

# Jesus in Islām, Christianity and the Judaic Talmud



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وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا

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

# Jesus in Islām, Christianity and the Judaic Talmud

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## Contents

Introduction.....	5
Argumentation with Jews and Christians .....	8
Jesus in Christianity.....	9
Jesus in Talmudic [Rabbinic] Judaism.....	17
Jesus in Islām .....	24
The Monotheism of the Prophets.....	32

وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لِيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ ۚ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ ۚ  
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## Introduction

Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) Son of Mary was from a line of Israelite Prophets sent to the Jews to proclaim the message of monotheism and to affirm and purify the law of Moses (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام). The Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus after he challenged their authority and rebuked them for their iniquities and excesses. The factions who believed Jesus—who later became known as Christians—exaggerated his status, deified him and worshipped him alongside Allāh.<sup>1</sup> The conflict between the Jews and Christians played out over the centuries and this can be seen in the anti-Christian polemics in Talmudic literature and the anti-Jewish sentiment that Christian Europe retained right into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions make clear the correct position with respect to Jesus to both of these groups—who were “Recipients of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*)—in their disputes with each other: One failed to act by the truth when it came to them and rejected the message of Jesus, and the other acted without knowledge, upon ignorance and fell into exaggeration by deifying him and worshipping him alongside Allāh. Both of these former recipients of the Book—the Jews and Christians—were guilty of excesses and exaggeration in religion as well as alteration (*tabdīl*), distortion (*tahrīf*) and concealment (*kitmān*) of the Book. This is something that the Qur’ān rehearses to them and which the honest amongst their priests, Rabbis and historians know very well to be a factual reality, as they are more than aware of their own deeds. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated in the Qur’ān:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ

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

Regarding their alteration (*tabdīl*):

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



Christians. However, many others rejected him and his message on grounds of pride and concealed the truth knowingly.

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

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

Jesus the Messiah holds a lofty and honourable position in Islām as does his righteous and chaste mother, Mary (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام). Muslims do not tolerate denigration of any of the Prophets and Messengers and especially the resolute Messengers who are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام) and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).<sup>3</sup>

In what follows we present the treatment of Jesus within Christianity, Judaism and Islām.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As for the negative portrayal of the Prophets of Allāh in the Torah and the ascription of reprehensible deeds to them, these are the fabrications of the poisoned pens of the scribes. All the Prophets and Messengers were noble, upright, righteous men. They were infallible in matters of revelation and its conveyance. They were secure (ma'ṣūm) from falling into major sin. As for minor sins, some of the Prophets may fall into them, but they do not persist upon them after being notified by Allāh and repenting. This is the Islāmic position regarding the status of the Prophets and Messengers.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that both Christianity and Islām are proselytizing religions in that their faith requires them to preach its message to others. As for Judaism, it is centred around a tribal, nationalistic doctrine that took shape long after Moses (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام) when it was inserted into the writing of the Torah around the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Thus, the Jewish Rabbis have always been more concerned with protecting the Jewish “national identity” than winning converts. The polemic between Jewish religious leaders and Christians—which includes the Jews for Jesus movement—takes on a certain form in that the Jewish religious leaders desire to save their flock from blatant idolatry and protect their national identity from being undermined. On the other hand Christians want Jews to accept Jesus as Lord and saviour. Jewish Rabbis explicitly acknowledge that Islām is strictly a monotheistic religion and that Christianity is idolatry.



## Argumentation with Jews and Christians

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

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

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

The Qur’ānic exegete, Imām al-Sa’dī (d. 1956) stated: “The Exalted has prohibited disputing the People of the Scripture when it is done without insight and without any pleasingly acceptable principle. [It orders] that they should only argue in a way that is best: with good manners, gentleness and softness in speech; inviting to the truth; beautifying it; refuting the falsehood and censuring it and using the nearest of ways leading to it. [It explains] that the intent should not be mere argumentation in and of itself and desiring to dominate [others] and for the love of exaltation. Rather, the intent should be to clarify the truth and guide the creation.”<sup>5</sup>

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

<sup>5</sup> *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 2002) p. 632.

## Jesus in Christianity

The earliest so-called “Jewish Christians”<sup>6</sup> (referred to as the Nazarenes and Ebionites) were broadly monotheists, affirmed faith in Jesus as a Prophet and observed the law (the Torah).

“Nazarene” is best seen as an umbrella term. The earliest Nazarenes are the Jewish inhabitants of Nazareth who followed Jesus. This is how they were referred to by the Jews who rejected Jesus, they were called *ha-Nozrim*. However, the term was applied more broadly over the next few centuries to individuals and groups who departed from the purely monotheistic message of Jesus and exaggerated in his status, claiming he was the Son of Allāh.<sup>7</sup> The Qur’ān refers to those who exaggerated in Jesus as “Naṣārā”:

وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَى الْمَسِيحَ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ

كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ

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

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<sup>6</sup> “Christ” is the latinized Greek translation of the Hebrew “mashiach”. It is inaccurate to refer to the original followers of Jesus as “Christians”. We employ the term “Jewish Christians” to help distinguish them from other Israelite factions who rejected Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> “The evidence provided by the Church Fathers appear to demonstrate that the Nazarenes, a Jewish Christian group orthodox in all respects except for their practice of the ceremonial law, existed as a distinct group from the time of the fall of Jerusalem until the late fourth or early fifth century. They were descendants of the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem, which escaped to Pella after the fall of Jerusalem. They recognized the authority of the Apostle Paul and his mission to the Gentiles, as well as the authority of the greater Church, of which they considered themselves a part. They evangelized their Jewish brethren in the synagogues. They accepted the entirety of the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments. They acknowledged that God was the Creator of all things and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.” Kenneth Howard (1993). *Jewish Christianity in the Early Church*. p. 33.

“The Ebionite Christians... believed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah sent from the Jewish God to the Jewish people in fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures. They also believed that to belong to the people of God, one needed to be Jewish. As a result, they insisted on observing the Sabbath, keeping kosher, and circumcising all males... An early source, Irenaeus, also reports that the Ebionites continued reverence to Jerusalem, evidently by praying in its direction during their daily acts of worship.”<sup>8</sup>

“Jewish followers of Jesus included the Nazarenes, or Nazoreans, and the Ebionites (from the Hebrew *ebyonim*, the poor). In their writings, they proclaimed faith in Jesus as the last prophet and as the Messiah of the Israel who had not come to abolish the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:17) but to purify it from false interpretations. They emphasized that Jesus followed the model set by the Prophet Jeremiah who denounced ‘the false pen of the scribes’ (Jer. 8:8) and attacked spurious laws regarding animal sacrifices (Jer. 7:21-26).”<sup>9</sup>

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

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ

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

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<sup>8</sup> Bart Ehrman in *Lost Christianities* (2003) p. 99-102.

<sup>9</sup> Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History: His Presence and Representation in Cyclical and Linear Settings*. Peter Lang GmbH (2009) p. 85.

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

Paul styled himself an apostle “among the Gentiles” and preached a Jesus doctrine that Greek Gentiles could believe in: a deified saviour, a redeemer of sins, in whom a personalized faith could be held without observance of law. Likewise, Paul taught a bodily resurrection that resembles the deities of the mystery cults such as Isis, Attis and Mithra. Finally, Paul ascribed divinity to Jesus by conferring divine attributes to him, turning him into an “incarnate son”. “Paul’s interpretation of the Christ figure bears the unmistakable stamp of a savior figure of the Greek mystery religions into whose form Jesus was cast. The statements of Jesus Himself, however, do not support His exaltation to the Godhead... With the gradual demise of the Jewish wing of Christianity Paul’s Christology came to the forefront in the Christian understanding on Jesus. His glorification of Christ’s divinity has played a major role in the deification of Jesus.”<sup>10</sup>

In Roman (Constantine) Christianity, Jesus became the “Sun-God”<sup>11</sup> and under the influence of Greek philosophy<sup>12</sup> and its

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<sup>10</sup> Jack Mclean in *The Deification of Jesus*. World Order, Spring Summer edition, 1980, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Historian Henry Chadwick writes, “Constantine, like his father, worshipped the Unconquered Sun [Sol Invictus]... His conversion should not be interpreted as an inward experience of grace... It was a military matter.” *The Early Church*, (1993) pp. 122-125.

<sup>12</sup> “Towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and during the 2<sup>nd</sup>, many learned men came over both from Judaism and paganism to Christianity. These brought with them into the Christian schools of theology their Platonic ideas and phraseology.” McIntock, J. and Strong, J. in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 1891, Vol. 10, “Trinity,” p. 553). “The use of Greek philosophy in Christian theology had far-reaching consequences for the core of Christology: the ontological terms *ousia*, *physis* and *prosopon* were introduced to explain and safeguard the mystery of Jesus Christ. In the process the Christian faith was dejudaeized and Hellenized.” Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History*. (2009) p. 91.

discussions of substance, soul, mind, spirit, as well as influence from pagan myths,<sup>13</sup> the Trinity received its final formulation after considerable debate had taken place regarding Jesus and the nature of the divine.<sup>14</sup>

“Through a series of creeds based on theological speculation Jesus the Son was declared to be the very essence of Divinity walking upon the earth, the Godhead Itself united with a deified Holy Spirit in a trinitarian theology. These creeds, far from descending upon the church fathers as divine revelation, underwent a long historical development that was not uncontested. They were finally elaborated in their present form after four centuries of acrimonious theological quarreling that necessitated four world councils of the church—those of Nicaea, Ephesus, Constantinople, and Chalcedon—that brought in their wake bloody warfare among Christian factions. These christological controversies resulted in the fragmentation of the churches of Asia Minor from those of Greek Orthodox Constantinople, a fragmentation that has continued to this day.”<sup>15</sup>

Concepts of “trinity”, “begotten son”, “sun-god”, “resurrection”, “rebirth”, “redemption” were already widespread during that era with respect to the deities of the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, and Romans such as Osiris, Horus, Isis, Mithra, Dionysus, Attis and Bāl. Thus, Jesus was deified and worshipped alongside Allāh. It became

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<sup>13</sup> Marie Sinclair, Countess of Caithness, in her 1876 book, states: “It is generally, although erroneously, supposed that the doctrine of the Trinity is of Christian origin. Nearly every nation of antiquity possessed a similar doctrine. St. Jerome testifies unequivocally, ‘All the ancient nations believed in the Trinity’.” *Old Truths in a New Light*. (p. 381).

<sup>14</sup> “The Nicene and Constantine creeds (325 and 381) confessed Jesus as being ‘of the same substance’ (*homoousios*) as God the Father. But they failed to put an end to the bitter Christological disputes that divided the early church... the fourth Ecumenical council of Chalcedon (451) produced a new language hoping to solve the Christological problem once and for all...” Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History*. (2009) p. 90.

<sup>15</sup> MacLean, J. *The Deification of Jesus*. World Order, Spring/Summer edition, 1980, p. 23.

more or less impossible for any ‘Christian’ to know and practice the true way of Jesus a couple of centuries after him.

As Christianity spread across the Mediterranean and European lands, local pagan symbols (such as the cross for example), customs, traditions, and festivals (such as the solstices and equinoxes for example)<sup>16</sup> were co-opted by the Church to win converts because rural pagan populations were unwilling to let go of these practices. In reality, it was not that pagans adopted Christianity, but more that Christianity adopted paganism.<sup>17</sup>

“The early Christian saints, bishops, and fathers, confessedly adopted the liturgies, rites, ceremonies, and terms of heathenism; making it their boast, that the pagan religion, properly explained, really was nothing else than Christianity; that the best and wisest of its professors, in all ages, had been Christians all along; that Christianity was but a name more recently acquired to a religion which had previously existed, and had been known to the Greek philosophers... That Christianity is nothing more than Paganism under a new name, has, as we said above, been admitted over and over again by the Fathers of the Church, and others. Aringhus (in his account of subterraneous Rome) acknowledges the conformity between the Pagan and Christian form of worship, and defends the admission of the ceremonies of heathenism into the service of the Church, by the authority of the wisest prelates and governors, whom, lie says, found it necessary, in the conversion of the

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<sup>16</sup> “Not only were Pagan festival days changed into Christian holydays, but Pagan idols were converted into Christian saints, and Pagan temples into Christian churches.” Doane, T. W. *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*. New York: The Commonwealth Company. 1882. p. 396.

<sup>17</sup> “The reign of Constantine marks the epoch of the transformation of Christianity from a religion into a political system; and though, in one sense, that system was degraded into an idolatry, in another it had risen into a development of the old Greek mythology. The maxim holds good in the social as well as in the mechanical world, that, when two bodies strike, the form of both is changed. Paganism was modified by Christianity; Christianity by Paganism” *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*. New York: Appleton and Company. 1875. pp. 50-52.

Gentiles, to dissemble, and wink at many things, and yield to the times; and not to use force against customs which the people were so obstinately fond of... We have seen, then, that the only difference between Christianity and Paganism is that Brahma, Ormuzd, Osiris, Zeus, Jupiter, etc., are called by another name; Crishna, Buddha, Bacchus, Adonis, Mithras, etc., have been turned into Christ Jesus: Venus pigeon into the Holy Ghost ; Diana, Isis, Devaki, etc., into the Virgin Mary; and the demi-gods and heroes into saints. The exploits of the one were represented as the miracles of the other. Pagan festivals became Christian holidays, and Pagan temples became Christian churches.”<sup>18</sup>

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

**First:** After the ascent of Jesus, some amongst the earliest Israelite believers began to exaggerate in Jesus and claimed he was the “Son of God”. **Second:** Paul took this a step further and cast Jesus as an incarnated divine figure and personal saviour cloaked with mystery-religion language familiar to Greeks. **Third:** Adoption of Greek philosophical and mystery-religion concepts by Roman Christianity, leading to the formulation of the Trinity. **Fourth:** The absorption of other local pagan ideas, customs, rites and rituals during the Church’s use of political power to spread Christianity across the Mediterranean and Europe.

Today, the three primary Christian divisions are:

- a) the **Roman Catholic** division,
- b) the **Protestant** division which broke off from Catholicism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and these two are referred to as the “Western Church” and,
- c) the **Orthodox** division of the “Eastern Church”.

All of these divisions believe in the Trinity and in the divinity of Jesus, that as the Son “Jesus is consubstantial [of the same substance and essence] with the Father” meaning that “the Son is

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<sup>18</sup> Doane, T. W. *Bible Myths*, p. 407-413.

one and the same God” and that he is “one in substance and triune in three persons”. This, in the teachings and messages of all of the Prophets, including Jesus himself, is associationism (shirk) and contradicts pure monotheistic belief as well as sound reason.

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

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

a) the overwhelming historical proof that what became known as “Christianity” after Jesus until today is not the religion that Jesus believed, practised and called to. Rather, that it was a later development through accretion and syncretization<sup>19</sup> and,

b) disillusionment with its confusing, contradictory theology that a critical mind is unable to decipher. Mystery does not offer satisfactory answers about divinity and many of these women converts state that they find a clear and intelligible treatment of divinity in Islām.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In other words, the attempts to harmonise and unify the gradually accumulated concepts and doctrines pertaining to Jesus and his nature over the first few centuries after Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> Refer to “Women and Conversion to Islām: The American Women’s Experience” by Elkoubaiti Naoualv, 2010. News headlines over the past twenty years abound in this regard: “Fast-growing Islām Winning Converts in the Western World”, CNN, 14 April 1997. “Why are so Many Modern British Career Women Converting to Islām”, Daily Mail, 28 October 2010.



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

Serious modern scholarship with respect to Jesus, his message and his early followers is now establishing a pictorial framework that increasingly resembles the portrayal of Jesus in the Qurʾān and the Prophetic traditions—a Prophet who was not divine and did not claim to be and was followed by Israelites who upheld the law and never understood him to be divine in the sense that developed afterwards.<sup>21</sup>

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“Europeans Increasingly Converting to Islam”, Gatestone Institute, 27 January 2012. “Converting to Islām: British Women on Prayer, peace and Prejudice”, Guardian UK, 11 October 2013. “Rise of Islāmic Converts Challenges France”, NY Times, 2 February 2013. “Converts to Islām increase after French attack”, World Bulletin, 24 February 2015. “More in France are Turning to Islām, Challenging a Nation’s Idea of Itself”, NY Times, 3 February 2013. “Islām is Ireland’s Fastest Growing Religion”, International Business Times, 21 February 2014. This article points out that most of the converts are women. “Lifting the Veil on Ireland’s Fastest Growing Religion”, Independent Ireland, 21 September 2014. “Islām Growing in America”, US Department of Defence, 4 October 2001. “Hispanic Islāmic Converts Find Comfort in God and Latino Culture”, Huffington Post, 11 September 2012.

<sup>21</sup> For further research one can study: Ehrman, B. D. *How Jesus Became God*. HarperCollins, 2014; Eisenman, Robert. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Roots of Christianity and Islam*. Grave Distractions Publications; 2nd edition (2014); Sanders, E. P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Allen Lane: 1st edition (1993).

## Jesus in Talmudic [Rabbinic] Judaism

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

The Pharisees who were the elitist religious elders<sup>22</sup> of the time asserted another divine law, the “oral tradition”—later put in

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<sup>22</sup> The “religious elders” who resided in Babylon from the 6th century BC onwards authored a new doctrine based upon race, nationality and land (after a history of conflict, contention and battle over land). This was the foundation of a new religion called “Judaism” (as opposed to the “Islām” of Moses) which was no longer centred around calling to “monotheism”, but around race, nationalism and land. They weaved it into their authorship of the the Torah and also claimed an “oral tradition” (claimed to be revelation) had been passed on through initiation. This later became the Mishnah and its commentary (Gemara) as the Talmud in written form, after the era of Jesus. Despite claims of adherence to monotheism, this oral tradition was a mixture of the dictates of religious leaders, occultism, gnostic-spirituality, magic (matters they had picked up from other nations such as the Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians) and the shackles of invented observances, statutes and laws that became the basis for a despotic micro-management by religious leaders of the lives of ordinary Jews. It superceded the original Torah given to Moses, though it is claimed to be an elaboration of it. The religious leaders assumed divine authority and demanded absolute obedience, even in their distortion of scripture. This religion is known as “Rabbinic Judaism” (God continuing to speak to the Jewish nation through the Rabbis, the religious scholarly elite) and has remained the dominant form of religion practiced by most Jews till today. Thus, the religion of Islām of Moses (and of all Prophets) and the task of preaching monotheism to the world that was left with the Children of Israel was turned by the religious elite into a racial, tribal, nationalistic doctrine centred around land.

writing as the Talmud—which they had used to abrogate and distort the Mosaic law in the name of explanation and legal interpretation, thereby assuming divine authority for themselves. Jesus’ opposition to their doctrine and his severe repudiation of their ancestors’ past deeds and their “traditions of the elders” brought him scorn.

Jesus (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) is reported to have said in the Gospels: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets.”<sup>23</sup> As for the mention of tombs and monuments, this is similar to what eventually entered the Muslim nation—as prophesied by Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)—among the grave-worshippers who build mausoleums and tombs and offer worship to the inhabitants who are claimed to provide intercession, fulfilment of needs and removal of calamities. It is what Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) warned against, cursing those [from the Jews and Christians] who had taken the graves of their Prophets as places of worship, an act that led them ultimately to worship the Prophets themselves. This was a warning to the Muslim nation, lest they follow in the same footsteps.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Gospels: “And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him [Jesus], ‘Why do your disciples not walk according to the traditions of the elders?’”<sup>25</sup> Jesus replied: “You have disregarded the commandment of God to keep the tradition of

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 23:29-31.

<sup>24</sup> In the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’ishah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا) who said that the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “May Allāh curse the Jews and Christians, they took the graves of the Prophets as places of worship.” Related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Despite these severe warnings, Muslim sects since around the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries hijrah (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) have followed in their footsteps—as the Messenger also prophesied—and fallen into worship of saints and tombs.

<sup>25</sup> Mark 7:5.

men.” He went on to say, “You neatly set aside the commandment of God to maintain your own tradition... Thus you make the word of God of none effect by your tradition that you have handed down.”<sup>26</sup>

The two central issues raised by Jesus were a) *tawḥīd* (pure monotheism) as the Jews had fallen into shirk (associationism) and other grave sins and b) *ittibāʿ* (following the law faithfully), as the Jewish religious elders had disobeyed the law through their excesses and iniquities and also distorted the law through clever semantic devices, additions and alterations.

Plots were hatched against Jesus. He faced accusations of sorcery and idolatry and of performing miracles through magic. He was subsequently depicted in Talmudic literature as a madman, idolator and sorcerer<sup>27</sup> and his mother, Mary (عَلَيْهَا السَّلَام) was reviled and accused of enormous things.<sup>28</sup> The early Jewish believers in Jesus were branded as heretics and referred to as *ha-Nozrim*, followers of *Yeshu ha-Nozri* (Jesus of Nazareth), they were considered more dangerous than Jesus himself because of their threat to the “national existence”.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mark 7:8-9. The “traditions of the elders” were not in written form at the time of Jesus, but were later committed to writing as the Babylonian Talmud, consisting of two parts: a) the Mishnah, which is the basic oral law that was the subject of contention between Jesus and Pharisees which was put into writing around 200 years after Jesus and b) the Gemara which is the commentary upon the Mishnah and is the essence of the Talmud.

<sup>27</sup> Refer to “*Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar and the Liturgy of the Synagogue: Texts and Translations*” by Dr. Gustaf Dalman, translated into English by A.W. Streane, Deighton Bell, Cambridge, 1893, and the more academic work by the expert, prolific scholar and Professor of Jewish Studies, Peter Schäfer, “*Jesus in the Talmud*”, Princeton University Press, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> In Sanhedrin 106a, she is accused of “playing the harlot with carpenters.” *The Babylonian Talmud*, The Soncino Press, London, (1936). The editors note, “Though no name is mentioned to shew which woman is meant, the mother of Jesus may be alluded to, which theory is strengthened by the statement that she mated with a carpenter.”

<sup>29</sup> Refer to Jongeneel, J. *Jesus Christ in World History*. (2009) p. 83.

With the development of the Pauline-Roman rendition of “Christianity”, Jews countered the exaggerated status of Jesus in the Gospels by providing a counter-narrative that is documented in the Babylonian Talmud. Studies in this contested subject have convincingly established as factual the negative and vilifying Talmudic image of Jesus.

In his book “*Jesus in the Talmud*”, Professor of Jewish Studies at Princeton University Peter Schafer—on the basis of his studies of manuscripts—writes that the various pieces in the Talmud (often with cryptic references) present, “polemical counternarratives that parody the New Testament stories, most notably the story of Jesus’ birth and death. They ridicule Jesus’ birth from a virgin, as maintained by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and they contest fervently the claim that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Most remarkably, they counter the New Testament Passion story with its message of the Jews’ guilt and shame as Christ killers. Instead, they reverse it completely: yes, they maintain, we accept responsibility for it, but there is no reason to feel ashamed because we rightfully executed a blasphemer and idolater. Jesus deserved death, and he got what he deserved. Accordingly, they subvert the Christian idea of Jesus’ resurrection by having him punished forever in hell and by making clear that this fate awaits his followers as well, who believe in this impostor.”<sup>30</sup>

The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia states, “The Jewish legends in regard to Jesus are found in three sources, each independent of the others—(1) in New Testament apocrypha and Christian polemical works, (2) in the Talmud and the Midrash, and (3) in the life of Jesus (‘Toledot Yeshu’) that originated in the Middle Ages. It is the tendency of all these sources to belittle the person of Jesus by ascribing to him illegitimate birth, magic, and a shameful death... The earliest authenticated passage ascribing illegitimate birth to Jesus is that in Yeb. iv. 3.... and here occur also the two

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<sup>30</sup> *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton University Press, (2007) p. 9.

expressions so often applied to Jesus in later literature—איש פלוני (= ‘that anonymous one,’ the name of Jesus being avoided) and ממזר (=‘bastard’; for which in later times איש אורו was used).”<sup>31</sup> For the charges of worshipping Balaam, questioning religious authority and leading Israel astray Jesus is said to be punished in Hellfire in “boiling hot excrement”.<sup>32</sup> References to Jesus were obscured by cryptic terms and later medieval versions of the Talmud (and other writings) were edited to avoid reprisals from Christians in Europe.

In the Soncino Press translation of the Babylonian Talmud, various footnotes by the editors make clear that the figure of Jesus is being alluded to. The Jewish Encyclopedia also affirms in its entry for “Balaam” that this is a code word for Jesus in Sanhedrin 106b and Gittin 57a.<sup>33</sup> Numerous interviews can be found on Youtube in which Rabbis are questioned about these beliefs and they respond with either candid affirmation,<sup>34</sup> justification (stating “maybe he deserved to die”) or evasion.

It should be noted that there are two elements to the Jewish treatment of Jesus and his followers. The first is their rejection of Jesus, the Messiah and their resentment of his challenge to their authority, their excommunication of the earlier Jewish Christians and considering them a threat to the “national identity” of Jews. The second is their reaction to the deification of Jesus in Pauline-Roman Christianity (considering this to be idolatry and paganism) and to its leaders and followers. They are correct in this regard though they are in manifest error for rejecting Jesus the Messiah, out of arrogance and disbelief.

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<sup>31</sup> The Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 7, p. 170.

<sup>32</sup> Gittin 57a, Gittin, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Volume 21, The Soncino Press, London, (1936), p. 261.

<sup>33</sup> The Jewish Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 469.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Rabbi Felix Rogan, Director of Temple Mount Centre, Jerusalem, states that “our sources” [referring to the Talmud] indicate that “Jesus was a witch or a sorcerer with an eye for the ladies.” Refer to the following clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouLodOujbbg>

Speaking of the Christians and Jews, Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

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

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

A group from the Children of Israel rejected Jesus and a group believed, and they are referred to as “Jewish Christians”, the supporters of Jesus the Messiah. However, after the ascension of Jesus, these followers split into groups and differed with each other. A group remained true believers, upon monotheism and the law, they said that Jesus was the slave and prophet of Allāh who was raised up to Heaven. Others exaggerated in Jesus: Some said he was the son of Allāh, raised by Allāh to Himself and others said he was Allāh incarnate and rose to the heaven.<sup>35</sup> From here, the path was laid out for further deification and the corruption and disappearance of the original message of Jesus.

Those mentioned in the verse who were supported and became dominant were the Muslims and those Christians who accepted Islām after Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They were aided by

<sup>35</sup> Refer to the Qur’ān commentaries of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Baghawī and others. Al-Ṭabarī explains, citing from Ibn ‘Abbās: That [prior to Islām] the Jacobites said Jesus was Allāh and the Nestorians said Jesus was the son of Allāh, and those who remained Muslims (true monotheists observing the law) said Jesus was the slave and messenger of Allāh. These two factions persecuted the believing faction—the true message of Jesus being obscured thereby—until Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was sent whereupon the truth became manifest.

the proof of the Qur'ān which had established the truth regarding Jesus the Messiah and his mother Mary.<sup>36</sup> The proof of any “Christian” who accepts Islām and the Islāmic viewpoint of Jesus and his mother Mary is dominant over those Christians who have strayed from the true message of Jesus, just as it is dominant over those who rejected and reviled him.

In debates between Muslims—the true followers of Jesus the Messiah—and Christians on the subject of the true nature of Jesus, the strength of argument of Muslims is clear, apparent, agreeable to instinct, natural disposition, common sense and reason and is supported by historical fact and uncorrupted revelation. It is for this reason that large numbers of Western, well-educated though confused and disillusioned Christians are accepting Islām after learning and studying the Qur'ānic presentation of Jesus and his message. The overwhelming reason given by them for their conversion and accepting the Qur'ānic account of Jesus is the resolution of conflict and confusion created by Christian doctrine that had been troubling them.

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<sup>36</sup> This is the explanation of the early Qur'ānic commentators



## Jesus in Islām

The Qur’ān notes the contention between the Jews and Christians regarding Jesus and the differing the Christians fell into regarding the status of Jesus shortly after his ascent. The Qur’ān therefore clarifies the truth of that wherein they differed. **Jesus Son of Mary** (عَلِيهِ السَّلَام) is a righteous prophet amongst the Prophets of Allāh such as Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon and he brought the same message as them. He was miraculously born of a chaste and righteous woman through Allāh’s spoken word [of command] (“Be!”) which instructed Jibrīl (Gabriel) to breathe of a created spirit into Mary through which he was conceived and born.

إِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّلِكُهُ يُمَرِّمُ إِنَّ آلَ اللَّهِ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ.

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

Hence, Jesus is the word and the spirit of Allāh in the sense explained, he was created through Allāh’s word of command. As confirmation of his prophethood, he spoke whilst in the cradle (to defend his mother from calumny), healed the sick and raised the dead. He came to confirm the Torah (the law) and preach the Gospel (the news).

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ.

“And He [Allāh] will teach him writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. And [make him] a messenger to the Children of Israel.” (3:48).

His message was not new or unique, but a confirmation of what came before: salvation through exclusively worshipping Allāh alone (monotheism) and perfection of morality and lofty character through adherence to the law. As Jesus stated:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ.

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

He came to restore the law and repudiate the extraneous traditions invented by the “elders” and their distortion of scripture. Plots were hatched against him, but Jesus was neither killed nor crucified. Rather, he was raised up to Allāh and saved from the designs of those who plotted against him.

Jesus is among the greatest of all Prophets and is highly respected in Islām. A Muslim’s faith is invalid without belief in Jesus.<sup>37</sup> Muslims are in fact the true followers of Jesus today, just as they are also the true followers of Moses.<sup>38</sup> Prophet

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<sup>37</sup> By name, Moses is mentioned around 120 times in the Qur’ān, Jesus around twenty-five and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) only four times, indicating the status that Moses and Jesus have in Islām. Had Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) been the author of the Qur’ān his own name would have been more prominent. Allāh (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) stated:

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرَى مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنَّا نَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْنَا إِنَّا إِنَّمَا نَنْذِيرُ  
مُذِبِينَ

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

The message of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is a continuation of the message of the previous Prophets.

<sup>38</sup> As for what is known as Judaism today, it is not what Moses originally called to, Moses called to Islām (submission to Allāh with pure monotheism, singling Him out with all forms of worship), as did all the Prophets and Messengers. Judaism is named after the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Jewish Encyclopedia makes a distinction between the original Mosaic teachings and Rabbinic Judaism, a later development which has remained the main character of Judaism till today. The Jewish Encyclopedia mentions that the Israelite faith underwent frequent changes throughout the ages. It was strongly affected and moulded by the beliefs and practices of host nations such as Egypt, Persia and Babylonia. The Qur’ān rehearsed to Jews in the era of Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) the great favours Allāh had bestowed upon the Children of Israel when they had been upon right guidance and were the best of nations. It reminded them how

Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “Both in this world and the next, I am the nearest of all the people to the son of Mary, and all the prophets are paternal brothers, and there has been no prophet between me and him (Jesus).”<sup>39</sup> The Prophet also said, “Whoever testifies that no deity is worthy of worship but Allāh alone, without any partners, that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger, that Jesus is the servant of Allāh, His Word which He bestowed upon Māryam, a Spirit from Him, and that Paradise is true and Hellfire is true, then he will enter Paradise through any of the eight gates of Paradise he wishes.”<sup>40</sup>

Regarding the statement of Allāh:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَيْنَهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَأَمِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ - وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً أَنْتَهُمْ خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا.

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

This verse was revealed in relation to various factions of the Christians (Jacobites, Nestorians and others). They had various sayings such as, “Jesus is Allāh”, others said, “He is the son of Allāh” and others said, “He is the third of three.”

their religious leaders had departed from the guidance of Moses, altered their scripture and law, entered into the practice of sorcery, fell into polytheism, contended with their prophets and distorted the religion of Islām they were ordered to follow.

<sup>39</sup> Reported by Imām al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ.

<sup>40</sup> Reported by Imām Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ.

The Islāmic commentators of the Qur'ān<sup>41</sup> provide the following elaboration of the meaning of the above verse, as clarification and admonition to the Christians:

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

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<sup>41</sup> Refer to the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarī and al-Baghawī.

Earth, save that Allāh bestowed miracles upon Jesus as a sign of his prophethood. Desist from this statement of “Three,” believe in the absolute unicity of Allāh and worship only Him alone. This is the straight path indicated by authentic, uncorrupted revelation and sound reason.

### What Jesus Will Say on the Day of Resurrection

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated in the Qur’ān:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَ الْهَيْنِ مِنْ  
 دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ  
 عَلِمْتَهُ تَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ  
 إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ آعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مِمَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ  
 فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ إِنْ نُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَلِإِنَّهُمْ  
 عِبَادُكَ وَإِن تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ فإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.

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

## Repudiation of the Jews and Christians for Rejecting and Deifying Jesus the Messiah

The Qur'ān repudiates the Christians for attributing divinity to Jesus, making him one of three in the Trinity, and worshipping him and his mother alongside Allāh. Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) stated:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا  
عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ. أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ  
وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ. مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ  
الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمْ آيَاتِنَا ثُمَّ أَنْظِرْ  
أَنَّى يُؤفَكُونَ. قُلْ أَنْعَبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَاللَّهُ هُوَ  
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ.

“They have certainly disbelieved who say, ‘Allāh is the third of three.’ And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment. So will they not repent to Allāh and seek His forgiveness? And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful. The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded. Say, ‘Do you worship besides Allāh that which holds for you no [power of] harm or benefit while it is Allāh who is the Hearing, the Knowing?’.” (5:73-76).

The Qur'ān also repudiates those Jews who slandered Mary, rejected Jesus the Messiah, rejected his message and claimed to have killed him.

وَيَكْفُرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ هُبْتُنَا عَظِيمًا. وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ  
مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي  
شَكٍّ مِمَّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا. بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا. وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لِيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ - قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ - وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا.

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

### The Non-Reliability of the Torah and Gospel

Finally, Muslims hold that the Torah and the Gospel have undergone alteration and distortion over time and are no longer accurate representations of what Allāh revealed to Moses and Jesus. Rebuking the Jews and Christians, Allāh stated:

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

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

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

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

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

### The Qur’ān Clarifies and Establishes the Truth Wherein the Jews and Christians Differed

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

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

يُؤْمِنُونَ

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

The Qur’ānic message regarding Jesus is clear and it establishes the truth of that wherein the recipients of the Book—Jews and Christians—differed and developed enmity against each other.

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



## The Monotheism of the Prophets

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

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

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ آعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

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

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

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

The monotheism which the Prophets called to is not merely to believe in a creator, provider and sustainer because this is already rooted in innate, natural disposition. Every child is born with this predisposition and it is referred to as the *fiṭrah*.

Rather, the monotheism of the Prophets it is to exclusively single out Allāh with all forms of worship. These forms include love (*maḥabbah*), fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajā*), reliance (*tawakkul*), bowing (*sujūd*), prostration (*rukū*), prayer (*ṣalāt*), invocation (*du‘ā*), seeking aid (*isti‘ānah*), soliciting rescue (*istighāthah*) by way of example and include both the inward (the heart, its belief and its feelings, emotions and states) and the outward (the tongue and the limbs, utterances and deeds).

Thus, claiming to believe in one God and Creator whilst directing these forms and types of worship to others, be they angels, prophets, saints [pious men whether dead or alive], stones, trees, idols, the sun, moon and stars or any of the elements or forces or intertwined ways and means and causes and effects is a contradiction. It is a violation of monotheism,

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

Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) said:

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَنِ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ

**“And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself.” (2:130).**

The Islāmic message of all the Prophets is built upon two mighty foundations:

Firstly, that Allāh is exclusively worshipped alone, no partners are associated with Him in worship. Secondly, that He is not worshipped except through what He legislated. The message of the Prophets combines between these two with the second being a completion of the first.<sup>42</sup> The Jews and Christians departed from both of these foundations. They worshipped others besides Allāh and distorted, abrogated or, in the case of the Christians, did away with the law altogether and worshipped upon ignorance, their own innovations and adoption of the rituals of the Pagans.

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

This is the way of Abraham, Isaac, Ismael, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, the Israelite prophets, Jesus and Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). It is to worship Allāh alone and to worship Him only through what He legislated and ordered. The treatment of monotheism in

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<sup>42</sup> In Islām, whilst deeds are essential to faith and are required for salvation, none will enter Paradise except through the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allāh.

the Qurʾān and the Prophetic traditions is vast, comprehensive and complete. It is a completion and perfection of the message of all of the Prophets. The Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The prophets are paternal brothers, their mothers are different, but their religion is one.”<sup>43</sup>

Traces of this message of Islām can still be found in what remains of the Torah and the Gospel. In Deuteronomy 6:4 we find: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” In Zechariah 14:9: “On that day there will be [but] one Lord and His name will be the One”. And in Mark 12:29: “‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one’.” The meaning is lost in translation,<sup>44</sup> but these statements, in the original Hebrew or Aramaic יְהוָה אֶחָד, יְהוָה אֶחָד יְהוָה, *‘eloheynu yahúwah ‘echad*<sup>45</sup> and יְהוָה אֶחָד וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶחָד *yahúwah ‘echad ush’mo ‘echad*<sup>46</sup> are identical to the statement **ilāhunā aḥād** – “Our Deity is uniquely one” – and **qul huwallāhu aḥad** – “Say: He is Allāh [who is] Uniquely One” – and the declaration of monotheism in Islām, **lā ilāha illallāh**, which means: “No deity has the right to be worshipped but Allāh alone.”

Islām is founded upon this monotheism and submission to the will of Allāh, just as Jesus himself taught in what is ascribed to him in the Gospel:

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<sup>43</sup> Related by Imām al-Bukhārī in his compilation of Prophetic traditions.

<sup>44</sup> The words *īl*, *eloh*, *ilāh* refer not to a mere creator, lord, but to a deity to whom longing and devotion is shown. Thus, deities are many and varied. The meaning of these statements of monotheism, as originally intended in all revealed books is that nothing has the right to be worshipped in truth but Allāh alone and whatever is worshipped besides Allāh is worshipped in falsehood. This is the meaning of the simple statement (لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ), *lā ilāha illallāh*. It is often incorrectly translated as “There is no god but God” which corrupts the meaning, or “There is no supreme creator but God” which is a deficient translation that eliminates the essence of the meaning.

<sup>45</sup> Meaning: Our deity (*ilāhunā*), the Lord, is one (*aḥad*).

<sup>46</sup> Meaning: The Lord is one (*aḥad*), His Name (*ism*) is One (*aḥad*).

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.<sup>47</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers’.”<sup>48</sup>

Doing “the will of the Father in heaven” means submission to the will of Allāh, which is the meaning Islām: to submit oneself to His Oneness (*al-istislām lillāhi bil-tawḥīd*) and to obey him through compliance with the law (*al-inqiyād lahū bil-ṭā’ah*) and to disavow the worship of other deities and those who fall into it (*al-barā’ah min al-shirk wa ahlihī*). This is the same message given by Jesus in the above citation. Jesus disavows those who worship him by invoking him and doing deeds in his name and affirms that only those who obey Allāh and perform His will shall attain salvation.

Finally, whilst deeds in Islām are essential to the reality of faith and to the attainment of salvation, none shall enter Paradise through his or her deeds alone, but ultimately by the grace and mercy of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ). The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Be deliberate in worship, draw near to Allāh, and give glad tidings. Verily, none of you will enter Paradise because of his deeds alone.” They said, “Not even you, O Messenger of Allāh?” The Prophet said: “Not even me, unless Allāh grants me mercy from himself. Know that the most beloved deed to Allāh is that which is done regularly even if it is small.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Submission to Allāh’s will (which means obeying Him in compliance with His command, upon a pure and strict monotheistic belief) is the meaning of “Islām” and this is what Jesus and all the Prophets called to. It is a simple message devoid of mystery, conflict, confusion and contradiction.

<sup>48</sup> Matthew. 7 :21-22.

<sup>49</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

