



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

**IN
THE GOSPEL AND THE KORAN**

ABD AL-FADI



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CHRIST IN ISLAM

Christ is mentioned 93 times in 15 verses of the Koran. Muslim thinking reverts to these verses, whenever the Person of Christ comes under discussion.

Most of the time Muslim theologians resorted to the Christian text in their interpretation of these verses. Whoever considers their writings, observes that they accepted from this text only that which seemed to agree with Muslim thought, and always refused any attempt to find agreement between the Gospel and the Koran due to the differences between the basic beliefs and traditional stories set forth in the two books. In their endeavour to uphold the validity of the Koran, they allege the alteration (corruption) of the Gospel whenever its text contradicts the Koran.

In this discussion I will try to show Koranic thought in its gradual development when it opposes the Christian doctrines. It is possible for me to begin with the statement that anyone who investigates the text of the Koran will notice that the first Koranic

verses from the Meccan period were very sympathetic to Christianity and were favourably disposed to Christ and His followers, to clergymen and monks. By the end of Muhammed's period in Medina the verses had become harsh, being hostile to Christians and entirely rejecting the deity of Christ. No doubt the reason was purely doctrinal because Muhammad saw, in the dogma of the Trinity, that which conflicts with the unity of God which Islam proclaims and on which its message is based. In repudiating any toleration of this subject there are a number of verses in the Koran which criticise severely the doctrine of the Trinity, accuse the Christians of Polytheism, of associating partners with God and of exaggeration in their religion.

Perhaps Muhammad was disturbed by the idea of the Trinity held by some heretical Christian sects which were scattered throughout the Arabian peninsula, and whose trinity consisted of God and His partner Mary, and her son I'sa. Even though no true Christian has ever stated such an idea, the Muslims have made a great issue of it which they have never abandoned, inspite of all the explanations given by Christians on every possible occasion.

There is also another deep-rooted problem. The reason for this is a verse in the Koran which says, "Remember I'sa, Son of Mary, said 'O: children of

Israel! Lo! I am the Emissary (Apostle, Ambassador) of Allah unto you, confirming that which is in My Hands from the Torah, and proclaiming good tidings of an Emissary who cometh after Me whose name is Ahmad (the Most Praised One). Yet when He came to them with proofs they said ‘This is pure magic’” (Surat As Saff – The Ranks – 6).

In a conversation Abu Jaafar al Tabari quoted from Muawiyeh ben Salih and Sa'id ben Suwaid and Al Ala bin Hilal al Sulami and I'rbād bin Sariah, saying:

“I heard the Emissary of Allah say, ‘With God I am foreordained to be the seal of the prophets. Really Adam is mixed with the earth. I will inform you first that my father Abraham prayed and I'sa also proclaimed about me and there was the vision which my mother saw. Likewise the mothers of the prophets saw that when my mother bore me, a great light issued from her, enough to light the palaces of Damascus.’”

Muslims take this statement literally, and as the Gospel is devoid of any indication of a prophecy concerning Muhammed, or any statement that Christ spoke of him, they say the Injil is corrupted.

There is a third difficulty. The reason for it is the belief of Christians in the Gospel account of Christ's suffering and his crucifixion, as a basic truth of their religion. The Koran denies the crucifixion because it

says the following about the Jews: “Because of their saying ‘We slew the Messiah, I’sa the Son of Mary’ – they slew him not nor crucified him but it appeared to them as if it was so, and lo! those who disagree concerning him are themselves in doubt about him; they have no knowledge of him other than the following of an opinion; they definitely did not slay him, but Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever mighty, wise” (Surat an Nisa – Women – 157).

There is a fourth difficulty. The reason for this is the belief of Christians that Christ is the Son of God. The Koran has condemned this belief in a series of verses which I will mention in their appropriate places in this booklet, along with the interpretations and comments of scholars.



DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST IN THE KORAN

In spite of the opposition of Islam to the basic Christian doctrines the Koran acknowledges Christs' attributes and dignity which put him on a higher level than human beings. These characteristics were manifested in his way of life and conduct, his message and his person. When we compare these characteristics with those which the Koran mentions concerning the prophets and apostles, we see that it does not give any of them, not even Muhammad himself, those special characteristics pertaining to Christ.

1) His Miraculous Conception.

We read in the Koran, "And Mary, daughter of Imran, whose womb was chaste, therefore We breathed therein from Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was from the obedient." (Surat El Tahrim – Banning – 12. See also Surat El Anbiya – The Prophets – 91.)

Al Fakhr al Razi says, "We breathed therein of our Spirit" means "in I'sa", as I'sa was in her abdomen.

There is disagreement over who breathed. Some say the breathing was from Allah – as Allah says, “We breathed therein of Our Spirit,” by which it appears it was Allah himself who breathed. Others say that the one who breathed was Gabriel, because it is said in a statement attributed to Gabriel, “I grant to you.”

There is also disagreement over the manner of this breathing. (1) There is the saying of Wahb that Gabriel breathed into her breast and it reached her womb.

(2) Another version is that he breathed into the hem of her garment and she conceived.

(3) Al Saddi said, “He took hold of her sleeve and breathed into her side, and it entered her breast and she conceived. Then Mary’s sister, the wife of Zachariah, came to visit and help her, and while she was assisting her she knew that Mary was pregnant, and Mary mentioned her state to her. The wife of Zachariah said ‘I find the child in my womb worships that which is in yours.’” Thus the statement (believing in the Word of Allah). (4) The breathing was in her mouth and reached her womb and immediately she conceived.

Ibn Abbas said, “Gabriel opened the inner garment with his fingers and breathed inside.” The saying, “whose body was chaste” means she kept

herself chaste and maintained her virtue, and, “We breathed therein of our Spirit” means the breathing was into the opening of her garment. It is also said, “We (i. e. Allah) created whatever appears in it (womb of Mary).”

Mu’qatil, in his explanation of the words, “She believed in the words of her Lord” said they mean, “in I’sa” and al Hasan, when reading the Koran, indicated this by substituting ”Word” of her Lord, instead of “Words”; and I’sa is called the “Word of Allah” in a number of places in the Koran.

2) His Miraculous Birth.

The Koran mentions this conversation between the virgin Mary and the angel of the Lord when he came with the announcement of Christ’s birth. “He said, ‘I am a messenger of the Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless boy’; she said ‘How can I have a boy when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste’. He said, ‘So it will be’. Thy Lord says, ‘It is easy for me. And we will make him a revelation to mankind and a mercy from us, and it is a thing ordained’” (Surat Mariam-Mary – 19 to 21).

Al Baidawi has commented on the miraculous birth of Jesus saying, “That distinction sets Christ apart from other humans and messengers, because he was born without any human embrace or relationship.”

But Al Fakhr el Razi comments on the subject thus:

a) Concerning the words “I bestow on thee a faultless boy,” he said, “Faultless means three things: First, that he is without sin; secondly that he grew in integrity, as it is said that he who has no sin is chaste and in the growing plant there is purity; thirdly, he was above reproach and pure.

b) The words, “We make him a revelation for mankind” mean we make his birth a sign to mankind, as he was born without a father; and, “a mercy from Us” means mankind will be blessed by the manifestation of these signs for they will be overwhelming indications of his truthfulness and will make the acceptance of his word more likely.

Al Imam Abu Jaafar al Tabari said in explanation of the words “faultless boy”, – and basing it on the saying of Abu Amr, – “the chaste boy is pure from sin.” Thus the Arabs say, “a youth pure and chaste, outstanding and excellent.”

3) He was Blessed of God.

We read in Surat Mariam these words as spoken by Christ, “He hath made Me blessed wherever I may be” (Surat Mariam – Mary – 30).

At Tabari, quoting Yunus ibn Abd al Ala and Sufyan said that the explanation of “hath made Me

blessed” means “He hath made me a ’teacher of good’”.

Suleiman bin Abd al Jabbar, quoting Muhammed bin Yazid bin Hunais al Makhzoumi, said, “I heard Ibn al Ward, a slave of the Bani Makhzoum say. A scholar encountered another more learned than himself and, after greeting him, said ‘What should be manifested from my knowledge?’ He said ‘The doing of good and the refraining from the forbidden. This is the religion of Allah, which he sent through his prophets to mankind.’” Scholars have agreed on the saying of Allah “He hath made Me (i.e. I’sa) blessed, wheresoever I be.”

4) He was supported by the Holy Spirit.

We read in Surat al Baqarah – the Cow – 253, “We gave I’sa, son of Mary, clear proofs and we supported him with the Holy Spirit.”

Ibn Abbas said, “The Holy Spirit is the name by which I’sa was raising the dead.” Abu Muslim said, “The Holy Spirit by whom he was supported was probably the pure Spirit, which Allah breathed into him, and by which he distinguished him from those whom he created in a normal manner from man and woman.”

We read in Surat an Nisa – Woman – 170, “The Messiah, I’sa, son of Mary, is a messenger of Allah,

and his Word which he conveyed unto Mary and a spirit from him. So believe in Allah and his messengers.”

The substance of these verses is that Allah gave I’sa, in his person, a spirit, and this spirit supported him in his personality. But Muslim scholars have differed in the explanation of the Holy Spirit by whom he was supported.

Ibn Ines said, “He is the Spirit which was breathed into Christ. Allah related him to himself, honouring him (Christ) and setting Him apart. The “Holy” is God, and the saying ‘We breathed in him of our Spirit’ is indicative of this.”

Al Suddi and Kaab said, “The Holy Spirit is Gabriel, and his support of I’sa consisted in being his companion and friend, helping and accompanying him wherever he went, until he was taken up into heaven.”

Ibn Jubair said, “Spirit of the Holy is the supreme name for Allah and by it I’sa was raising the dead.”

Al Qashani said, “Allah purposed to cleanse the body of I’sa from inherent impurities and he was an incarnate spirit in an ideal and spiritual body. he (Allah) cleansed his spirit and purified him from being influenced by natural instincts and environmental characteristics, so that he could be

supported by the Holy Spirit on whose form he was.”

Ibn A'ta said, “The most excellent plants are those whose fruits are like I'sa, the Spirit of God.”

Ibn Abbas said, “As it was the Spirit which was breathed into him and the Holy One is Allah so he is the spirit of Allah.”

5) His Ascension at the time of His Death.

We read that, “Allah said ‘O I'sa, lo, I am gathering You and causing You to ascend to me and am cleansing You of those who disbelieve’” (Surat al Imran 55).

Al Fakhri al Razi said, “There are many interpretations of this verse”, of which we quote two:

a) The meaning of ‘I will cause you to ascend’ is that Allah would take him to the place of his honour and make that ascension honour and exaltation to I'sa.”

Similar to this is the saying, “I go to My Lord” (this statement is taken from the Gospel).

b) “The interpretation of ‘causing you to ascend unto me’ means that Allah was raising him to a place where no one could judge him, for on earth men pass various kinds of judgement on one another, but in heaven there is no true or omniscient Judge except Allah.”

6) His Infallibility in His Message and His Way of Life.

Some people imagine that infallibility of message is definitely linked with infallibility of conduct, but the verses of the Koran contradict this idea. We read many verses which make it clear that the prophets' lives were not without blame, neither before nor after their message. But in the Koran Christ's life was infallible, as was his message. The angel witnessed to that when he said to his mother, "I am the messenger of your Lord and I bestow on you a faultless child." El Baidawi said in his comments on the word "faultless" that I'sa advanced intellectually from year to year.

7) Signs proved the uniqueness of His message.

As his message was made unique by the support of the Holy Spirit so was it also unique in the multiplicity and character of the signs attending it, which exceeded those given to any other messenger. We read, "We gave I'sa, son of Mary, clear proofs" (Surat al Baqara: the Cow; 253). The proofs being the miracles.

Al Baidawi said, "Allah bestowed on him a special assignment and made His miracles a reason for his preference above other messengers. They were clear signs and great wonders unequalled in number by any other."

8) His Omniscience.

The Koran says, “When the Son of Mary is quoted as an example, your people alienate themselves from Him. Surely he is a sign for the hour (i.e. day of Judgement)” (Surat al Zukhruf: Ornaments of Gold; 57 and 61).

Al Jalalan said in his explanation of the phrase ‘a sign for the Hour’ “seeing as I’sa was a Sign for the hour, he knew when it (the day of Judgement) would come. When we remember that people generally recognize that Allah is separate from his creation in that he alone knows the times, we comprehend the distinction which the Koran assigns especially to Christ.”

9) He is the Mediator near to Allah.

When we consider verse 44 of Surat al Zumar: the Troops; we find that the Koran confines the work of intercession to Allah alone, when it says: “Unto Allah belongs all intercession”. Another verse of the Koran hints that intercession is also one of the privileges of Christ, when it says, “Remember when the angel said ‘O Mary, lo, Allah gives you glad tidings of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, I’sa, Son of Mary, an outstanding personality in the world and in the hereafter, and one of those brought near” (Surat al Imran 44).

Al Jalalan said in explanation of this verse, “Out-

standing in this world by the ministry of prophecy and in the hereafter by intercession and position and being one of those brought near unto Allah.”

Al Tabari, quoting Ibn Humaid and Salama and Ibn Ishaq and Muhammed bin Jaafar, said, “‘outstanding in the world’ means possessor of dignity and living close to Allah in the world. The words ‘in the hereafter and among those brought near’ mean that he is one of those whom Allah brings near to himself on the Day of Resurrection, and who will dwell close to him.”

Al Razi said concerning I’sa, “He was outstanding in the world because he obeyed the call of Allah, and raised the dead, healed the blind and the leper; and will be outstanding in the hereafter because Allah will make him an intercessor for his people.”

However the saying, “one brought near” has various viewpoints.

First, that Allah had made the position of being near to him a great privilege for the angels and would admit I’sa to their rank and dignity. Secondly, this description is an announcement that he would be raised to heaven and associated with angels.

Thirdly, not every outstanding person in the hereafter would be close to Allah, because those in paradise are of various ranks and degrees.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST IN THE KORAN

1) His Power to Create.

In the Koran there is the following statement: “When Allah saith ‘O I’sa, son of Mary! Remember My favour unto Thee... and how I taught Thee the Scripture and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel: and how Thou didst shape of clay as it were the likeness of a bird and didst blow into it and it was a bird, by my permission’” (Surat al Maidat-The Table Spread – 109).

Ibn Arabi in his interpretation of this verse said, “Allah bestowed on I’sa a Spirit, and added the power to breathe life into what he had made of clay. To none other than I’sa has Allah given this power to impart life.”

2) He spoke at His birth.

When Mary gave birth to her son, her people blamed her, thinking that she had born him out of wedlock. “Then she pointed to him and they said ‘How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy?’

He said 'Lo! I am a slave of Allah. He hath given me the scripture and hath appointed me a prophet'" (Surat Mariam [Mary] 28-29).

It has been said by trustworthy scholars that when Mary's people went too far in reproaching her she was silent and pointed to her child as if she would say to them, "He will answer you."

As Suddi said, "When she pointed to him they were very angry, and said, 'Her mockery of us is worse than her adultery'".

Another story relates that I'sa was feeding at his mother's breast, and when he heard the complaint against Mary he stopped feeding, turned his face to the people, and resting on his left hand, pointed with his finger and spoke to them.

There is also another story, told by Al Razi which says Zachariah came to her during this debate among the Jews concerning her, and said to I'sa, "Speak for yourself if you have been commanded so to do" and I'sa said, "I am the servant of Allah. He has given me wisdom and made me a prophet".

3) He raised the dead and healed the blind and the leper.

The Koran states, in the words of Christ, "I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead by the permission of Allah" (Surat al Imran: 49).

It is known that the word “blind” in this quotation means those who were born in that condition. It is also a fact that leprosy is a dangerous disease, and both ailments are beyond the power of man to cure.

Al Muthanna, quoting Ibn Ishaq and Hafs ibn Umar and Ikrima, mentioned that Allah told I’sa to repeat this verse to the Jews by way of proving he was a prophet because blindness and leprosy have no cure.

Concerning the phrase “I raise the dead”; Wahb ibn Munabbih related that while I’sa was playing with some boys, a youth sprang on one and striking him with his foot killed him, then threw him bleeding into the arms of I’sa. People were told of this and accused I’sa, then seized him, took him to a judge, and said, “This boy has killed another boy”. The judge questioned him and I’sa replied, “I do not know the one who killed him neither am I one of his friends”. Then they wanted to strike I’sa so he said to them, “Bring the boy to me”, and they asked him, “Why?” He replied, “I will ask him who killed him.” They asked, “How can he speak to you if he is dead?” Then they took him to the dead boy and I’sa began to pray for him and Allah restored him to life.

From Wahb comes another story, which says, “A great number of sick people, possibly some fifty thousand, once crowded around him. Those who were able

to do so reached him, but for those who could not do so Jesus walked amongst them and cured them by prayer”.

Another from Kalbi, who says, “Jesus used to raise the dead by the cry ‘O Thou Who art alive-O Everlasting One’. He raised Lazarus his friend and he called Shem, the son of Noah, from his grave and he came forth alive. He passed by the dead son of an old woman and invoked Allah for him, and the deceased descended from his bier, returned to his family, and continued his normal life.”

4) He had knowledge of things hidden and invisible.

The Koran mentions Christ as saying: “I announce to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses” (Surat Al Imran 49).

In regard to this scholars see two factors. The first, that I’sa, from the beginning, could discern hidden matters. As Suddi relates; “While he was playing with the children he told them what their mothers and fathers did. He told one boy, ‘Your mother has hidden something for you’, so the boy went home and cried until he received it. Then the people said to their children ‘Don’t play with this magician’ and they collected them into a home. I’sa came to look for them and the people said to him, ‘They are not in the

house' so he asked, 'Who then is in this house?' They replied; 'pigs'. I'sa said, 'Thus they will be for they are pigs'".

The second factor is that discernment of hidden matters is miraculous. Astrologers who tell the future and reveal hidden matters can only do so by questioning. They also confess they often make mistakes. But knowledge of the unknown, without recourse to aids, or previous knowledge, cannot be without inspiration.

5) He brought a table spread with food from heaven.

The Koran says; "When the disciples said, 'O I'sa, son of Mary! Is Thy Lord able to send down for us a table spread with food from heaven?' He said, 'Reverence Allah, if you are true believers'. They said, 'We wish to eat thereof, that we may satisfy our hearts, and know that Thou hast spoken truth to us, and that we may be witnesses thereof'. I'sa, son of Mary, said 'O Allah, send down a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, for the first of us, and the last of us, and a sign from Thee. Give us sustenance, for Thou art the best of Sustainers'" (Surat al Maidat — The Table Spread — 112–114).

The religious leaders (Imams) have disagreed in describing the descent of the 'table'; also how it looked and what was on it. Qatada, quoting from Jabir and Yasir ibn Ammar and Muhammed, says, "The table

was sent down spread with bread and meat. The disciples had asked I'sa for food they could eat, and which would not cease. He said to them 'I will do this for you and it will remain, if you do not hide it nor cheat. If you do you will be punished'. But before the day had passed they cheated and hid food, so the 'table' was taken up and they were transformed into monkeys and pigs".

Ibs Abbas said, "I'sa said to the children of Israel, 'Fast for thirty days, then ask Allah what you will and he will give it'. They fasted thirty days and when they had finished they said, 'O I'sa, we have fasted and are hungry. Call upon God to send down a table of food from heaven'. Then I'sa put on a coarse woolen garment covered with ashes and called upon Allah and angels came with a 'table' on which were seven loaves and seven huge fish. This was placed among them and there was sufficient for all".



THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE KORAN

Whoever considers the person of Christ as revealed in the Koran discovers that the subject of his "Sonship" raises much controversy. There are five theories concerning it.

1) It is blasphemy.

The Koran states, "It is not fitting to the majesty of Allah that he decreeth a thing. He saith only unto it 'Be!' and it is" (Surat mariam 34).

It also says, "They say, 'The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son'. Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing, whereby the heavens are almost torn, and the earth is split asunder, and the mountains fall in ruins, that ye ascribe unto the Beneficent a son. It is not meet for (the majesty of) the Beneficent that he should take a son. There is none in the heavens and in the earth but cometh unto the Beneficent as a slave" (Surat Mariam: 89-94).

It says in Al Fakhri al Razi's commentary, "I know that Allah, when he replied to the idolaters, spoke to those who asserted that he had a son. The Jews said that Azer was the son of God, and the Christians said that Christ was the Son of God; and the Arabs said the angels were the daughters of God, and all of them are included in the verse, "They say 'The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son...'"

The words, "a disastrous thing" mean it was a shocking denial of truth. Thus the tearing of the heavens and the splitting of the earth and the collapse of mountains mean that the wrath of Allah is on him who says, "The Beneficent has taken to himself a son".

2) It is a uniting of part of creation with the Creator.

In Surat az Zukhruf-Ornaments of Gold – 15, we read, "They allot to him a portion of his bondmen. Lo! man is an obvious blasphemer. Does he take daughters from that which he created and honoureth you with sons?"

Here there arises the question: "What relationship is there between Creator and created that a part of creation can be joined to the Creator?" It is physically and mentally impossible. Also they (the Muslims) go on from the statement, "There is none in the heavens and in the earth but cometh unto him as a slave" to say, "It is not possible for a slave to become a lord", and

from the words, “the Creator of heaven and earth” they affirm it is not possible for the created to be a creator.

We, as Christians, affirm that it is not possible to join anything to Allah from his creatures, but according to our belief, this cannot be applied to any relationship between the Father and the Son, as the “Son” is one in essence with the “Father”, and the Koran itself says that Christ is the Word of God, and a Spirit from Him. So the uniting of part of God’s creation with Him has nothing to do with the matter of the Sonship of Christ.

3) A “Son” can only be born from male and female.

Here there is a problem in the understanding of Islam concerning sonship, seeing as the Koran states “How can he (Allah) have a child, when there is for him no consort?” (Surat An’am – Cattle – 102).

Al Baidawi has commented on this verse saying, “It is only rational to say that a child is one born of male and female, of the same kind and nature, and Allah is far above homogeneousness”.

This is the concept of Islam, with regard to the inconceivability of God as having a son. He does not have a consort and it is impossible that there could be one. This is the secret of their denial to God’s father-

hood of Christ, for there is no “sonship”, in the opinion of the Koran, except in a physical sense.

That which is written in Tabari’s “Jami al Bayan” supports this opinion. It is quoted by Wahb and Abi Zeid who say “A child must be born of male and female, and it cannot be that Allah has a consort and a child. It is he who has created all things and if there is nothing except that which Allah has created how could he have a son?”

Some scholars resort to the verse given concerning certain heretics who were originally heathen and after joining the church sought to introduce in it a heresy which claimed that Mary, the virgin, was a god. Perhaps they took her as a substitute for the goddess Venus, whom they used to worship before. They are alluded to by the learned Ahmad al Maqrizi, in his book “Al Qoul al Ibrizi” page 26, and also mentioned by Ibn Hazm in his book “Al Milal wa Al Ahwa wa Al Nihal”, page 48. Their heresy suggests that Allah had a consort and a son by her, and is obviously rejected by the Koran. But this idea is entirely foreign to Christianity. No Christian believes it. It is an insult directed against a Holy God who is free from bodily characteristics.

In fact anyone considering the Christians’ belief, which is based on the Gospel, finds that they never look upon Christ as Son of God in a physical sense, but

believe he is the Son of God, coming out from the divine presence, as in the description of Him being “the Word who was with God in the beginning”, and who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The great apostle Paul points to this truth when he says in Romans 1:1–4, “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, and set apart for the gospel of God – the Gospel he promised his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.”

4) He used to partake of food.

It is recorded in Surat al Maidat 75: “The Messiah, son of Mary, was not other than a messenger, like those who had passed away before him. His mother was a saintly woman. They both used to eat (earthly) food. See how we make the revelations clear to the people and see how they are turned away.” According to Islamic thinking the impossibility of there being divinity in Christ is clear from his humanity, for he who partakes of food, how can he be Allah?

Al Razi says in explanation of this verse, a) “Everyone who has had a mother has come from a non-

existence into being and all such were created and not Allah. b) They were poor and in need. They were in desperate need of sustenance but Allah is he who is in need of nothing so how could Christ be Allah? c) The saying “they both ate food” alludes to their humanity; for everyone who partakes of food is mortal”. (Al Razi commented that he considered this third point to be weak.)

5) The created is incapable of benefitting or harming.

Surat al Maidat 76 says, “Serve ye in place of Allah he who possesseth for you neither hurt nor use? Allah is the Hearer, the Omniscient”. Commentators have taken this verse to refer to perverted Christian claims and have said it contains a number of arguments.

a) The Jews continually opposed I’sa and sought to do him harm, but he was not able to hurt them. His friends and followers loved him, but he was unable to bring to them good or worldly gain. If one is unable to harm his enemies or bring worldly benefits, how can the mind accept that he be Allah?

In addition to this interpretation Al Baidawi said “I’sa, even if he possessed special privileges did so because God took possession of him; he did not possess them in himself”. But we say that if Jesus was merely the I’sa of the Koran — I’sa the slave — we would admit that he did not possess these powers, (to

benefit his followers or harm his enemies). But Jesus, as Isaiah the prophet said, is “Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6) and we thank him because his message was neither for harming, nor for giving material benefit, but was for salvation. The Koran itself says that he came as a “mercy to the world”.

b) There is a sect of Christians who say that the Jews crucified him and wounded his side and when he was thirsty and asked for water, they poured vinegar in his nostrils. How could anyone as weak as this be considered Allah?

c) The God of the world cannot be in need of any other being, but all others are in need of him. If I’sa had been Allah, he would not have been occupied in worship, for an Allah does not worship anything. It is man who worships Allah. It was generally acknowledged that he (I’sa) continued in obedience to God and worshipped him, and it was understood he did so because he was in need of obtaining benefits himself, and the ability to do harm to others. He who is thus, how can he convey benefits to others and defend them from evil? If he was like this, he was a man as other men.





THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN ISLAM

Probably the greatest controversy in the dialogue between Christianity and Islam is that which arises from the Christian belief in the divinity of Christ, which in the opinion of the Koran is blasphemy and unbelief. It is contradicted in many verses, the most important of which are four mentioned in Surat al Maidat (The Table), and a fifth in Surat an Nisa' (Woman).

1) It is stated in the Koran that, "They have disbelieved who say 'Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary'. Who can do anything against Allah, if he had willed to destroy the Messiah, Son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone on earth?" (Surat al Maidat 17)

Al Razi, in his comments on this verse, claims it contains a question. If none of the Christians say that Allah is Christ, Son of Mary, why did Allah speak like that about them, seeing as they do not say it? His answer is that many of those who believe in "incarnation" say that Allah may have become incarnate in the body of a designated person, or in his spirit and if that is so, it isn't improbable to say that some of the

Christians hold this doctrine. Yet this is not far from what Christians do maintain, because they say that the person of the Word was united with the person of I'sa.

The element of "the Word" is either a "Being" or an attribute. If he is a Being, then the personality of Allah has become incarnate in I'sa, and is one with him, and thus, according to this saying, I'sa is Allah. If we say the element of "the Word" is an expression of an attribute then the transition of an attribute from one personality to another is illogical.

Then the supposition of the transfer of the element of knowledge from Allah to I'sa necessitates that Allah himself is emptied of knowledge and he who is not omniscient is not Allah. According to their belief I'sa is Allah and it is certain that even if the Christians do not clearly state this doctrine, the result of their ideology is nothing less than that.

Allah-his name be praised-remonstrated against the corruption of this belief when he said, "Who can do anything against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah, Son of Mary, and His mother?" These words, in the opinion of commentators, mean that I'sa was the same as any other on earth in his physical appearance, nature, physique, character and conditions.

2) The Koran states, "They surely disbelieve who say: 'Lo! Allah is the Messiah, Son of Mary.' The

Messiah himself said ‘O children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil doers there will be no helpers’” (Surat al Maidat 72).

The Imam al Razi says in explaining this verse: “Allah, when he inquired about some sayings of the Jews, began here with a statement to the Christians, and spoke of a sect that said, ‘God became incarnate in I’sa and was united in his person’”.

3) Surat al Maidat 73 states, “They surely disbelieve who say ‘Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no Allah save One. If they do not desist from so saying a painful doom will fall on those who disbelieve”. Muslims start from this verse and accuse the Christians of worshipping three gods, Allah, Mary and Jesus.

Al Razi looks at the belief of the Christians in the following way: “It is said about the Christians that they claim “One Essence”, and Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and these Three are One God, even as the sun contains a disk, rays and heat. They mean by “The Father” the Personality; by “The Son” the Word; and by “The Spirit” the Life. They assert the Personality, the Word, and the Life, saying ‘The Word which is the Words of God, merged with the body of

I'sa, as water mixes with wine, and water with milk', and allege that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God". Al Razi concludes his explanation with this addition, "Now this is known to be false by instinct of the mind, for three cannot be one and one cannot be three".

4) The Koran says "And when Allah saith, 'O I'sa, Son of Mary! Didst Thou say unto mankind, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?' he saith 'Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it then, Thou knowest it. Thou knowest what is in my soul and I know not what is in Thyself. Thou only art the Knower of things hidden'" (Surat al Maidat 116).

Al Razi finds problems in this saying:

The first is linked with the meaning of the statement of Allah, "O I'sa, son of Mary remember my grace is upon you". He relates this to the distinction Christ will have on the day of resurrection.

The second; if Allah, being omniscient, knew that I'sa did not say "take me and my mother for two gods" – and it is not fitting that the omniscient should ask the question – why did he address him? If it be said that the purpose of it was to reprimand and rebuke the Christians, then we say that no Christian has believed the statement that I'sa and Mary were

two gods besides Allah. Therefore, how is it possible to link this statement with them seeing as no one has ever made it?

The answer given to the first point, “Why did he address him?”, is that it was a question stated in the form of a denial.

The answer given to the second is that Allah is the Creator. However, Christians believe that the Creator of the miracles performed by I’sa and Mary was I’sa and Allah did not create them at all. If that is so then the Christians have said that the Creator for those miracles is I’sa and Mary and not Allah. So truly they have asserted to some extent that I’sa and Mary are two gods beside Him. Thus Allah is no longer God. Al Razi believes that various statements and stories agree with this interpretation.

However, commentators on the Koran disagree about the exact time as to when God asked Jesus this question.

Al Suddi for instance says that God, when he raised Jesus, Son of Mary, unto himself, asked him, “Didst Thou say unto mankind ‘Take me and my mother for two gods?’”

But Qatada says “This question has not yet been asked. It will be asked at the Resurrection”. Ibn Jarir and Maisara agree with this opinion.

5) “O people of the Scriptures! Do not exaggerate in your religion, nor say anything about Allah save the truth. The Messiah, I’sa, Son of Mary, is a messenger of Allah, and his Word, which he conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and his messenger and say not ‘Three’. Cease! It is better for you! Allah is only One God” (Surat an Nisa’ – Women – 170).

Abu Jaafar at Tabari in commenting on this verse said “O people of the Gospel, you Christians! Do not go beyond the truth in your religion or exaggerate, and do not say about I’sa what is not true. Stop, O you speakers, saying that Allah is ‘Third of Three’. You are speaking lies and upholding polytheism. The ceasing from stating it will be better for you for there will be sudden punishment for you from Allah for this saying, if you continue, and do not return to the truth which you have been authorized to defend”.

The knotty problem in Islam is the belief that the Trinity means three Gods: Allah and I’sa and Mary; but Christianity, throughout the centuries has proclaimed, before Islam and after, that the word “Trinity” (as indicating there are three gods) is never mentioned. It is a delusion of heretics whom the Church disowned and whose heresies it condemned.

The heretics belonged to the Arabs in the days of

ignorance in pre-Islamic times. From them Islam has taken this distorted idea of Christianity.





THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST IN ISLAM

In the teaching of Islam, Christ is:

1) A servant, not Lord.

According to the word of the Koran, quoting the saying of Christ, “I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture, and hath blessed and made me where-soever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive, and hath made me dutiful towards her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant or unblest” (Surat Mariam 30—34).

Al Imam al Razi commenting on this verse says, “In this phrase ‘slave of Allah’ there are four points to note.

“The first, that it does away with the erroneous belief of the Christians that I’sa is God.

“The second, if Christ, when he confessed his servitude was truthful in his statement, then truly he was Allah’s slave. If he was lying, the power he used would not have been divine, but satanic, and both suppositions would render void his being a god.

“The third, that which was the pressing need for him at that time was to remove the accusation of adultery from his mother Mary. However I’sa did not clearly deny that, but laid emphasis on the fact of his servitude, as if he made the removal of the accusation that he was equal with Allah more important than removing the accusation from his mother.

“The fourth, the removal of this accusation from Allah assists the removal of the accusation from his mother, because Allah would not choose an adulteress to bear a child for this great and high position.”

Then he comments on the Christian belief in the divine nature of Christ and says, “The belief of Christians is very confused. They have agreed that God is not in a body nor confined, yet we can put forth an argument which makes void their belief from every direction. We say that if they believe he is confined we annul their statement with the argument that all bodies are created. If they believe he is not confined then their statement that the Word merged with humanity as water mixes with wine, and fire blends with coal, is made void, because this is not reasonable except there be a physical element”.

I believe the concept of the Koran with regard to the person of Christ is based upon two truths containing a mystery which the natural man cannot comprehend.

The first truth is that Jesus, as being the Son of Mary, was the Servant of God, and this is expressed in the language of the prophets. Isaiah 52:13, and 53:11 says, "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted . . . by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."

The second truth: this attribute of "servant" is not incompatible with the Koranic statement that he is a "Word, bestowed upon Mary and a Spirit from him".

Anyone who ponders carefully the twofold meaning of this verse in the Koran sees within it the declaration of Paul in Romans 1:1-4, "as to his human nature Jesus was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead".

2) Christ is in the likeness of Adam.

It is written in the Quran; "Lo! the likeness of I'sa with Allah, is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust and then said unto him 'Be!' and he is" (Surat al Imran 59).

In Abi Jaafar al Tabari's book "Jami al Bayan" it reports that Allah said "O Muhammed! tell the Christians of Najran that my creation of I'sa without

a male progenitor was similar to that of Adam to whom I said, 'Be!', and he was; without a progenitor male or female. My creation of I'sa from his mother, without a male, is no greater miracle than my creation of Adam".

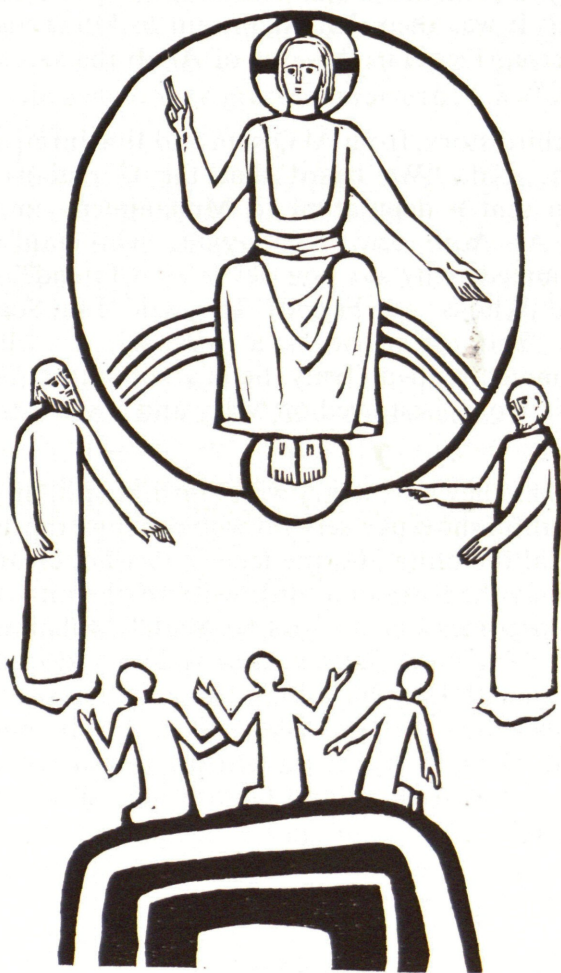
It is related that Muhammed ibn Saad, quoting his father and Ibn Abbas said "A group of people from Najran came to Muhammed, among whom were As Sayyid and Al Aqib. They said to Muhammed 'Why do you speak about our Friend?' He said 'And who is he?' They said 'I'sa. You allege he is a servant of Allah'. Muhammed replied 'Surely he is a servant of Allah'. Then they said 'Have you ever seen or been informed about I'sa?' and forthwith they left him. Then came Gabriel sent by our Lord, the Hearer and the Omniscient, and said 'Tell them, if they come to you, that the likeness of I'sa (in His creation) with Allah is like that of Adam'".

Another story from Muhammed ibn Husain, and Ahmed ibn al Mufaddal, and As Suddi, says, "When Muhammed was sent, and the people of Najran heard of him, four of their leaders, Al Aqib, and As Sayyid and Masirjus, and Jarijus, came to him and asked him what he thought of I'sa. He said, 'He is a servant of Allah and his Spirit and his Word'. They said 'No! He is Allah. He descended from his dominion and entered into Mary, was born and manifested himself.

Have you ever seen a man who was born without a father?" It was then that Allah sent to Muhammed this verse, 'I'sa is in the eyes of Allah the same as Adam'".

A third story, from Al Qisam and Ibn Juraij and Ikrima, said, "We heard that the Christians of Najran sent a deputation to Muhammed, among them Al Aqib and As Sayyid, who said 'O Muhammed, why do you revile our Friend?' He replied 'Who is your Friend?' They said 'I'sa, Son of Mary. You allege he is a servant', to which Muhammed replied 'Truly, he is a servant of Allah and his Word, bestowed on Mary and a Spirit from him'".

"Then they were angry with him and said, 'If you are truthful show us a servant who can raise the dead and heal the blind and the leper and who, creating from clay the form of a bird, will breathe into it so that it becomes a bird – isn't he Allah?' Muhammed said nothing until Gabriel came to him and said 'O Muhammed! They have blasphemed who said that Allah is Christ the Son of Mary'. Then Muhammed replied 'O Gabriel! they asked me to tell them to whom I'sa is similar', and Gabriel said 'I'sa is just as Adam'".



CHRIST IN THE HOLY BIBLE

1) The Deity of Christ.

No doubt the enquirer into Christianity will find himself confronted by many serious questions. Probably the most difficult is the deity of Christ. By this I mean the firm belief of Christians that Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary in Palestine, and lived on our earth for some time, is the Son of God, and God the Son.

It may seem that this belief is difficult for many, although the difficulty does not alter the fact of Christianity being the only true religion. The belief of Christians in the existence of three persons in the person of the one God, does not necessitate that one preceded the other in time, or that one is greater than the other, in any sense whatever. God is one but reveals himself by these names in order to show the plan of redemption.

Before starting to consider the deity of Christ, it is necessary to consider the statements in the Bible concerning the Fatherhood of God to Christ.

2) Revelations from the Father.

In the Gospel of Luke 1:31, 32 we read that the Angel of the Lord said to the virgin Mary, “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” When Jesus was born the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled. “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel – which means, ‘God with us’.” (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22–23)

Then we read, at the time of the baptism of Jesus, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:16–17).

Furthermore while Jesus was with three of his disciples on Mount Hermon, he spoke with Moses and Elijah, and “He was still speaking when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5).

3) Declarations of Christ.

Christ said in one of his parables, “I am the true

vine and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1). Then in the Gospel of John 10:27 to 30, he declared, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand . . . no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” In his parting message he said, “I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.” (John 14:12, 13).

When the Jews boasted to Christ because Moses had given them manna in the wilderness, he said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven” (John 6:32).

He also said to others, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does . . . just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.” Then he added, “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live” (John 5:19–25).

Then later, while teaching the people, he said, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:34–36).

In a dialogue with others he stated, “‘My Father is always at work to this very day, and I, too, am working’. For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:17–18). And one day he said to his listeners, “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father... and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:27–28).

When we consider this profound declaration, it is clear that neither an ordinary man, nor prophet, nor apostle, nor angel from heaven, nor chief of angels can comprehend the secret of the wonderful person of Jesus Christ. It clearly means that the nature of Christ is unlimited, for no one can comprehend Him other than the Father. Surely, if Christ is only an ordinary man it is not right that this statement be made. Without any doubt, this glorious declaration teaches

us that one of the functions of Christ, in his eternal oneness with the Father, is to reveal to us the Father who is described as "The Invisible".

This revelation, which Christ declared, may appear to be a mystery and difficult to understand. But the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of the Gospel of John to clarify it for us in a series of verses, of which the clearest is: "No one has ever seen God; but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18). This verse assures us that no human or angel has ever seen God, or knows him with the knowledge which makes him fully acquainted with his divine attributes. What was revealed to them came by inspiration or "Vision". Moses, and others of the prophets, never saw God. They received their revelations by inspiration and the source of them was the Second "Person" of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for he alone of his own accord knows the thoughts of God – the Three in One – and his purposes, for he is God who "appeared in a body" (1 Timothy 3:16).

When Jesus said to His disciples, "I and the Father are one. He who has seen me has seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in me", he was assuring them of the unity between himself and his Father, namely that he and the Father are one in essence and glory, rank and ability, will and purpose.

4) The Testimony of the Apostles.

a) When Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say I am?”

b) When Jesus asked his disciples, “‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!’” (Matthew 16:15, 16).

c) John said, “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

d) Paul said, “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5).

5) The Testimony of the Prophets.

a) Solomon the wise: “Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know! Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him” (Proverbs 30:4–5).

b) Daniel: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the

clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13, 14).

c) John the Baptist: “You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him’. ... The one who comes from above is above all ... He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony ... The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:28–36).

After the testimony of these verses we must keep in mind that Christ is called “Son of God” because of his being the “Second person” of the Godhead. So it must be understood that the words “son” and “father”, according to the Christian belief, has no connection whatever with the human idea of fatherhood and sonship.

The Son, in the Bible, is called the “Word”, the “likeness of the invisible God”, the brightness of His glory”, the “express image of His person”, and

His glory”, the “express image of His person”, and “Emmanuel (which means God with us)”. All these titles explain the word “Son”. As the word manifests the thought, revealing what is in the mind, even so the “Incarnate Word” reveals God and expresses His thought towards humanity. As the picture portrays a likeness, so Jesus portrays God, and as the light of the sun reveals its glory and is an element of the sun itself, so is Jesus the brightness of God’s glory, reflecting the glories of the spiritual nature of deity. But he, in the greatness of his love, veiled this behind the garment of the flesh, during his existence in our world, that we might see God and hear him.

From what has been said, we know that the Son was the agent who revealed the deity, and he was also the means of revealing God to the feelings of man in a very sensitive way. So also the Holy Spirit, the third “Person” of the Godhead is the mediator of God to the conscience of man, for we cannot comprehend the true nature of the revelation apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides us to an understanding of the mysteries of divine revelations. Inspired by this truth, Paul the apostle said, “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Possibly the word “Son” disturbs some people’s minds, because they immediately imagine, through its relationship with the word “Father”, that the Father

preceded the Son in time, so there must be a difference in time and of status between them. We, however, wish to assure you here that the word "Son" does not in any way indicate any inequality or precedence between them, because the word "Father" cannot be used of God unless there be the "Son", and the word "Son" requires the word "Father".

We can conclude from the Bible that God, from eternity, has had the title of "Father", so this necessitates the existence of the "Son" from eternity also. Perhaps this has originated the confusion and disagreement which most people fall into over the subject of "equality", and which is traceable to the idea that the Father must precede the Son, and the thought of there being a difference in time between the two. A more correct way of expressing it is that no one becomes a "father" until the moment when the "son" comes into being. The time, difference in this case, is imaginary and a delusion, in regard to God and his Son Jesus Christ. If we add to this, that God neither begets nor is begotten, as human beings on earth understand it, we must disassociate this idea from God and think more rationally.

We use the terms "son of truth" or "son of light" indicating the resemblance between them and truth or light. In this way, Jesus has been called "Son of God", because of the complete resemblance between Father

and Son in the person of the one God. Jesus has been called thus because he is the only complete and eternal revelation of the person of God to mankind, or, as we read in Hebrews, 1:1-2, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe." In the Gospel of John 1:14 we read that Jesus revealed the glory of God. "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."



THE DEITY OF CHRIST AND HIS HUMANITY

“Who do people say that I am?” This question was asked by Jesus of his disciples some twenty centuries ago. It is an extremely important question which has continued to be asked until the present day. Perhaps it is the greatest question ever asked throughout history, for it contains the most critical and important issue for the whole of mankind. This question will remain as long as time remains. It is the decisive dividing line between various beliefs and mentalities and civilizations and cultures. The destiny of every man depends on a decisive and complete answer to this question.

One of the distinguishing features of Christianity is that it is not afraid or worried about what is said of Christ, its Lord. He built its imposing structure and made it firm, so that the “gates of hell” shall not prevail against it. Christ himself encouraged freedom of thought to the last degree. It never appeared that he forced or commanded anyone to accept any doctrine,

or to do anything against his will. Carnegie Simpson said that Christianity, throughout its long history, has never accepted from man a faith in the person of Christ at the point of the sword, but rather a faith based on a complete assurance, which controls heart and mind alike. With this principle before us, we say today that we do not wish men to believe in the deity of Christ by constraint, or to accept in advance an opinion and be fanatical concerning it and angry at hearing any other view. Instead, we set forth before all various opinions concerning Christ which we will discuss, both their weakness and strength, with all consideration, until we arrive finally at the truth.

1) Perfect Deity.

Perhaps one of the strangest concepts was that of the Gnostics, who denied the idea of the incarnation, adhered to by the vast majority of Christians of their time. The Gnostics acknowledged the deity of Christ, but denied his humanity. They said that Christ appeared in the likeness of a man without having a real human body, and thus he was not born. He neither suffered nor actually died, because his body was a phantom or apparition visible to men. One sect among them said that the body of Christ was not material, as the bodies of other men, but that he was of special heavenly substance.

However this idea cannot be maintained in the light of the truth, which was set forth in the inspired Word from God. We read in 1 John 4:1-4; "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world".

2) Human Only.

This idea is no less strange than the above. The adherents of this sect claim the humanity of Christ, but not his Deity. They say that Christ is the perfect man, i. e. the greatest man in the world, and must be honoured as the greatest leader and most wonderful and glorious hero, and martyr. Probably the clearest answer refuting the opinion of these heretics is the statement of Dr. Conrad when he said, "These who have come to this conclusion are completely mistaken, for it is not possible for them to maintain that Christ is a leader, or a hero, after they have refused to accept what he affirmed about himself". In this case Christ is one of two things; either he is the greatest deceiver, or deceived and therefore needs to be pitied. It would

then be foolish to give him a place of honour. Actually, if Christ is not worthy of worship, he is not worthy of any respect, for he demanded for himself that which would not be justified, namely, worship and majesty.

3) Unity of Deity and Humanity in the Person of Christ.

This is the correct teaching that has prevailed in the Church. There it is destined for victory, dominion and universality. The confession of the Church continues to be proclaimed in the whole world, through every generation and age. The substance of this opinion is that Christ has two perfect natures, for he is perfect God and perfect Man.

The question might be asked: “What are the incentives and reasons which have caused people and the Church Councils to believe in the Deity of Christ?” and “How have these incentives and convictions been able to make progress, and become so firmly rooted in the mind that they have reached the status of being a doctrine, for which people have lived and have suffered martyrdom?” Also, “Why do people, and amongst them some of the greatest of human thinkers and geniuses in every generation and age, believe in his deity, and what are the irrefutable and conclusive proofs on which they rely?” These questions have to be answered before we can have faith, or convince people of the truth of our faith in the deity of Christ

and his incarnation, and makes it necessary for us to produce convincing and conclusive proofs on the subject.

First – Proof taken from the prophecies.

The many successive verses of prophecy have extended from the beginning of history up to the last books of the Old Testament, that is, during some four thousand years. It is not possible that these verses have been tampered with, fabricated or altered by Christians, for they were written in the scrolls of inspiration before Christianity. The last of them were written approximately four hundred years before the coming of Christ. The sum of what these prophecies is that a divine person will come from heaven in the form of human nature, to be the Saviour of the world. This person will be born of a woman, and will be of the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David. He will be born of a virgin without blemish or defilement and the place of his birth will be the town of Bethlehem, the city of David. At the same time he is the mighty and eternal God. This cannot come to pass except by incarnation and the uniting of deity with humanity. The texts which give assurance of this truth are many and what follows are the clearest and most conspicuous of them.

a) From the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6).

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and, and the government will be on his shoulder. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Also in Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel”. Matthew 1:23, also tells us that the word “Immanuel” means “God with us”.

b) From the Psalms. Psalm 110:1.

“The Lord says to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’”. This expression is very significant, and we cannot find for it any explanation except to believe in the eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son, and to be sure that God is the one who spoke.

c) From Micah 5:2.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will rule over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Secondly – Proofs taken from the sayings of Christ.

The famous preacher and man of God, Spurgeon, said: “Christ is the great central fact in the history of the world. All lines of history converge in him, and all

the issues of providence run according to his will; all the greatest aims in life are fulfilled in his person". When I add to all this the fact that his miracles and the wonder of his acts witnessed to the truth of every letter or words he spoke, it must be recognized there is conclusive proof and irrefutable evidence to be drawn from his statements. The Messiah attributed to himself at least twenty truths which cannot be ascribed except to God alone. Some of the most important of these are:

a) His Eternal Being.

Perhaps this is one of the most momentous things he ever stated, when, speaking to Jewish religious leaders, He said, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58). This word "I am" is the same which God used of himself when Moses asked, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:13, 14). This teaches that Christ reveals in himself the same God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush on Mount Horeb.

Also in John 17:5, it is recorded that Christ, in His intercessory prayer said, "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had

with you before the world began”, and verse 24, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world”. These words give assurance of the eternal existence of Christ and silence all tongues which allege that this is not so.

b) His coming from heaven.

In His dialogue with some of the Jews, Jesus said, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

Then in his discussion with the religious leader Nicodemus, he said, “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of man” (John 3:13). Furthermore, we read, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 22:13).

We note here that Jesus not only speaks of his coming from heaven, but of his existence in Heaven, while he was on earth.

c) His presence in all places and at all times.

In Matthew 18:20 it is stated that he said, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them”, and after His resurrection He said to His disciples, “Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19—20).

d) His unlimited power.

He said at his appearing to John on the island of Patmos, “I am the Alpha and the Omega”, says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).

Thirdly – Proof from His titles and Divine acts.

a) His power to create.

The following verses make this clear. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (John 1:3, 4).

“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Colossians 1:16).

“To make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things” (Ephesians 3:9).

b) His power to raise the dead.

“As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry’. Then he went up and touched the coffin and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ And the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him to his mother” (Luke 7:12–14).

“When he said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go’” (John 11:43, 44).

c) He will be the Judge of the whole world.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:31, 32).

“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgement to the Son” (John 5:22).

d) He is worthy of worship.

“That all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father” (John 5:23).

The worship of the Son with the Father was known to godly men in the Old Testament. David said, “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry and you be destroyed in the your way” (Psalm 2:11, 12).

e) He forgives sins.

The Jews were always convinced that God alone had the authority to forgive sins and they were astonished when they were present at one of Jesus' miracles and he said to the paralysed man, “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). When their thoughts were disturbed by his behaviour, he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... ” He said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home”. He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:8–12).

f) He gives eternal life.

He said in John 10:27–38, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish”.

g) He is equal with the Father.

He himself stated, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? ... Or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves” (John 14:8–11).

h) He accepted worship and adoration.

There is no doubt that Christ accepted worship and adoration, which is not permissible for a mortal being ever to accept. This happened with the man who was born blind. When Jesus asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him (John 9:35–38).

Fourthly-Proof from the testimony of His Disciples.

The testimony of these, who saw his glory, was clear, complete and free from uncertainty.

The following are not exhaustive but are given by way of example.

a) Thomas.

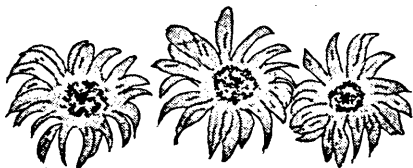
This disciple, after the resurrection, when he saw the marks of the nails in the hands of Jesus, and the wound in his side which was pierced by a sword said, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

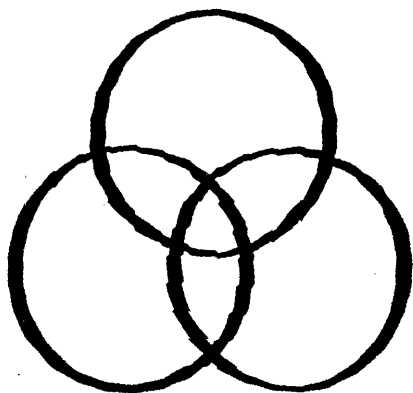
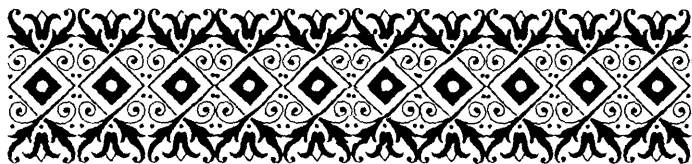
b) John.

This inspired disciple said in John 5:20, “We are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life”.

c) Paul.

The great apostle said in Romans 9:5, “...from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!”





THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Christianity believes that God is a living person, not a material body which it is possible to see or to touch, or to be comprehended by the senses. He is, as Jesus said, "...a spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). He is also the Father of the spirits of men for he created them in his image, and in his likeness, for we read in the Bible, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26). This God is one person containing three elements, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

When we meditate upon this article of faith, doubtless we confess that we are face to face with a mystery of the deepest kind, a mystery of life and existence. Saint Augustine confessed, and after him the great reformer Calvin, that the Latin language, rich as it is in words and beauty, is completely unable to express the depths of this mystery.

One thing is sure, that Christians did not take this belief of the ‘unity in diversity’ (the Trinity in the Godhead), from any human source, but they have believed in it as a fact, revealed from God, and consistent throughout the Bible, from beginning to end.

Maybe it would be better, before we commence the study of this subject, to gather up that which is clear of its history in the Church of Christ, and the thinking which encompassed it, until it became a permanent, final and unchangeable belief.

Christians in the time of the apostles, and even up to the second century A.D., were not thinking of laying down a definite formula of Christian beliefs, seeing as they were adhering to these beliefs and practising their principles as set forth in the Bible, without reducing them to definite unified doctrines. If problems or difficulties hindered them they referred to the apostles and to their disciples who succeeded them.

However, when heresies arose which stirred up disagreements over some points, the most important being the “status” of Christ, or the coming of the Holy Spirit from the Godhead, there became an urgent need for the church to state her views over these controversies, especially when the views of Sabellius and Arius were being spread abroad. The first held that in the one God there was no trinity. The Word, the Father,

the Son, and the Holy Spirit were only “Theophanies” and manifestations of God. The second declared that there was no equality; the Son and the Holy Spirit were not equal with the Father as both were, according to his claims, “created” and thus, on this basis, were inferior to him, and the Father has made them in the likeness of his divine nature.

The Church rejected these views because they were contrary to the Bible which teaches clearly that there never was a time when all three members of the Trinity did not exist. The Son was with the Father from eternity, as we read in Psalm 110:1, “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Psalm 16:8, was spoken in connection with the Son, “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken” (Acts 2:25–28).

One of the outstanding men of the Church who combated the heresies and defended the faith was Saint Athanasius, who confuted the heretical doctrines and issued the well known Athanasian Creed, which I shall summarise as follows:

- 1) Whoever desires salvation must, before everything else, abide by the universal faith of the Christian church.
- 2) This universal faith is the worship of God who

is one in three and three in one.

3) We do not mingle the three, nor separate them in essence.

4) The Father is one, the Son is one and the Holy Spirit is one, but the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in deity and equal in glory and eternal majesty.

5) As is the Father, so is the Son and so is the Holy Spirit.

6) The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated and the Holy Spirit is uncreated. They are not three uncreated but One uncreated.

7) The Father is unlimited, the Son is unlimited and the Holy Spirit is unlimited. They are not three unlimited but One unlimited.

8) The Father is from eternity, the Son is from eternity and the Holy Spirit is from eternity. They are not three from eternity, but one from eternity.

9) The Father controls all things, the Son controls all things and the Holy Spirit controls all things, but they are not three controllers but one.

10) The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but they are not three gods, but one God.

11) The Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord, but they are not three lords, but One Lord.

12) Even as Christian truth commands us not to

confess that each of the persons is by himself God or Lord, so also our religion forbids the saying that there exist three gods and three lords.

13) We have one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, and not three sons; one Holy Spirit and not three holy spirits.

14) No one of these three persons existed before or after the other. Neither is one greater or less than the other. All three Persons are eternal and equal.

15) Thus, from all that has been said, we must worship the "One in three and the three in one".

16) The true faith is that we believe and assert that our Lord Jesus Christ is God from the essence of the Father, begotten from eternity, and that he is man from the nature of his mother, begotten in this age.

17) And he, though he is God and Man, is one Christ, not two, and he became man not by changing his deity to humanity, but by blending humanity with deity.

Perhaps the questions are asked, "What is there to support this truth, and what is its basis? What is the proof of its genuineness and certainty? How did it attain this degree of influence, stability and permanency in history?"

The answer is that the principle and only support is the Bible. It is not possible for man, however great a

thinker he may be, to comprehend the nature of God without an unveiling and a revelation from God Himself. Whatever comes from outside the Bible, regarding the Trinity, of philosophic thinking, or logical argument is nothing but an explanation or exposition by means of analogy. Is it likely to be otherwise, seeing we are contemplating one of the most incomprehensible mysteries that man has ever faced?

What is quite certain is that the unity in the nature of God, which the Bible proclaims and which is beyond all contention or argument, – and the Old Testament as well as the New has likewise testified to it – is a complete unity which unveils the nature of the Holy Trinity which Christians believe in.

Scholars in their study of this belief in the Bible have believed it, have firmly established it, and have recorded it in the status of the Church. The most important of these in the Nicene Creed of Faith, the text of which is:

“I believe in One God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before the worlds, God of God, Light of light, Very God of Very God, begotten not created, being of one sub-

stance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets. I believe one Holy universal and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins and look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

It is true the Bible says, “The Lord our God is one God. I am the Lord. That is my name and my glory will I not give to another”, but it is also full of verses showing that in the person of God there is “unity in plurality”.

Also, from study of the Holy Books, we understand that God is spoken of as having certain characteristics, such as possessing hearing, sight, words, knowledge, will, and love, for he is a person.

There is a bond between him and his creatures who also have these characteristics. It is sure that these qualities were not inoperative in eternity; i.e. before he created man. This leads us to conclude that God used to exercise these qualities and it is self-evident that such could only be between more than one intelligent person. This makes inevitable, the existence of three persons in the Unity of God.

There is no doubt that the one who meditates deeply on this Christian belief will discover the following facts:

- 1) That each of the three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are given the titles and attributes of deity, and that each of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are worthy of honour and trust and worship.
- 2) It is clear from the Bible the Son is divine, even as the Father. Jesus said in John 5:23; "that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father".
- 3) The deity of the Holy Spirit is also clear from the Bible text, even as is the deity of the Father and the Son. "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

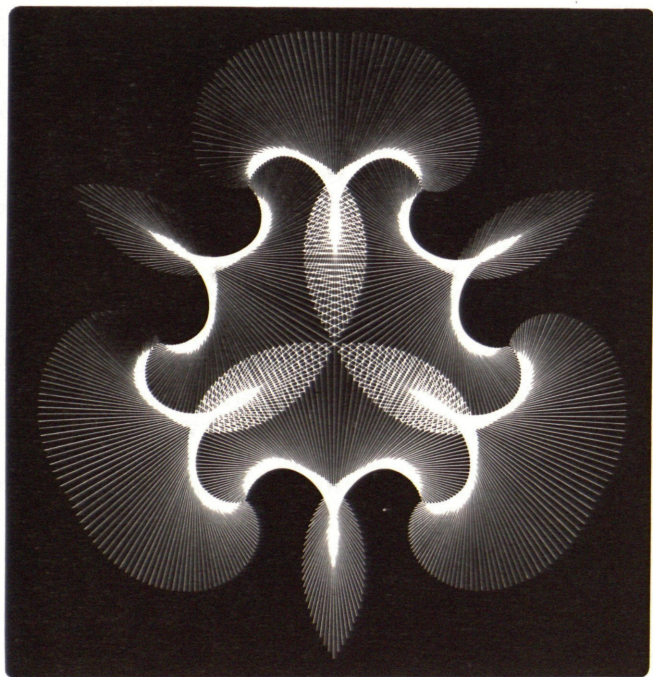
Also when we study Christian doctrine we see that the names of the Holy Trinity, i.e. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are not expressions of differing

relationships between God and his creatures such as is indicated in the terms “Creator”, or “Guardian”, or “Benefactor”. Though this is alleged by some, it is an assertion which is refuted by the following points:

- 1) Each of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit speak of themselves as “I”.
- 2) Each One, when speaking to the other directly says “Thou”, and indirectly “He”.
- 3) The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, and the Holy Spirit witnesses to the Son and glorifies Him.

Thus, the natural result of all these facts and Bible truths is that Christians have brought to the world their great doctrine; the doctrine of their belief in One God, and the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Many may say that this teaching is beyond our comprehension. But such a statement does not elucidate Christian teaching, even as it does not elucidate scientific facts which are difficult to understand. We have to confess that our limited minds were not created to gauge what is possible or impossible concerning that which is beyond our comprehension.



THE ONENESS OF THE THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

1) In Deity.

The scriptures, given by the inspiration of God, state concerning:

a) The Father – that he is God our Father. “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

b) The Son – “About the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom’” (Hebrews 1:8).

c) The Holy Spirit – “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit... You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3–5).

2) In Lordship.

a) About the Father – that he is Lord. “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth’” (Luke 10:21).

b) About the Son – that he is Lord, “This is the

message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36).

c) About the Holy Spirit, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

3) In Eternity.

a) The Father is eternal, “Reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he enduring forever” (Daniel 6:26).

b) The Son is eternal, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).

c) The Holy Spirit is eternal, “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:14).

4) In Their Omnipresence.

a) The Father. “One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6).

b) The Son. “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

c) The Holy Spirit. “Where can I go from your

Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Psalm 139:7–10).

5) In Their Worthiness of Worship.

a) The Father. “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23).

b) The Son. “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10–11).

c) The Holy Spirit, who prepares the believers to worship. “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26–28).

6) In the Quality of Truth.

a) The Father is Truth. “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

b) The Son is Truth. “Jesus answered, I am the way

and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

c) The Holy Spirit is truth. “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:16–17).

7) In the Quality of Love.

a) The Father is love. Jesus said, “The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God” (John 16:27).

b) The Son is love. “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:14, 15).

c) The Holy Spirit is love. “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

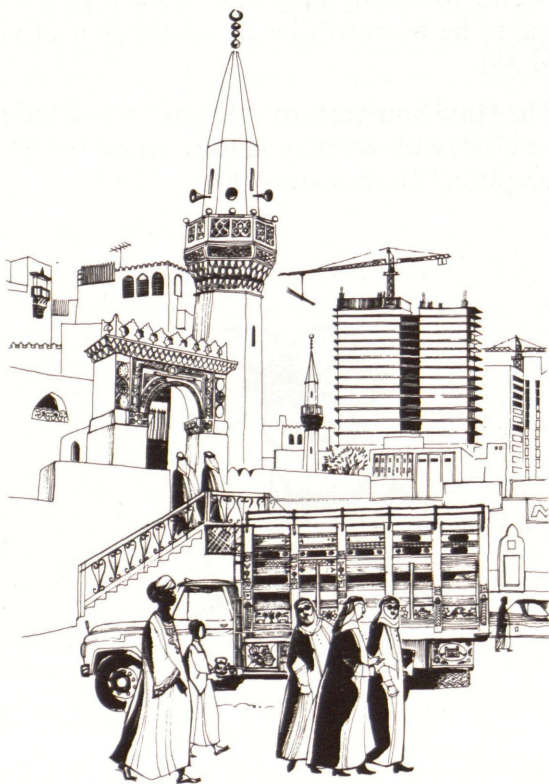
8) In Holiness.

a) The Father is holy. In his intercessory prayer Jesus said, “Holy Father, protect by the power of your name – the name you gave me” (John 17:11).

b) The Son is holy. The angel said to the virgin Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

c) The Holy Spirit is holy. “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).





A REPLY TO OBJECTIONS

1) The objection to the Deity of Christ.

Perhaps someone will object to the deity of Christ and support his objection with the saying of Christ in John 5:30, "By myself I can do nothing... for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." Also John 14:28, "For the Father is greater than I."

To this objection we say that these statements do not disprove the deity of Christ, with regard to the fact of his relationship to the Father within the Trinity, for it was necessary for man's redemption that the second person of the Trinity should become incarnate, to carry out the divine will by offering himself to atone for the sin of mankind. After he had completed this divine work he ascended to heaven and sat on the right hand of God in heavenly places "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the

church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:21-23).

We understand from the teaching of the apostles that the work of redemption necessitated that the redeemer should be a man in order to share the nature of those whom he had come to redeem. Also to be God that he might have supreme power to overcome sin and set free from its authority all who believe in him. All who study the Bible find the shadow of this redeemer throughout its lines, from the book of Genesis to the end of the book of Revelation. Sometimes he is seen “as man, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4). Sometimes he is seen as God, that he might be the centre for worship of his chosen ones and the object of their faith.

Christ is an amazing person: he is God and Man in One. He filled the vision of the prophets throughout the generations before his incarnation. Isaiah pointed to his coming in the flesh as the greatest of God’s wonders and signs, when he says, “the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us)”. Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:22-23). Isaiah also described him with the words,

“He will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

2) The objection to the Deity of the Holy Spirit.

Some say that the Holy Spirit is not a person of the Trinity, but rather that he is the power of God, carrying out his work in the universe and in the hearts of men. But the texts of the Bible make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a person and not merely a divine power at work in us. Mere power cannot be said to be the possessor of holiness, truth, wisdom or will, neither can it speak or be spoken to.

It is recorded in the Bible that at the baptism of Christ the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove, and there was a voice from heaven which said, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). This reveals the three persons at one time, for the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, from the Father who spoke from heaven, upon the Son who was on earth.

Likewise the promise of Christ to his disciples of another Comforter, the apostolic blessing, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”, and the apostle Paul’s declaration, “For through him (Jesus)

we have access in one Spirit to the Father” all indicate three persons of the Godhead.

All who study the Bible find many passages which show the falsity of the claim that the Holy Spirit is merely divine power. One of them is the apostle’s statement that through the Spirit the church was given many gifts, one of which was the working of miracles (see I Corinthians 12:4–11). If the Holy Spirit is merely “power”, the meaning would be that the Spirit is just one of the “gifts”.

There are other passages also which show he is a person, and not a mere “gift” or “power” among them.

Luke 4:14; “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit”.

Acts 10:38; “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power”.

Romans 15:13; “That you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”.

Romans 15:19; “By the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Holy Spirit”.

If this assertion of objectors were true, we should have to say “Jesus returned by the power of the power” or “that you may abound in hope by power of

the holy power". The apostolic blessing would read like this – "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the "holy power" be with you all". No sensible person could accept such renderings.

3) The objection to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Many times the question is asked, "What are your evidences for the plurality of the Godhead?" The answer is that the unity of God is prominent in the Bible, and the acknowledgement that the universe has no place for another like unto God does not necessarily prevent there being three persons, who are one in essence.

We conclude this from the texts of the Bible. The expression generally used in the Old Testament for God is the plural "Elohim", as is also the pronoun "We". The most outstanding of these texts is found in Deuteronomy 6:4; "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one". Here, the word "our God" is in the plural, though the purpose of it is to show the unity of God. There are many other texts also which mention the name of God in the plural form, such as:

Genesis 1:26; "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness".

Genesis 3:22; "The Lord God said 'The man has now become like one of us'".

Genesis 11:7; "Come, let us go down and confuse their language."

Isaiah 6:8; "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'"

Some say that in this way God's purpose was to glorify himself-as some kings do. But the word God spoke in Genesis 3:22; "the man has now become like one of us" refutes this, as the purport of this expression indicates the existence of speaker and hearers.

Though the mystery of the Trinity is beyond our comprehension, this does not mean we must reject it because of our limitations. The revelations of the divine are many and their comprehension is beyond our capacity. There is for example his self-existence, his eternal existence, his being the first Cause of all things, as well as his omnipresence and his omniscience from eternity to eternity and through all time.

It is submitted that the doctrine of the Trinity, even if it is beyond our understanding, does not exclude unity, nor is there in it anything to compel us to reject it, nor anything which is inconceivable to faith or reason, because it does not mean the existence of three gods.

Some may ask, "Is the doctrine of the Trinity any advantage to the Christian religion?" To this I would

reply that the benefit of the teaching of the Trinity appears in assisting the explanation of other important teachings. For example:

1) It enhances the deity and reveals its perfections.

The “unity” without the Trinity limits it and leaves it devoid of every content of happiness and love. We find in the counsel of the Trinity the love of one for another, which gives the deity all the requirements of eternal happiness.

2) The Trinity is a means by which God reveals himself to his creatures.

Each one, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of one substance. The Son has full knowledge of the Father and can reveal him perfectly. The Holy Spirit is of the essence of deity and can thus reveal it to mankind.

By means of the three persons, God draws near to his creatures, and without this approach God remains far from us and veiled from our understanding, and cut off from our experience.

3) The Trinity is the means by which God completed the work of redemption in all its requirements.

The second person became flesh, and atoned for our sins. He interceded and mediated for us and

provided a means of justification, reconciliation and salvation. The apostle says, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). It is also said concerning the work of the third person, the Holy Spirit, that he renews our hearts and enlightens our minds and sanctifies us with the holiness which enables us to enter the presence of God. Of a truth, without the Trinity, God could not become Redeemer and Saviour, Sanctifier and Judge, in a way which fulfills the sinner's need of redemption from the curse of the law which condemns him because of sin.

4) The Trinity presents God as a pattern for human life.

In loving social relations and family harmony we see the true quality of Fatherhood in the first person, and true Sonship in the second person, which elevates both the aspect of fatherhood and sonship among men.

Unquestionably, if we empty the deity of all feelings of love, God would become a mighty and severe Lord to us, whose might and severity would separate us from him.

TEST YOURSELF!

THE PERSON OF CHRIST in the Gospel and the Koran

If you have read this booklet carefully, you will be able to answer these questions easily:

1. What are some points where Islam and Christianity touch on identical views in regard to the personality of Christ?
2. What are the reasons which led the Muslims to refuse the Christian teaching of the Trinity?
3. In your opinion, do the Muslims have sufficient reason for saying that the gospels are distorted because they do not mention Muhammed as being a prophet?
4. What is the distinguishing characteristic of Christ in the Koran?
5. Which miracle does Islam accredit to Christ, but does not occur in the gospel?

6. Is one able to perceive the deity of Christ in the Koranic texts?
7. In your opinion, what are the reasons which led Islam to deny the Fatherhood of God?
8. What conclusions does Islam make about the deity of Christ?
9. How would you answer the Imam Arrazi in his denial of the teachings of Christ?
10. How would you refute the statement of Islam that "Christ was just a slave"?
11. Briefly state the evidence from the Holy Bible about the divinity of Christ.
12. Did Christ mention his relationship to the Godhead in the Gospel? Give references.
13. What evidence is given from the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Apostles about the deity of Christ?
14. Did Christ ask the people to honour him as they honour the Father?

15. How would you specify the views of the agnostics and aruists which show their denial of the person of Christ?
16. Is there a Psalm which reveals the acceptance of Christ in the Godhead?
17. How would you, personally, explain the truth that God is a Trinity?
18. How would you answer those who say that the Holy Trinity is three Gods?
19. Does the expression, "The Holy Trinity" have roots in the holy books (Koran and Bible)?
20. Give a text from the Holy Bible which shows the uniqueness of the Holy Trinity.

If you answered 15 out of these 20 questions correctly, we will send you one of our books. Please write your answers on a separate sheet of paper with your address written clearly on it. Send to:

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