holy Quran does not give the details of the personpersons that Jesus brought back to life. The present Gospels however have recorded some dead people whom Jesus revived such as Lazarus (John 11:1-44).

For Christians, the reviving of the dead is considered one of the greatest miracles demonstrated by Jesus. They count on this miracle as one of the signs for his deity.

We however, need to bear in mind that firstly the miracles of Jesus were performed by the Leave of God and secondly according to the Old Testament Prophet Elijah also revived the dead by the Permission of God. (1 Kings 17: 2-24). If reviving a dead to life makes the actor god or son of god, then why can’t Elijah also be the same?

4. Healing the terminally ill and those born blind

Jesus was healing those born blind and the lepers too as indicated in the holy Quran. (3:49)

Christians argue that in the Old Testament it is God Himself Who is associated with the giving of sight to the blind. (Ex. 4:11). Thus, they conclude, Jesus is god! The answer to this is that neither Jesus nor any other person can ever perform any miracle without the Leave of God and hence the miracles of Jesus are in fact the intervention of God through His selected servant, i.e. Jesus.

5. Disclosing secrets

The holy Quran narrates another miracle that Jesus performed by God's permission, which is related to the scope of human knowledge. Jesus was informing people about those things which were secret to other than them, such as what they ate at home and what they had hidden there. (3:49)

Although man in an ordinary manner has no access to the unseen, God chooses to unveil the secrets and the unseen to some of His servants. "He (Allah alone is) the All-Knower of the unseen, and He reveals to none His unseen. Except to a Messenger whom He has chosen." [72:26-27] Jesus was a chosen Messenger of God and hence God revealed to him the secrets.

6. A table spread with food from heaven

Prophet Jesus performed a miracle exclusively for his disciples when they were wandering with him on the earth preaching his teachings. Once they ran out of food and asked Jesus: "Can your Lord send down to us a table spread with food from heaven?" Jesus, who was not sure about their intention, refused to perform the miracle and advised them: "Fear Allah if you are indeed believers." They explained that they had no intention for this request but "to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts to be stronger in faith, and to know that you have indeed told the truth and that we ourselves be its witnesses."

Once Jesus was assured of their sincere intention he invoked to God saying: "O Allah, Our Lord! Send us from the heaven a table spread (with food) that there may be for us –for the first and the last of us- an Eid and a Sign from You; and provide us with sustenance, for You are the Best of sustainers." The fifth chapter of the Quran is named after this miracle 'al-Ma'edah' and its story is mentioned in Ayaat 112 to 114.

The holy Quran, as of its usual style, does not mention the details of the story. According to a Hadith from Imam Baqir (a.s) their heavenly food was bread and fish.

7. Prophecy of the coming of Ahmad (s.a.w.w)

I shall deal with this miracle in chapter seven.

The Miracles of Jesus in the Gospels

The four Gospels recorded about 35 separate miracles Jesus performed. The Bible, distorted as it is, has narrated in the Gospel of John (chapter 2) that the conversion of twenty to thirty gallons of water into wine at a wedding was the first miracle performed by this great Messenger of God! Undoubtedly a religion where its leader converts water into wine, will serve wine as part of their religious service! According to the sublime and rational teachings of the holy Quran, "all intoxicants are an abomination, the Satan's handiwork". [5:90] Thus, the finger print of Satan is so obvious in the narration of John. The compilers of the Gospels exaggerated so much about the number of miracles performed by Jesus that it was as if all the people in his area were born blind, deaf and lepers, and Jesus had no mission other than to heal them all. John at the end of his Gospel says that if all the miracles of Jesus were described in detail, he supposed the world itself would not have room for the books that would have been written!

The Mission of Prophet Jesus

In order for us to understand the mission of Prophet Jesus it is essential to be acquainted with the period during which Jesus was living.

Christianity has emerged from Judaism. As most of the first Christians were Jews, the rest being converts, their history is deeply rooted in Judaism. The roots of Christianity are most directly traced to the period of Hellenistic Judaism (4th century BC to the 2nd century) of the ancient Greek culture. This period was introduced with Alexander the Great's conquest of Palestine in 332 BC. When Alexander the Great conquered Palestine, it became a Greek state. During this period the Israelites had been afflicted with various caste and tribal differences. The Roman kings had subjugated them and their main city of Jerusalem was under the reign of the Roman government.

Hellenistic influences on Jewish culture and religion were evident by the early 2nd century BC, when Hellenizing Jews took control of the high priesthood. During this time the Syrian King Antiochus IV Epiphanes gave an edict against the practice of the Jewish religion. Hellenistic Judaism continued and reached its climax during the reign of Herod I of Judea (37 BC-AD4).

The idolatrous Roman rulers had built many temples in Palestine and created various idols.

The Israelites on the other hand, after several centuries had passed from the time of Moses, were afflicted with various superstitions, theological divisions and deviations. As gradually the spell of Hellenistic influences fell upon the priesthood, the lay scribes found themselves more and more the only guardians and exponents of the Law. The scribes and teachers of Scripture gained the title of Rabbi ('my lord' in Hebrew) which was meant to be a title of respect. Rabbis proved by the Law (Ex. 34:37) that oral traditions (the Mishna and the Talmud which was its commentary) should be preferred to the written Law (Torah). The Rabbis had perverted the Jewish scriptures and religion had become a means of their earning. Abuse of power by Rabbinical figures had reached the extreme.

According to William Durant in his Story of Civilization, the Jewish merchants dissimulated in their transactions. They then assumed that by merely offering a sacrifice or prayer, their vices were compensated. In short, the Jewish community was politically, socially and religiously in decline.

The holy Quran in various Ayaat condemns the Rabbinic perversion of the Mosaic Law. In Surah al-Baqarah the Almighty God reveals:

“Then Woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say this is from Allah, to purchase with it a little price! Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn.” [2:79]

It was under such circumstances that the Almighty Allah sent Prophet Jesus to the Children of Israel to confirm the Torah and to bring the lost sheep of Israel to the Right Path. “And when Jesus, son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Torah which came before me...” [61:6]

The following are the main themes of Jesus` mission as described in the holy Quran.

1. Monotheism

Like all other prophets, Jesus began his mission by preaching the unity of God. His first address to the Israelites was, "Truly Allah is my Lord and your Lord so worship Him alone. This is the straight path." [3:51]

Neither Jesus nor any other Messenger of God had ever called to the worship of other than Almighty Allah. Jesus never called himself "God" or "son of God".

As already noted, the first Christians were Jews, so they worshipped only God. As long as Jesus lived with his community he made sure no one ever believed in his deity. The holy Quran quoting from Jesus states: "Never did I say to them aught except what You (Allah) did command me to say: Worship Allah, 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." [5:117]

2. Acknowledging the Torah

Jesus in his teachings confirmed the Torah of Moses. The holy Quran quoting from Jesus states: "I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Torah which came before me..." [61:6]

Prophet Jesus did not come to abolish the Torah, in all his teachings he acknowledged it although he did correct the perversions being taught by the rabbis. Nonetheless he made some minor abrogation to the law of Torah and accomplished some of its teachings.

St. Paul; the author of several Epistles in the New Testament, allegedly claimed in his letter to Ephesians [2:14-15] that Jesus had abolished the Law with all its commandments and regulations. Matthew in his Gospel narrated from Jesus quite the contrary: "Do not suppose that I came to annul the Law of the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to complete them; for I assure you, while heaven and earth endure not one iota or one projection of a letter will be dropped from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever, therefore, abolishes the least significant of these commands and so teaches the people, he shall be of least significance in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever shall observe and teach them shall be prominent in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteous surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not at all enter into the kingdom of heaven." [Matt. 5:17-20]

It is worth mentioning that Paul, although a high-ranking Jew who referred to himself as "Hebrew of the Hebrews" from the tribe of Benjamin (Romans 11:1,2; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Phil.3:5) became greatly influenced by Greek teachings and his work appears to have been largely among the Ephesians and other peoples who were Greek, whereas Matthew and those for whom he had written his Gospel were Jewish Christians.

Contrary to the Jews, the Greeks were not committed to the Jewish Law. Thus, it is quite possible that each one of the authors have compiled their works according to the interests of their readers. Thus, there are elements of exaggeration in both the records. Jesus did not thoroughly abolish the Law nor did he say that even one letter should not be dropped from it.

Religion is a set of divine guidelines for prosperity of mankind both in here and in hereafter. A religion without do's and don'ts is no more than a deceit and in practice leads to atheism. Ironically the analogy of Paul for abolishing the Law was "to break down the barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles." [Ephesians 2:14] He further argues that in doing so, Jesus had united the two sects! Imagine how cool it sounded to a community with an atheist background that a Prophet invites them to a religion where there are no obligations. Uniting the Jews and the Gentiles (non-Jews) by abolishing the Law was, in essence, an invitation to unite all under atheism!

The mission of every Prophet was to accomplish the teachings of the previous prophets on the one hand, and to abrogate some of the laws that the Almighty God had temporarily decreed on the other. Thus, Matthew also has exaggerated by claiming that Jesus did not even change a letter of the Law. As we shall read in the next paragraph, whilst Jesus confirmed the Torah in general, he also abrogated some of the Jewish law.

3. Removing some of the forbidden acts

One of the missions of Prophet Jesus was to remove some of the difficult statutes that the Almighty God had temporarily made obligatory upon the Israelites. Those obligations had been put upon the Israelites due to their oppression and sinful deeds. When the right time arrived the Merciful God dispatched Jesus to remove those difficult obligations. According to the holy Quran, Jesus declared "And to make lawful to you part of (not all of) what was forbidden to you." [3:50]

One of the missions of the lawmaking prophets was to abrogate some of the temporary laws as decreed by the Almighty God. For instance, at the time of Moses God had forbidden the consumption of some foods. The holy Quran with reference to this states, "And unto those who are Jews, We forbade every (animal) with undivided hooves, and We forbade them the fat of the ox and the sheep except what adheres to their back or their entrails, or is mixed up with the bone." [6:146] A similar rule is mentioned in chapter 11 of the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament. Thus, eating the flesh of horse and camel was forbidden for the Jews. This rule was rather a punishment for their sins. The Quran says, "We recompense them for their rebellion and verily We are truthful." [6:146]

Unfortunately, at present the erroneous Christian dogma, which follows the perverted teachings of St Paul, assumes that the main reason why Jesus came was to free his believers from all religious law. Jesus, they claim, gave his life as a ransom for many (Matt.20:28-Mark 10:45) and has thus "fulfilled" the law.

It is with this justification that Christians do not commit themselves to any jurisprudential rules of the Old Testament. They called their Scripture 'New Testament' to indicate that it is a new version of the Old Testament. And we note that although consumption of the flesh of swine is clearly forbidden in the Old Testament (Leviticus 11:7-8, Isaiah 65:2-4), the Christians relentlessly consume it. They further argue that these are civil laws and mere rituals and the ministry of Jesus was not on earth. Therefore, Mark allegedly quotes from Jesus that he declared all food clean for the purpose of returning the emphasis of the true holiness to the heart. (Mark

7:18-23) Another reason they give is that the Mosaic Law was for the children of Israel and most Christians are not descendants of Israel hence they are not subjected to the civil laws!

Contrary to the above claim the Gospels narrate that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day of his birth, he was a faithful and committed Jew abiding by the Mosaic Law. If Jesus had come to abolish the Law, then why did Peter the chief disciple of Jesus say, "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." (Acts 10:14) We should also bear in mind that the human consumption of the flesh of swine is still a medical health issue.

Undoubtedly Jesus prayed and fasted. Historically, during the period of the Christian Church there was a period of forty days prior to Easter called Lent which was a fasting period for Christians. According to the Catholic Encyclopaedia modern scholars are almost unanimous in rejecting the view of fasting forty days before Easter. The obligation of fasting is rarely observed in its integrity nowadays. Yes, Jesus said when you fast or pray do not do it to make a show of it, like hypocrites do. But he never said to stop praying or fasting.

The truth is that it was Paul and not Jesus who abolished the law. Paul in his letter to the Romans (14:20) said that all food is clean. In his letter to Ephesians (2:14-15) he alleges that Jesus had abolished the law with all its commandments and regulations. As stated above, Matthew in his Gospel states the contrary. It is worth mentioning that in its earliest years, the Christian religion was divided into three main religious movements: The Gnostics, Jewish Christians, and Pauline Christian. The first almost disappeared. The second did disappear. Almost all current Christian groups trace their lineage back to the Pauline Christian movement. Thus, what we have today is the religion of Paul, not Prophet Jesus.

4. Follow me, not worship me

Like all other prophets Jesus had also come to teach the sublime ethical issues. With his lifestyle he set a role model for his followers inviting them to guard themselves against evil and to obey his commands. He said to his people: "Fear Allah (be pious) and obey me." [3:50]

From the day he miraculously spoke in his crib, he declared, "Verily I am the servant of God", and until the time that he lived among people he invited them to follow him not to worship him. He always invited people to praying, fasting and worshipping God much. He lived a very simple life and always shared his words of wisdom with people. The holy Quran quoting from Jesus stating: "And when Jesus came with clear Proofs, he said: I have come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the points in which you differ. Therefore fear Allah and obey me. Verily, Allah He is my Lord (God) and your Lord(God). So worship Him alone. This is the only Straight Path." [43:63-64]

Imam Ali (a.s) in Nahjul Balaghah in description of the simple life of Prophet Jesus says, "If you desire I will tell you about Jesus; son of Mary (p). He used a stone for his pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate rough food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His shade during the winter was just the expanse of earth eastward and westward. His

fruits and flowers were only what grew from the earth for the cattle. (Sermon No.160)

How far indeed the lifestyle of the Popes is from Prophet Jesus!

5. Resolving religious disputes

Another mission of Prophet Jesus was to clarify the religious issues which different Jewish sects were disputing over. The holy Quran quoting from Jesus states: “I have come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the points in which you differ.” [43:63]

During the period of Hellenistic Judaism two major groups of Jewish religious leaders appeared on the scene, i.e. Sadducees and Pharisees. The conservative and aristocratic Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch (five books of Moses) while at the same time denying the existence of angels, spirits, and the resurrection of the body. Pharisees were the popular Jewish group at the time of Jesus. The strict Pharisees accepted texts outside the Pentateuch and embraced doctrines of angels and resurrection. They emphasized on both the oral and written form of the Mosaic Law.

Although clarification and unification of religious issues was one of the missions of Jesus, Christianity today suffers the most major of religious divisions. There are hundreds of lists of recognised Christian denominations in existence- all different. In the North America itself over 1000 Christian faith groups are recognised all of whom regard themselves to be the only ‘true’ Christianity. The holy Quran with reference to the divisions occurred in Christianity after Jesus states: “Then the sects differed amongst themselves. So, woe unto the disbelievers from the Meeting of a great Day (of Judgment).”

Glad Tidings of the Advent of Ahmad

One of the missions of all the previous prophets had been to announce and prophesy the advent of the forthcoming prophet(s). To this effect, Prophet Moses as well as many other Israelite Prophets prophesied the coming of Prophet Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them).

Christian theologians quote from many passages of the Old Testament such as passages in the Psalms and the Book of Prophet Isaiah to prove the advent of Jesus. Muslim scholars also quote from the Bible to convince their Christian friends of the advent of Prophet Muhammad. The description about the seal of the prophets; Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w) had been so apparent in the Torah and the Gospel (Injil) that the People of the Book knew of his name and even the place whereat his advent would occur.

The holy Quran states: “Those who follow the Messenger, the prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they find (his name) written with them in the Torah and the Gospel...” [7:157]

Similarly, quoting from Prophet Jesus (a.s) the holy Quran states:

“And (remember) when Jesus, son of Mary, said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Torah which came before me, and give glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad. But when he (Ahmad) came to them with clear proofs, they said: This is plain magic.” [61:6]

According to the above ayah Prophet Jesus introduced himself as a link between Prophet Moses and Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.w). The above prophecy was so clear that with the advent of the Prophet of Islam many Jews and Christians embraced Islam as their religion although the majority of them denied the truth and accused the Prophet of being a magician. The question is the name of the forthcoming prophet as quoted from Jesus was to be ‘Ahmad’ whereas the name of the Prophet of Islam is known to be Mohammad. W. M. Watt claims that Muslim children were practically never called Ahmad before the year 125AH. (G. Parrinder, Jesus in the Quran, p99) Alfred Guillaume furthermore claims that the name Ahmad is not found in Ibn Is’haq or Ibn Hisham’s Sirah Rasul, in their argument, dealing with the prophecy of the coming of a prophet after Jesus. (The Life of Mohammad pp. 103-104) Contrary to the above claims there are many historical evidences proving that the Prophet of Islam from his very childhood was known by two names, Mohammad and Ahmad. The first was chosen for him by his grandfather Abdul Mutalleb and the latter by his mother Aminah. (Sirah al-Halabi) Among those who repeatedly used to call the Prophet of Islam Ahmad was his uncle Abu Taleb. The poetry book of Abu Taleb is available today and in many instances he calls his nephew Ahmad. The following are some examples

*“The wrongdoers attempted to kill Ahmad,
but they did not find any leader for this atrocity.
Although Ahmad brought them a religion
of truth and he never brought a false religion.”
(Deewan Abu Taleb pp.25-29)*

It is also narrated from Abu Taleb:

“Surely Allah honoured the Prophet Mohammad

and thus the most honourable creation of God amongst people is Ahmad.”

(Tarikh ibn Asaker vol.1 p.275)

Moreover, the Prophet of Islam is repeatedly addressed by the Almighty God in the night of Ascension as ‘Ahmad’. All Muslims have also narrated the following from the Prophet, “Surely there are names for me, I am Ahmad and I am Mohammad and I am the Eraser the one by whom Allah erases the infidelity and I am the Raiser that people will rise in front of my feet and I am the End that there is no prophet after me. “ (Al Bukhari, Majma’ul Bayan vol9 p357, Beharul Anwar vol 16 p129)

With regards to the claim of Mr. Watt, we agree that the name ‘Ahmad’ and ‘Mohammad’ were not common among Arabs prior to the birth of the Prophet of Islam; nevertheless, as the advent of the last promised prophet was approaching some Arabian tribes began calling their children Ahmad or Mohammad hoping that their sons would be the promised Prophet. For instance, Ahmad ibn Hafs al-Moghairah known as Abu Amr al-Makhzoomi the husband of Fatima; the daughter of Qais was one of the companions of the Prophet of Islam who accompanied Imam Ali (a.s) on his trip to Yemen. (Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, al-Isabah vol.4, p.139)

The Prophet of Islam in the Present Gospels

Before we make any investigation in the present Gospels about the prophecy of Prophet Jesus (a.s) with regard to the forthcoming Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (s.a.w.w) we need to address the question of whether it is justifiable for Muslims to quote the Bible or quote from it to prove any of our claims.

As Muslims we believe that the Quran is the last but not the only book revealed by Allah to mankind through His Messengers. The holy Quran is, however, the only holy book which remained intact from the time of its revelation to the present time and for ever. The Quran is the only divine Scripture of which the full text is available in the original language in which it was revealed (Arabic).

Although we believe in the original Torah of Moses and Gospel of Jesus, we also believe, and numerous evidences confirm, that many additions, deletions and interpolations have occurred in the previous scriptures. The original Gospel of Jesus is lost to such an extent that Christians today do not even acknowledge any written Gospel for Jesus. Thus, what is available today is the recollection of passages of the original Gospel as remembered by the authors of the Gospels in addition to their own versions of the history of Jesus.

That however does not mean that as Muslims we totally reject the present Bible and do not accept a single passage of it. We ought to distinguish between literature of divine origin yet distorted throughout history, and the one which is a mere fiction. Let me give you a vivid example. Prophet Jesus (a.s) is quoted in the Gospel according to Mark to have said: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord and you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with our whole mind, and with your whole strength.” [Mark 12:29-39] Muslims have no problem accepting this

quotation from Jesus and agree with its essence which is the chief Commandment of the Ten Commandments.

Criteria of Acceptance

The holy Quran provides the main criteria for accepting or rejecting the passages from the Bible. In Surat-ul Ma'idah the rule is stated as follows; "And We have sent down to you (O Mohammad) the Book (this Quran) in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it and trustworthy in highness and a witness over it (all the scriptures). So judge among them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you." [5:48] This emphasises that Biblical passages must be examined and judged by the Quran, and if the Quran confirms and verifies the Biblical passages, then they can be accepted.

To this end, if the Bible contains apparent prophecies about the advent of Prophet Mohammad, and if the Quran confirms that fact, then there is no objection in referring to such prophecies. It is to this effect that the Imams of Ahlul-Bait in their debates with Rabbis or Christian scholars have quoted from the Bible.

Imam Redha (a.s) V's Jatheliq

Ma'moon; the Abbasid king of the 9th century AD ordered a debate between Imam Redha (a.s); the eighth Imam of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) and the grand scholars of various religions.

Jatheliq was the Christian archbishop who was called to debate the Imam. When he entered the court of the Abbasid king, he complained to the king as to how he could debate with someone who may refer to a Book (the Quran) that he does not acknowledge. Upon hearing that Imam Redha (a.s) replied: "O Christian! What if I debate you with your Bible? Would you acknowledge that?"

Jatheliq replied: "How would I be able to deny what the Bible says. Yes, indeed I will acknowledge even if it's against my wish".

Among the points that Imam Reza raised to Jatheliq was; "O Christian! Do you know the speech of Issa in the Gospel where he says 'Surely I am going to your Lord and my Lord and Parcleto is coming to witness for me in truth as I witnessed for him and he is the one who will explain everything for you and he is the one who will convict the world of the wrongdoings and he is the one who will break the pillars of Kufr (atheism).'"

Jatheliq replied, "You did not mention anything from the Gospel but I acknowledge it."

Imam Redha: "Are you sure you find this in the Bible?"

He answered "Yes." [al-Tabrasi, al-Ihtejaj vol.2p.411]

The Glad Tidings of the Coming of Ahmad

Are there any passages in the present Gospels wherein the advent of Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.w) has been prophesied? The Gospel according to John contains some passages that although they are made notoriously obscure in addition to some alterations, still the prophecy of Jesus about Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.w) can be concluded from it.

Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John reads:

“If you love me, keep my commands, and I shall ask the father and he will give you another paraclete to stay with you forever, the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither perceives nor understands him. You know him, for he remains with you and will be within you. “[John 14: 15-17]

Chapter 16 also reads:

“However, I tell you the truth: My going is for your benefit; for if I do not leave, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, then I will send him to you. When he comes he will convict the world regarding sin and righteousness and judgment- regarding sin, because they do not believe in me; regarding righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no more and regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have still many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. When the spirit of truth comes, however, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own account but he will say whatever he hears, and he will make known to you what is to take place. He will glorify me, for he will take from what is mine and will declare it to you.” [John 16: 12-14]

The word ‘Paraclete’

The key word in the above passages is the Greek term ‘Paraclete’. The word occurs 5 times in the New Testament, all in writings of John. Four instances are in his Gospel and one in the First Epistle in which Jesus is a Paraclete. In the English translations of the Bible, the word ‘Paraclete’ is usually translated to ‘Comforter’, ‘Advocate’, ‘Helper’ and ‘Intercessor.’ The term is so ambiguous that the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia after suggesting various translations concludes that “it would be the best that instead of translating we simply transfer the word ‘Paraclete’”.

The term ‘Paraclete’ in John 2:1 without doubt is a title for Jesus. But Christians in general argue that the Paraclete in the Gospel of John is meant as a title for the Holy Spirit that, they believe, descended to the disciples on Pentecost (50 days after the ascension of Jesus). Father Raymond E. Brown however argues in Appendix V of ‘The Anchor Bible’ that the Paraclete cannot be ‘the Holy Spirit’.

The above mentioned passages of the Gospel of John has been for long the subject of on going debates between Muslim and Christian scholars.

Analysis of the word ‘Paraclete’

I believe the debate over the term ‘Paraclete’ is quite futile. The word ‘Paraclete’ is a Greek term. Although scholars are not unanimous about the language that Jesus used to speak, we know that Jesus did not speak Greek because the Aramaic and Hebrew speaking people in the time of Jesus considered it sinful to speak any other language. The Greek term ‘Paraclete’ is really the distortion of ‘Periklytos’ or ‘Paraklytos’. Both words mean ‘praised’ or ‘celebrate’, the meaning and character of Prophet Muhammad. Also, according to the present day Aramaic scriptures, the word for Muhammad would read ‘Paraqleyta’ or ‘Paraklytos’ in Greek and ‘Menahem’ in Hebrew. In the ancient Aramaic scriptures, before these changes, it read ‘Ahmad’, then Munahammana which is the Aramaic/Syriac

rendering for the name 'Muhammad'. These are names, not simply words. Unless, one discovers the distortion occurred in the term, the passage remains notoriously obscure and the debates about it will be in vain. It is due to this obscurity of the distorted Greek word 'Paraclete' that even the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia fails to provide a clear translation for it. Similarly, it is perhaps due to this ambiguity that Allamah Tabatabaei; the most renowned exegete of the holy Quran in the 20th century, suggests that the present Gospels contain no prophecy about the advent of the Prophet of Islam.

Supporting Points from the Johannine Literature

Ironically Christians quote from many obscure passages of the Old Testament to prove the advent of Jesus, yet when Muslims exercise the same method, they bluntly deny it. "That indeed is a division most unfair". [53:22]

Nonetheless, if one still argues about the word Paraclete that it does not, even in its original Aramaic sense, mean Ahmad, there are many supporting points that can provide a meaningful prophecy for the advent of Prophet Muhammad. Let's examine how much the passages that John has narrated in his Gospel apply to the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w):

1. Regarding the coming of Paraklytos:

1/1: The Paraklytos will come (but only if Jesus departs) [15:26, 16:7,8,13]

The Holy Spirit was already there and had been with the Prophets including Jesus. According to the Bible when Jesus was being baptised by Prophet John (Yahya), the Holy Spirit happened to be present at the River Jordon. {Mark 1: 4-11} So, how could Jesus say: "But if I don't go away the Paraklytos shall not come to you".

1/2: The Paraklytos comes forth from the father. [15:26]

This implies that the forthcoming Prophet similar to Jesus himself would be sent by Allah.

2. Identification of Paraklytos:

2/1: He is called 'another Paraklytos' (14:16)

This can only be correct if Paraklytos is a name or a title for a male human who will be another Messenger of God. For obviously there can be no 'another Holy Spirit'.

2/2: He will speak only what he hears and nothing on his own. (16:13)

The Messengers of God spoke only what was revealed to them from God. Thus, Jesus proclaimed: "For I have not spoken of my own accord, but the Father who sent me. He has given me a command what I should say and what I should speak." [John12:49] Similarly, Almighty Allah proclaims the following about the Prophet of Islam: "Nor does he speak of his own desire. It is only a Revelation revealed." [53:3-4]

2/3: He is the spirit of truth. (14:17)

John in his First Epistle relates the spirit of truth and the spirit of error to human characters. [1John 4-6]. Thus, the spirit of truth can refer to an honest and very righteous person. Historically, there is no doubt that

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w) even before he received the revelation was well known as a trustworthy and honest person. It seems the prefix 'Holy' in Chapter 14 verse 26 is added to the 'spirit' for it is not consistent with other parts of the passage.

At the time of Prophet Jesus, the position of Prophet-hood belonged to Jesus. With the advent of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w) he took over that position and declared it to the world. (16:14) With the advent of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) the position of Jesus would be upheld and his teachings shown to be true.

3. His role in relation to the Disciples:

3/1: He will teach them everything (14:26)

Christians usually argue that the idea of a Prophet some 600 years after Jesus would be too late for the disciples.

Ironically however the Catholics claim that the Paraclete comforts the Church by guaranteeing her inerrancy and fostering her sanctity. The Catholic Encyclopedia states: "There is no reason for limiting to the Apostles themselves the comforting influence of the Paraclete as promised in the Gospel." In fact, Jesus was sharing his prophecy with the faithful community of his time, insomuch as Moses and Isaiah did. Therefore, it should not be taken that they were the only or direct address of Jesus.

The teaching of Islam is the most comprehensive of all and the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w) taught the world all that was required by humanity for their prosperity both here and in the hereafter.

3/2: He will glorify Jesus. (16:14)

The history of religions has recorded none other than Muhammad (s.a.w.w), the Prophet of Islam who has uncompromisingly borne witness to the birth of Jesus through the Virgin Mary; attested the miracles performed by Jesus by the Leave of God, and has declared Jesus as a 'Messiah' and the righteous Prophet..

Jesus' Disciples

'Disciples' were those who chose to follow Prophet Jesus and to listen to his teachings. They are also called 'Apostles'. According to the Bible they called him 'Rabbi' or 'Teacher'. Historically we know very little about Jesus' disciples. The Gospel of Matthew and Luke have mentioned their names (Chapter 6). The Twelve Disciples were followers of Jesus whom he had chosen to become his core group, the people he talked things over with and depended on. Ironically, however, the Bible records that one of his disciples named Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver! Similarly, according to the Gospel of Mark prior to the so-called crucifixion of Jesus all his disciples forsook him and fled. (Mark 14:50)

Disciples in the Quran

The disciples of Prophet Jesus are mentioned five times in the Quran and their faith has been always praised. The holy Quran states with reference to their sincerity and submission to Allah:

"Then when Jesus came of know of their (Jews) disbelief, he said: Who will be my helpers in Allah's Cause? Al-Hawariyyun (the disciples) said:

We are the helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims.” [3:52]

According to a narration from Imam Redha (a.s) the name ‘al-Hawariyyun’ (literally means whitening) is given to them for they used to cleanse themselves from sins and struggling in cleansing others by teaching and preaching. (al-Bahrani, al-Borhan vol. 2: p.40)

Islamic literature does not confirm the betrayal of Jesus by any of his disciples. Nay, an authentic Hadith indicates that one of his disciples following the request of Jesus offered himself to be killed instead. (Ibid p.41)

Crucifixion or Crucifiction?!

Crucifixion is an ancient method of execution, in which the victim was tied or nailed to a large wooden cross (Latin: crux) and left to hang there until dead. Thus, crucifixion does not necessarily guarantee the death of a victim. It could also be a means of severe torturing.

The mainstream Christians today strongly believe in the crucifixion of Jesus. The standard account of what historically is claimed to have happened during the crucifixion of Jesus in today's Christianity, is based on the accounts in the four canonical gospels although their authors are generally regarded as anonymous. In these accounts Jesus was crucified, died on the cross and buried outside of Jerusalem during the thirty third year of his life. Then he arose from the dead and he was raised up to heaven.

Contrary to this Christian account, however, the Quran strongly states that Jesus was not crucified or killed, but instead God raised him unto Himself. As we shall see there is no statement in the Quran more explicit, emphatic and uncompromising in rejecting the dogma of a faith than this. Why?

I have been asked by many Christians and some new reverts as to why the Quran so strongly denotes the dogma of the crucifixion of Jesus? What is the big deal about it? Many Prophets have been tortured to death in the past. Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) was historically the closest prophet to Jesus who was beheaded and died as a martyr. Thus, what is wrong if Jesus was also killed by his enemies?

The answer is, firstly, the holy Quran contains 'the true story of Jesus' as well as other prophets. Thus, any distortion ought to be corrected. According to the Quran the accusation of the crucifixion of Jesus is as grave as the false charge they uttered against Mary in terms of illegal sexual intercourse.

Secondly, the crucifixion of Jesus is not a mere historical event in today's Christianity. It is of fundamental importance to the theology of most contemporary Christians. As a result the cross has become the primary symbol of Christianity. 'Atonement'; the dogma of reconciliation between God and humans by the redemptive life and death of Jesus, lies under the cross of Jesus. To them, Jesus died on the cross so that the sins of those who believe in him can be forgiven and thus they can gain salvation. They regard the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus with the conviction that all took place 'according to the scriptures'. (1 Cor. 15:3-5)

According to the teachings of Paul (not Prophet Jesus) without crucifixion, resurrection of Jesus becomes irrelevant and without resurrection Christianity itself is rendered meaningless. Paul in his first letter to Corinthians claims: "But if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching amounts to nothing and your faith is futile." (1 Cor 15:14)

Therefore, the extra emphasis of the Quran on denouncing the dogma of crucifixion means more than a mere historical correction. It aims at denouncing the illogical dogma of 'atonement'.

The Holy Quran and the Crucifixion

The holy Quran in its unique style denounces the crucifixion of Prophet Jesus, in Chapter 4 (Surah al-Nisa). Almighty Allah does so, along with the reasons why the Jews were reproached by Allah, as follows::

“And because of their saying: We killed Messiah, Jesus; son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah, but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it appeared so to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For, surely they killed him not. But Allah raised him up unto Himself. And Allah is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise.” [4:157-158]

Nearly every single word in the above Ayah contains an emphasis on the issue. Almighty Allah has even denounced both ‘the killing’ and ‘the crucifixion’ in separate terms to leave no room for any type of claim for the killing of Jesus, whether by crucifixion or execution or hanging as claimed by the anonymous author of Acts of Apostles 5:29-30.

The Jews and the Christians believe that Jesus was crucified yet they disagree in that Christians maintain that Jesus was resurrected three days after his crucifixion. Thus, the Quran states: “those who differ therein are full of doubts”. [4:157]

According to the above Ayah it was ‘so appeared to them’ to think that they killed Jesus. Imam Baqir (a.s) in an authentic Hadith narrated from him states: “Verily, in the night that Allah had promised to raise Jesus to Him, Jesus invited his disciples, who were twelve men, to a house. Jesus came out to them from a corner of the house whilst he was drying his head from water. He then said: Surely, Allah revealed to me that He will raise me this time to Him and will clear me from the Jews, so which one of you is willing to have my image cast upon him to be killed and crucified and he will be with me in the hereafter? A young man from among them said: I (will accept) O Ruhullah! Jesus replied: So, you will be the one.” [Tafsir al-Qomi, vol.1 p.111]

Does the Quran Contradict Itself?

Some Christians claimed that the Quran is contradicting itself when it gives the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. They usually refer to two references in the Quran to prove the death of Jesus. In the following I shall deal with them separately.

1. “And when Allah said: Jesus! I will take you (Motawafiyaka) and raise you to Myself.” [3:55]

They assume that the term ‘Motawafiyaka’ in the Ayah equals ‘death’. The term ‘Wafat’, which is the root of the term ‘Motawafiyahka’, means to collect something thoroughly. When a creditor collects all his money it is said in Arabic “Tawaffa Daynah”. Similarly, with reference to sleeping, the Quran states: “It is He Who takes (Yatawaffa) your souls by night (when you are asleep), and has knowledge of all that you have done by day.” [6:60] Thus, the term ‘Tawaffa’ does not by itself mean death. Moreover, to avoid any misinterpretation Almighty Allah has coupled the term under consideration with the phrase ‘and raise you to Myself’ which is an explanation for ‘Motawafiyaka’.

2. “And Salam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!” [19:33]

The above Ayah is part of a Quranic quotation from Jesus when he miraculously spoke in the cradle. Quoting the above Ayah some Christians claim the Ayah confirms the death of Jesus (on the cross) and his resurrection (after three days).

Interestingly, a very similar Ayah is repeated in the same Chapter about Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist). “And Salam (peace) be on him (Yahya) the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he will be raised up to life.” [19:15]

Undoubtedly, there has never been any claim for the resurrection of Prophet John in this world after his death. Thus, the meaning of ‘will be raised’ in both the statements refer only to the Day of Resurrection in hereafter. The verb in ‘the day I die’ (not the day I died) is for the future which indicates an action yet to happen. Moreover, Christians do not believe in the natural death of Jesus whereas the Ayah quoting from Jesus states: “the day I die”, not the day I will be killed or crucified.

Crucifixion of Jesus in the Gospels

All the present four Gospels, although with some differences, have narrated the fiction of crucifixion. Nonetheless, the testimony of none of them can be accepted in any court of law for the following reasons:

1. Unfortunately none of the authors of the Gospels are living for cross examination of their narrations. Hence, we can only refer to their texts available to us as their sworn affidavit.

The main problem of the present Gospels is their authors are anonymous. As we discussed in the previous chapters, the authors, the date and the language of the Gospels are unknown. Thus, as Ahmed Deedat adequately expressed, ‘no civilized court of law would pay any heed to the present gospels as attested documents.’

2. None of the anonymous authors of the gospels were eyewitnesses of the crucifixion. So, where did they get their information from? For instance, it is believed that Mark had been the disciple of Peter; the chief disciple of Jesus. Nonetheless Mark says that at the time of the arrest of Jesus ‘all his disciples forsook him and fled.’ [Mark 14:50] So, either we have to agree that Mark is lying or ‘all disciples’ including Peter had left Jesus. Then again who narrated the arrest and the crucifixion of Jesus to Mark? Yes, Mark narrates that Peter followed Jesus from a distance, but then again to safeguard himself he stayed outside the entrance of the court, even blaspheming so that people would not accuse him of being one of the disciples. Thus, Peter was not an eye witness either. As a result, Mark could not even be an ‘ear-witness’ to the scene. Thus, his Gospel is more of a community gossip. As a matter of fact, the present gospels are technically less reliable than a history book such as ‘The History of Tabari’. For, Tabari at least mentions the chain of the narrators through whom he narrates the historical events, a process which enables scholars to examine and verify the authenticity of the narrations.

3. Gospels narrate different phrases for the last words of Jesus. The last word of Jesus according to John was ‘it is finished’. (John 19:30) Luke on

the other hand narrates: “With a loud voice Jesus cried: Father, into Your hands I entrust my spirit! And with these words he died.” [23:46] The last words Mark narrates from Jesus is ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?’ [Mark 15:34, Matt. 26:14-16] Keep in mind the fact that that the reason why the narrations of Mark and Matthew are practically the same is due to Matthew’s narration depending largely upon that of Mark’s. Thus, it should not be treated as a separate historical source.

4. It is very unlikely for a Messenger of Allah to have expressed such a complaint, as narrated by Mark, in the last minutes of his life, questioning Allah as to why He had forsaken him.

Narrations of other Gospels

As discussed in the previous chapters, the present four canonical gospels are not the only existing gospels. Once upon a time there had been many gospels. The present four gospels were the only ones acknowledged by the Roman Emperor Constantine and his successors following the triumph of the Trinitarian branch of Christianity.

One of the historical gospels which is available today, though in fragments, is the gospel according to Peter. If he be Peter the disciple, then he is Simon whom Jesus called Peter. Biblically, he is the first disciple that Jesus chose and he is the chief disciple.

The gospel of Peter was used by the church at Rhossus and often quoted by Christian writers during the latter part of the second century. The fragments of the gospel of Peter were found in a Christian monk’s grave in Egypt in 1886 and were published in 1972. They have been dated to the late second or early third century. (i.e. around 200 C.E) For more information about the gospel of Peter visit: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/gospelpeter.html>

The Gospel of Peter was eventually branded as heretical, if for no other reason, because it seemed to deny the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

The account of the gospel of Peter suggests that Jesus was not killed. Chapter 5 verse 5 reads:

“And the Lord cried, saying: My power, my power, you have abandoned me. When he said this, he was taken up. And at that moment the veil of the Jerusalem temple was torn into two.”

The phrase ‘he was taken up’ as it could mean death; it can also refer to ‘ascension into heaven’ which is very close to what the Quran states, although the Quran even denounces the crucifixion.

Independent Sources

Is there any non-Christian and non-Biblical source that has narrated the crucifixion of Jesus?

Flavius Josephus who lived from 37AD to about 100 AD was a Jewish historian. His book ‘Antiquities of the Jew’ is the account of Jewish history from its early beginnings to the revolt against Rome in 66AD. His book is generally considered a reliable source and the nearest to the time of Jesus. Fortunately, his book is available today even on the internet. In Book 18 Chapter 3 he mentions Jesus with high praise. Although he touches upon the

issue of the persecution of Jesus, he does not mention anything about his crucifixion.

Book 18 Chapter 3 Paragraph 3 of his book reads:

“3. Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, (9) those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; (10) as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”

<http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-18.htm>

Is Jesus God?! Let Us Reason Together

Monotheism; the common word

Monotheism and believing in one unique God is the core of the teachings of all divine prophets. In the Old Testament God instructed Moses (a.s) to proclaim: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.” [Deut. 6:4]

In the New Testament also, when a man asked Jesus what would be the chief Commandment of the Commandments, he said: “the chief one is, ‘Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.’” [Mark 12:29]

Monotheism is the basis of all the teachings in the Final Testament (the holy Quran). The Chapter of ‘Purity’ (112) of the holy Quran is the article of monotheism in the most comprehensive and explicit way. Muslims are strongly recommended to recite it at least once in their daily Prayers. The Chapter states:

“In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Say: He is Allah, the Unique. Allah is the Self-Sufficient Master Whom all creatures need. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none co-equal (or partner) to Him, He is Unique.”

Of all the different distortions which have occurred in Christianity, none is as horrible as the blasphemous claim of the deity of Jesus and the dogma of the Trinity. The vague and mysterious dogma of Trinity has become the central doctrine of most of the Christian sects of today. Although Christians do not claim they believe in three gods and hence find it offensive to be called ‘polytheists’, their perverted doctrine of the Trinity has led them astray from the true path of monotheism.

In Christian theology there is a branch of study called ‘Christology’ which is concerned with the person and attributes and deeds of Jesus. In Christology Christians are taught to believe in Jesus as coexistent and coequal with God who descended from his high pre-existent station as a God when he came to earth to die for mankind’s sins. “He was Jehovah- they claim- came to earth in a physical body as the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh.”

The deity of Jesus is explained through the mysterious dogma of Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity states that God is the union of three divine persons- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit- in one divine being. Thus, they say there is one God who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. According to Christians the Father is God, the Son (Jesus) is God and the Holy Spirit is God although the Father is not the Son and neither of them is the Holy Spirit. Here is the formula of the Trinity: One person, God, the Father + one person, God the son + one person, God the Holy Spirit= one person, God the what? And by the way this is English not gibberish! Most churches baptize infants into the Trinity and thus Christians from their very childhood are told to believe in the deity of Jesus, though on faith alone.

It is due to this conviction that Christians consider Muslims ignorant- at best- about the personality of Jesus when they hear that Muslims respect Jesus “(only) as a prophet and the messenger of God”! Consequently, their preconceived ideas make communication difficult. Often the thing said is not the thing heard!

The Historical Background of Trinity

When and how did the dogma of the Trinity emerge? Did Jesus ever proclaim to be God or son of God? Did he ever call for the Trinity? Nay.

Historically, the original Christians of the first three centuries did not know of the Trinity.

Some early Christian sects who did exist before the Roman Catholic, such as the Ebionite and Essences in the first century were Unitarians and knew no Trinity and did not worship Jesus. It is unanimously accepted that the Nicean Conference in 325 AD called by the order of the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, over a controversy about the personality of Jesus, led eventually to the acceptance of Trinity. The Trinity dogma, first referred to by St. Augustine (415CE), however came about much later than the Council of Nicea, and was accepted as the Athanasian Creed in the fifth century.

Trinitarian Christians Verses Unitarians

In 318 C.E. a controversy over the matter of the nature of Jesus blew up between church men from Alexandria- Arius, the deacon and Alexander his bishop. In order to safeguard the unity of his kingdom, the Emperor Constantine stepped into the fray and called for the first ecumenical council in church history in order to settle the matter once and for all. According to Encarta Encyclopaedia, of the 1800 bishops in the Rome Empire, 318 attended the Council in 325 C.E. in Nicea (now Iznik, Turkey). The irony is that Christ's deity was ratified over the objections of most of the Christian bishops who had been gathered there from all over the world. Nevertheless, the Emperor concluded the council with a faith that he dictated in the Council. The Nicean Creed according to Catholic Encyclopaedia reads:

“We believe in one God; the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten no make, of the same substance with the Father.”

Although the Creed was signed, the matter was still far from settled. Arius and the new bishop of Alexandria, a man called Athanasius, began arguing over the matter. By the end of the 4th century, under the leadership of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus (the Cappadocian Fathers), the doctrine of the Trinity at the council of Chalcedon took substantially the form it has maintained ever since.

Since then, brutal punishments, violent persecution and being labeled as heretics was the only destiny of the Unitarians. All their books were burnt and by 600 A.D., they had basically ceased to exist.

Today some critical Christian theologians such as John Hick in his book ‘The Myth of God Incarnate’ find the roots of the Trinity in ancient pagan religions. Hick finds amazing similarities between the Buddhist doctrine of Trikaya (the three body doctrine) and the Trinity. Similarly, there are many similarities between the Trinity and the Hindu doctrine of Trimurti (Sanskrit: Three Forms) consisting a triad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. It is due to these similarities that some historians assumed that Jesus must have spent some time in India during his missing years! There is however,

no historical proof for this assumption. Moreover, the claim of the adaptation of a pagan doctrine by a Messenger of God i.e. Jesus (a.s) is the most irrational proposition.

Trinity on the Scale of Rationality

Common sense and the faculty of mind is one of the most important blessings of God upon mankind. Enjoying this blessing, man can be held responsible for his deeds. Rationality is the only common platform among human beings irrespective of their religious or cultural background. Unless people are able to relate in a rational manner with each other, no communication can be accomplished between them.

Prophet Isaiah; was one of the Hebrew prophets. His book in the Old Testament is an historical reference for Christians to prove the coming of the Messiah. According to that book, God reveals to Isaiah to tell his people: “Come now, and let us reason together.” [Isaiah 1:18] Christians are being baptized in the name of the Trinity, and yet they are always told to believe in the Trinity by faith alone. If any Christian dares question the mysterious dogma of Trinity, his priest immediately tells him that this doctrine is a bit difficult to grasp and it is beyond the common understanding! Thus, they never really allow their minds to ponder upon it. I would like to invite my Christian brethren to put aside the stereotypical teachings of the church and for God’s sake for once try to think independently! As God said to Isaiah, “come now, let us reason together.”

There are two meanings for rationality when concepts like Trinity are treated: One is to say that the dogma of Trinity is irrational because it violates some basic laws of rationality. The second meaning is to say it doesn’t make sense in that it doesn’t appeal to any sensory perception, that it is hard to conceptualize the Trinity because it cannot be pictured in the mind.

If the Trinity doesn’t make sense in the first meaning, then it is irrational, but if it is in the second meaning, then it is all right?

Christians argue that the Trinity doesn’t make sense in the second meaning of it and hence it is like many other religious concepts that we can’t picture, such as ‘God’, ‘Angels’, etc. The same is true with abstractive concepts such as love, evil, etc. To them it should come as no surprise that trying to understand the Divine Nature of God in our limited human perspective is impossible. We can only know, what He has revealed to us about His nature, through the Bible. The bottom line is that we must have faith in the Trinity. Thus, they claim, the Trinity is incomprehensible. The Athanasian Creed read: “The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible... not three incomprehensible...but... one incomprehensible.”

One may add: ‘and an incomprehensible argument’!

The fact is the dogma of the Trinity violates the basic laws of rationality and hence it doesn’t make sense.

The Trinity violates the law of contradiction; a law that is the core of human logic. The law of contradiction means that two antithetical propositions cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense. X cannot be non-X. A thing cannot be and not be simultaneously. All logic

depends on this simple principle. Rational thought and meaningful discourse demand it. To deny it is to deny all truth in one fell swoop.

The Trinity Violates the Law of Contradiction

1. God is physical and God is not physical! No doubt, the God that all monotheists believe in is not physical, or else he would be limited. Nevertheless, Trinity is explained as 'God reincarnate in Jesus'. Jesus was born of Mary. He had body and flesh. He was eating and drinking. Jesus was physical. Thus, the result of the dogma of the Trinity is that God is physical and God is not physical!

2. God is not begotten and God is begotten! All monotheists believe that God is not begotten. Christians also believe that God; the Father is not begotten. On the other hand, the Trinity claims that Jesus is the begotten son of God and he is God! Thus, God is begotten and is not begotten.

3. God dies and God doesn't die! God that all monotheists- including Christians as they claim- believe in is Ever-Living. God does not die, not even for a micro-second. Jesus is born and hence they celebrate Christmas. All Christians believe Jesus died on the cross. Although he was resurrected again, he died. Thus, God dies and God doesn't die. Isn't this violation of a law of contradiction?

It is for this reason that Athanasius, the bishop who formulated this doctrine, confessed that the more he wrote on the matter, the less capable he was of clearly expressing his thoughts regarding it.

Fallacious Examples for Trinity

In their efforts to explain the dogma of Trinity, Christians refer us to examples that they call 'the Trinities in nature'. For instance, they say the universe consists of three elements: Time, Space, and Matter. Each of these is comprised of three 'components'.

Christians assume the anti-Trinitarians don't recognize number '3' and hence endeavour to present examples of three sided things. The fallacy of these examples is that in the external real world, there is only gas, solid and liquid. The concept of 'matter' that we draw from them is an abstractive concept. 'Matter' doesn't have a real existence. It is only a common name we have made for gas, liquid and solid. These three matters are separate entities. The same fallacy applies to space and time. All generic concepts are like that. For instance, the concept of 'human being' applies to you and me and every human being. Yet, 'human being' has only a mental existence not external existence. What exists in the external reality are Tom, Dick and Harry, etc.

The application of these examples is that there is Son, Father, and Holy Ghost in the external reality and the name God or Godhead is an abstractive concept driven from those three realities. The conclusion is that 'God' doesn't have a real existence! "See what examples do they apply to you, so they have gone astray, and they cannot find a (Right) Path." [25:9]

Did Jesus Ever Claim to Be God?!

The holy Quran states that on the Day of Judgment on the trial of Christians, Allah will ask Jesus if he had ever asked people to either

worship him or his mother? The purpose of this rhetorical question is for the Christians to hear from Jesus that he had never had such a blasphemous claim. “And when Allah will say: O Jesus son of Mary! Did you say unto men: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah? He will say: Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say, Had it 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.” [5:116]

Nowhere even in the present gospels has Jesus ever explicitly claimed to be God. The Encyclopedia Britannica states: "Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema in the Old Testament: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. (Deut. 6:4)".

The worship of God was always focal in Jesus' life. For instance, when his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1-2) he taught them to pray to God; the Father, not to himself. Notice that the words “Father! Grant us” indicate that Jesus included himself among the creation of God, acknowledging a high authority; ‘God’ over all of them. Similarly, according to John, Jesus said to Mary Magdalene: “I am going to ascend to my father and your father, to my God and your God.” [John 20:17]

The holy Quran quoting from Jesus states: “But the Messiah (Jesus) said: O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.” [5:72]

Imam Redha (a.s); the 8th Imam of Ahlul-Bayt (a.s) in his debate with one of the archbishops of his time named ‘al-Jatheliq’ said: “Everything apparently about Jesus is good except his worshipping? Al-Jatheliq whilst objecting to that said: “Rather he was the most worshipping person.” Imam Redha (a.s) who had this confession from the priest replied to him: “Then who was he worshipping? Himself or another Being?!” the priest was dumb-founded.

According to Mark, Jesus even did not allow himself to be called ‘good’ let alone ‘God’. Mark narrates that as Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him: “Good teacher. What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” [Mark 10:17-18]

Deity of Jesus on the scale of the Bible

We must however say that Christians do quote various passages, mostly ambiguous, from the Bible to enforce belief in the deity of Jesus. In fact, they base the dogma of Trinity more on the Bible than anything else. To them, to understand the divine nature of God is beyond the human limited perspective and hence we can only know “what He has revealed to us about His nature through the Bible”.

First of all, you must note that logically proving the deity of Jesus from the Bible falls into the fallacy of ‘begging the question’. Begging the question or circle reasoning is a fallacy in which the premises include the claim that the conclusion is true or assume that the conclusion is true. Imagine you go for a job interview and the interviewer asks for a reference. You mention a name and if he asks how he would know if he is trustworthy, you say: Oh I vouch for him!

Christians –quoting from the Bible- claim that Jesus is the only begotten son of God. John in his Gospel says: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son...” [John 3:16]

The above quotation is one of the Biblical sources of Christens’ claim for divinity of Jesus.

Let’s read the Bible and see whether Jesus was the only begotten son of God.

1. David; a begotten son of God

Psalms of Prophet David (or as Christians refer to him; King David) is one of the books of the Old Testament. Although the Psalms are the product of various authors, Peter and John (Acts 4:25) ascribe the second Psalm to David. In the second Psalm we read: “I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto me, you my Son; this day have I begotten you.” [Psalms 2:7]

2. Israel; the begotten son of God

Israel was another name for Prophet Jacob. In the book of Exodus we read: “And you shall say unto Pharaoh, thus said the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.” [Ex. 4:22]

3. Adam was the son of God

Luke mentioning the lineage of Jesus says: “Jesus being ...the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, ...which was the son of Adam, who was the son of God.” [KJV]

As you can see according to the Bible, Jesus was not the only begotten son of God. The expression of son of God, if I were to justify it, at best would mean the one who is spiritually and passionately close to God and is chosen by Him; the Almighty. In this sense, all the Prophets are the sons of God. Any one who has studied the Bible knows that Jesus in many instances spoke in figures of speech. Then if these quotations about his `sonship` are correct, why couldn’t he have said it as a figure of speech?!

The holy Quran, however, has abandoned the usage of this expression not to leave any room for misinterpretation.

Jesus did not have the attributes of God

Another way to examine the deity of Jesus is to examine whether he enjoys the attributes of God!

1. God is Omniscient

One of the attributes of the Almighty God is that He is Omniscient, i.e. He is All Knowing. When Jesus was asked about the time of the Hour (the Day of Judgment) he said: “About the exact date and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”[Mark13:32]

In an attempt to prove the omniscience of Jesus, Christians quote from the Gospel of John in which it is narrated from the disciples to have said to Jesus: “Now we know that you know everything and do not need anyone to tell you. From this we believe that you came from God.” [John 16:30]

Obviously the above statement doesn’t mean more than the fact that Jesus was a Messenger of God and his knowledge, like all other prophets, is from God and by revelation not by learning from other human beings. Thus,

when his disciples say that he knows everything, they don't mean he is omniscient.

2. God is Omnipotent

Another divine attribute is that God is Omnipotent and the Almighty. God is needless but all other than Him are in need of Him. Thus, it is not possible for God to seek anyone's help. According to Matthew and Mark the last words of Jesus on the cross were: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Moreover, Jesus is reported by John to have said: "I can do nothing independently." [John 5:30]

In conclusion, Jesus never claimed to be God. The dogma of Trinity is irrational and violates the basic law of contradiction. Jesus does not enjoy the attributes of God and there are more monotheistic interpretations for the ambiguous statements of the Bible. Overall, if still some of the authors of the Bible such as John refer to Jesus as God, they have definitely been wrong and must be influenced by the pagan Romans. The best and the most accurate title for Jesus is what he introduced himself with, i.e. A Messenger of God:

"Jesus replied to them: My teaching is not mine but His who sent me." [John 7:16]

Deity of Jesus on the scale of the holy Quran

I would like to conclude this chapter with the explicit statements from the Final Testament, i.e. the holy Quran; about Jesus son of Mary (may the peace and mercy of God be upon him). Surely, this is the true statement about Jesus which is far from the blasphemous accusations of Christians as well as the Jews about the personality of this great prophet.

1. "O people of the Scripture! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah, son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit from Allah. So believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not three (Trinity). Cease! It is better for you. For Allah is One God, glory be to Him above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth." [4:171]

2. "Verily, the likeness of Jesus before Allah is the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be"- and he was." [3:59]

3. "The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was righteous. They both used to eat food. Look how We make the proofs clear to them; yet look how they are deluded away (from the truth)." [5:75]

4. "The Christians say: Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths, resembling the saying of those who disbelieved aforetime." [9:31]

5. "Surely they have disbelieved who say: God is Messiah, son of Mary. But Messiah said: O Children of Israel! Worship my Lord and your Lord." [5:72]

6. "Such is Jesus, son of Mary. (This is) the statement of truth, about which they dispute." [Chapter of Mary 19:34]

Everlasting Division

The theological deviation in Christianity caused the Christian community to acquire the largest number of divisions of any of the known religions. According to David Barrett et al, editor of the 'World Christian Encyclopedia' 3400 Christian groups have been identified in the world.

The holy Quran with reference to this fraction and the purpose of it states; "And from those who called themselves Christians We took their covenant, but they have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them. So We planted amongst them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection; and Allah will inform them of what they used to do."

Jesus Will Return with Imam Mahdi (p.b.u.t)

Biblical Eschatology is a study of things to come. The Second Advent of Jesus is one of the eschatological issues in Christian theology. Mainstream Christians believe that Jesus, forty days after his resurrection ascended to heaven and he will return to Earth at the end of time. One of the main Biblical references for the second advent of Jesus is in the Acts of the Apostles.

“Upon saying this and while they were looking on, he was taken up and a cloud carried him up from their view. And as they kept gazing intently toward heaven as he was going away from them, two men in white clothing were standing by them, who also said: Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into heaven? This very Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come again in the same manner in which you have seen him going to heaven.” [Acts 1:9-11]

For the past 2000 years, there has been an ongoing debate regarding the above and similar Biblical passages. Many Christians believe that Jesus will literally return. Others believe that the return of Jesus will not be physical, rather symbolic somehow. Others suggest that the church serves the same purpose. Most of the debates rotate around the above phrase ‘in the same manner’ as to whether it should be taken literally or figuratively.

The Return of Jesus in Islam

Muslim scholars irrespective of their denominations are quite unanimous that upon the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (May God hasten his reappearance) Prophet Jesus will also descend to Earth from the heavens. During that time Jesus and Imam Mahdi will spread peace and justice on earth and the earth will attain unprecedented peace, justice and welfare. Jesus will be like the minister for Imam Mahdi and his main mission will be to correct the dogma of Trinity and to clarify his humane personality and servitude to God.

The Islamic doctrine of the descent of Jesus to earth is derived from a couple of Ayaat in the Quran and many Ahadith which are narrated by both Shi’a and Sunni narrators. The following are the most important reasons for this doctrine:

1. Jesus is still alive

As we learn in chapter 8, the holy Quran in a unique style denotes the false dogma of crucifixion. The holy Quran clearly states that Allah raised Jesus to Himself. Thus, Jesus has not tasted physical death as yet. On the other hand, ‘every creature shall have a taste of death’. [29:57] In conclusion, Jesus must return to earth to live a physical life and die a physical death.

2. The People of the Book believe in Jesus before his death

The Almighty Allah states: “And there will be none of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) but must believe in him before his death and on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them.” [4:159]

Most interpreters of the Quran agree that the above Ayah is with reference to the time of the return of Jesus to earth. During that time there

will be no Jews or Christians but those who believe in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah and a human being. According to this interpretation the pronoun in 'before his death' returns to 'Jesus' not a Jew or a Christian.

Shahr bin Houshab narrated: "Hajjaj bin Yusuf said to me: "There is an Ayah in the Quran that I'm baffled as to its meaning. I said: O Amir! Which Ayah is that? He said: "And there will be none of the People of the Book ..." By Allah! I have ordered the execution of many Christians and Jews and I have witnessed their death, but none of them believed in the humanity of Jesus before his death." Shahr said: "I said to Hajjaj: This is not the meaning of the Ayah. (He meant the pronoun in that phrase returns to Jesus not the Jews and Christians). The meaning of the Ayah is that Jesus will descend to earth before the Day of Resurrection and there will be no Jews or Christians but believers in Jesus and he will pray behind Imam Mahdi." Hajjaj asked from whom I had learnt that interpretation from. I replied: Imam Baqir, son of Imam Sajjad, son of Imam Husain, son of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib narrated this to me." Hajjaj said: By Allah, you gained it from a pure spring."

3. The followers of Jesus will be superior over disbelievers

Almighty Allah states:

"And when Allah said: O Jesus! I will take you and raise you to Myself and clear you of those who disbelieve, and I will make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieve till the Day of Resurrection. Then you (believers and disbelievers) will return to Me and I will judge between you in the matter in which you used to dispute." [3:55]

The above Ayah is one of the controversial Ayaat in the story of Prophet Jesus. Some Christian preachers use this Ayah to prove the superiority of Christians over the adherents of all other religions whom they also call 'disbelievers' until the Day of Judgment.

Christians assumed the Quranic phrase 'those who follow you' equals Christians. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Christianity today is in essence very different from the actual teachings of Prophet Jesus. The followers of Jesus were those who truly followed his teachings. According to the Quran, the dogma of Trinity is in full conflict with the teachings of Prophet Jesus. Thus, how could Trinitarians be regarded as the followers of Jesus?!

The examples of 'those who follow you' from the time of Jesus till the advent of Islam are those sincere believers who believed in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah and followed his teachings. With the rise of Islam, Muslims who believe in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah are the true followers of Jesus. The disbelievers in return are those who never believed in Jesus as a Prophet such as the Jews or even the Christians who believed in the divinity of Jesus. Thus Almighty Allah has made the true monotheists who believe in Jesus as His Messenger superior in their ideology over the disbelievers who do not believe in Prophet Jesus.

Another meaning for the Ayah is to say when Imam Mahdi (a.s) reappears and Jesus returns to earth, the true followers of Jesus who include all Muslims, Jews, Christians who truly followed Jesus will be superior to the disbelievers.

4. Prophetic narrations confirm the descent of Jesus

Numerous Narrations in both Sunni and Shi'a sources confirm and detail the descending of Jesus at the same time as Imam Mahdi.

Renowned Sunni narrators such as al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Maajah, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Abu-Dawood and many others have narrated the Narrations of the return of Jesus at the time of Imam Mahdi and that he will pray behind Imam Mahdi.

Ibn Jouzi in his book 'Tathkeratul-Khawas' narrated: "Mahdi and Jesus will reunite. When it's the time for Prayers, Mahdi will ask Jesus to lead the Prayers, but Jesus will say: You are more preferred to lead the Prayers. Then Jesus will pray behind him."

According to the Narrations of his return Jesus will break the cross and abandon the meat of the pig. He will also abolish the Jazyah for the People of the Book of his time will have no excuse to adhere to their false principles. They have to either convert to Islam and hence no Jazyah will apply to them or will be executed by Jesus. Jesus will live on the earth for 40 years before he dies. Imam Mahdi will pray on his body and will attend his burial in public.

The Return of Jesus and the Seal of Prophet-hood

One of the theological problems about the return of Jesus is the paradox between this concept and the seal of Prophethood. Undoubtedly, Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet and Messenger of God. With Prophet Muhammad, prophethood ceased to continue. Then how could one of the previous prophets return to earth after Prophet Muhammad?

The answer to the above paradox is that Prophet Jesus will not return to earth to bring a new Shari'a Law. Thus, he will pray behind Imam Mahdi. In fact, Imam Mahdi who is the 12th and the last successor of the Prophet of Islam will lead the world. The main purpose of the return of Jesus to earth is in order for him to prove to the Jews and the Christians the truth about himself.

'Christians'

The names by which the disciples were known among themselves were 'brethren', 'the faithful', 'elect', 'saints' and 'believers'.

The title 'Christian' for the followers of the teachings of Jesus is historically a Greek-given name not a God-given name. In Greek, the adjectival ending -ianos denoted the adherents of an individual or party. So, adherents to Christ were called Christianos which is developed in English to Christians. The name 'Christian' was first given by the Greeks or Romans, probably in reproach, to the followers of Jesus.

There is no record of any disciple calling another believer a Christian or of Jesus applying that designation to himself. Luke in Acts [11:19-30] writes that "the disciples were called Christians," not that "the disciples called themselves Christians." According to the Acts (11:26) the title of 'Christian' was first used at Antioch for the disciples. When disciples under the persecution of the Jews sought refuge in Antioch which was a Greek city, they were named in reproach by pagan Greeks as 'Christians' meaning those who believe in the one who claimed to be the Christ. In the early

stages of Christianity to be called 'Christian' would most probably equal execution.

Although this title initially carried some negative sense, over time Christians accepted it, as to them it would be an honour for them to be related to Christ (the Messiah; al-Maseeh in Arabic). Hence, the title was universally accepted.

On the other hand, the Jews who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah scorned the followers and the disciples of Jesus as "the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) meaning the followers of the one who was merely born in Nazareth.

The only God-given title for the followers of the teachings of Jesus is given by Allah in the holy Quran. The holy Quran has never referred to the followers of Jesus as Christians (Al-Maseehiyoun in Arabic) or Nazarenes. The term used in the Quran for his followers is 'Nasara' meaning the helpers, the singular of which is 'Nasrani' meaning 'the helper'. Just like the term used for those believers in Madina who supported Prophet Muhammad and hence were called 'the helpers'. The reason as to why the holy Quran is calling the adherents of Jesus 'the Helpers' stems from a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. According to the Quran when Jesus began his mission he asked his disciples who would be helping him in the cause of God. The holy Quran states: "O you who believe! Be you helpers (in the Cause) of Allah as said Jesus, son of Mary, to the disciples: Who are my helpers (in the Cause) of Allah? The disciples said: We are Allah's helpers." [61:14]

Therefore, contrary to the name given to the followers of Jesus by the Romans or the Jews, the Quranic title for them is a God-given name and designates their devotion to Allah.

Another title used frequently in the Quran for both the Christians and the Jews, is the appellation of 'People of the Book' which is a very honourable title confirming that they historically belonged to the community of the faithful people who originally had a divine Scripture.

The Characteristics of the 'Nasara'

In the story of Prophet Moses (a.s) I dealt with the status of the People of the Book in the Quran. The People of the Book are sometimes condemned in the Quran not merely because they are Jewish or Christians. They were castigated due to their wrong actions. The Quran, whilst emphasising that Christians did, theologically, go astray by believing in the erroneous dogma of the Trinity, respects and admires their good deeds and moral behaviour. Almighty Allah in Surah al-Ma'edah (Chapter 5), Ayah 82 states:

"And you will surely find the nearest in love to the believers (Muslims) those who say: We are Nasara (Christians). That is because amongst them are priests and monks, and they are not proud."

This love and compassion is a Godly gift to them, as Allah in Surah al-Hadid (Chapter 57) Ayah 7 states: "And We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him (Jesus) compassion and mercy."

On the other hand, however, Muslims are commanded not to trust and make close friendships with the Jews and the Christians.

Allah in Surah Ma'edah (Chapter 5) Ayah 51 states:

“O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as friends (or protectors or helpers), they are but the friends (or protectors and helpers) of each other. And if any amongst you take them as friends, then surely he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are the wrong-doers.”

The message of this Ayah is similar to the following Ayah in which relying u[on the wrong-doer is forbidden.

“And incline not toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire should touch you, and you have no protectors other than Allah, nor you would then be helped.” [11:113] Thus, God condemns only the wrong-doers whoever they may be.

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