

History of Truth

the Truth About
God & Religions
(2)
Comparative Religion

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Dedications

To The God of the universe.

Thank You for showing me Your way.

Allah, I bear witness that there is no god but You.

Allah, all Praises are to You for Your Glory, Mercy and Bounty.

Allah, please accept this humble effort and forgive me for my shortcomings.

Allah, help me to disseminate this knowledge to those who need it.

Allah, help me to live as a Muslim and die as a believer.

Allah, bless anyone who seeks the truth and Your way.

My Lord! Bestow on them (my parents) Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was young.

Amen.





Al-Azhar's Approval

Translation of Al-Azhar's approval for publishing this book

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

AL - AZHAR

ISLAMIC RESEARCH ACADEMY

GENERAL DEPARTMENT

For Research, Writing & translation

Dr. Adel Mahmoud Elsaie

May Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah.

Following your request for examining and reviewing your book:

“History of Truth, The Truth about God and Religions.”

We would like to inform you that this book follows Islamic beliefs and
can be published at your expense.

Please ensure the utmost accuracy of the verses of the Quran and the
Prophetic Sayings.

May Allah guide your steps.

May Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah.

General Manager, Department of Research, Writing & translation.

Signed and stamped.



1. In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

2. All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinns and all that exists).

3. The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

4. The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)



5. You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).



6. Guide us to the Straight Way.

7. The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians).

(Quran 1:1-7)





Preface

Throughout time immemorial, man has been in search of the truth. The truth, relative to physical phenomena and spiritual experiences, has lead mankind to a winding course. Sometimes, confusion and disorientation of the principles of life, unfortunately, can taint this course. Religion and philosophy are the historical vehicles for the search of truth. While religion presents the Divine aspect of the purpose of life, philosophy is a human attempt to gain a higher intellectual knowledge of oneself, morality and the underlying meaning of life. The current tendency to separate science and religion imposes disgraceful restrictions on science to achieve even more prosperous horizon. This book incorporates theology, natural sciences and philosophy in an attempt to satisfy the eternal quest for the search of the ultimate truth.

It is easy to go through life avoiding difficult questions about our origin and our destiny. It is easy not to talk about dying, or why people suffer. However, life would not be the same if there were no questions and answers. It is important to have an accurate understanding of our origin and yes, its pursuit is worthwhile. Everyone needs a sense of identity, purpose and personal goals. This is impossible without a sense of origin. What a person believes about human origin will condition that person's life style and affect one's ultimate destiny. Our origin goes back, perhaps, tens of thousands of years and our destiny takes us from the present time to eternity. Although our life on this earth spans through, perhaps, 60 or 70 years, we are heavily involved with this short time while neglecting our origin and destiny.

Sometimes we have very interesting and yet vital questions that linger in our minds:

- Why do humans suffer and how can one be happy?
- What is the purpose of this life?
- What will happen to us after death?
- Does God exist?
- Were we created or did we evolve from apes?
- Why do we have this huge universe?

When one asks these questions to anyone, one gets different answers such as:

- I do not care and I just want to enjoy my life.
- Leave me alone. I am trying to survive.
- I do not know. I never thought about that.
- I know that God exists, but I am confused with all those religions. I do not know which one is right. I will try to live a good moral life and that is it.
- I know that God exists, but I am not really doing a good job in preparing myself to meet Him. Maybe I will do that when I retire and have more time.

Only a small percentage of people know why they exist and they are living their lives the way it is supposed to be. Those are the people who understand their priorities in life and act accordingly. Those are the people who appreciate human knowledge and know its limitation. Those are the people who realize the difference between science and reality. Einstein said *“One thing I have learned in a long life - that all our science, measured against reality, is primitive and childlike... Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind”*, (1941).

In the present time, it seems that science and technology have an answer for everything. Consequently, many people may tend to think that they know everything. If you ask one of those persons about life and how it started, the answer will be quick and most likely will be: life started as an organic substance that came to earth through a comet that collided with earth billions of years ago. Life after that evolved according to Darwin, (1809 - 1882). Ask him again about human behavior and he will start referring to Freud, (1856 - 1939). Then, most people tend to think that we know all the answers about everything. The reality is that we know very little about few things. And if you don't believe this statement, just ask a pharmacist how aspirin works, a brain surgeon how the brain works, or a psychoanalyst how we dream.

One of the top priorities of everyone in this life, regardless of one's wealth or social status, is to make one's house comfortable. The English language provides the word “home” to emphasize a feeling of comfort, security, peace and love in a house. Humans spend a lot of time and energy to change a house into a home. If someone plans to move to another house, he usually reserves his energy and money for the next house. However, everyone knows that all our homes are temporary and sooner or later everyone will move to another house or home called “the grave.” Should we not be wise and invest a little bit in making sure that this



grave is a home? Should we not make sure that this home will have “light and heat”? Would we not like to have this grave as a piece of paradise? Ancient Egyptians dramatized this concept 5000 years ago. They did not just build graves; they built pyramids. The fourth dynasty pharaoh Khufu (also known as Cheops) built the great pyramid of Giza, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, as his tomb. The pictures of this tomb do not do the pyramid any justice. This pyramid is much larger than anyone would think. It covers 13 acres and contains more than 2 million blocks of stone, (Lacovara & Millar, 2004, p. 40). This proves that what the ancient Egyptians experienced in their daily life was just as important as what awaited them beyond the death’s gate. They firmly believed in an afterlife that was not all that different from the normal life. This concept of ensuring comfort in the afterlife, although practiced by polytheists, had its root in the original monotheist religion, perhaps by Enoch (Prophet Idris in Arabic). Some scholars believe that Prophet Idris was the same as the ancient Egyptian god Osiris.

The questions, that everyone should ask, are:

- Should I invest heavily in a home that I will live in, perhaps, for tens of years, or in the home that I will live there for, perhaps, thousands of years?
- How can I make this home for thousands of years extremely comfortable?

The Quran goes one step further than that by labeling life in the grave as only a visit, which indicates a short stay, compared to eternity.

Over thirty years ago after graduation from college, I found myself thinking about religion and God. I wanted to search for the ultimate truth. I wanted to know the true purpose of life. Taking answers for granted from someone was not good enough for me. I wanted to “feel” the answers and not just “know” them. I wanted to have a strong faith based upon logic. A few times during prayer, I was wondering if I was just following a ritual. How do I make sure that God exists? How do I achieve strong belief? And, how do I know that I am following the right religion? My religion tells me that it is the true religion. This is also the same for Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and the rest of the religions. I want to be sure that I am following the right religion. Humans have choices to select a religion, but they cannot control the consequences of their choices. Consequently, I started my search with an open mind and a total objectivity.

I started reading books that addressed the existence of God. To my delight, I found an Arabic book about God and the modern sciences

written by Dr. Abdel-Razek Nofal. This book had a great effect on me throughout my life because it convinced me that God truly exists. This can be demonstrated by the numerous examples that show the perfect balance in the universe and the intricate design of the earth, its atmosphere and its different life forms. Then I asked myself the next basic question; what is the right religion? I read about Moses, Jesus, Buddha and Confucius. I excluded Judaism since it is not a universal religion and not just anyone can be Jewish. It is hard to believe that God, the Ultimate Just, has chosen only about 15 million Jews as His people at the present time and the 6 billion gentiles on Earth have no chance for salvation. A Muslim has to believe in Moses, his message, his miracles, as well as the Jewish and all other prophets. This makes the original Judaism included in Islam. I read the Bible and the Quran. I had so many troubles with the Bible. My first problem was the eternal confusion of the mystery of the trinity. Is God one, or two, or three? My Christian friends told me that God is one. But there is a statement in the Bible that says that Jesus ascended to heaven and sat on the right hand side of God. This makes them two separate beings. I was told that they are two but they are one and I just had to have faith. Every time I discuss this subject with my Christian friends, we found ourselves involved in a Byzantine argument where no conclusion could be reached. It is interesting to note that the term Byzantine argument was coined in the second century AD, when Christians argued about the nature of God as compared to the nature of Jesus.

Next, the last words of Jesus on the cross are very confusing. First, there are four different versions of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This raises major questions about the accuracy of recording a Holy Book. These verses are part of a Christian doctrine of divine inspiration. If God had inspired these four gospel writers, why did God inspire them to record different words? These verses are not just different words, but totally different concepts. It seems that the closest statement should be the one that Jesus said in his own Aramaic language:

“Jesus cried with a loud voice saying Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46, & Mark 15:34, though it is Eloï instead of Eli in Mark.) which means “God, God, why have you abandoned me?”

It is hard to believe that Jesus said that God abandoned him. There are three possibilities:

- **He said that.** Then, why did the son of God think that his father abandoned him? Jesus told the disciples that he would die and rise from the dead in three days. He knew that he would die and be resurrected, so how can that be called abandonment? If he is the son



of God that came to save humanity with his blood, so how can that be called abandonment? If he knew his mission in life, so how can that be called abandonment? This statement simply contradicts all the New Testament. Many Christian scholars have the same trouble justifying this statement.

- **He did not say that.** This means that Matthew and Mark were not accurate and God did not inspire the Gospels because God would not allow any inaccuracies.
- **The man on the cross was not Jesus!** This may seem at first sight as an unreasonable idea. But if we know that the same sentence, word for word, exists in the songs of David, Psalm 22.1, one may be tempted to suggest that the man on the Cross was a Jew asking God for help from his Old Testament.

It is interesting to note that Christian theologians introduced a branch called Apologetics to provide answers to criticisms against Christian beliefs. Apologetics started early in Christian history to resolve many contradictions in the New Testament. It is no secret that the word Apologetics came from the Latin word “apology” and the Greek origin “Logos.” Some apologists suggest that Jesus said all the above versions. This is in spite of the fact that no single Gospel included all the four versions. Analyzing the Apologetics reasoning of the above four versions of Jesus’ last word does not present a satisfactory argument. Also, recent Apologetics advocates that historical and archeological evidences support early Christian history. That is a fair statement. However, historical and archeological evidences support the historical Jesus only and cannot be extended to support the Christian belief about the nature of Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus always presented himself as the “*son of man*.” He never said that he was the son of god. Forty years later, Paul made him the “*son of god*,” and in the first Ecumenical Council of Churches, 325 AD, Athanasius made Jesus of the same Divine “*substance*” as that of God.

The three monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam originated in the Middle East. Islam and Christianity share many common beliefs and history that no other two religions may claim to share: Oneness of God, Day of Judgment, resurrection from the dead, eternal afterlife and the moral values of peace, freedom and justice. While there are differences between Muslims and Christians about the nature of Jesus, (Pbuh i.e. Peace be upon him) there is no disagreement in the Middle East about the Name of God, or the status of many of the common prophets in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Noah (Pbuh), Abraham (Pbuh), Moses (Pbuh) and Jesus (Pbuh), are also prophets in Islam. The Quran declares

Mary as the holiest woman ever (Chapter “Surah” 3, verse “Ayah” 42) - not Muhammad’s (Pbuh) mother, daughter, or wife. One complete chapter in the Quran is devoted to Mary with her name as the title of chapter 19. The Bible does not give Mary the same honor. The Quran mentions Jesus and Mary 34 times and Muhammad 4 times.

Arab-speaking Christians and Muslims recognize Allah as the only name of God. Any Arab-speaking Christian, when asked about the name of God, would answer Allah! The English Old Testament starts with: *“In the beginning, God created the heaven and earth.”* The Arabic Old Testament starts with: *“In the beginning, Allah created the heaven and earth.”* The name of God throughout the Arabic Old and New Testament is Allah.

It is ironic that the Western Christians are unaware of the name of God of their Arabic brothers. The differences in the stature of the prophets in Judaism, Christianity and Islam involve only Jesus and Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Them. Jews do not recognize Jesus and claim that he was a false Messiah and Christians do not recognize Muhammad and claim that he was a false prophet.

Moreover, some Christian may feel that the Quran has satanic origin, God forbid, because the Quran does not recognize the divine nature of Jesus (Pbuh). This is a false notion. Satan is rejected and accursed in many verses in the Quran. Also, Muslims have to seek the protection of God from Satan every time they recite the Quran.

After extensive reading and thinking, I became convinced that Islam is the righteous religion and Islam has the answer to all our social, economic and judicial troubles. That is when I decided to write this book with the only motive to make the truth known.

To try to reach answers about vital questions, assumptions and criteria have to be adopted. The guidelines followed in reaching conclusions in this book are as follows:

1. This book is for anyone, from any faith, who seeks the truth.
2. Not a single attempt was intended to offend any faith, or lack of, for that matter.
3. The search for knowledge should be approached with an open mind, heart and soul and that search should not decrease or stop.
4. Our logical approach is real and meaningful with no deception or arrogant ideas.
5. Divine Creation is not subjected to any or all the laws of physics.

In the present time, there are serious challenges to monotheism:

1. High-powered scientists armed with tremendous marketing tools, promoting atheistic concepts that a layman has no way of challenging.
2. Global education system that fails to stimulate a comprehensive thinking process, but rather introduces subjects such as history, physics and life sciences in a fabricated form to exclude God from our lives. Again, students have no way of challenging their teachers.
3. Overwhelming western culture that promotes fake images of success. Again the layman anywhere on earth has no chance but to accept the western image for success.

Having watched all that, I feel compelled to agree with John Calvin, the Protestant theologian, who said:

“I would be a coward if I saw that God’s truth is attacked and would remain silent without giving any sound.”

(Filson, 2006, p. 9)

I tried to study the approaches taken by the true scientists, such as Newton and Einstein, along the history of humanity. I admired tremendously their reasoning and logic because their goal was knowledge for the sake of knowledge and not for business, publicity, or marketing by twisting facts. Accordingly, this book represents a scientific attempt to answer the following questions:

1. **Does God exist?**
2. **Should there be a universal religion and what is that right religion?**
3. **How can one be constantly sure that his or her conclusion is accurate?**

The first question is the most difficult one if we do not know where to look. Therefore, the first question is answered by examining the known facts about the universe and life. The introduction of these subjects is presented in simple contexts and not just pure scientific abstracts. The divine Law of Repetition is introduced. This law simply states that because common guidelines exist in all living organisms or physical objects, then the Designer or the Creator of all living and non-living objects is the same. With humility and open mindedness, we should believe that God exists. He, then, has to make somehow this existence known to everyone. Some people adopt an arrogant idea of believing in god, but not in any organized religion or any messenger of god. These people may think that

god should communicate directly with them and they have reached the level of the prophets. How else will they know what god wants from them. Examining the monotheistic religions that believe in One God is followed. Next, one conclusion should become obvious after that: because God is one, then there should be only one religion for the entire universe at any time and any place. This is the essence of monotheism. This is accomplished by establishing criteria for accepting a religion and then applying these criteria on the three Abrahamic “*monotheistic*” religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

It is important to note that I am not writing this book as a biologist, cosmologist, physicist, or theologian. I am writing this book as a human being searching for the truth and purpose of life. In doing so, I am following two religious commands in Islam; first to seek knowledge and second to spread knowledge. Also, I would ask you to consider the contents of this book with an open mind because this information could prove to be of greater importance to you than you might yet realize.

In writing this book, technical information has to be introduced and could not be avoided. I tried to make the presented information simple and readable for average readers. Also a glossary section is added to present definitions of technical or religious terms.

This book is an attempt of recording the Truth, which is one of the Names of God and is mentioned in the Quran 226 times. It is not about faking lies about Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad (Peace be upon them), who are loved, honored and respected by all Muslims. Some Jewish and Christian “scholars” made it their business to spread unsubstantiated lies about the life of Muhammad and to quote obscure references or preach half the truth. The main references in this book are the Bible and the Quran, thus it should be easy for the readers to check these references. Also, a good part of the information on Christianity in this book was obtained from Christian authors and friends. Allah addressed mankind to get to know each other, Surah 49, Ayah 13. Consequently, as a Muslim I had to form my ideas about Christianity from its sources. That is something that most of the critics of Islam never tried.

Religion is a serious business. In the present time, there is a statement that declares that all religions lead to One God. Well, I do not accept that. I cannot believe that worshiping a cow or a statue leads to one God. Humans make choices everyday in their lives but they cannot control the consequences of those choices. It should be a matter of utmost wisdom for everyone to think and plan for the Day of Reckoning. Our faith will lead us to our destiny. Everyone in every faith should be prepared to face God,



the Ultimate Judge. Humans will be asked about their faith and will have to acknowledge the truth, regardless of their faith. This Day of Judgment is like a court scene, where the Judge knows all, even more than people can tell. As such, this book is also my attempt to do my best to search for God and a religion. I started researching and writing this book in 1992. I believe that this time is well spent since this book can be my defense on the Day of Judgment. I will beseech God:

“I did not ignore the important questions about my origin and my destiny. I tried, I thought, I researched and this is the best within my capacity.”



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Years ago on a Christmas day, my granddaughter Dannah asked me a question: how can God be baby Jesus? Then she started laughing!!! This was the intuition of a 5 years old girl. Since then, she has been asking me a lot of questions about God and religions.

May God bless my daughter, her husband Bilal, Telecommunication Engineer, M.Sc. in Telecommunication from SMU and my granddaughters: Dannah, Daliah, Deyalah and Denah who will be InShaa Allah the harbinger of Islam in the new age.

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1 Polytheism and Trinities




In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.



171. O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, ("Be!" - and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit (Ruh) created by Him; so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not: "Three (trinity)!" Cease! (it is) better for you. For Allah is (the only) One Ilah (God), Glory be to Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is All-Sufficient as a Disposer of affairs.



(Quran 4:171)



Polytheism is defined as a multiplicity of individualistic divinities having human and/or animal forms and feelings. According to Islamic traditions, the first idols on Earth were during the time of Noah (Pbuh). Noah was the tenth grandson of Adam (Pbuh). The names of these idols were Wadd, Sawaa, Yaguth, Yauq and Nasr. They were righteous people and everyone used to love and listen to them. When Wadd died, his followers missed him and became very sad. Satan encouraged the people to make a picture of Wadd so they can keep it in their places and remember this spiritual leader. They accepted Satan's offer and became heavily involved in the pictures. When Satan saw what they did, he extended his offer to give them a statue of Wadd. Once again, they accepted Satan's offer. Their

following generation saw how their parents glorified those statues. Eventually, those statues were treated as gods and during Noah's time there were five idols and that is why God caused the great flood that destroyed all those associated other gods with Him.

This story explains how Satan takes human beings step by step towards every sin, even when the intention, of the people that accepted the pictures, might have been sincere. That is why the Islamic laws prohibit all actions that may lead to major sins.

Moreover, this story indicates that Man did not invent polytheism out of nothing. Adam believed in One God. His children followed satanic steps and converted monotheism to polytheism. As time passes, religious beliefs and traditions were adulterated and contaminated from one generation to another. This explains why most polytheistic beliefs or philosophical notions still have some elements of the monotheistic religion.

Many gods as well as the embodiment of Gods in human form (incarnation) characterize polytheism. Because of their human forms and the multitude of gods, they usually fight with each other and they marry and get children who are also gods. Since the beginning of time, knowledge and wisdom were always transmitted from parents to children. Thus, the ancient relationships of gods to humans were as close as fathers and sons.

Man's ingenuity and inventiveness strives continually towards attaining a state of affairs where he could achieve a satisfactory result without too much effort on himself. In other words, being the weakest of creations, man has always tried to adopt the line of least resistance. The pagan or the polytheist mind, too, functioned along this line. The primitive man had always invented a religion that did not impose many requirements on his side. Feeling his own weakness, he always strove to shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of another – a common human trait - without any exhausting effort on his part, to pacify the deity that might have become angered. In Christianity, man is considered sinner not because of what he does, but because of what Adam did! In believing that, man managed to shift the responsibility of his sins to the shoulder of Adam and his salvation to the shoulder of Jesus.

As a Muslim, I do not dare to even think that Jesus was mythical, just like what some authors suggested. However, the New Testament has irreconcilable differences in the crucifixion, resurrection of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him), the earthquake, the resurrection of the dead and their walking in Jerusalem as mentioned in Matthew. Moreover, the theological additions that were introduced by Paul and the writers of

the Gospels make the careful reader of the Bible extremely suspicious. Christianity recognized God, but stripped Him from His attributes and gave it to Jesus, as the savior, the judge in the Day of Judgment, the Loving God and many more.

Moreover, the more knowledgeable Christian who is familiar with pagan gods in the Mediterranean area before and after the time of Jesus realizes that the early Christian missionaries compromised with the surrounding gentile pagans in order to achieve their support and conversion. Paul abolished the Law of Moses to satisfy the pagan gentiles against the saying of Jesus. Paul exempted the pagan gentiles from circumcision and eating pork, which Jesus never advocated. Paul emphasized the concept of son of god that was prevailing in this whole area while Jesus referred to himself as the son of man. Paul stressed the event of death-resurrection that was already established in the minds of gentile pagans, regardless of its conflicting details in the Gospels. Paul achieved all that by claiming that he received “visions” from Jesus and he was speaking under the authority of the “Holy Ghost” according to his “own gospel.” And all of those were against the beliefs of the original Jewish-Christians who actually saw, lived with and listened to Jesus.

Many early Christian theologians and historians noted the extreme similarity between Christianity and Pagan gods such as Osiris, Attis, Mithras, etc. Eusebius of Caesarea (283-371 CE) wrote:

“The religion of Jesus Christ is neither new nor strange.”

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) wrote:

“This, in our day, is the Christian religion, not as having been unknown in former times, but as having recently received that name” (Graves, 1876, p. 246).

Celsus (late second century) commented on the similarities between Pagan and Christian beliefs:

“...are our [Pagan beliefs] to be accounted myths and theirs [the Christians’] believed? What reasons do the Christians give for the distinctiveness of their beliefs? In truth, there is nothing at all unusual about what the Christians believe...” (Freke & Gandy. 2001, p. 9).

There are two principal savior-gods recognized by mythologists, namely: vegetation-gods and sun-gods. Ancient man realized the crucial

effect of vegetation and sun on his life. He recognized that both sun and vegetation continuously provided him with his own life. He looked at them as saviors of his own existence. Consequently he worshiped his eternal saviors.

The vegetation theory has been brilliantly developed by Sir James George Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*, (1951), and by Grant Allen in *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, (1897). This viewpoint is concisely summarized by the noted psychologist Dr. David Forsyth, (1935, p.97):

“Many gods besides Christ have been supposed to die, be resurrected and ascend to heaven. This idea has now been traced back to its origin among primitive people in the annual death and resurrection of crops and plant life generally. This explains the world-wide prevalence of the notion. Among still more primitive tribes, as Grant Allen showed, it is not yet understood that sown corn sprouts because of the spring sunshine, and they attribute the result to divine agency. To this end they are accustomed at seed time to kill their tribal god—either in human or animal form—and scatter the flesh and the blood over the sown fields. They believe that the seeds will not grow unless the god is sacrificed and added to them in this manner. When, therefore, the crops appear, they never doubt that it is their god coming to life again. It is from this erroneous belief of primitive tribes that Christianity today derives its belief in Christ’s Death and Resurrection.”

According to the advocates of the solar myth theory, the ancient crucified saviors were personifications of the sun and their life-stories were allegories of the sun’s passage through the twelve constellations of the Zodiac. The astronomical elements in the Christian Epic are pointed out by Edward Carpenter’s *Love’s Coming of Age*, (1926, p. 107), with characteristic eloquence:

“The Passover, the greatest feast of the Jews, borrowed from the Egyptians, handed down to become the supreme festival of Christianity, ... is, as well known, closely connected with the celebration of the Spring Equinox and the passing over of the Sun from south to north of the equator; i.e., from his winter depression to his summer dominion. The Sun, at the moment of passing the equinoctial point, stood three thousand years ago in the Zodiacal constellation of the Ram, or he-lamb. The Lamb, therefore, became the symbol of the young triumphant god. ... At an earlier date—owing to the precession of the equinoxes—the Sun at the spring passage

stood in the constellation of the Bull; so, in the older worships of Egypt, and of Persia and of India, it was the Bull that was sacred and the symbol of god. ... In the representation of the Zodiac in the Temple of Denderah (in Egypt) the figure of Virgo is annotated by a smaller figure of Isis with Horus in her arms; and the Roman Church fixed the celebration of Mary's assumption into the glory at the very date (15th August) of the said constellation's disappearance from sight in the blaze of the solar rays, and her birth on the date (8th Sept.) of the same constellation's reappearance. ... Jesus himself ... is purported to have been born like the other sun gods, Baccus, Apollo, Osiris, on the 25th day of December, the day of the Sun's rebirth, i.e., the first day which obviously lengthens after the 21st of December."

From time immemorial, the sun has presented the same phenomenon everywhere. It has the same phases that occur on the same date in each country. The same effect is created by its rise and its decline. The appearance, disappearance and reappearance of the glorious sun must create the same notion in the mind of ancient man inhabiting the various corners of the globe. The sun, therefore, was worshipped in many parts of the globe.

The New Testament states that Jesus had 12 disciples, though accounts vary about their identities in the Gospels according to Matthew 10:2-4 and Luke 6:13-16. 12 is also the maximum number of spheres of a fixed size which can be placed simultaneously in contact with a sphere of equal size. Splitting the heavens into such spheres around the central sphere containing the solar system caused the Ancient Greeks to define the zodiac to have 12 parts. Some ancient cults, for example one of the many forms of Horus, was considered to have 12 followers, both as 12 is the maximum possible simultaneously in contact with the central and due to the alleged origin of some of these cults as astronomical observations. Some scholars postulate that this is also the reason that the authors of the bible chose there to be 12 apostles - a combination of the idea of Jesus as an astronomical figure being surrounded by the zodiac and that there cannot be more than 12. The New Testament also states that there were 72 disciples (known as "the 72"). According to the Old Testament, the number 72 is also the number of races supposedly resulting from Noah (even though the counting is arbitrary and ignores the descendents of Peleg, but counts fathers with sons) and the number of those receiving the spirit with Moses (including the two absentees -Eldad and Medad) and the number of languages at the tower of Babel.

Jesus Christ represents the central figure in Christianity. The crucifixion and resurrection of God's body was introduced to save humanity and wash away the original sin of Adam. The Church advocates and millions of Christians believe that the One and Only God sacrificed his blood and flesh so the believers could live happily ever after with Jesus in the Kingdom of God. However, there is a real crisis in this central story of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection. The Church insists that this story is unique only to Jesus. However, ancient history and mythology books reveal that this same story happened many times all over the globe in a span of time of about two thousand years before Jesus. You do not hear the stories of the dying resurrecting mythical gods in the Sunday classes, but they are an established part of mainstream Christian schools. The Church then added a powerful attractive incentive to the believers of this story "if you forget previous religious commandments and rituals and just believe this story, then you are guaranteed the shortest and easiest path to kingdom of God." On the Day of Judgment, Jesus will conduct the reward and punishment of humans and his chief apostle Peter will hold the keys of Heaven.

Christianity was intended to be an extension of Judaism. Jesus came to fulfill the religion of God and not to destroy it and the mission of the Christians was to get the Jews to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah and to reform Judaism. Jews were marked out by circumcision and abstinence from pork. After Jesus, small group of apostles formed a Jewish sect that remained faithful to the form of worship practiced in the Jewish temples. Some Christian missionaries went to Antioch in 49 CE and told the Gentiles "*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*", (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas were against this teaching. When converts from paganism presented their case to the apostles in the council of Jerusalem in 49 CE, a "special system" was offered to them that exempted them from circumcision and the Mosaic Law. Many Judeo-Christians rejected this concession. This conservative group was separated from Paul. For Paul, the circumcision, Sabbath and rituals of worship practiced in the temple were old fashioned, even for the Jews.

Another important position of the early Christian missionaries was to present Christianity in a way that the pagans could identify with. The concepts of the son of god, savior, crucifixion and resurrection were not new in old civilizations and certainly were not new during and after the time of Jesus. Graves mentioned sixteen crucified saviors before Christ, (1876). This makes one suspicious about the true origin of existing Christianity and its doctrine. The "death" and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

as told in the gospels, retells the ancient myth of the death and rebirth of the previous human-gods. The difference was that no pagan had seen his mythical god, but the early Christian missionaries had seen and talked to their Lord Jesus. They emphasized that Jesus was real while pagan gods might not be real. This made the Gentile receptive to the message of Christianity and the Judeo-Christians hostile to many of the innovations that were added to the message of Jesus.

At the time of Christ's advent, there were many temples at the Mediterranean and neighboring world that had been the scene of a vast number of pagan creeds and mythical gods. There was Osiris, god of the Underworld and Judge of the dead in coastal Egypt and Sinai, Baal and Astarte (Biblical Bel and Ashtaroth) among the Babylonians and Carthaginians Bacchus god of the wine, in Rome, Apollo or Dionysius in Greece, Adonis in Syria, Attis in Phrygia (Western Turkey), Antiochus in Samaria (Mesopotamia) and so on.

These deities were all sun-gods. Their stories are close, with some variations, which suggest that their origins were the same as the oldest trinity: Osiris, Isis and Horus in Egypt. Edward Carpenter (1920, p. 21) stated in *Pagan and Christian Creeds* that nearly all these deities, it was believed that:

- They were born on or very near Christmas Day.
- They were born of a Virgin-Mother.
- And in a cave or underground chamber.
- They led a life of struggle for mankind.
- And were called by the names of Light-bringer, Healer, Mediator, Savior and Deliverer.
- They were, however, vanquished by the Powers of Darkness.
- And descended into hell or the underworld.
- They rose again from the dead and became the pioneers of mankind to the heavenly world.
- They founded Communions of Saints and Churches into which disciples were received by baptism.
- And they were commemorated by Eucharistic meals.

Also Freke and Gandy, (1999), suggested that:

- For thousands of years before Christianity Pagans had also worshipped a son of god.
- This Pagan savior was also born of a virgin on the 25th of December before three shepherds, turned water into wine, died and resurrected at Easter and offered his body and blood as a Holy Communion.

- Pagan myths had been rewritten as the New Testament.
- The truth has been kept from us by the greatest cover up in history.

These ancient mythologies can be checked by anyone who cares to search for the truth and who is sufficiently interested to trace the source of the doctrine of world saviors in the world, (Graves, 1876).

It is extremely easy to show those doctrines that the Christian church teaches today and that form a central part of Christianity did NOT come from Jesus. The doctrines that are declared as “necessary to salvation” were brought into the religion of Jesus by converted gentile monks and priests during the first few centuries after the time of Christ. These dogmas were not invented by the clergy, but were ready-made essentials of Paganism, the various effects of many cults spread from Persia to Britain.

The best and the easiest way for a man to calm down an angry god was to offer sacrificial human blood. A willing or unwilling victim was readily found and his or her blood was religiously spilt on the altar or as in the case of the bride of the Nile, a female was thrown into the Nile as a sacrifice to seek refuge from a destructive flood. When the sacrifice was offered, man went home in the secure belief that this action pleased his mythical god and that its wrath was warded off, until some further misfortune or affliction overtook him. So the game of the ancient priests was first to frighten people from an impending disaster and then offered a way out by asking for a human sacrifice.

This, then, has been the universal belief and it formed the central code of religious conduct of the uncivilized man. As time passed, the dying victim at the altar himself came to be looked upon as a deity - god himself that came on the earth to suffer for the sins of man. It is thus easy to see that the idea of reconciliation by these barbaric methods became the characteristic feature of every creed that was professed and practiced in countries near the birth-place of Jesus at the time of his advent. Following the ancient pagan religions, the Church created an enormous terror by insisting that every human is a sinner and as such everyone is condemned to hellfire. The only way out of this gigantic shock should be a sacrifice of unprecedented magnitude: God himself.

In my Father’s house there are many mansions (John 14:3)

In the list below, six savior pagan-gods in the Mediterranean and surrounding area are given - from amongst tens in many parts of the world - who were all believed by their followers to have died for the sins of the world, together with their countries of origin and approximate dates:

Table 1.1 - Six Savior Pagan-Gods Before Jesus.

(1)	Osiris	Egypt	1700 B.C.
(2)	Baal	Babylon	1200 B.C.
(3)	Attis	Phrygia	1170 B.C.
(4)	Tammuz	Syria	1160 B.C.
(5)	Dionysius	Greece	1100 B.C.
(6)	Mithras	Persia	400 B.C.

EGYPTIAN TRINITY

In the Egyptian myth, Horus and his father, Osiris, are frequently interchangeable, as in “*I and my Father are one.*” John 10:30. Egypt, where the myth of Osiris was originated, shares borders with Palestine, where Jesus lived. Ancient Egyptians, just as the Christians, recognized in words the unity of the Godhead, while worshipping many deities that possessed certain influence on human affairs. Ancient Egyptians acknowledged One infinite God, Almighty and Creator but added the confusing concept of trinity to the Unity of God. This is against all the teachings of all the Prophets before and after Jesus. This is the eternal Satanic step by step to confuse humans.

According to Barbara G. Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*:

“Of all savior-gods worshipped at the beginning of the Christian era, Osiris may have contributed more details to the evolving Christ figure than any other. Already very old in Egypt, Osiris was identified with nearly every other Egyptian god and was on the way to absorbing them all. He had well over 200 divine names. He was called Lord of lords, King of kings, God of gods. He was the Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd, the God who made men and women to be born again. From First to Last, Osiris was to the Egyptians “the god-man” who suffered, and died, and rose again, and reigned eternally in heaven. They believed that they would inherit eternal life, just as he had done” (1996, p. 748).

According to Egyptian scriptures, “*As truly as Osiris lives, so truly shall his follower live; as truly as Osiris is not dead he shall die no more; as truly as Osiris is not annihilated he shall not be annihilated.*” These same concepts still exist in the Christian theology. Osiris coming was announced by Three Wise Men: the three stars Mintaka, Anilam and

Alnitak in the belt of Orion, which point directly to Osiris' star in the east, Sirius, as a sign of his birth. Angelic voices hailed the coming of the "Universal Lord" on this occasion, which marked the rising of the Nile flood.

Certainly, Osiris was a prototypical Jesus. His flesh was eaten in the form of communion cakes of wheat, the plant of Truth. Osiris was "*Truth*", and those who ate him became "*Truth*" also. Each of them became another "Osiris", a "Son of God", a "Light god", a dweller in the "Light-god." Egyptians came to believe that no god, except Osiris, could bestow eternal life on mortals. He alone was their "Savior", the "Good One." Egyptians were much afraid of death's corruption awaiting them without the kindly intervention of Osiris.

The cult of Osiris contributed a number of ideas and phrases to the Bible. The 23rd Psalm copied an Egyptian text appealing to Osiris the Good Shepherd to lead the deceased to the "green pastures" and "still waters" to restore the soul to the body and to give protection in the valley of the shadow of death. The Lord's Prayer was prefigured by an Egyptian hymn to Osiris - beginning by Amen, "*O Amen, O Amen, who are in heaven.*" Amen was also invoked at the end of every prayer. This word Amen is one of the left over rituals of the monotheistic origin of all polytheistic mythologies.

As Col. James Churchward, (2007, p. xvi), candidly exclaims, "*The teachings of Osiris and Jesus are wonderfully alike. Many passages are identically the same, word for word*". Osiris was also the god of the vine and a great traveling teacher who civilized the world. He was the ruler and judge of the dead, just like Jesus. In his passion, Osiris was plotted against and killed by Seth. Like that of Jesus, Osiris' resurrection served to provide hope to all that they may do likewise and become eternal.

Osiris' brother Seth envied his power and popularity and killed him by luring him into a coffin, which he sealed with lead. Seth set the coffin adrift in the Nile. It washed up in Lebanon and a mighty tree grew around it, which a king cut down and put in his palace. Osiris' wife, Isis, could not rest until she had buried him properly. She tracked down his coffin and returned it to Egypt. Seth was so angry, he cut the body into pieces and scattered them across Egypt. But Isis found the pieces, made wax copies of them to be worshipped in a temple and, preserving Osiris' body with linen bandages; she breathed life back into him. He rose and ruled as god of the underworld. Horus was conceived magically after the death of Osiris and brought up by Isis on a floating island. The child was weak and in constant danger from the scheming of his wicked uncle Seth, who sent serpents and monsters to attack him. But his mother, Isis was great in the

magical arts and she warded off this evil by using a spell against creatures biting with their mouths and stinging with their tails and the young Horus survived and grew.

M. D. Aletheia (1897) suggested that at least 2500 years before Jesus, the Egyptian god Osiris (Horus), in some accounts, was crucified on “*an accursed tree*” in an event of sin-atonement. “*Osiris, after being put to death, rose from the dead, and bore the title of the Resurrected One,*” he said “*The suffering, death, and resurrection of Osiris formed the great mystery of the Egyptian religion.*” While some might dispute the Egyptian’s god legend of crucifixion, there is no denying that the stories of Jesus and Horus are quite similar. Even the name Horus has been suggested as a contributing factor in the name Jesus. Originally, because Horus was depicted as a hawk or a falcon-headed god, the Romans turned Horus into an eagle-headed god and the eagle symbol was transferred to Christianity. Hence, the podiums and pulpits in the Roman Catholic Churches often bear eagle symbol taken directly from the Egyptian god Horus.

At least 2500 years before John baptized believers in the Jordan River, ancient Egyptians baptized believers in the Nile, or in burial chambers. In both cases, the purpose of baptism was to cleanse and rejuvenate individuals - whether alive or dead - into a new state of “eternal blessedness”. Furthermore, just as Christians today are assimilated with Jesus through baptism, ancient Egyptians were assimilated through baptism with their god, Horus. In addition, just as Jesus himself was baptized by John the Baptist, Horus was baptized by lesser gods.

Isis was part of a sacred triad. The Egyptians deified so-called “emanations” of the supreme, unknowable godhead, typically grouping them into trinities (in fact, a whole hierarchy of trinities). Thus *Isis-Osiris-Horus*, *Amun-Re-Mut-Khons*, *Atum-Shu-Tefnut-Mahet*, etc., reigned for forty centuries, as eternal, evolving godhead. Crucially, the Egyptian priests linked the gods directly to their ruling kings. Throughout the 4000 years of Egyptian history every Pharaoh was the incarnation of the youthful Horus and therefore the son of Isis, the Goddess Mother who had suckled and reared him. After death, Osiris took care of the dead Pharaoh in the kingdom of the dead.

According to the Egyptian mythology, the “Father” and “Son” were inseparable and of “one essence.” The pharaohs stepped into trinity on Earth (as Horus) and became the heavenly element (as Osiris) after death. In the endless cycle Isis functioned as sister, wife and mother, a sort of ‘holy spirit’, keeping the whole thing going.

According to author and theologian Tom Harpur (2006, p.85):
"[Author Gerald] Massey discovered nearly two hundred instances of immediate correspondence between the mythical Egyptian material and the allegedly historical Christian writings about Jesus. Horus indeed was the archetypal Pagan Christ."

The following are examples of quotes by Horus, according to Tom Harpur, and the corresponding quotes of Jesus from the New Testament:

"I have given bread to the hungry man and water to the thirsty man and clothing to the naked person and a boat to the shipwrecked mariner."

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me..." (Matthew 25:35-36).

"I am Horus in glory...I am the Lord of Light...I am the victorious one...I am the heir of endless time...I, even I, am he that knoweth the paths of heaven."

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12).

Egyptian priests practiced "transubstantiation", claiming to be able to transfer the sun god Osiris into a circular wafer. In rituals prefiguring Catholic Mass, the faithful then ate the "body" of their god to nourish their souls. The letters IHS on the sun-shaped wafers stood for Isis, Horus and Seb (later, Roman Catholics claimed they were the first three letters of Jesus' name in Greek).

The myth of Osiris included some monotheistic features, such as belief in the hereafter, resurrection of the dead, Day of Judgment and beginning and ending the prayer with Amen. This suggests that Osiris might have been a prophet of God and his original message was not preserved and corrupted by time. Some scholars believe that Prophet Idris (Enoch in the Bible) was the same as the Egyptian god Osiris.

BABYLON TRINITY

Baal is one of the sons of El or Dagon, the chief god of the Canaanites. The word Baal means Lord. He is the god most actively worshipped in Canaan and Phoenicia, the storm god, source of the winter rain storms, spring mist and summer dew which nourish the crops. Therefore he is

considered responsible for fruitfulness, particularly of the Earth, for the growth of vegetation and for the maintenance of life. While the word “Baal” also means simply “master” or “owner,” he is considered a prince. Among his other epithets are rider of the clouds, prince and master of the Earth. Baal champions the divine order against the menacing forces of chaos. Baal is often depicted striding forward, wearing a horned helmet and short wrap kilt, carrying a mace and spear or lightning-bolt staff. Another of his names is re`ammin, meaning thunderer. He is also called `aleyin, meaning “most high,” “mightiest,” “most powerful” or “supreme.”

There are approximately 89 references to the god Baal in the Old Testament. When the children of Israel went “*whoring after other gods*” (Judges 2:17), as they often did, they went generally after Baal and Astarte. Baal, known also as Hadad, was the Canaanite god of fertility. He had many local manifestations, such as Baal of Peor (Num. 25:3) and Baal-berith, “*lord of the covenant*,” at Shechem (Judge. 8:33), hence the plural form Baalim. Baal died in the spring, wailed over and buried by his wife, the love and war goddess, his sister the virgin Anat. But in the fall Baal revived, vanquishing Mot, the god of death and drought and bringing with him the autumn rains. Celebrations were held commemorating the death and resurrection of Baal which marked the beginning and end of the growing season. In a graphic but fragmentary text from Canaanite Ugarit (excavated at Ras Shamra in Syria), Baal was out hunting, Anat followed him. He spotted her, fell in love and had sex with her in the form of a cow. She gave birth to “a wild ox” or a “buffalo”.

The actual tablets describing Baal’s story do not preserve an exact account of Baal’s death; that portion of the tablets are lost and the events are concluded from remaining parts of the story. In what we have left, Baal is discovered dead and given a burial; but later in the narrative, he reappears alive. The passion play of Baal, the Babylonian Sun-God, was in existence centuries before the birth of Jesus. It was a mystery play acted every year in the beginning of spring. The main features of the play have been deciphered from some tablets discovered from Babylonian ruins. The tablets disclose very remarkable facts which must be disturbing to thousands of honest minds in Christendom.

Baal refused to acknowledge Mot, denying him hospitality and confining him to the deserts of the earth. Much angered, the god of death challenged Baal to come to the underworld and eat mud, the food of the dead. Baal accepted and died.

He was mourned by weeping women. His sister and wife, the ferocious virgin Anat (or Ashtoreth or Astarte), a fertility goddess,

traveled to the underworld and attempted to retrieve the corpse of the dead god, but could not. Mot refused to help (in some accounts refused to bring Baal back to life) and Anat went into a frenzy, stabbing Mot “with a sharp knife,” scattering the pieces with a winnowing fan.” She finally burnt the remains, ground them into dust and tossed the dust over a field. When she had destroyed the god of death, Baal was instantly resurrected. Anat’s actions are symbolic of planting, growing and threshing, with the rebirth of Baal indicating the renewal of the cycle.

During the long period of trade and exchange between the Canaanites/Phoenicians with the Egyptians, Baal was associated with several Egyptian gods. Osiris was known to the Canaanites; the head of Osiris after his dismemberment was said to have floated to the Phoenician city of Byblos. Some scholars related Baal to the Egyptian Osiris, considering both as dying-resurrecting gods.

PHRYGIAN TRINITY

Sir James George Frazer (1951), examined the striking similarity of the Biblical story of Jesus and Attis “*the only begotten son and savior*” in Phrygia (presently West Turkey). Attis, the Phrygian god, was born of a virgin named Nana. He was bled to death at the foot of a pine-tree. His blood renewed the fertility of the earth and thus brought a new life to humanity. He also rose from the dead. In celebrating his death and resurrection, his effigy was fastened to a pine-tree on March 22 and the day was called the “Day of Blood”, since on that day the deity was bled to death. The God was dead. The effigy was then laid in a tomb with wailing and mourning, but on March 25 the sorrow changed to joy (a striking parallel to the Christian holy week and Easter). “*For suddenly a light shone in the darkness; the tomb was opened; the God had risen from the dead...[and the priest] softly whispered in their ears the glad tidings of salvation. The resurrection of the God was hailed by his disciples as a promise that they too would issue triumphant from the corruption of the grave.*” (For more information see Frazer, Attis). These mysteries seem to have included a sacramental meal of bread and wine. The wine represented the God’s blood; the bread became the body of the savior. In the fourth century pagan critics accused the Church of plagiarism on this account. Both festivals had an all-night vigil with lights.

In Rome the new birth and the remission of sins by shedding of bull’s blood took place on what is now Vatican Hill, in our days the site of the great basilica of St. Peter. The Attis believers were baptized in this way: a bull was placed over a grating, the devotee stood under the grating.

The bull was stabbed with a consecrated spear. *“It’s hot reeking blood poured in torrents through the apertures and was received with devout eagerness by the worshiper...who had been born again to eternal life and had washed away his sins in the blood of the bull.”* (For more information see Frazer, Attis)

Attis was said to have been a fair young shepherd or herdsman beloved by Cybele, the Mother of the Gods, a great Asiatic goddess of fertility, who had her chief home in Phrygia. Some held that Attis was her son. His birth, like that of many other heroes, is said to have been miraculous. His mother, Nana, was a virgin, who conceived by putting a ripe almond or a pomegranate in her bosom. The worship of Cybele and Attis dated back centuries in Phrygia before it was imported to Rome in 204 BC towards the close of their long struggle with Hannibal. Attis was both the father and the divine Son. Before and during the years when the Christian Gospels were written (from the reign of Claudius, 41 – 54 CE) the festival of joy commemorating Attis’ death and rebirth was celebrated yearly in Rome. A Christian writer of the fourth century recounted ongoing disputes between Pagans and Christians over the remarkable similarities of the death and resurrection of their two gods. The Pagans argued that their God was older and therefore original. The Christians admitted Christ came later, but claimed Attis was a work of the devil whose similarity to Christ and the fact he predated Christ, were intended to confuse and mislead men. This was apparently the stock answer -- the Christian apologist Tertullian makes the same argument.

The argument between pagans and Christians was probably about the contradiction of the death and resurrection of the sign of Jonas. Matthew 12:38:40, Luke 11:29 and Mark 8:11-13. *“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matthew 12:40).

Those verses refer to discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus says that this generation seeks a sign to believe. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus adds that there will be no sign but the sign of Jonas, i.e. Jesus will die and be resurrected in three days and three nights. In Mark, Jesus says that there will be no sign without any exception. Perhaps the Christians were referencing the death-resurrection of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, while pagans were referring to Mark, where there is no mention of this event.

Attis was depicted as a man nailed or tied to a tree – at the foot of which was occasionally depicted a lamb. Some accounts said that Attis castrated himself beneath the tree resulting in a priesthood that practiced

either self-castration or enforced celibacy. This occurred centuries before Gregory VII (1073-1085) enforced celibacy on the Roman Catholic clergy.

BABYLONIAN / SYRIAN TRINITY

This myth is based on the pagan trinity of Nimrod the father, Semiramis the mother and Tammuz the child. According to Genesis 10: 1-6, Nimrod was the son of Cush, the son of Ham, the son of Noah. Late Rev. Alexander Hislop (1853), proposes that all ancient myths are originated from Babylon and all false religions have a pagan trinity of father, mother and child, the mother taking the place of the Holy Spirit in Christian trinity. Nimrod is mentioned in the bible as being *“a mighty hunter before the Lord”* and as being the founder of Babylon, Shinar and Erech (Gen 8:1) and he may also have built the tower of Babel. As the great black hunter he rode forth on horseback and used leopards to hunt other animals and the vestiges of dinosaurs that were left on the earth after the flood. Then placing people in cities to be protected from the beasts he became their first king. The fair skinned and beautiful Semiramis caught the eye of Nimrod and he took her to be his wife. It was rumored that her beauty could stop a rampaging mob. The king now trained bands of men in the mountains so that he could form the first army then went to battle against the surrounding peoples. Nimrod lifted the heavens up on his shoulders (comparable to Atlas) by promoting sexual immorality, drunkenness and the use of magic among his people even calling down lightning from heaven to destroy and frighten his enemies. This caused God’s spirit to lift off the earth, so it was no longer oppressive to the sinner. For his many sins Shem the son of Noah, who was still alive 500 years after the flood, called Nimrod into Egypt to be judged in the patriarchal way. Nimrod came forth to receive the charges against him and was judged worthy of death. His body was cut into twelve pieces and sent to the surrounding countries as a warning against his sin. His wife lamented for him but was a whore and she slept with many partners and in time had a child who she named Tammuz and proclaimed that Nimrod had visited her one night after his death and told her that he would be reborn as her son. The people worshipped Tammuz as Nimrod reborn but they also revered Semiramis his beautiful mother and wife. Eventually idols appeared featuring mother Semiramis and baby Tammuz who was worshipped as a god and the son of god at the same time.

Semiramis convinced the people that Nimrod was a god (the sun god Baal) and that she was a goddess (the Queen of Heaven). Semiramis

developed the pagan religion of Baal worship, including confession (for blackmail and public fear), secret societies and the idea that she, as the religious leader, was the only medium to God. Like Isis, her symbol was the moon and Nimrod's was the sun (like Horus and Baal). Semiramis promoted baby sacrifices and celibacy for priests, foreshadowing Roman Catholicism. She invented death by crucifixion (crucifixes were originally pagan symbols in Babylon and Egypt).

The worship of Tammuz was introduced into Syria in very early times with his wife Ishtar, who corresponds to Semiramis. They are identified with Osiris and Isis of the Egyptian pantheon, showing how widespread the cult became. The Babylonian myth represents Tammuz, as a beautiful shepherd slain by a wild boar, the symbol of winter. Ishtar long mourned for him and descended into the underworld to deliver him from the embrace of death (Frazer: Adonis, Attis and Osiris). This mourning for Tammuz was celebrated in Babylonia by women on the second day of the fourth month, which thus acquired the name of Tammuz. The fourth month of the Jewish year corresponds to the seventh month Tammuz of the current Syrian calendar.

Tammuz was killed and was resurrected in the spring. Every year the maidens wept for Tammuz (Ezekiel, 8: 14) and then rejoiced over his resurrection. Considering the disgraceful and immoral rites with which the cult was celebrated, it is no wonder that Ezekiel should have taken the vision of the women weeping for Tammuz in the temple as one of the greatest abominations that could pollute the holy house.

The origin of Easter involves the birth of Semiramis' illegitimate son, Tammuz. Since people had been looking for the promised savior since the beginning of mankind (Genesis 3:15), they were persuaded by Semiramis to believe that Tammuz was that savior, even though he had been supernaturally conceived. Before long, in addition to worshipping Tammuz (or Nimrod reborn), the people also worshipped Semiramis herself as the goddess of fertility. In other cultures, she has been called Ishtar, Ashtur and yes, Easter.

Contemporary traditions such as the Easter Bunny and the Easter egg can also be traced back to the practices established by Semiramis. Because of their productive nature, rabbits have long been associated with fertility and its goddess, Ishtar. Ancient Babylonians believed in a legend about an egg that fell into the Euphrates River from heaven and from which Queen Semiramis was "hatched."

GREEK TRINITY

Dionysus or Bacchus is thought of as being Greek, but he is another remake of the Egyptian god Osiris, whose cult extended throughout a large part of the ancient world for thousands of years. Dionysus' religion was well-developed in Thrace, northeast of Greece and Phrygia, which became Galatia, where Attis also later reigned. Although a Dionysus is best remembered for the rowdy celebrations in his name, which was Latinized as Bacchus, he had many other functions and contributed several aspects to Jesus character.

Dionysius, sometimes referred to as Bacchus, was born on the 25th December. His mother was a virgin called Demeter. The world was enveloped in evil, so Jupiter the god of gods was beseeched to redeem mankind. The prayer was accepted by Jupiter who declared that his son would redeem the world from its misery. He promised a liberator to the earth and Bacchus came as a Savior. He was called the ONLY Begotten Son of the supreme god.

Herodotus mentioned that when in Egypt, he was surprised to hear the very same mournful but ravishing "*Song of Linus*" sung by the Egyptians (although under another name), which he had been accustomed to hear in his own country of Greece. Linus was the same god as Bacchus in Greece, or Osiris in Egypt. Homer introduces a boy singing the song of Linus while the vintage is going on.

Sir Frazer in his book "*The Golden Bough*" (1951, p. 229) records Bacchus as saying: "*It is I who guide you; it is I who protect you, and who save you; I who am the Alpha and Omega.*" Bacchus was also a great traveler and brought the gift of wine to mankind. This brings to mind the Biblical first miracle of Jesus when he converted water into wine at the wedding feast.

PERSIAN TRINITY

Many events in the story of Jesus' life and birth are either coincidental or borrowings from earlier and contemporary pagan religions. The most obviously similar of these is Mithraism. Most of the information available about this ancient religion, the favorite of Roman soldiers, comes to us from the two volumes by Belgian scholar Franz Cumont (1956). More recently, David Ulansey has added to the discussion with his "*The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*" (1991). Roman Mithraism was a mystery religion with sacrifice and initiation. Like other mystery cults, there's little recorded literary evidence. What we know comes mainly

from Christian detractors and archaeological evidence from Mithraic temples, inscriptions and artistic representations of the god and other aspects of the cult.

For over three hundred years the rulers of the Roman Empire worshipped the god Mithras. Known throughout Europe and Asia by the names Mithra, Mitra, Meitros, Mihr, Mehr and Meher, the veneration of this god began around 2600 years ago in Persia, where it was soon imbedded with Babylonian doctrines. The faith spread east through India to China and reached west throughout the entire length of the Roman frontier; from Scotland to the Sahara Desert and from Spain to the Black Sea. Sites of Mithraic worship have been found in Britain, Italy, Romania, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, Persia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine and North Africa. In Rome, more than a hundred inscriptions dedicated to Mithras have been found, in addition to 75 sculpture fragments and a series of Mithraic temples situated in all parts of the city. An inscription to Mithras which parallels John 6:53-54 says *“He who will not eat of my body and drink of my blood, so that he will be made on with me and I with him, the same shall not know salvation.”* One of the largest Mithraic temples built in Italy now lies under the present site of the Church of St. Clement, near the Colosseum in Rome. The widespread popularity and appeal of Mithraism as the final and most refined form of pre-Christian trinities was discussed by the Greek historian Herodotus, the Greek biographer Plutarch, the philosopher Porphyry, Origen and St. Jerome the church Fathers. Mithraism was quite often noted by many historians for its many shocking similarities to Christianity. The faithful referred to Mithras as “the Light of the World”, symbol of truth, justice and loyalty. He was mediator between heaven and earth and was a member of a holy trinity. According to Persian mythology, Mithras was born of a virgin given the title “mother of god.” The god remained celibate throughout his life and valued self-control, renunciation and resistance to sensuality among his worshippers. Mithras represented a system of ethics in which brotherhood was encouraged in order to unify against the forces of evil. The worshippers of Mithras held strong beliefs in a celestial heaven and an infernal hell. They believed that the benevolent powers of the god would sympathize with their suffering and grant them the final justice of immortality and eternal salvation in the world to come. They looked forward to a final Day of Judgment in which the dead would resurrect and to a final conflict that would destroy the existing order of all things to bring about the triumph of light over darkness.

Purification through a ritualistic baptism was required of the faithful, who also took part in a ceremony in which they drank wine and ate bread

to symbolize the body and blood of the god. Mithras traveled as a teacher and illuminator of men with twelve disciples. Sundays were held sacred and the birth of the god was celebrated annually on December 25th, the temple of Mithras was lit with candles, priests in white garments celebrated the birth of the son of god and boys burned incense. After the earthly mission of this god had been accomplished, he took part in a Last Supper with his companions before ascending to heaven, to forever protect the faithful from above. Mithraic rituals brought about the transformation and Salvation of his adherents, an ascent of the soul of the adherent into the realm of the divine. It was written on the wall of a Mithraic temple in Rome: "And thou hast saved us by shedding the eternal blood."

However, it would be a vast oversimplification to suggest that Mithraism was the single forerunner of early Christianity. Aside from Christ and Mithras, there were plenty of other deities (such as Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis and Dionysus) said to have died and resurrected. Many classical heroic figures, such as Hercules, Perseus and Theseus, were said to have been born through the union of a virgin mother and divine father.

In order to fully understand the religion of Mithraism it is necessary to look to its foundation in Persia, where originally a multitude of gods were worshipped. Amongst them were Ahura-Mazda, god of the skies and Ahriman, god of darkness. In the sixth and seventh century B.C., a vast reformation of the Persian pantheon was undertaken by Zoroaster, a prophet from the kingdom of Bactria. The stature of Ahura-Mazda was elevated to that of supreme god of goodness, whereas the god Ahriman became the ultimate embodiment of evil. Ahura-Mazda was said to have created Mithras in order to guarantee the authority of contracts and the keeping of promises. The name Mithras was, in fact, the Persian word for 'contract'. The divine duty of Mithras was to ensure general prosperity through good contractual relations between men. It was believed that misfortune would befall the entire land if a contract was ever broken. Mithras was born of Anahita, an immaculate virgin mother once worshipped as a fertility goddess before the hierarchical reformation. Mithras came from heaven to be born as a man, to redeem men from their sin. He was known as "Savior," "Son of God," "Redeemer," and "Lamb of God." The ascension of Mithras to heaven was said to have occurred 64 years after his birth.

Persian Mithraism was more a collection of traditions and rites than a body of doctrines. However, once the Babylonians took the Mithraic rituals and mythology from the Persians, they thoroughly refined its theology. The Babylonian clergy assimilated Ahura-Mazda to the god

Baal, Anahita to the goddess Ishtar and Mithras to Shamash, their god of justice, victory and protection (and the sun god from whom King Hammurabi received his code of laws in the 18th century BC. As a result of the solar and astronomical associations of the Babylonians, Mithras later was referred to by Roman worshippers as “Sol invictus” or the invincible sun. The sun itself was considered to be “the eye of Mithras”.

Mithras was worshipped as guardian of arms and patron of soldiers and armies. The handshake was developed by those who worshipped him as a token of friendship and as a gesture to show that you were unarmed. When Mithras later became the Roman god of contracts, the handshake gesture was imported throughout the Mediterranean and Europe by Roman soldiers.

It is one of the great ironies of history that Romans ended up worshipping the god of their chief political enemy, the Persians. The Roman historian Quintus Rufus recorded in his book *History of Alexander* that before going into battle against the ‘anti-Mithraean country’ of Rome, the Persian soldiers would pray to Mithras for victory. However, after the two enemy civilizations had been in contact for more than a thousand years, the worship of Mithras finally spread from the Persians through the Phrygians of Turkey to the Romans. The Romans viewed Persia as a land of wisdom and mystery and Persian religious teachings appealed to those Romans who found the established state religion uninspiring. In those days, it was imperial policy to remove troops as far as possible from their country of origin in order to prevent local uprisings. A Roman soldier, who after several years of service in his native country had been promoted to the rank of centurion, was transferred to a foreign station where he was later assigned to a new garrison. This way, the entire body of centurions of any one legion constituted a microcosm of the empire. The vast extent of the Roman colonies formed links between Persia and the Mediterranean and caused the diffusion of the Mithraic religion into the Roman world. Mithraism became a military religion under the Romans. The many dangers to which the Roman soldiers were exposed caused them to seek the protection of the gods of their foreign comrades in order to obtain success in battle or a happier life through death. The soldiers adopted the Mithraic faith for its emphasis on victory, strength and security in the next world. Temples and shrines were dedicated to Mithras across the empire. In 67 BC, the first congregation of Mithras-worshipping soldiers existed in Rome under the command of General Pompey after defeating the Sicilian pirates. Mithras appears epigraphically in the circles of the Roman emperor in the first century CE, around the time the canonical Christian Gospels were written.

CHRISTIAN TRINITY

Jesus, Peace be upon him, was born of Virgin Mary. He never claimed to be god, son of god, or part of a trinity. When he talked about God as his father, it was in the Jewish sense of the Old Testament as a close relationship between God and his righteous people. Certainly he did not distinguish himself as having a different relationship with God than other Biblical prophets that were called sons of god. Let alone being called as co-equal and of the same essence of God. So where did these doctrines come from? The simple and straightforward answer: it came from previous trinities that existed during his time. Virtually every pagan religious practice and festivity that couldn't be suppressed or driven underground was eventually incorporated into the rites of Christianity as it spread across the Roman Empire.

As the final pagan religion of the Roman Empire, Mithraism paved a smooth path for early Christian missionaries by transferring the better elements of paganism to this new religion. After Constantine, Emperor from 306-337 CE, converted on the eve of a battle in 312, Christianity was made the state religion. Constantine converted to Christianity after claiming to see a vision of a cross in the middle of the sun just as Paul converted to Christianity after seeing Jesus in a vision. All emperors following Constantine were openly hostile towards Mithraism. Mithraism was persecuted on the grounds that it was the religion of Persians, the arch-enemies of the Romans. Nonetheless, Mithraism survived up to the fifth century in remote regions of the Alps and has managed to survive in the near-east until this day.

When the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Epistles of Paul were written, Mithras and Mithraism were already known, worshiped for centuries as God's messenger of truth. Sadly there is a lot we don't know about the details of this cult. Early Christians established the dominance of their religion by exterminating Mithras' faithful, razing his temples, burning many of his sacred texts. There are some differences in the details of Mithraism, just as the differences in the details of major events in the life of Jesus in the New Testament. They got his miraculous birth and his spiritual teachings and dressed them up with 12 disciples that they did not agree about their names, contradictions in the sign of Jonas, last supper, crucifixion, Jesus' last words, resurrection, ascent to heaven and so on.

The absurdity with which Christianity enveloped Roman paganism was characterized by the early Church Father Tertullian (160-220 CE), who noticed that the pagan religion utilized baptism as well as bread

and wine consecrated by priests. Tertullian whose writing influenced the Christian theology tried to explain this by suggesting that Mithraism was inspired by the devil, who wished to mock the Christian sacraments in order to lead faithful Christians to hell. He said:

“The devil, whose business is to pervert the truth, mimics the exact circumstances of the Divine Sacraments. He baptizes his believers and promises forgiveness of sins from the Sacred Fount, and thereby initiates them into the religion of Mithras. Thus he celebrates the oblation of bread, and brings in the symbol of the resurrection.”

Justin Martyr (100-165 CE), a church father, says: “... which things the evil spirit has taught to be done out of memory in the mysteries and ministrations of Mithras” (Parsons, 1895, p. 179).

The Devil thus provided an easy and convenient target for venting wrath and abuse resulting from a patent inability to find a reasonable explanation. This is a most convenient way of evading facts and eluding the truth. A bold anachronism was thus perpetrated by them. Did paganism borrow from Christianity or did Christianity plagiarize wholesale from paganism? In the sequence of time: did Christian trinity come before pagan trinity, or pagan trinity before Christian trinity? They would not be reasonable enough to admit and acknowledge the fact that Christianity was a mere rework of pagan beliefs. This would be a lowering of their dignity. A scapegoat had to be found. And who could be a better candidate for this honor than old Lucifer himself?

The wardens of the Church in those days never failed to do two things, until Christianity fully triumphed over the existing creed. They incorporated, on the one hand, almost all of the popular pagan cults into their faith; on the other hand they took particular care to destroy and burn the pagan records and libraries - amongst them that of Alexandria some 50 years after the death of Constantine - in order to obliterate the origin of the faith so alien to that of Jesus. In this respect, Professor Murray says: “*The polemic literature of Christianity is everywhere triumphant; the books of the pagans have been destroyed*” (Kamal-ud-Din, 1924).

Christianity was born into a world of great dichotomy. Still firmly committed to the Jewish faith that it had inherited, the growing religion nonetheless attempted to develop and establish itself within a world dominated by pagan trinities and Greek philosophy. Thus, the early developments of Christian doctrine dealt primarily with the adoption and incorporation of rituals and philosophy that were at odds with Christianity's religious heritage. Alexandria was the center of the Greek philosophy

of the Roman Empire and this Greek Philosophy was entrenched in the minds of its inhabitants. The Bishops of Alexandria imposed their theological arguments on the Ecumenical councils of Church.

In Jewish tradition, God was conceived of as being creator, one who is totally unlike creation and separate from it. Following the works of Aristotle, Plato and the Stoics, however, the Greek understanding of God centered on His Essence that exists in everything from humans to water, fire and earth, i.e. God “generates” the universe and all creatures out of his Essence. Thus Christians were forced to answer how it was, then, that God was present within the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The many statements in the Old Testament about sons and daughters of God were understood by the Jews to be allegorical and not literal. It is with these two contradictory and conflicting notions of “creator” and “generator of sons and daughters” that the Christian community attempted to synthesize a distinctly Christian notion of God and Jesus’ relationship to Him.

The Christian religion was not founded by a set of doctrines written and explained in a book by Jesus Christ. These doctrines were formed as the early Christian community grew up as the products of terrible persecutions of Christians by the Roman Emperors. The Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE was followed by the first major persecution of the Christians by the Roman Emperor Nero. During the same year, St. Peter was executed in Rome. Paul was executed in 67 CE in Rome. The Jews revolted against the Romans in 66 CE and Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE. During the reign of Domitian, the Roman Emperor 81-96 CE, the persecution of Christians was renewed. The mere profession of Christianity was a good reason to suffer imprisonment, torture, being flung to wild animals in the amphitheater. Also, during that time, many copies of Christian scriptures were burnt and no one really knows the relevance of these Gospels to the original teachings of Jesus.

The question of Jesus’ identity is necessarily a question that strikes at the very nature of salvation. During the early Christianity, some Christians believed that Jesus was born instantaneously: the Holy Ghost went from Virgin Mary’s ears and Jesus was born immediately. Consequently, for over three centuries following Jesus, Christians were involved in some sort of Byzantine argument where no clear answers could be definitely stated. Christians at that time attempted to find and understand answers to the following questions:

- What is Jesus?
- Does Jesus have one or two natures?
- Does Jesus have one or two wills?

- Is the Son co-eternal with God or not?
- Are Jesus' miracles literal or allegorical?
- Did Jesus pre-exist in the Godhead before birth?
- What is the relation of Christ to God the father?
- How could a human being incarnate the Logos?
- What exactly did it mean that Jesus was a divine?
- How could an omnipotent God have suffered in Jesus?
- Is Jesus made of same or similar substance as that of God?
- Did the Lord, to whom and through whom Christians pray, pray?
- Was the Logos the same as such Biblical terms as Word or Wisdom?
- What is the relation between the Logos and the concept of one God?
- How can God be the father, son and the Holy Spirit and yet still be one?
- How could Christians believe that Jesus was divine and in the same time believe in one God?

These questions were asked because people who wanted to be true Christians wanted to understand the basic beliefs of the true Christian. Besides, Jesus himself never answered any of the above questions clearly and without any ambiguity. The fact that these questions were circulated in the Roman Empire indicates that Christian trinity was in a state of confusion. This is not because Jesus message was not clear or that the Apostles did not understand the basic beliefs of Christianity. This is simply due to the first century persecution of the Christians, the burning of their scriptures and the effect of the converted gentiles with their cultural and Trinitarian background.

There were over 50 Gospels circulating among the early Christians. No one knows for sure why only the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John were canonized. No one knows for sure why the Church accepted four versions of the Gospel with many inherent contradictions. What about the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Q, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, the Gnostic Gospel and others? In the present time, these Gospels are somehow being resurrected because Christians want to know the beliefs of the early Christians. Millions of Christians that do not buy the doctrine of trinity are hungry for Christian information that supports their belief. They want to be Christians like Jesus Christ and his circle of apostles and disciples. And right now the existing versions of the Bible and the different sects of Christianity do not satisfy their needs.

Christian scholars and experts raise major doubts to the prevailing doctrines of Christianity. One can examine the different versions of the Bible that are translated by experts in theology and languages and find

omitted important verses with marginal footnotes and major differences in the translation of verses that are crucial to the Christian beliefs. The average Christian layman has the right to ask: what did Jesus really say? To answer this question, a group of New Testament experts meet in a seminar twice a year to analyze the story of Jesus and build their own version of what happened. This Jesus Seminar is perhaps best known for color-coding the New Testament. Since its founding in 1985 by Robert W. Funk, the group has studied the sayings of Jesus, using colored beads to vote on the accuracy of each saying of Jesus.

- **Red:** Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it.
- **Pink:** Jesus probably or might have said something like this.
- **Gray:** Jesus did not say this, but the ideas are close to His own.
- **Black:** Jesus did not say this; it represents a later tradition.

Their voting conclusions: Over 80% of the statements attributed to Jesus in the Gospels are, by voting consensus, either gray or black. This means that only 20% of Jesus' statements are likely to have been spoken by Him. The other 80% are most assuredly, they say, unlikely to have ever been uttered by Jesus! The Jesus Seminar has been receiving extensive coverage lately in such periodicals as Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, as well as on network television. Furthermore, a quarter of British bishops - Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Methodists - did not believe that Jesus was born to a virgin! This is not terribly surprising if one knows that Christian priests, ministers, archbishops, bishops, pastors and missionaries convert to Islam. These are the Christian experts, the scholars and the ones that really know Christianity.

HINDUISM

Hinduism is a collection of religions, which has evolved over 4000 years on the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism is a major world religion, not only by virtue of its many followers (estimated at more than 900 million) but also because of its deep influence on other religions during its long history. The word Hindu is derived from the Sanskrit word sindhu, "river." The Persians in the fifth century BC called the Hindus by that name, identifying them as the people of the land of the Indus. Hindu beliefs are so diverse; it has been suggested that "Hindu religion" does not exist. There are, however, some basic beliefs that are shared among the Hindus:

- Belief in the unity of all things in the world. The Hindus believe that there is one spirit that runs through all humans, animals and plants. The Hindus call this unifying spirit Brahman.
- Belief in reincarnation of souls. They believe that when a person dies, he or she will be reborn in another life form. For example, the soul of dead animal might move to a newborn child.
- Belief in the Karma, which is the spiritual law of the universe that has great power, even though we cannot see it or touch it. It records the good and the bad deeds that a person does while alive and determines where the person should go in the next life. Being reborn as a Hindu of the high caste might be the reward a good person. An evil person may be reborn as an animal.
- Belief in the non-injury of any living creature. Since the Hindus believe that the same spirit unites all humans, animals and plants, many of them do not kill animals or eat meat.
- Belief in many gods and goddesses who are different forms of Brahman. The trinity in Hinduism involves Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. Vishnu is also worshipped in the form of a number of “Avatars” - avatar is the descent of a god to Earth in human form, more generally used of a person who is believed to embody or incarnate the divine. Shiva is said to have appeared on Earth in various human, animal and vegetable forms. The great river goddess Ganga (the Ganges) is said to be a wife of Shiva. The goddess of music and literature, Saraswati, associated with the Saraswati River, is the wife of Brahma. Some scholars suggested that this Hindu form of trinity was the model adopted later as a Christian doctrine.
- Belief in working without worrying about results.

Many minor gods are associated with the great gods or with their children and friends. Hanuman, the monkey god, appears in the Ramayana as the cunning assistant of Rama in the siege of Lanka. Skanda, the General of the Army of the gods, is the son of Shiva and Parvati. Ganesha is the elephant-headed god of scribes and merchants, the remover of obstacles and the object of worship at the beginning of any important enterprise.

It is interesting to note the close resemblance between the names Brahman, the Hindu unifying spirit and Rahman, one of the Names of God in Islam. This may suggest that Hinduism had monotheistic origin.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism is closer to philosophy than religion. It was founded in northeastern India by Siddhartha Gautama (560 - 480 BC), who is known as the Buddha, or Enlightened One. He was born near the present Indian-Nepal border. He was the son of the ruler of a small kingdom. He had everything that he wanted, but was disturbed by the sorrow and suffering of some of the people in the kingdom. Therefore, at the age of twenty-nine, he left the palace, his wife and his son, to search for the cause and the solution of suffering. He meditated underneath a bodhi tree, near what is now Nepal, until he attained the enlightenment for which he had been searching. Once having known this ultimate truth, the Buddha underwent a period of intense inner struggles. He began to preach, wandering from place to place, gathering a body of disciples and organizing them into a monastic community known as the sangha. In this way he spent the rest of his life.

Buddha means the enlightened one. This title applies to any person who has attained the ultimate reality “nirvana” but it is often used for the founder of Buddhism. The original teachings had little ritual and downplayed the importance of deities. Legends surrounded the Buddha’s life quickly turned into miracle stories and after the Buddha died (from eating a poisoned meal) his bones and teeth were spread far and wide as holy relics. The Buddha was an oral teacher; he left no written body of thought. Later followers arranged his beliefs. The original Buddhism seems to present a moral and philosophical way of life rather than a religion.

Although never actually denying the existence of the gods, Buddhism denies them any special role. Their lives in heaven are long and pleasurable, but they are in the same condition as other creatures, being subject eventually to death and further rebirth in lower states of existence. They are not creators of the universe or in control of human destiny and Buddhism denies the value of prayer and sacrifice to them. The deities are so preoccupied by their own pleasures that they lose sight of the need for salvation. Enlightenment is possible only for humans and not for gods.

The Four Noble Truths: At the core of the Buddha’s enlightenment was the realization of the Four Noble Truths:

1. Everything in life is suffering. It is a statement that, in its very nature, human existence is essentially painful from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Even death brings no relief, for the Buddha

accepted the Hindu idea of life as cyclical, with death leading to further rebirth.

2. All suffering is caused by ignorance of the nature of reality and the craving, attachment and grasping that result from such ignorance.
3. Overcoming ignorance and attachment can end suffering.
4. The means to achieve nirvana lies in the Noble Eightfold Path of right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindedness and right contemplation. These eight are usually divided into three categories that form the cornerstone of Buddhist faith: morality, wisdom and concentration.

Nirvana: is the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path in life. To achieve this goal is to reach nirvana, an enlightened state in which the fires of greed, hatred and ignorance have been extinguished. Not to be confused with total annihilation, nirvana is a state of consciousness beyond definition. After achieving nirvana, the enlightened individual may continue to live, burning off any remaining karma until a state of final nirvana is attained at the moment of death.

The ethic that leads to nirvana involves cultivating virtuous attitudes, known as the Palaces of Brahma: loving, kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and patience. The ethic that leads to better rebirth, however, is centered on fulfilling one's duties to society. It involves acts of charity, as well as observance of the five ethics that constitute the basic moral code of Buddhism. The ethics prohibit killing, stealing, harmful language, sexual misbehavior and the use of intoxicants. By observing these ethics, the three roots of evil—lust, hatred and delusion—may be overcome.



2

Monotheism

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

“Our Lord! Punish us not if we forget or fall into error, our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us (Jews and Christians); our Lord! Put not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Pardon us and grant us Forgiveness. Have mercy on us. You are our Maula (Patron, Supporter and Protector, etc.) and give us victory over the disbelieving people.”

(Quran 2:286)

Throughout history, humans have experienced spiritual experiences that cannot be explained. However we choose to interpret this encounter, these spiritual experiences are a fact of life. Buddhists deny that their visions are derived from a supernatural source. On the other hand, Judaism, Christianity and Islam maintain that those experiences are divine. These monotheistic religions agree that it is impossible to describe those experiences in normal conceptual languages. Monotheism is a belief in the Unity of the God, or in One God. Jews are forbidden to pronounce the sacred Name of God. Muslims are prohibited to depict God, or any of his prophets, in human form. This discipline is a constant reminder that God is beyond all human comprehension.

There is a striking similarity in Jewish and Islamic concepts of God. The Jews and Muslims find the Christian doctrines of the trinity and incarnation almost impious. One form of Christianity, Unitarianism, denies the doctrines of the Trinity, maintaining that God exists in One

Being only. From the middle of the second century to the end of the third century a succession of distinguished Christian teachers maintained the undivided unity of God. Unitarianism is based upon Arianism, which was a Christian sect in the fourth century that denied that Jesus Christ had the same divine substance as that of God and hold instead that he was only the highest of created beings. It was named after its author, Arius (256-336). A native of Libya, Arius studied at the theological school of Lucian of Antioch, where other supporters of the Arian's belief were also trained. Unitarians are generally close to the Jews and Muslims. They deny the doctrines of the Trinity, the delegated atonement, the deity of Jesus Christ and the original sin.

According to the Islamic religion, the perception of God's Uniqueness is the basis of the morality of the Quran. To give allegiance to earthly things or associate God with anyone or anything is considered blasphemy, the greatest sin in Islam that will not be forgiven on the Day of Judgment. Any other sin may be forgiven by God's mercy if He wills. The Quran detests the pagan deities in almost exactly the same way as the Old Testament. These pagan gods are totally useless: they are powerless and they cannot guide or protect humans. Instead, Muslims believe that Allah is the ultimate and unequalled reality:

“Say: He is Allah, The One; Allah, the Eternal, the Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him”
(Surah 112).

The nature of Allah here is indicated to us in few words that anyone can understand. Here we are specially taught to avoid the pitfalls into which humans have fallen at various times in trying to conceptualize Allah. We can understand Him as follows:

We have to note that his nature is so elevated, so far beyond our limited conceptions; that the best way in which we can realize Him is to feel that He is a Personality, “He” and not a mere abstract conception of philosophy. He is near us; He cares about us; we owe our existence to Him.

He is the One and Only God, the Only One to Whom worship is due; all other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way should be compared or associated with Him.

He is Eternal without beginning or ending, Absolute, not limited by time, space or circumstance. He is the Ultimate the Reality.

We must not think of Him as a human having a son or a father, for that would be to import human qualities into our conception of Him.

He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine. His qualities and nature are unique.

The unity, consistency of creative designs and the fundamental facts in our existence, proclaim the unity of the Designer, Maker and Creator. This Surah sums up the whole argument and warns us especially against anthropomorphism, the tendency to conceive Allah after our own pattern, an evil tendency that creeps in all times and among all people. Islam returns to the Semitic concept of the divine unity and refuses to imagine that God can “beget” a son. There is no deity but Allah, the creator of heaven and Earth, who alone can save man and send him the spiritual and physical sustenance that he needs. Only by acknowledging Him the Uncaused Cause of all being, Muslims address a dimension of reality beyond time and space.

The call for Muslims to prayer starts by “*Allah Akbar*”, which is translated and may be understood by some Muslims, as God is great. This is not a correct translation or meaning. It actually means, “Allah is greater.” Full stop. Period. According to rules of any languages, this is not a complete sentence. But this phrase actually means that Allah is greater than anything that anyone may conceptualize. “Allah Akbar” distinguishes between God and the rest of all realities. I heard this phrase thousands of time in my life, but the first time I realized its true meaning, two pictures came to my mind: the intricate design of the universe and the living cell and I was shaken and overwhelmed by the Greatness, Power and Glory of Allah. Only by contemplating the verses of the Quran and the signs of nature, Muslims can grasp that aspect of divinity, because we can see God only through His words or His creations. The Quran emphasizes Allah as the Absolute, who alone has true and eternal existence:

“All that is on Earth Will perish. But will abide (for ever) the face of Thy Lord - Full of Majesty, Bounty, and Honor” (Surah 55, Ayah 26).

The first pillar of Islam is “Shahadah”, which is the Muslim profession of faith:

“I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is His messenger.”

This is not simply an affirmation of God’s existence, but an acknowledgment that Allah is the only true reality or perfection, the only true form of eternal existence and all beings that exist owe their existence to His Will. To make this assertion demands that Muslims integrate their lives by making God their focus and sole priority. To say that God is

One is not a mere numerical definition, but it is a call to make this unity the driving factor of one's life. The divine unity requires Muslims to recognize that everything they do is for God's sake. A Muslim works because God asks him to work and in this case working becomes an act of worship. A Muslim marries because God asks him to marry and in this case, marriage becomes an act of worship and so on. Therefore, a Muslim is always reminded with the divine unity of Allah. Because there is only one God, all rightly guided religions must derive from Him alone and the basic beliefs of those religions should not change. The unity of God is also manifested in the Quran by the command of Allah to the Muslims to believe in the authentic revelations and books revealed to all prophets, even if they do not exist in our present time.

GOD IN THE BIBLE

Humans are always looking to the sky for one supreme deity, who has created the world and governs human affairs. Belief in such a High God or Sky God is still a feature in many tribes in Africa, Australia and South America. They look at the sky to ask God for help. The primitive tribes in South Australia climb a tree to be closer to God and then seek his help. Those tribes are higher in their concept of God Almighty than millions of the many humans who impose human characteristics on God. Though all theology originated with God, mankind played games with these pure and holy concepts.

The Old Testament had many imperfect descriptions of God portraying God after man's own image:

God regrets making man: (Genesis 6:6)

"And it repented the Lord that he had made man on Earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

This is in reference to the time of Noah, when people became evil and started associating idols with God Almighty.

God smells sweet savor: (Genesis 8:21)

"And the Lord smelled a sweet savor;"

God smelled the burned birds and animals that Noah sacrificed on the altar (a stoned table used for burning)!

God came DOWN: (Genesis 11:5)

“The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded”

This is a reference to the tower of Babel, where God caused people to spread all over the Earth. Babel is the place where God confused the language of the whole world and Babel may mean “confuse” or the “gate of God.”

God Wrestles with Jacob: (Genesis 32:24- 26)

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh”

God changed the name of Jacob to Israel which might mean, “*he fights with God*”, or “*he whom God broke his leg*”!

It is logical that a prophet fights for God or with the devil, but how can we understand that a prophet fights with his Creator all night long and that God is afraid of the light because He wanted to leave before the daylight!

Jacob saw God face to face: (Genesis 32:30)

“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved”

God rested and was refreshed: (Exodus 31:17)

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and Earth, and on the seventh day he RESTED AND WAS REFRESHED.”

Moses asked God to repent from evil things! : (Exodus 32:12)

“..Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people...”

Do you believe that Moses said that to God? The Easy-to-read Version of the Bible made this unacceptable statement as follows: “Please change your mind! Don’t destroy your people”!

What is worst: God obeyed Moses and repented! : (Exodus 32:14)

“And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people”

Ask yourself now who is the god and who is the prophet?

Moses threatened God! : (Exodus 32:32)

“Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”

Moses asked God to erase his name from his book, if he did not forgive the people of Israel! Again, do you believe that? Who is the god and who is the prophet?

Moses sees God’s back parts: (Exodus 33:23)

“And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen”

This is when God talked to Moses and was about to leave him.

God rejected Israel completely: (Psalm 78:59)

“And God heard this and became very angry, And God rejected Israel Completely!”

God like a drunken man: (Psalm 78:65)

“And the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.”

This is when God reminded Israel of all the favors that He bestowed upon them when He took them from Egypt, and then they turned like their fathers.

Reading the Bible makes one wonder about the concept of God in the Jewish and Christian scripture. Here is a God that rested and refreshed to commemorate the Sabbath because God Almighty became tired and needed to be rejuvenated after His six days of hard labor.

Out of the 73 books of the Roman Catholics and the 66 books of the Protestants of the Holy Bible, endless number of quotations can be found to illustrate man’s various imperfect descriptions of God. No nation has had as much opportunities as the people of Israel had. And despite repeated warnings to the effect that:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is in the water under the Earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy Lord am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:4-5).

And in our present time, you can see God in the movies: walking, talking and even smoking cigar, in the Hollywood movie *“Oh God.”* Also, you can see books or chapters in books with titles such as *“When God does not make sense”*, *“The future of God”* and even *“The death of God”*. One can only wonder about the effect of “The Holy Bible” in creating a human image of God.

Although the Bible said: *“So God created man in his own image,”* Genesis 1:27.

It looks also that Homo Arrogans created God in their own images!

This is a standing insult to God, the most powerful, as the Quran says:

“Allah! There is no God but He, - the Living, The Self-subsisting, Supporter of all, No slumber can seize Him Nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on Earth” (Surah 2 Ayah 255).

“We created the heavens and the Earth and all between them in six days, nor did any sense or weariness touch us” (Surah 50, Ayah 38).

The above verses state clearly that God has no need for rest or sleep. His activity, like His Life, is perfect and self-subsisting. This is in contrast with expressions, used by the Bible, such as awakened, repented, rested and refreshed. This Islamic perception of God confirms that of the prophet Isaiah that people can’t imagine what God is like:

“Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting god, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding” (Isaiah 40:28).

HIS NAME IS ALLAH

Christianity and Islam originated in the Middle East. Any Christian in this area when asked about the Name of God, he will say Allah!

The English Bible starts with:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and Earth.”

And the Arabic Bible starts with:

“In the beginning Allah created the heaven and Earth.”

The western Christians are unaware of the Name of God of their eastern brothers. Some Christians think that Allah is the idol that the Islamic cult worships! The Office for the Non-Christian Affairs at the Vatican published a document under the title “Orientations for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims. It is a very important document in that it shows the new position adopted towards Islam. In the third edition of this study (1970), the document stresses this fundamental point in the following terms:

“It would seem pointless to maintain that Allah is not real God, as do certain people in the west!” The Conciliatory document has put the above assertion in its proper place. There is no better way of illustrating Islamic faith in God than by quoting the following extracts from *Lumen Gentium*, produced by the second Vatican Council (1962-1965):

“The Muslims profess the faith of Abraham and worship with us the sole merciful God, who is the future judge of men on the Day of Reckoning.”

El, Yahweh, or Jehovah

According to Biblical scholars, Abraham’s God was El, the High God of Canaan. This name of God was preserved in such Hebrew names as Isra-El, Ishma-El, or Beth-El. Bethel means house of Allah (In Arabic Bait Allah). The last words of Jesus, in his own native Aramaic language, on the cross:

“Eli, Eli la’ma sa-bach’tha-ni? That is to say My God, my god, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

It is interesting to note that the Aramaic “la’ma sa” is the same as the Arabic “why” and pronounced “lemasa.” This is just one of the many words that shows the common origin of the Arabic and Aramaic languages.

In 1780, the German professor, J. H. Eichhorn discovered that there are two versions of many of the Biblical stories that are different in the

details (Cupitt, 1988, p. 90). He also discovered that one version refers to God as Yahweh. He called the writer of this version “J”, which in German is pronounced like the English Y. The writer of the second version E referred to God as El (Elohim in Hebrew). J was from the southern Kingdom of Judah, while E was from the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Whenever the name of God appeared in its true Hebrew form “YHWH,” these four letters were preceded by a substitute word “Adonai,” to warn the reader that the following word should not be pronounced. The Jews took meticulous care in repeating this exercise six thousand, eight hundred and twenty three times - interpolating the words “Adonai” or “Elohim.” They sincerely believed that this awesome name of God should never be pronounced. This prohibition was no ordinary affair: it called for a death penalty on one who dares to utter it and this restriction has been more powerful than all the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of the Ten Commandments put together.

The English Bibles refer to YHWH as “Lord God” and to Elohim as “God”.

“And God said, Let us make man in our own image” (Genesis 1:26).

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Genesis 2.7).

The word “Jehovah” did not exist prior to the sixteenth century. If Jehovah is the name of God and if the twenty seven Books of the New Testament were inspired by Him, then it is extremely strange that He (Jehovah) did not have His own name recorded in “His Own Words.” The Geek version of the New Testament does not have the name “Jehovah” written in it. Curiously this name of God has been replaced by the Greek words Kyrios and Theos, which mean Lord and God.

Hallelujah means Praise God in both secular and religious sense. The Jewish interpretation means Praise Jah (abbreviation of “Yahweh”). It is also used in Revelation 19:1 as Alleluia. It is possible that Hallelujah consists of both Hall (praise) and elujah (El or Eloh or Allah). If Hallelujah means praise Allah, then in this case, no one has been able to eliminate the name “ALLAH” from the originals of the Bible. Consider this as a divine intervention!

The exact sound of the four letters YHWH is known to neither the Jews nor the Gentiles, (Gentile is anyone who is not Jewish!). The European Christians replaced the letter Y with J as follows:

Table 2.1 - Letter Y changed to J

Yehuda	changed to Judah
Yusuf	changed to Joseph
Yunus	changed to Jonah
Yeheshua	changed to Joshua
Yehowa	changed to Jehovah
Yehudi	changed to Jewish
YHWH	changed to JHVH

YHWH became Yahweh and JHVH became Jehovah! Jehovah Witnesses say that the Letters YHWH occur in the Hebrew Scriptures 6823 times and it occurs with combination with the word “Elohim” 156 times in Genesis alone. This combination YHWH / ELOHIM has been consistently translated in the English Bible as “Lord God.” Since the Jews did not articulate the word YHWH for centuries and since the Chief Rabbis would not allow the unspeakable to be heard, they have forfeited the right to claim dogmatically how the word should sound. We have to seek the aid of the Arabic language to revive Hebrew, a language that had once died out. In every linguistic difficulty, recourse has to be made to the Arabic, a sister language, which has remained alive and viable.

Note the startling resemblance between the two languages; very often the same sounding words carry identical meaning in both:

Table 2.2 – Hebrew and Arabic Words

HEBREW	ARABIC	ENGLISH
Shalom	Salaam	Peace
Yaum	Yaum	Day
Ikhud	Ahad	One
Elah	Ilah	God
Yahuwa	Ya Huwa	Oh he

YHWH, YaHuWa, Ya HuWa all means the very same thing; “**Ya**” is a vocative and an exclamatory particle in both Hebrew and Arabic, meaning Oh. Also notice the similarity of **huwa**, **Huwa** and **he** in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Together, they mean **Oh He!** So instead of YHWH ELOHIM, we now have:

Oh HE! ELOHIM. This is very close to Surah 112 in the Quran: “*Say: He is Allah,*”

The suffix “*IM*” of the word “*ELOHIM*” is a plural of respect in Hebrew. In Arabic and Hebrew, there are two types of plurals: one for numbers and the other for honor as in royal proclamations. Since the plural of honors is uncommon in the language of the European, he has confused these plurals to connote a plurality of God, hence his justification of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

El in Hebrew means God and this was His name in the northern kingdom of Israel when it separated into two kingdoms. EL also was known to be the God of Abraham. El is also the name of God that Jesus called upon on the cross “Eli”, (Eli means my God). This means that El, Elah, Eloh and ELOHIM are not distinctly different words. They all represent the single Arabic name Allah.

In the English Bible, “New and improved Edition,” edited by Rev. C.I. Scofield, D.D., (1945), with his Bible Commentary in comment No. 1, the eight authors concur that:

“Elohim, (sometimes El or Elah), English form God, the first of the three primary names of Deity, is a uni-plural noun formed from EL = strength, or the strong one, and Allah,”

All the authors agreed that Allah is a name of God. However, in a later version with new authors, “*The New Scofield Reference Bible*” the name Allah was taken out. Western Christian scholars simply do not want any association with Allah, the God of Eastern Christians and Muslims.

There is no difficulty in understanding that in the languages of the world, every nation has given a distinctive name to God. Most of these names are attributive names, describing some aspect of God. But the proper name for God Almighty in the Semitic languages’ i.e. in the mother tongues of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (Peace be upon them all) is Allah. The name Allah exists in the Arabic Bible. The name Allah came from the lips of Jesus. The name Allah exists in the western world in “Hallelujah.” In Revelation 19:1, John saw a vision, in which he heard the angels in the heaven singing alleluia. This vision is the same as the Islamic tradition that the angels are praising Allah all the time.

If you look in the American Heritage Dictionary, (the Second College Edition), you will find the following:

Babel: Akkadian bab- ilu (also in Arabic) Bab, door or gate, El, God.

Ishmael: Hebrew (Ismael in Arabic) yisma, He will hear, El, God.

Until now in the Middle East most names have meanings. In Babylonian mythology, Marduk was called Bel (B + El), meaning “Lord.” Also Israel means, “He fights with God.” Notice also the vowel u at the end of bab- ilu, which means a vowel, exists after El or IL. Therefore in ancient languages El meant God and a vowel can be added to EL or IL. If you add to that Hallelujah, Eli, Eli la’ma sa-bach’tha-ni, Allah in Scofield’s Bible and the Arabic Bible, you will come to the conclusion that the name Allah, the Almighty, has been in existence for thousands of years. One may argue that El does not pronounce Allah. But El has been translated from Akkadian and Hebrew to Greek, to Latin and then to English. And if you want to know what time can do to the pronunciation and writing in the same language, consider the following:

“Yes” is written and pronounced “Yeah”

“Want to” is written and pronounced “wanna”

“Got to” is written and pronounced “gotta”

And this only happened in a few decades within the same language, without translation to four languages in at least 5000 years.

What is His Name? ALLAH.



3

Setting the Stage for Christianity



In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

25. [Musa (Moses)] said: “O my Lord! Open for me my chest (grant me self-confidence, contentment, and boldness).

26. “And ease my task for me;

27. “And make loose the knot (the defect) from my tongue, (i.e. remove the incorrectness from my speech) [That occurred as a result of a brand of fire which Musa (Moses) put in his mouth when he was an infant]. [Tafsir At-Tabari, Vol. 16, Page 159].

28. “That they understand my speech,

(Quran 20:25-28)



Reading the Old Testament can be a very confusing experience for an average careful reader. Some verses strike the reader as the “Word of God.” Others register as the “words of the Prophets.” and most of the verses were written by historians who injected their environment and tribal feud in the stories of the Old Testament. And the serious question is how the average layman can separate the above three categories? Should the seeker of the authentic Word of God in Bible depend on himself or his preacher? Will the preacher state the facts or keep quiet? It is extremely hard to get information from the Bible if the above three categories are merged together. That is why the Islamic sources of knowledge are divided into five main separate categories:

1. The Word of God, as revealed to Prophet Muhammad, is found in The Holy Quran, which is the same Arabic text that exists everywhere in all Islamic countries, for more than fourteen centuries.
2. The words of Muhammad (Pbuh), the Prophet of God, are recorded in books called the Hadith. There are two kinds of Hadith: Hadith Qudsi (or Sacred Hadith) and Prophetic Hadith. Hadith Qudsi are the sayings of Prophet Muhammad as revealed to him by Allah. Hadith Qudsi are so named because their authority is traced back to Allah but Muhammad put them in his own words. The Prophetic Hadith are the majority of Hadith and are traced back to the Prophet. There are two major accepted collections of the Hadith collected by the Islamic scholars Albukhari and Muslim. Every Hadith is recorded with the chain of people who heard it. This chain may include one person, or many persons. Based upon the trustworthiness of each reference included in the narration, the Hadith is classified as accepted, good, or weak. It is interesting to note that the Bible does not even enjoy this complex referencing system of the Hadith.
3. Interpretation of the Quran where each verse of the Quran is discussed as to why, when and where it was revealed. The interpretation of the Quran is always accompanied with the original verses of the Quran as a precaution against misinterpretation. It should be noted that few verses in few interpretations were not correctly interpreted and were rejected by the majority of the Islamic scholars. There must be certain qualifications to interpret the Quran. Among these qualifications are memorizing of the whole Quran by heart, knowledge of the Arabic language and its grammar and good Islamic character.
4. Interpretation of the Hadith where each saying of the Prophet is explained as to why, when and where it was said. The interpretation of the Hadith is always accompanied with the original saying of the Prophet as a precaution against misinterpretation.
5. Islamic history, written by historians of high integrity and knowledge and others of lesser trustworthiness. This history extends from the life of Muhammad to the present time. The life of the Prophet is detailed from his birth to his death in many references.

As a hypothetical situation, if someone attempts to mix the Quran, sayings of the Prophet, the different interpretations and Islamic history, in one composite text, then anyone who reads that confusing text will surely find contradictions. And if the composite text is thought to be totally inspired from God, then surely researchers will eventually find the contradictions and question the authenticity of the whole text. This situation is what I will attempt to prove happening in the case of the Old and

New Testament. This is not a personal point of view from a Muslim. It is the Biblical scholars' works that the average Christian does not know and the information that the Sunday classes' preachers are not volunteering. Thank God, Muslims kept the above five kinds of books separate, hence there was no way to add any word, or even a comma for that matter, to the Quran, the authentic Word of God. This was a promise from God Himself that He will protect the Quran. And that is what happened:

"We have without doubt, sent down the message. And We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)" (Surah 15, Ayah 9).

The purity of the text of the Quran through fourteen centuries is an indication of eternal care with Allah's Truth protected through all ages. As promised by God, this Holy Truth will never suffer corruption, or any human adulteration.

The Quran as a text is undoubtedly preserved by the promise of Allah Himself. Furthermore, the recitation of the Quran, anywhere on Earth, is the same recitation as that of the Prophet. In the written Quran there are some symbols that indicate that the Prophet joined verses or break long verses in his recitation. These symbols are listed at the end of the Quran. Therefore, in reciting the Quran, Muslims use those symbols to stop where the Prophet stop and continue where he continued. It is quite exceptional to imagine the Power of God's promise to secure the Quran in writings as well as in readings.

Reciting the Quran is an established science in Islamic schools. The Quran is 604 pages long. During the time of the Prophet thousand of his companions memorized the whole 604 pages. In the present time millions of Muslims everywhere know the Quran by heart.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

It important to start with that the Bible admits its own corruption by the scribes who wrote down and copied the different chapters of the Old Testament. First Moses warns the people of Israel that the Covenant, heaven and earth would be against them because they are very stubborn, Deuteronomy 31:24-29. He predicted that the Jews, who refused to obey him while he was with them, would become evil and corrupt. Then in the Revised Standard Version, Jeremiah 8:8, God asked Jeremiah to tell the people of Judah:

"How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie."

The Holy Bible, Easy to Read Version makes it even clearer:

“You keep saying, ‘We have the Lord’s teachings! So we are wise. But that is not true. Why? Because the scribes have lied with their pens.’”

This is an obvious statement from Prophet Jeremiah that the scribes corrupted the Bible. They claim that the Bible says that they are wise, but they are liars.

The term Bible is derived through Latin from the Greek biblia, or “books,” the diminutive form of byblos, the word for “papyrus” or “paper,” which was exported from the ancient Phoenician port city of Biblos. The Bible consists of the Old Testament of the Jewish scripture and the New Testament of the Christian books. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the Old Testament.

The order and the number of books differ between the Jewish Bible and the Protestant and Roman Catholic versions of the Bible. The Jewish Bible is the Hebrew Scriptures. It consists of 39 books originally written in Hebrew, except for a few sections in Aramaic. The Bible of Judaism consists of three distinct parts:

1. The Torah or Law, also called the books of Moses.
2. The Nebiim, (plural for Nebi, “Prophet”) or Prophets, divided into the earlier and latter Prophets.
3. The Ketubim, (plural for Ketub, “book”) or Writings, including Psalms, wisdom books and other diverse literature.

The Christian Old Testament organizes the books according to their type of literature:

1. The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, corresponding to the Torah.
2. The historical books.
3. The poetical or wisdom books.
4. The books of the Prophets.

The Protestant and Roman Catholic versions of the Old Testament place the books in the same sequence, but the Protestant version includes only those books found in the Bible of Judaism. Christians and Jews have been reading the Bible for over two thousand years. In the present time Christians go to Sunday classes after a full week of work to attain spiritual doses. They hear good lessons about the importance of moral values and the message of Jesus or Isaiah to be righteous and to love thy neighbor and all the uplifting speeches according to the Bible. After all, the Bible is

the heart of Christianity and Judaism. Biblical scholars are preaching and studying it in churches, synagogues and seminaries. People read it, study it, appreciate it, write about it, scrutinize it and argue about it. And no one knows who actually wrote it. No one knows when or where it was written.

However, the layman accepts the hypothesis that the first five books of the Bible were written by Moses, half of the Psalms by David, the Gospel of Mark by Mark and the Revelation by John and so on. After all in Exodus, 17:14, God told Moses *"Write this for a memorial in a book."* John in his Gospel, 5: 46-47, makes Jesus say the following *"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote for me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words."* Paul, in his letter to the Romans, 10:5, referring to Leviticus, affirms *"Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law."* John wrote in the Revelation, 1:9, *"For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* So, everything was fine and everyone believes that the whole Bible is the authentic Word of God.

In the third century AD the Christian scholar Origen responded to objections to the authenticity of the Torah by suggesting that contradictions are only apparent contradictions. They can be explained after very complex interpretation that the Bible did not include. For example Moses described his own death and where he was buried because God had told Moses this would happen. He also knew that Israel cried for him for thirty days (Deuteronomy, 34:8). Investigators accepted, for eleven centuries, this argument that Moses wrote the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books are known as the Pentateuch (from Greek, meaning "five scrolls"). Then Isaac ibn Yashush, a Jewish physician of a Muslim ruler in Spain in the eleventh century, discovered that the list of the Edomite kings that appeared in Genesis 36 mentioned kings who lived long after Moses. Ibn Yashush proposed that another one wrote this part after Moses. The response to his theory was that he was called "Isaac the blunderer" by Abraham ibn Ezra, who was a twelfth century Spanish rabbi. He recommended that the book of Ibn Yashush to be burned. Ironically, it was Ibn Ezra that discovered that it was impossible for Moses to write the first five books of the Bible. These books referred to Moses in the third person, described places that he had never seen and used language that reflected another time and place than those of Moses. He concluded that *"And if you understand, then you will recognize the truth."* Then he wrote *"And he who understands will keep silent"* (Knight-Jadczyk, 2006, p. 353).

In the fifteenth century other scholars came to the same conclusions as those of Ibn Yashush. In the sixteenth century, van Maes, a Flemish

Catholic scholar, suggested that later writers expanded the original text of Moses. They achieved that by making the text more current and more understandable. Later the Catholic Church classified this book as a Prohibited Book. In the seventeenth century, Isaac de la Peyrere, a French Calvinist, published a book that categorically said that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch. He referred to the first verse of Deuteronomy, when *“Moses spake to all Israel on this side of Jordan.”* But Moses himself never recorded that he had been in Israel in his life. The book was also banned and burned. He was arrested and was ordered to recant his views to the Pope himself, which he did. Later, other Christian scholars investigated the Bible and found more contradictions such as *“There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses,”* (Deuteronomy, 34:10). This statement does not sound like the words of the humblest man on earth as Moses described himself. The Catholic Church took the same stand as with other scholars. Books were burned and scholars were arrested.

The Tribes of Israel

Joseph, the son of Jacob, brought his parents and brothers to Egypt. The sons of Jacob formed 12 tribes in Egypt. According to biblical tradition these tribes varied considerably in size and population. Moses counted all the people of Israel in Numbers 1:1-15. These tribes are divided into two groups:

1. The first group included the tribes of Reuben, Simon, Levi and Judah, settled in the south. Later, they formed the Kingdom of Judah.
2. The second group included Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, Nephtali and the descendants of Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh, settled in the north. Later, they formed the Kingdom of Israel.

After the first generation of the Israelites died, many of the people of Israel worshipped the idol Gods of the Canaanite Baal and Asherah. For the following few centuries, judges governed the people. When the judges became corrupted, Israel asked for a king to lead them. The first king was Saul who committed mistakes and sins. God was sorry that he made Saul king. Then God chose David, from the tribe of Judah, to be the new king. He ruled over all of Israel and wrote many of the songs (or Psalms). He committed adultery with Bathsheba and later he married her. When David was old, he appointed Solomon, his son from Bathsheba as the king of Israel. When Solomon was old, his wives pushed him to

worship their idol gods. In the Quran, David and Solomon are recognized as two righteous kings and Prophets. Their sins in Bible do not exist in the Quran.

After Solomon's death, his son king Rehoboam did not have the skills to keep the country united. The tribal feud expanded and the unified Israel did not last long. Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the northern tribes called themselves Israel and the southern tribes called themselves Judah. The people of Israel chose a man named Jeroboam as their king (reigned 786-746 BC). In the northern kingdom of Israel, several dynasties came and went. The kings of Israel had several capital cities at various times, the last of which was Samara. There were many wars between Israel and Judah.

The choice of priests by Jeroboam for his new kingdom was crucial to the authorship of the Old Testament. In order to strengthen his hold on the people, he changed the way they worship God. He built two temples for worshipping golden calves, one at Dan and the other at Bethel. Jeroboam appointed new priests, including individuals who were not Levites, to the function of the altar of the golden calf. The priests from the Levi family had no place in Jeroboam's new religious structure. They condemned the golden calves, which were the symbol of a pagan religion. Since the tribe of Levi had no territory of its own, as the other tribes had, the Levites had only two choices: they could move to Judah and try to find a place in the priestly hierarchy there, or they could stay in Israel and perform various religious services outside Dan and Bethel. The pious priests of Levi turned into poor and homeless people.

The existence of the kingdom of Israel in the north lasted for about two hundred years. During the time of Isaiah, the Assyrian empire, presently north of Iraq, destroyed Israel in 722 BC and deported the ten tribes of Israel into many places in the empire. Many Israelites fled from Israel south to Judah to escape the approaching Assyrian army. The Assyrians replaced the people of Israel with the Samaritans who came with their pagan religion. The Assyrians invaded Judah in 701 BC and many cities were conquered. But they could not defeat Judah and they turned back. In 586 BC the Babylonians finally conquered Judah and its people led away into exile.

The two Jewish kingdoms existed side by side for two hundred years. They had common language and history, but they had many tribal hostilities and feuds. The priests of the Levi tribe became extremely bitter and frustrated from the tribes of the north who revived pagan religions. With this picture of the early years of the biblical world, the writers of the Old Testament can be identified.

J, E, P and D

During the eighteenth century three independent investigators discovered that the Old Testament has two or three versions of the same story. They are: the German minister H. B. Witter in 1711, the French Physician Jean Astruc in 1753 and the German professor J. H. Eichhorn in 1780. Some of these versions have different details to the extent that careful studying of the Bible should raise serious challenges to the issue of the divine inspiration. It was Eichhorn who discovered that the two versions of many of the Biblical stories were written by J and E who referred to the deity as Yahweh and Elohim respectively (Cupitt, 1988, p. 90). This step paved the way to further criticism of the Pentateuch. Even in the English translation of the Bible, it is easy to observe that biblical stories often appear with variations of details in two different places in the Bible. In one version, the deity was referred to as “God”. In the second version God was referred to as “Lord God.”

1. There are two stories of the creation of the world.
2. There are two stories of the flood.
3. There are two stories of the covenant between God and Abraham.
4. There are two stories of the naming of Abraham’s son Isaac.
5. There are two stories of Abraham’s claiming to a foreign king that his wife Sarah was his sister.
6. There are two stories of Jacob making a journey to Mesopotamia.
7. There are two stories of a revelation to Jacob at Bethel.
8. There are two stories of God’s changing Jacob’s name to Israel.
9. There are two stories of Jacob’s giving birthright.

The assumption that the two earliest biblical writers, J and E, developed the whole Pentateuch lasted only eighteen years. Biblical researchers used the same technique of separating the Pentateuch into J and E to perform further separation of E. They discovered that there was a third source that appeared interested in the priests. This source was called P for the priestly interest. P had a dignified and distinguished belief of God. For example P did not believe that anyone could actually see God. When Moses beseeched God to see Him, God responded: “*You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live*” (Exodus 33:20). However, P believed that humans could have spiritual experiences as a sign to His existence, which is not to be confused with God Himself. While J and E consider any Levite could be a priest, P recognized only the descendants of Aaron as priests over those of Moses. J and E were hostile to P.

The criterion of having three writers of the whole Pentateuch did not apply to the fifth book, Deuteronomy. Again there were major differences in the interest and style of the three writers and that of the Deuteronomy. The differences were obvious even in the translation. There are different expressions and favorite sentences. Biblical stories were different from those of the first four books. Deuteronomy appeared to be an independent fourth source, called D. There are blatant contradictions of details between D and the others. For example, D has different Ten Commandments! D was hostile to P since both fought for the priestly advantages.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Julius Wellhausen, (1844-1918), established the new critical model of discerning the four sources (JEPD) of the Pentateuch (Armstrong, 1993a, p. 12). Up to the present time, this theory goes by his name. It constitutes a solid foundation that any further work should be developed upon it. This study draws the ultimate conclusion of suggesting a new position instead of the prevailing one of divine revelation to Moses. This criticism downgraded the historical authenticity of the Biblical traditions. This critical analysis has extended beyond the five books of Moses and has touched every book in the Old and New Testament. There is hardly a biblical scholar in the world actively working on the problem that would claim that the Pentateuch was written only by Moses - or by one single person. No serious biblical researcher can ignore it and no other explanation of the evidence has opposed it.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is not our intention to present all the contradictions in the Old Testament. This would require more than one book devoted to this subject. As such, only samples of the contradiction are presented in this chapter. The Old Testament is full of stories about tribal feud of the people of Israel and because of that the Old Testament is full of contradictions. Many biblical scholars approach this issue with the conclusion that the whole Old Testament could not be inspired by God. In this case, how can anyone discern the Word of God from the human words? How can then anyone separate the authentic Word of God from those stories? The analysis and criticism of the Old Testament began since the eleventh century. Yet Sunday classes, TV Evangelists and Jewish rabbis decided that this information could be confusing to the layperson. So they all approach religious preaching from a position of comfort that emphasizes the moral lessons of the Bible rather than introducing confusing issues that may be very hard to explain. Most likely, biblical preachers use the advice

of Abraham ibn Ezra when he said “And he who understands will keep silent.”

The Story of the Creation

The creation event is a fascinating case of two versions of the same story. At the beginning of the Bible, one version of how the world was created is presented. The second chapter of the Bible starts with a different version of creation. And both versions are scientifically inaccurate. In several points they contradict each other. For example, they describe the major events in different order.

1. In Genesis 1:1-26, God created plants on the third day and fish and birds on the fifth day. On the sixth day, He created animals and man.
2. In Genesis 2:7-25, God created man first. Then He created plants. Then, for man to have company, God created animals and birds. And finally, God created woman.

The two stories have different sequences of steps of creation. Biblical scholars noticed that the first version referred to the deity as “God” thirty five times. The second version always referred to Him by name “Yahweh God” eleven times. The first version never calls Him Yahweh and the second version never calls Him only God. Therefore, it can be concluded that the first version was written by P and the second version was written by J. P described the creation in great details to give a sense and a feel of the supremacy of God. It is interesting to note that Genesis 2:1-3 referred to the deity as “God”, after that He was referred to as “Lord God”, which might mean that the first three verses of Genesis 2 should be the end of genesis 1 and thus was part of P. However, in describing the details of the creation in seven days, P had created a theological crisis:

1. If the sequence of the creation is not the same in the two versions, then which one is correct?
2. If P, who holds an omnipotent view of God, wrote the whole first version, then how did P make God rest in the seventh day? Did someone other than P write the seventh day resting story? Was there a fifth source, for example “F”?
3. Why the details of P have major scientific inaccuracies? Maurice Bucaille in his book “*The Bible, the Quran and Science*” listed many scientific inaccuracies that show that the P version of creation is inconsistent with what we know now about the Big Bang theory.

Keeping in mind that God cannot contradict Himself, the following points can be concluded:

1. God did not exactly inspire these two different versions.
2. The authentic story from God was edited, interpreted and expanded by at least two writers.
3. The authentic sequence of creation, if any, was changed to conform to the different audience and the readers at the time of compilation.

Now, we can understand why the Islamic religious books are divided into five categories, and the authentic Word of God is kept separate.

The Flood of Noah

The story of the flood exists in Genesis 6:5 to 8:22. Biblical scholars investigated this part of Genesis and separated the entire story from its two sources J and P. The P part refers to the deity as God, while the J part refers to God by the name Yahweh. The two versions differ in important details of the story:

1. J stated that God regretted that he had made humans and He was grieved to His Heart, Genesis 6:6. P did not say that.
2. P says that the flood lasted for almost one year (7:11, 7:24, 8:3 and 8:13). J says that it lasted for forty days and forty nights (7:17).
3. P says that Noah sent a raven, while J says it was a dove, (Genesis 8:7-8).
4. J has seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals. ("Clean" means proper for sacrifice like sheep, "unclean" means not proper for sacrifice like lions.) This is because Noah offers a sacrifice at the end of the story in J. P has one pair of each kind of animal and the sacrifice event was not mentioned.
5. J stated that God smelled the sacrifices of Noah and it pleased Him, (Genesis 8:21).

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The Ten Commandments

The fact that the Ten Commandments are repeated in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5 almost word for word, with the exception of the fourth commandment raises very intriguing questions. Why? How did it happen? If these are words inspired by God, then why did God repeat Himself in 17 verses or in about half a chapter? Someone may say that God uses

repetition for emphasis, why then is the fourth commandment the only difference?

Biblical investigators agree that P wrote the Exodus version and D wrote the Deuteronomy version. The fourth commandment deals with the reason given by God for keeping the Sabbath. The Exodus version, 20:10, by P states that the reason is because God rested on the seventh day. The Deuteronomy version by D gives a very general reason like “*And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by stretched out arm.*” Deuteronomy 5:15. If P wrote this verse of Exodus, why then did he abandon his perspective of the deity as an Almighty and All-powerful God and made God rest on the seventh day. This part actually conforms to J, because it certainly does not fit the Priestly P. It is fascinating to note that the Exodus version, with God’s resting, is more publicized than the second one. This is probably to present a more potent reason to rest on Saturday. However, in doing that, they give the Almighty human characteristic.

Now, we can understand why the Islamic religious books are divided into five categories, and the authentic Word of God is kept separate.

The Golden Calf

One of the most intriguing stories of the bible is that of the golden calf. Moses liberated the Israelis from slavery in Egypt. They had seen many miracles, the last of which was the splitting the Red Sea. While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments on the mountain, Aaron made a golden calf for the people, Exodus 32:4-5. The people said: “*these be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*” And Aaron said: “*Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.*” The people sacrificed and celebrated wildly. At the same time, God told Moses about the terrible sin that the Israelis were committing and God said that he would destroy the Israelis and make a great nation from Moses. Moses then asked God to repent of this evil act against the Israelis! The Lord repented and did not destroy the people. Moses came down from the mountain with Joshua and saw the calf and the condition of the people. He, then, smashed the tablets in anger. The tribe of Levi gathered around Moses and carried out a bloody purge among the people. The story has many questions:

1. Why did the writer of the story portray his people as rebellious at the very time of their freedom and their receiving the covenant?
2. Why did he describe Aaron as the leader of this paganism?
3. Why did Aaron not suffer any punishment?

4. Why did the writer depict a golden calf?
5. Why did the Jews refer to the golden calf (which is singular) as *“these are your gods”* (plural)? This sentence is exactly the same as that of Jeroboam when he built two temples for the golden calves, 1 king 12:28. Jeroboam was justified in using plural for the calves, but in Exodus they worshiped a singular calf.
6. Why did they say, *“which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”* when the calf was made after they left Egypt?
7. Why did Aaron say, *“Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.”* when he allowed worshipping an idol?
8. Why did he picture the Levites as acting in bloody rage?
9. Why was Joshua not included in association with this particular sin?
10. Is it conceivable that Moses asked God to repent of the evil of His wrath?

The story was written by E from the Northern Kingdom of Israel who used to criticize both the northern and southern religious organizations. Aaron was regarded as a high priest. E could not change the history and the tradition by punishing the high priest. But E chose Aaron because the priests of the family of Aaron had been firmly established in Judah. So he accused Aaron, Moses' brother, of paganism. In Exodus 4:10-15, when Moses first spoke to God, he said: *“I am not a skilled speaker. I have never been able to speak well.”* According to the story in the Bible, Moses was reluctant to accept God's Command and therefore God said: *“I will give you someone to help you. I will use your brother Aaron, from the family of Levi.”* If this Word of God did not mean that Aaron was a Prophet, then what does? He was not just a high priest. Aaron was a Prophet in Judaism and Islam. However according to the Old Testament, due to tribal hostilities and wars between the north and the south, Prophet Aaron was accused of paganism and was demoted from a Prophet to a high priest.

Now, we can understand why the Islamic religious books are divided into five categories and the authentic Word of God is kept separate.

Judah or Ephraim

This is a story of birthrights and inheritance issues with Jacob distributing his wealth among his family. E story is in Genesis 48 and J story is in Genesis 49. In the E version, Jacob granted Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh equal share in everything he owned. Jacob was old and his eyes were weak. When Jacob was blessing Joseph and his sons, Joseph put Ephraim on his left side and Manasseh on his right side. But Jacob

crossed his arms, so his right hand was on Ephraim's head even though Manasseh was firstborn. This did not make Joseph happy. He took his father's hand and wanted to put it on Manasseh's head, but Jacob refused and argued that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh. Why Ephraim? The writer of the E version was from Israel and king Jeroboam was from the tribe of Ephraim.

Jacob's first son was Reuben, Simon was the second, Levi was the third and Judah was the fourth. The J story justifies the superiority of Judah and the formation of the kingdom of Judah. The first son Reuben was excluded from his birthright because he slept with one of his father's wives and his father found that out. Simon and Levi were also excluded because they planned evil things, killed men and hurt animals for fun. Therefore the birthright, in the J version, went to Judah who was praised by his father, described as a lion and was told that his family would be kings.

Now, we can understand why the Islamic religious books are divided into five categories and the authentic Word of God is kept separate.

Isaac or Ismael

Christian scholars apply their investigative techniques to biblical stories and usually defend any evil action of some biblical figures. But when it comes to Ismael, then this is another story. There is no sense here to investigate who wrote the story of Hagar and Ismael. If J wrote that Judah got the birthright and E claimed that the birthright went to Ephraim and J and E were from the twelve tribes of Jacob, the son of Isaac, can anyone expect good words about Ismael, the brother of Isaac, from any writer? Ismael was the firstborn and of course he was denied his birthright as in the above stories. Any reference to Hagar is accompanied with such description as the maid and the Egyptian servant. The entire blessing and the praise went to Isaac. The Angel of the Lord told Hagar that "*Ismael would be wild man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand would be against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren,*" Genesis 16: 12. Recall that Aaron got much more disrespect when he was accused with paganism in the golden calf story. The honor of ultimate test of obedience, Abraham sacrificing his "only son", was given to Isaac instead of Ismael, Genesis 22. In fact, it was Ismael who was about to be sacrificed for the sake of God. Ismael knew what would happen to him and he surrendered to the will of God. So the writers of the Bible took the honor and praise from Ismael.

In Genesis 17:20 God said to Hager: *“As for Ismael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.”* This verse states clearly that Ismael is blessed. God also said that his children would form a great nation. This great nation is obviously the Arab nation that started in the Saudi peninsula.

Also, God the Almighty left us with a formidable miracle that no one could take away from Ismael and his children. In Genesis 21:17-20 God’s angel came to help Hagar and the baby Ismael when they were thirsty and God allowed Hagar to see a well of water. So Hagar went to the well and filled her bag with water. Then she gave water to Ismael to drink. Now, what is this formidable miracle? This referenced well still exists in the Paran desert in Mecca. Since the time of Abraham, that well never dried. Every year millions and millions of Muslims still drink from the well. It is called Zamzam. The Saudis added compressors to the well Zamzam to lift up more and more water. This living miracle has existed for thousands of years. All miracles of the Bible disappeared, but the will of God for praising Ismael still defies time.

Now, we can understand why the Islamic religious books are divided into five categories, and the authentic Word of God is kept separate.

To See or Not To See

After Jacob wrestled with God, *“And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”* (Genesis 32:30).

When Moses beseeched God to see Him, God responded: *“You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live”* (Exodus 33:20).

E wrote the first verse claiming that Jacob wrestled with God, saw his face and nothing happened to him. P wrote the second verse that denied the action of seeing God by anyone.

1. Which story do you believe?
2. Was E trying to elevate the status of Jacob above Moses?

To Rest or Not to Rest

The Jews’ reason to rest on Saturday *“For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”* (Exodus 31:17).

The Prophet Isaiah says that people can’t imagine what God is like *“Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting god, the*

Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding” (Isaiah 40:28).

Which verse of the Old Testament fits your perception of God the Almighty?

The Lord or Satan

David was asked by the Lord to number Israel and Judah:

*“And again the anger of the **Lord** was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Samuel 24:1).*

Then in 1 Chronicles 21:1, David was provoked by Satan to number Israel:

*“And **Satan** stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”*

Again, these two verses raise very interesting questions:

1. Are these explanations of the reason for numbering the Jews refer to the same story?
2. Or did God ask David to number Israel and Judah, while Satan provoked David to number Israel alone? And if so, why?
3. Did the two writers have different political interests about the reason for numbering? And if so, could both stories be inspired by God?

The revisers of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible had this to say about the authors of Samuel and Chronicles:

1. Samuel: Author “Unknown”
2. Chronicles: Author “Unknown”, probably collected and edited by Ezra.

THE PROPHETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Islam is based on reason and on pure teachings of all the Prophets of Allah not contaminated with paganism or corruption. Allah sent all the Prophets for the guidance of mankind. All Prophets were humans and every one of them is a righteous example for the entire humanity. Because they were humans, they could do mistakes, not sins. However, the Bible is full of degrading stories about many Prophets as if God had sent the

wrong people for our guidance. No Muslim would dare to write a book and stamp the Prophets of Allah (Allah' blessings and peace be upon all) with paganism, rape, adultery, prostitution or incest. They all have the respect that they deserve. The subject of the Prophets should not be approached as such: if you are Jewish, Moses is the only Good example and if you are a Christian, Jesus is your only example and savior. Each Prophet is a good example for the entire human race to follow.

When Muslims tell Christians or Jews that Muhammad is a Prophet of God, they think that Muhammad was just like many of the Biblical Prophets. Well, Muhammad, Peace be upon him, did not commit any sin, like all the sins alleged to the Biblical Prophets. Many Christians and Jews do not have much respect for their Prophets, because many of their Prophets are much more worse human beings than an average human being. On the contrary, Muslims hold Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, to the highest degree of respect and honor and they get very angry if any Westerner insults their very dear Prophet Muhammad.

Here are some of the stories from the Bible about the corruption and sins of the Prophets. These stories show that the Jewish people did not have any respect for most of their Prophets. None of the following stories are mentioned in the Quran or the Islamic tradition.

Drunken Noah

The Bible states that after the flood, Noah became a farmer (Gen. 9:20-23). He planted a field of grapes. Noah made wine and drank it. He became drunk and lay naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his naked father. He told his brothers outside the tent. Then Shem and Japheth got a coat. They walked backwards into the tent, so they did not see their father naked. The wine made Noah sleep. But when he woke, he learned what Ham had done. He cursed Ham and prayed that he be the slave of his brothers.

We are familiar with the tribal feuds of the Israelis. Who wrote this story? Of course, it should have not come from the tribes of Ham, but most likely from the tribes of Shem or Japheth.

- Does this story identify a man that God chose to save the righteous people and destroy the unbelievers?
- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?

Moses Kills Women and Boys

The book of Numbers narrates an incredible story about Moses. He asked his army to get even with the Midianites. The Israeli army killed all the Midianite men and burned all their towns and villages. They took the women, children and animals and brought them to Moses. Moses was very angry with the leaders of the army. Moses said to them *“Why did you let the women live.” “Now kill all the Midianite boys and women and spare the women who had not sexual relations with any man”* Numbers 31:15-17. The women who were spared were 32,000! Now imagine how many men, women and boys were killed by the command of Moses.

- Is this the same Moses who preached the commandment “Thou shall not kill”?
- If those people were killed because they had sexually transmitted disease, why kill the boys and spare the girls? And how many people did they slaughter?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story to Christian boys?

Lot and incest

Lot was the nephew of Abraham and he is a Prophet in Islam. However, the Bible (Genesis 19:30-36) tells an unbelievable story. Lot took his two daughters to live in a cave in the mountain. The daughters conspired to use their father to grow a family by getting him drunk and then having sex with their father each in one night. They did that and they became pregnant. The older daughter gave birth to a son called Moab (Hebrew: from my father!) and the younger daughter gave birth to a son called Ben-Ammi (Hebrew: Son of my father!)

So the Bible tells us that it was not enough for Lot’s daughters to commit this scandal, but to give their illegitimate children names to publicize their act!

- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?

Jacob and the Red Lentil Soup

This is another story of the effect of tribal politics on compiling the Old Testament. Abraham’s son, Isaac, married Rebekah. While she was pregnant, God told her that she would have twin sons in her body and that the older son would serve the younger (Genesis, 25: 22-34). The first baby was red and hairy, so he was called Esau, (means hairy). When

the second baby was born, he was holding tightly to Esau's heel, so he was called Jacob, (means heel or tricky). In the ancient Near East, birth order was extremely important, because the firstborn son was entitled to the birthright, which meant the largest portion of the father's inheritance. Esau and Jacob grew up. One time Esau came back from the field hungry. He asked his brother to let him have some of the red lentil soup that Jacob was eating. And for some of the red lentil soup, Jacob asked for Esau's rights as firstborn in return. Esau did not have a choice. If he died from hunger, Jacob would have all of his father's wealth anyway.

When the time came for Isaac to give the birthright to Esau, Rebekah encouraged Jacob to pose as his older brother. To deceive his weak-eyed father, Jacob put on his brother's clothing and goatskin on his arms to simulate hairy arms. Isaac gave Jacob the blessing and the birthright that included the control over Esau. When Esau came in from hunting, he knew what happened and he asked Isaac for another blessing for him. Isaac said: Jacob tricked him and you will be a slave to your brother, but you will break away from his control.

Again this story has many questions:

- Why all these details, that even included red lentil soup, in the Word of God?
- Why did the story emphasize that Esau and Jacob were twin brothers?
- Why did the writer say that God told Rebekah that her older son would serve her younger son?
- Why did Isaac give the birthright to Jacob?
- Why was Esau given the promise that he would be free from Isaac?

The answers lie in the history of the tribes of Israel and the knowledge about their tribal feud and wars between Israel and Judah. First, the writer of this story conforms to J, because he refers to God Yahweh and J is from Judah. The southern kingdom of Judah had borders with the land of Edom, the tribe of Esau. J was actually fabricating a part of history, not the Word of God. J composed the story of his people's ancestors with an eye on explaining and justifying the present and past history. Esau, after eating the red lentil soup, became known as "red". The word for red in Hebrew is "Edom". Esau and Jacob were twins, like Judah and Edom were related neighbors, in language and origin. The United Kingdom of Israel-Judah under David defeated Edom and controlled it for two hundred years. Then Edom achieved its independence in 848 BC.

Sunday preachers do not mention this deceiving action or even justify the cunning behavior of Jacob, the father of Israel. The greedy negotiating

tactic of Jacob for getting his father's wealth in exchange for some red lentil soup is just beyond comprehension. Even if it is mentioned, it is usually minimized or justified as God's will.

While following the futile negotiations between the Zionist Israelis and the Palestinians during the last decades, I remember Jacob, the father of the Israelis and the story of the red lentil soup. And if Jacob did that to his twin brother Esau, what do you expect Zionist Israelis to do to their cousins, the Arabs. During negotiations, Zionist Israelis are asking for everything the Palestinians have (land, water, trees...) in return of a bowl cup of red lentil soup!!!

Jacob's Family

The Prophet Jacob was married to two sisters, Leah and Rachel, at the same time, (Gen. 29 22-30). Leah was the mother of all his children except Joseph and Benjamin whose mother was Rachel. Jacob's daughter Dinah was kidnapped and raped by the son of the king (Gen. 34:2). Dinah's brothers, Simon and Levi, killed the king and his son for revenge (Gen. 34:26). Jacob's sons from Leah conspired to throw Joseph into a well (Gen. 37:20). Jacob's first son Reuben was accused by Jacob of sleeping with one of his father's wives (Gen. 49:4).

This Biblical story does not seem like a family of a Prophet of God, but a soap opera on TV. But we all know how those stories were written. May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon Jacob and Joseph.

- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?

Judah and Tamar

To continue the saga of Jacob's family, Judah was one of his sons. Genesis 38 tells the story of the father of the Jewish race, from whom we derive the name Judea and Judaism. This patriarch of the Judaism got married and God granted him three sons: Er, Onan and Shelah. When the first-born was old enough, Judah had him married to a lady called Tamar. *"But Er, Judah's first born was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him."* Gen. 38:7. Following the Jewish tradition, if a brother died and left no offspring, it was the duty of the other brother to give "seed" to his sister in law, so that the deceased's name might be perpetuated. Judah, in honor with this custom, ordered his second son Onan to do this duty. But jealousy entered his heart. It would be his seed, but the name would be his brother's. *"He spilled it (sperms) on the ground...and the thing he*

did displease the Lord: wherefore He slew him also.” Gen. 38:9-10. The sexual therapists call the act of Onan “Onanism!”

Now Judah told his daughter in law, Tamar, to return to her father’s house until his third son Shelah grew up and then she would be back to marry the third son. Shelah grew up and perhaps married another woman. Judah was terrified to fulfill his promise to Tamar, because he already lost two sons. The distressed young lady resolved to take revenge on her father in law for depriving her of her “seed” right. Tamar learned that Judah was going on a trip. She planned to get even with him on the road. Judah saw her but he thought that she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. So Judah went to her and said: Let me have sexual relations with you. He promised her in return that he would send her a young goat. She asked for his seal as a guarantee for the goat. He accepted and he *“came in unto her and she conceived by him”* (Gen. 38:18). Judah knew that Tamar sinned like a prostitute and she was pregnant and Judah wanted to burn her. Of course after he learned what happened, he did not burn her or burn himself!

- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?

David and Adultery

King David was a Prophet of Allah. The Bible tells a story about David when he was in Jerusalem, (II Samuel 11:1-5). In an evening, David got up from his bed. He walked around the roof of the king’s house. While he was on the roof, he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. So David sent for his soldiers and asked them who the woman was. An officer answered that the woman’s name is Bathsheba and she was married to one of David’s soldier called Uriah. David sent messengers to bring Bathsheba to him. When she came to David, he had sexual relation with her. She washed herself and then went back to her house. But Bathsheba became pregnant and she sent word to David about her pregnancy. David did not stop at that, but he sent Uriah to the front line where the fighting was the hardest to be killed in the battle.

- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?
- How could David then be accepted in the genealogy of Jesus when it started with a person who committed adultery? Allah forbids it!

David Kills Tens of Thousands

Saul put David in charge of the Israeli army who went to fight the Philistines. On the way home after the battles, Israeli women in every city in Israel came out to meet David. They enjoyed very much the slaughter of people; they danced and played music. They sang: “Saul killed thousands of the enemies, but David killed tens of thousands.” It was a competition of slaughtering people between Saul and David. 1 Samuel 18:5-7.

- Did David believe in the Ten Commandments? He killed people and committed adultery?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church?

Solomon and Paganism

Solomon the son of David was a Prophet of Allah who gave him wisdom and wealth. According to the Bible, (I Kings 11:3-10), Solomon had 700 wives. He also had 300 slave women that were like wives to him. When Solomon was old, his wives forced him to follow their gods. Solomon worshipped Ashtoreth, the Cananite goddess of love and war. And Solomon also worshipped Milcom, the god of the Ammonite people. Solomon built a place on a hill next to Jerusalem for worshipping Chemosh, the idol of the Moabite people. Solomon also built a temple for Molech, the idol of the Ammonite people. Solomon did the same thing for all of his wives from other countries. The Lord came to Solomon and told him that he must not follow other gods. But Solomon did not follow the Lord's command.

- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?

David's Son and Incest

According to the holy Bible, (II Samuel 13:1-20) Prophet David had a son named Amnon. Amnon had a half-sister called Tamar who was very beautiful. Amnon was in love with Tamar who was a virgin. He pretended to be sick and asked his sister to bring him food into the bedroom and feed him with her hand. When she began feeding her brother, he grabbed her and asked her to sleep with him. Tamar refused, but he forced her to have sex with him. After that he hated her and locked her in a room. In this story, there is a private event in the Holy Bible between Amnon and his sister. How was this story revealed to the writers of the Bible?

- Did Amnon damage his sister's name by bragging about sexually assaulting her?
- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?

Another one of David's Son and Multiple Rape

Yet another multiple rape episode by Absalom, the brother of Tamar, on David's wives, as told in II Samuel 16:20-23. David left some of his wives to take care of the house. Absalom was given advice to go and have sexual relations with them, so all the Israelis would hear that David hated his son and the people would be encouraged to give Absalom more support. Absalom put up a tent on the roof of the house and he had sexual relations with his father's wives. All the Israelis saw it!

- What is the moral lesson in this story of the Holy Bible?
- Can Christian preachers tell this story in the church to young people?
- Do you believe that anyone, even a barbarian, in the world could do this?

Societies today are raged by violence and sex. However, the present violence and sex do not reach that level that was committed by Prophets and their families. Are these the Prophets of God that we should look up to as examples for righteousness and obedience of Allah?

THE AXIAL AGE

Historians call the period from 800 to 200 BC the axial age. This period witnessed the introduction of major world religions. It was a period of great empires in Mesopotamia, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and then Greece. International politics had an impact on religion and the belief of the people in the Middle East and its surroundings. The Greek philosophy had reached its peak during this time. This period had a crucial effect on the development of Christianity after Jesus. During this time, polytheistic religions, history and philosophy were setting the stage for shaping a religion that was founded by Jesus and later compromised and reinterpreted by other people.

When the Assyrian Empire destroyed the kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, Judah was a weak kingdom. The great empires of the East were interested in destroying the rest of the Jews in Judah. The kings of Judah honored a pagan god in the Temple and the priests denounced them for promoting paganism. King Hezekiah ruled Judah around 715 to 687 BC and carried out religious and political reforms. But then his son and

grandson did not follow his footsteps. Assyrian forces returned to Judah and reintroduced pagan worship. Then an important change took place in the international scene. The Assyrian empire was getting weaker and Babylon was threatening to replace it as the major power in the Near East. In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took Jehoiakim, king of Judah and many of his people prisoners to Babylon. In 587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem. Its population was exiled as prisoners in Babylon or as refugees in Egypt. Their temple was destroyed and the Ark was lost, which remains a mystery to this day.

The exile of the Judeans to Babylon was a major turning point in Jewish theology. The prior history of Israel now was reinterpreted in light of the burning of Jerusalem in 587, laying the foundation for the traditional biblical Pentateuch, Prophetic canon and historical books. The Prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah believed that Yahweh had used the Babylonian Empire to punish the Israelites for their sins and he therefore had the power to redeem them from captivity if they repented. The Jews hoped for a restored Judean kingdom under the leadership of an heir of the royal house of David. In 539 BC the kingdom of Babylon fell to the Persian Cyrus the Great (600 - 529 BC). After the defeat of Babylon, he permitted a restoration of subject populations and local temples. The Persians did not allow the re-establishment of a Judean monarchy, but only a temple-state with the high priest as its chief administrator. The Persian Empire was the most powerful state in the world until its conquest two centuries later by Alexander the Great.

Zoroaster (628 - 551 BC) founded the Zoroastrian religion in Persia (Douglas, 1991. p. 895). The basic concept of this religion consists of an interesting mixture of monotheistic worship of Ahura Mazda (Lord Wisdom) and an ethical dualism of opposing Truth and Lie, which encompass the entire universe. All that is good derives from and is supported by, Ahura Mazda's emanations: Spenta Mainyu (Holy Spirit) and his six assisting entities, Good Mind, Truth, Power, Devotion, Health and Life. All evil is caused by Angra Mainyu and his assistants. Angra Mainyu is evil by choice, having allied himself with Lie, whereas Spenta Mainyu has chosen Truth. So too, human beings must choose between Truth and Lie. Upon death each person's soul will be judged at the Bridge of Discrimination; the follower of Truth will live in paradise and the adherents of Lie will fall into hell. All evil will eventually be eliminated on earth in an ordeal of fire and molten metal. The religious practice was centered about worship of fire. For example, a sacred flame was always kept burning in their temples. After Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, the Zoroastrian religion underwent a constant decline.

Eventually, the Persians regained their independence. During the Sassanid dynasty (226 - 651 AD), Zoroastrianism was again adopted as the state religion of Persia. A dualistic form of the Zoroastrian religion affected the fourth century Christianity in Manichaeism.

Confucius (551 - 479 BC) established a religion in China that is a mixture of sacred philosophy and ethical doctrine. Confucianism provides rules for the proper conduct of family, community and political affairs (Douglas, 1991. p. 227). Although Confucianism became the ethic of the mandarin class, the elite group, Confucius himself came from a poor family. The principle upon which he built his doctrine is reciprocity, meaning to treat people as you want to be treated. This is considered central to producing an ideal relationship and is recorded in the *Analects*, a collection of Confucius's most famous sayings. Confucius also taught the importance of many other virtues, including loyalty, wisdom, self-control, piety and self-development. Confucius used the family as a model for society. Those who are in power should rule for the well being of the people, while the rest of society should obey and respect the authority, as children do to their parents. Unlike the major religions, Confucianism is not oriented to the metaphysical. Confucius did not speculate about afterlife. In this religion there are no sins, only errors and mistakes.

THE HELLENISTIC AGE

The Hellenistic Age (4th-1st century BC) is the period between the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great and the establishment of Roman supremacy. In this era, Greek culture, art and philosophy were introduced to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. One of the greatest achievements occurred in sciences, where Greek and non-Greek mingled to produce remarkable results. It is called Hellenistic (Greek *Hellas*, "Greece") to distinguish it from the Hellenic culture of classical Greece.

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), king of Macedonia, was one of the greatest military geniuses of all times. Aristotle was Alexander's tutor; he gave Alexander a thorough training in rhetoric and literature and stimulated his interest in science, medicine and philosophy. Before the end of the summer of 336 BC he had reestablished his position in Greece and was elected by a congress of states at Corinth.

Alexander began his war against Persia in the spring of 334 BC with an army of 35,000 Macedonian and Greek troops. Alexander encountered the main Persian army, commanded by King Darius III, at Issus, in northeastern Syria. The Battle of Issus, in 333, ended in a great victory for

Alexander. He captured Gaza next and then passed on into Egypt, where he was greeted as a deliverer. By these successes he secured control of the entire eastern Mediterranean coastline. Later in 332 he founded, at the mouth of the Nile River, the city of Alexandria, which later became the literary, scientific and commercial center of the Greek world.

In the spring of 331 Alexander made a pilgrimage to the great temple of Amon-Ra, Egyptian god of the sun, whom the Greeks identified with Zeus. The earlier Egyptian pharaohs were believed to be sons of Amon-Ra; and Alexander, the new ruler of Egypt, wanted the god to acknowledge him as his son. The pilgrimage apparently was successful and it may have confirmed in him a belief in his own divine origin. Turning northward again, he crossed the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers and continued to expand his empire. His domain then extended along and beyond the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, including modern Afghanistan and Balochistan and northward into Bactria and Sogdiana, the modern Turkestan, also known as Central Asia.

Shortly before he died, Alexander ordered the Greek cities to worship him as a god. Although he probably gave the order for political reasons, he was, in his own view and that of his contemporaries, of divine birth. The order was largely nullified by his death. To bind his conquests together, Alexander founded a number of cities, most of them named Alexandria, along his line of march; these cities were well located, well paved and provided with good water supplies. Greek veterans from his army settled in them; young men, traders, merchants and scholars were attracted to them; Greek culture was introduced; and the Greek language became widely known. Thus, Alexander vastly extended the influence of Greek civilization.

The Hellenistic world was dominated by three great monarchies founded by the successors of Alexander: Egypt under the Ptolemies; Syria, ruled by the Seleucids; and Macedonia under the Antigonid dynasty. The urban elite in these kingdoms spoke koine (common) Greek, which became the new international language and their religion, art and literature were a mixture of Greek and native elements. Under the Ptolemies, who used their wealth to attract poets, scholars, artists and scientists, Alexandria became a great economic, cultural and religious center. Systematic scholarship was encouraged at new institutes of learning, such as the famous Alexandrian Library, where studies in historical linguistics, grammar, lexicography and literary criticism were pursued. Many advances were made in such sciences as empirical medicine, astronomy and mathematics. The basic views of Hellenistic

thinkers were not seriously challenged until the 16th century. Two of the main philosophical schools of the age were Stoicism and Epicureanism:

1. **The Stoics** taught that one should live according to nature, which is the divine reason, Logos that permeates all things. Logos, a word signifying reason, is the governing principle in the universe. The prudent should be free from passion and calmly accept everything, as the unavoidable result of the divine will, thus achieve freedom from suffering. The stoics also taught that it is possible for a moral human being to become divine. This had also been essential to the Platonic view.
2. The **Epicureans** were devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. They were fond of good food, comfort and ease of life. Their philosophy sought freedom from pain and suffering, rejected the afterlife and the influence of gods and held that all things are composed of atoms.

The religion of the Hellenistic Age combined the Greek gods with Eastern deities. The Hebrew bible was translated into Greek at Alexandria and the language of the later New Testament was koine. As the Hellenistic monarchies declined in the second and first centuries BC, the Romans gradually extended their control over Greece and the Middle East. The Roman civilization that subsequently became dominant was in many ways a continuation of Hellenistic culture.

GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Greek Philosophy is a compilation of philosophical concepts developed by the Greeks, particularly during the peak of Greek civilization between 600 and 200 BC. Greek philosophy formed the basis of all later philosophical concepts in the Western world. The intuitive hypotheses of the ancient Greeks suggested many theories of modern science. Also many of the moral ideas of pagan Greek philosophers have been incorporated into Christian moral doctrine. Educated Greeks turned to philosophy, not religion, for enlightenment. Their saints and priests were such philosophers as Plato, Pythagoras and Epictetus. They even saw them as sons of god. Plato, for example, was considered to be the son of Apollo. The average Greeks trusted philosophers to provide answer for the eternal questions of why do humans suffer and how to enjoy life. The people needed a simple answer that they could understand. Greek philosophy may be divided between those philosophers who sought an

explanation of the world in physical terms and those who emphasized the importance of human thoughts or ideals.

The Search for Wisdom

The word philosophy means, “*love of wisdom*.” Greek schools sought the wisdom that would help people to live happy and worthwhile lives. The Ionian school was the first important school of Greek philosophy. It was based upon materialistic concepts that attempted to discover the building block of all matter. This school was founded by Thales of Miletus (640? -546? BC), who suggested that water is the basic substance from which all matter is created. A more complex view was offered by Anaximander (611-547 BC), who held that the raw material of all matter is an eternal substance that changes into the known forms of matter. These forms in turn change and merge into one another according to the rule of justice, that is, balance and proportion. Heraclitus advocated that fire is the original source of matter, but he believed that the entire world is in a constant state of change and that a mixture of different matters produces most objects and substances. He considered the soul, for example, as a mixture of fire and water. Anaxagoras (500-428? BC) introduced dualistic explanation of the universe, that is to say that the universe consists of living and non-living matters. He developed the concept of nous (reason), which he considered as an infinite and unchanging substance that entered into and controlled every living object. This concept of eternal substance was later adopted in formulating the doctrines of Christianity during the Ecumenical Councils of Churches.

A more materialistic interpretation was made by Empedocles, who accepted the belief that reality is eternal, but considered that it consists of the four basic substances: fire, air, earth and water. Materialism applied to daily life inspired the philosophy of a group known as the Sophists, who were active in the fifth century BC. With their emphasis on the importance of human wisdom they doubted that humanity would ever be able to reach truth through logic and taught that material success rather than truth should be the purpose of life.

The division between idealism and materialism became more distinct. Pythagoras stressed the importance of form rather than matter in explaining material structure. The Pythagorean School also emphasized the importance of the soul, regarding the body only as the soul’s “tomb.” The beliefs of Pythagoras formed the basis of the idealism that was to characterize later Greek philosophy.

Socrates

The ideas of Socrates, (470-399 BC), represented Greek philosophy at its highest level. He spent much of his time teaching and asking questions of the people he met. He asked: What is the purpose of your life? What is good? What is justice? Such questions stimulated people to examine the conduct of their lives? Socrates believed that a life without questions is not worth living. Socrates wrote nothing himself, but from the writings of his student Plato, we know the important ideas he taught. He advocated that each person should learn to understand himself. "*Know thyself*" was the slogan of Socrates. Socrates described the soul as a combination of an individual's intelligence and character.

Socrates' contribution to philosophy was essentially ethical in character. Belief of such concepts as justice, love and virtue and the self-knowledge that he emphasized, was the basis of his teachings. He believed that all corruption is the result of ignorance and that no person is willingly bad; thus morality is knowledge and those who know the right will act rightly. His logic placed special emphasis on rational argument.

Although a patriot and a man of deep moral values, some leaders of Athens were afraid of his ideas. They accused Socrates of teaching young people dangerous concepts leading them away from the principles of democracy and they brought him to trial. He was charged in 399 BC with neglecting the gods of the state and introducing new divinities. Since he refused to change his way, Socrates was sentenced to die by only a small majority. When, according to Athenian legal practice, Socrates made an ironic counter proposition to the court's death sentence, proposing only to pay a small fine because of his value to the state as a man with a philosophic mission, this offer angered the jury that it voted by an increased majority for the death penalty. Socrates' friends planned his escape from prison, but he preferred to obey the law and die for his cause. At the age of seventy, he was executed according to the Greek custom by being given a cup of the poison hemlock.

Plato and Aristotle

The death of Socrates did not stop other Greeks from continuing the search for wisdom. His idealism was arranged by his student Plato, (428-347 BC). Plato wrote many dialogues: books describing real and imaginary philosophical conversations among his friends. In such dialogues as the republic, Plato presented his ideas: People should be guided in their lives by eternal principles such as justice, love and honor. Only the wisest men and women should rule the people. There should be no rule by vote of

the majority. In his theory of ideas, Plato considered the objects of the real world as being merely shadows of divine Forms or ideas. Only these divine Forms can be the objects of true knowledge; the perception of their shadows, that is, the real world as heard, seen and felt, is merely opinion. Plato believed that the eternal Forms, “Gods”, communicate to people through their powers and not by themselves. They are the highest reality that the human mind can grasp. The goal of the philosopher, he said, is to know the eternal Forms and to educate others in that knowledge.

Aristotle, (384-322 BC), was the son of a physician to the royal court. From his father, Aristotle gained an interest in biology, zoology, physics, anatomy, astronomy, geology and almost every other field known to the ancient Greek. He was one of the students who studied under Plato. He believed that people should examine, describe and classify as many forms of life as possible, because it is important to have scientific knowledge. Aristotle stated that the universe consists of four elements, fire, air, earth and water, plus a fifth element that exists everywhere and is the sole constituent of the heavenly bodies “above” the moon.

Aristotle advocated the existence of a divine being, described as the Prime Mover, who is responsible for the unity and direction of nature. God is perfect and therefore the aspiration of all things in the world, because all things desire to share perfection. The Prime Mover, or God, described by Aristotle was not very suitable for religious purposes, as many later philosophers and theologians have observed. Aristotle limited his “theology,” however, to what he believed science requires and can establish. Aristotle seemed to have been strongly opposed to Plato’s view of the Forms, rejecting the concept that they had a prior and independent existence.

Philo of Alexandria

Philo of Alexandria (20 BC - 50 AD) was a Jewish-Hellenistic philosopher. Philo was considered the greatest Jewish philosopher of his time. However, he used exclusively the doctrines of Greek philosophy that he must be considered also a Greek philosopher. He combined the Greek philosophical concepts into an original form.

Philo was born in Alexandria, Egypt, to a wealthy, aristocratic Jewish family and received a thorough education in the Old Testament and in Greek literature and philosophy. He had an intimate knowledge of the works of Homer and of the Greek tragedians, but his chief studies were in Greek philosophy, especially the teachings of the Pythagoreans, Plato and the Stoics.

Philo was a devout Jew. He considered the divinity of the Jewish law as the basis and test of all true philosophy. He maintained that the greater part of the Pentateuch, in both its historical and legal portions, could be explained symbolically and that its deepest and truest significance is to be found through such interpretation. He conceived God as a being with neither attributes nor human qualities: to say that God is “angry”, for example, is wrong. God is better than virtue and knowledge and better than the beautiful and the good. He is a Being so exalted above the world. God communicates with the world through his “powers”, which seem close to Plato’s Forms. These powers are real, active powers, surrounding God as a group of attendant beings. An individual’s duties consist of adoration of God and love and righteousness toward others. Humans are immortal by reason of their heavenly nature. Mere living after death, common to all humanity, differs from the future existence of the perfect souls, for whom paradise is oneness with God.

Many of the numerous existing works of Philo are concerned with the adoration and the symbolic interpretation of Genesis and with the display of the Law of Moses to Gentiles. He interpreted the story of God’s visit to Abraham with two angles, for example, as God’s essence with two senior powers. His other writings include biographies of biblical characters and a series of works on the Ten Commandments. Jews have always found that Philo’s concept of God somewhat inauthentic. Christians, however, would find him extremely supportive. The concept of the oneness with God in paradise was later used in the New Testament.

JEWISH RELIGIOUS GROUPS

By the first century BC, the Law of Moses had become extremely important to the Jews. The people had studied and argued over the law. They understood the Law in different ways, but many Jews were ready to fight and die for that Law. There were three major religious groups among the Jews and there were scribes (lawyers or scholars) in each group (Bright, 1981).

The Sadducees

One of the groups was called the Sadducees, who descended from mainly aristocratic families. This sect was formed about 200 BC. They accepted only the Law (the five books of Moses) and not the oral tradition accepted by the Pharisees. Many of the priests and the people in authority were Sadducees. The Pentateuch taught many things about the priests and sacrifices, but it did not teach them about life after death. So the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead because it is only found in

the book of Daniel, composed long after Moses' time, which in their view lacked authority. Their sect was centered on the cult of the Temple and they ceased to exist after its destruction in 70 AD.

The Pharisees

This second group established their name from a Hebrew word meaning "separatists" or "deviants." Their opponents were the Sadducees, who probably gave them their name. The Pharisees began their activities about 166 B.C. with an attempt to teach and interpret the Law of Moses to the common people. The Pharisees accepted an interpretation of Judaism that was in opposition to the priestly Temple cult. They stressed faith in the One God; the divine revelation of the law both written and oral handed down by Moses through Joshua, the elders and the Prophets to the Pharisees. So they were very careful about what to eat, what to touch, about washing their hands and bathing. They also believed in eternal life and resurrection for those who keep the law, because they understood that many later Prophets said that it would happen. By separating Judaism from the Temple cult and by stressing the direct relation between the individual and God, the Pharisees laid the groundwork for standard rabbinic Judaism. Their influence on Christianity was substantial as well, despite the passages in the New Testament that label the Pharisees "hypocrites" or "offspring of the vipers." St. Paul was originally a Pharisee. After the fall of the Temple 70 A.D., the Pharisees became the dominant party until 135 A.D.

The Essenes

This was the third group of a small Jewish religious sect, starting in the second century B.C. They lived as a highly structured community that held possessions in common. They believed that many of the priests in Jerusalem did not live according to the way of God. Also, the Romans had appointed many of the high priests and some of these men were not qualified according to the Law of Moses. Because of this, the Essenes did not think that worship and sacrifices were being done properly in Jerusalem. So the Essenes moved out in the Judean desert to live. They formed their own community, where only other Essenes could come and live. The Essenes fasted and prayed and waited for God to send several Messiahs and purify the Temple and the priesthood. Their practice of purification through ritual submergence in water might have been a significant influence on the development of the ritual of baptism in the early Christian church. Although they did not condemn marriage as impious, they expected full members of the community to be celibate. The sect ceased to exist sometime in the second century A.D.



4 Evolution of Christianity

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

29. Then she pointed to him. They said: “How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?”

30. “He [‘Iesa (Jesus)] said: Verily! I am a slave of Allah, He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet;”

31. “And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Salat (prayer), and Zakat, as long as I live.”

32. “And dutiful to my mother, and made me not arrogant, unblest.

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

(Quran 19: 29-33)

I tried to understand how the teachings of Jesus (Pbuh) evolved into a religion, with a name that was neither declared by Jesus, the original founder, nor mentioned in the Bible. How did the theology of Christianity evolve? Who started the name “Christianity”? What is the origin of the Trinity? Jesus never mentioned the Trinity. As I was studying the Christian history, it became obvious that Christianity evolved in four phases. Each phase took it further away from Jesus’ message. Historians report stories of the past with a certain package that depends on their intention and the message that they attempt to emphasize. Sometimes, historical facts are

being “tampered and altered” to convince the people with certain points of view. Christian history is abundant with such views. Christianity as it exists today is an altered version of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Four Phases Theory

The Theory of the Four Phases started right after Jesus and lasted for about 800 years. Each phase took the religion further away from the original message of Jesus. This Four Phases Theory can be identified in chronological order as follows:

1. **The first phase:** The establishment of Pauline Christianity as a major drive to attract the Gentiles to the new religion. This was accomplished by the victory of the liberal Paul, who cancelled the Mosaic Law, over the conservative original apostles.
2. **The second phase:** Writing of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and their influence on the pagan converts.
3. **The third phase:** The fierce theological struggle of the fathers of the church to accommodate their perceptions of God of the Old and New Testaments with the Greek culture.
4. **The fourth phase:** The establishment of the doctrines by the Ecumenical Councils and the role of the emperors and empresses in shaping the Christianity.

Because of these four phases, we have a religion that was compromised to attract more pagan converts at the expense of the purity and the holiness of the original message of Jesus.

Due to the crucial importance of the Gospels, this chapter starts by examining the Gospels. The average Christians believe that all the writers of the Gospels were contemporaries of Jesus, recording the message of Jesus with honesty, integrity and virtue. They assume that Matthew wrote the Gospel according to Matthew and Mark wrote the Gospel according to Mark, etc. They also believe that the Evangelists wrote the New Testament by inspiration of God or the Holy Ghost. It can be proven that the Gospels according to the Evangelists are full of major contradictions, negating the notion that any of these Gospels was inspired by God or the Holy Ghost. It is important to note that if there were even a single contradiction in the Gospels, the idea of divine inspiration would collapse. The Almighty does not contradict Himself.

For a quick head start, consider the following questions:

- Who are the real Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?
- What were Jesus' last words on the cross in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?
- How did Judas die in the Gospels according to Matthew and Acts?
- How did the people who arrested Jesus identify him in the Gospels according to Matthew and John?

To prove that God did not inspire the entire New Testament, let us apply the same method that was adopted in the previous chapter. The origin and the contradictions in the New Testament will be exposed. First, the name "New Testament" should be questioned, because nowhere does it refer to itself with such name. Christian scholars followed the same steps of analysis that the critics of the Old Testament had pursued. As mentioned before, the contradictions in the Old Testament started by scholars noticing that there are parts in the Books of Moses, that should have been written after Moses, especially the part that addresses Moses' death. Then scholars found more and more contradictions. Next, when contradictions are found in a Holy Book, supposedly inspired totally by God, then the question of authenticity of the entire book is raised.

As for the New Testament, it appears that the discrepancy of the genealogy of Jesus according to Matthew and Luke was the first contradiction that was discovered. This was followed by critical examination of the entire New Testament to establish the degree of inconsistency. Apart from the general accounts of Jesus' arrest, trial, death and resurrection, which are generally similar in all four Gospels, they differ in important details. Neither Matthew nor John accounts for Jesus' Ascension. Luke in his Gospel places the Ascension on the day of the Resurrection and forty days later in the Acts of the Apostles, which is assumed to be by the same Luke. Mark mentions it, without giving a date, which suggests that it is not thought to be authentic. The Ascension, which is a major Christian event, therefore, has no solid scriptural basis. Commentators nevertheless approach this subject casually.

The first three Gospels are called synoptic Gospels because despite their differences, they can be viewed together. General comparison of Matthew, Mark and Luke impresses the reader with such agreements that they have generated many theories about their relationships. One of the most widely held scholarly opinion is that Mark was the earliest Gospel and became a source for Matthew and Luke. Most likely, Matthew and Luke each had other common sources as well. This assumption is based upon the source of much shared texts not found in Mark. The interrelation of the Gospels also has continued to attract much study. In 1863,

Holtzmann (1832-1910), introduced the Two Source Theory, with Q and Mark being the common sources of Matthew and Luke (Bucaille, 1989. p. 87). Q is short for the German word “Quelle” which means “source.” In 1972 the Four Source Theory was introduced, with Q, A, B and C as the sources of all Gospels. Does this sound familiar to J, E, P and D of the Old Testament? In a preface the author of Luke 1:1-4 stated that he learned from some other people that saw those things from the beginning before writing his Gospel. The fourth Gospel of John stands most noticeably apart from the synoptic Gospels.

The Gospels translated into Modern English by J. B. Phillips in London, (1996, p.1), with editors Geoffrey Bles, had the following to say about the Gospel of Matthew:

*“Early tradition ascribed this Gospel to the apostle Matthew, **but scholars nowadays almost all reject this view.** The Author, whom we still can **conveniently call Matthew**, has plainly drawn on **the mysterious “Q”**, which may have been a collection of oral tradition. **He has used Mark’s Gospel freely**, though he has arranged the order of events and has in several instances used different words for what is plainly the same story. The style is lucid, calm, and tidy. Matthew writes with certain judiciousness as though he himself has carefully digested his material and is convinced not only with its truth but of the divine pattern that lies behind the historic facts. If Matthew wrote, as is now generally supposed, somewhere between 85 and 90, this Gospel’s value as a Christian document is enormous. It is, so to speak, **a second-generation view of Jesus Christ the Son of God and the son of man.** It is being written at that distance in time from the great event where a sober reflection and sturdy conviction can perhaps give a better balanced portrait of God’s unique revelation of Himself than could be given by those who were so close to the light that they were partly dazzled by it.”*

The above quotation stated frankly the facts about “Q” and then tried to reason as why Christians should still accept second generation accounts of Jesus: the first generation could not handle both the light of Jesus and writing of the Gospels!

Many ancient translations of the Bible have received critical attention and are available in scholarly form. The language in the New Testament has received much attention not only for theological reasons but also from students of history of the Greek language. The study of the Aramaic language, the native language of Jesus and the contemporary Palestinian Christians, has also advanced. Scholars advocate that the traditions used

by the Gospel writers and the author of Acts existed in Aramaic, perhaps in manuscripts but certainly in an oral form. It remains a matter of debate to translate the New Testament from Greek to Aramaic in an attempt to recreate the original manuscripts or the oral tradition.

Early Christianity, just like Judaism, took the idea of authenticity and inspiration of the scriptures for granted. No formal doctrine of the divine inspiration of New Testament was initially proposed. Christians generally believed, however, that the Bible is the word of God as transmitted by the Holy Spirit, first through the patriarchs and prophets and then through the apostles. The writers of the New Testament, in fact, relied upon the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures to support their claims concerning Jesus Christ.

To set a New Testament canon beside the Old implied divine inspiration of the entire Bible. The New Testament writings were considered as “prophecy” given by the Holy Spirit to the disciples. However, Paul did not think of his letters to his churches as constituting inspired revelation to the entire humanity at all time. It was suggested that the divine inspiration was a case of verbal inspiration that took over the voice of the prophet. This view implied that the words are divinely given; so any text can be interpreted in the light of other texts. This theory of verbal inspiration was considered as acceptable for the first Greek translation of the Old Testament. Christian scholars Origen and Augustine adhered firmly to this theory. At times, this took a sophisticated form of explaining discrepancies between the Biblical texts, such as a divine will to teach the point of a deeper meaning that lies beyond human comprehension! During the 19th century, the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible by the Holy Spirit was promoted in response to the development of new biblical criticism. Scholarly studies seemed to challenge the divine origin of the New Testament. Those who advocate the authenticity of the Bible, word for word, cannot prove their claim easily.

The subjects of authenticity and history of the early Bible are not readily available in common Christian bookstores. It appears that the history of Christianity began in 325 AD, when the council of Nicaea condemned the theology of Arius and declared that Christ is “*one in essence with the Father*”. There are no written details of events of what actually happened after Jesus until the council of Nicaea. Biblical apologists attributed the lack of information to the oppression that the Christians faced over three centuries. It is also quite difficult to find detailed information from Christian scholars. This is because most of them are writing to average Christians and the information has to be packaged in an acceptable way that should not cause public confusion. For

example, I tried unsuccessfully to find out what happened to the Virgin Mary after Jesus and what was her role in the early Christian history? To the Christian, Mary is a model to all believers. To the Muslims she is the holiest woman ever among all the Jewish, Christian and Muslim women. When Mary holds such a unique stature, one would be tempted to know everything available about her role. Jesus was obedient to his parents, (Luke 2:51). When Jesus began his public ministry, he called his mother “woman”, (John 2:4, 19:26). Sometimes I wonder if this is the same Jesus that said in Matthew 19:19 “Honor your father and your mother.” This would indicate that Mary’s maternal role on his behalf is finished. It is hard to believe that Jesus called his mother “woman”. Is this a permit for anyone to call his mother woman? Or was this the writing of someone that did not appreciate the mother of Jesus for one reason or another? Looking at the Holy Bible, Easy to Read Version, I found that in John 2:4, the word “woman” is replaced by “Dear woman.” This was a little bit of a relief; at least someone else feels that it is inappropriate to call the holiest woman ever simply a “woman”. A Christian apologist suggested that Jesus called his mother “woman” in a soft tone! There is no knowledge about “tape recording” the tone of Jesus! The question still remains. Did Jesus call his mother woman, dear woman, mother, or dear mother? Did he or did he not honor his mother? And, what was Mary’s role after Jesus?

VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament consists of 27 documents written between 60? - 150? AD. Although some have argued that Aramaic originals lie behind some of the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews all have been circulated in Greek. For a period of time, some Christian scholars treated the Greek of the New Testament as a special kind of religious language. It is now known that the language of the New Testament was koine, i.e. common Greek that was used everywhere. The 27 books of the New Testament are only a fraction of the Christian scriptures in their first three centuries. The New Testament was widely copied and recopied. As many as 50 Gospels were circulating during this time. Many of these non-canonical Christian writings have been collected and published as New Testament Apocrypha, i.e. doubtful authority.

Existing Greek manuscripts of the New Testament - complete, partial, or fragmentary - now number about 5000. It is important to know that none of these manuscripts have the signature of its author. Probably the oldest is a fragment of the Gospel of John dated about 120 to 140 AD. There are broad similarities among these manuscripts. Discrepancies,

however, involve omissions and additions. The more significant of these variants usually appear in English translations as footnotes citing what other ancient authorities say. For example, John 7:53 - 8:11 has a footnote saying that the oldest and the best Greek copies do not have these verses according to the Bible, Easy to Read Version. So, who added them and why?

Tracing the history of the development of the New Testament by noting which of the books were quoted or cited by the early Fathers of the Church is an uncertain process. It seems that the earliest attempt to establish a canon was made about 150 AD by a heretical Christian named Marcion, whose acceptable list included the Gospel of Luke and Ten Pauline Epistles, edited in a strong anti-Jewish language. Perhaps opposition to Marcion accelerated efforts toward a canon of wide acceptance.

By 200 AD, 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament seem to have been generally regarded as acceptable. However differences still existed between the Eastern and Western Churches. Generally speaking, the books that were disputed for some time but were finally included were James, Hebrews, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, 2 Peter and Revelation. Other books widely favored but finally rejected, were Barnabas, 1 Clement, Hermas and the Didache

As was mentioned before, the Jewish Bible was written in Hebrew, except for a few sections in Aramaic. When Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the language of everyday life, translations to Hebrew became necessary. This fact that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew helped the Jews to reserve their Scriptures. On the other hand, the New Testament was written in Greek and Aramaic. The present English translation of the Bible came from a long history of translation, collection and interpretations, as outlined in the following:

Original Manuscripts

One would assume that the word of God that was delivered to Jesus would be recorded somehow. Moses got the Ten Commandments written on tablets and Muhammad got his revelations immediately recorded and memorized. So what happened to the original New Testament? This is one of the biggest mysteries in Christianity. It is agreed upon that the original manuscripts of the Christian Bible have perished!

Ancient Versions

The rapid spread of Christianity beyond the regions where Greek prevailed necessitated translations into Syrian, Old Latin, Coptic, Gothic,

Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopian and Arabic. Syrian and Latin versions existed as early as the second century and Coptic translations began to appear in the third century. These early versions were in no sense official translations but happened to meet regional needs in worship and preaching. The translations were, therefore, conducted in local languages by unknown translators and often included only selected portions of the New Testament.

The Septuagint and Other Greek Versions

The first major Greek version is called the Septuagint (from “seventy”) because of the legend that seventy scholars in Alexandria translated the Torah in the third century BC. The legend narrated how seventy translators had worked in independent cells and had all come up with the identical versions of the sacred text. Thus the Septuagint often ranked as an inspired version. Some of the Fathers of the Church thought the legend had been ridiculous, while others adhered firmly to it. Eventually other scholars, whose skills and backgrounds differed, translated the remaining Hebrew Scriptures.

The most valuable versions of the Hebrew Bible are the translations into Greek. In some instances the Greek versions actually offer readings superior to the Hebrew, being based on older Hebrew texts. Many of the existing Greek manuscripts are much older than the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible; they were included in copies of the Christian Bible that date from the fourth and fifth centuries. The oldest and the most complete text of the Old and New Testaments are in the form of fragments as different from scrolls, are (Smith, 1863, p.1200):

Codex Vaticanus

The Codex Vaticanus, so called because it is the most famous copy in the possession of the Vatican library, is probably transcribed during the first half of the fourth century. It was found over a thousand years later in 1481 in the Vatican library in Rome. No one seems interested in analyzing it and its original has not been found. It is thought to be the oldest (nearly) complete copy of the Greek Bible in existence. The total number of leaves is 759. The Old Testament is almost complete and consists of 617 leaves. The New Testament is made up of 142 leaves. The leaves measure about 10.8 inches on each side. However, it lacks most of the book of Genesis, Hebrews 9:14 to the end, the Pastoral Epistles and the book of Revelation. Also, Matthew 16:2 f. is omitted, Mark ends at 16:8 (Mark 16:9-20 mentions the resurrection and ascension of Jesus), Luke 22:43 f. and John 5:4 are omitted. Pages 1519-1536 that contain Hebrews 9:14

through Revelation were lost and replaced by a 15th century minuscule supplement (no. 1957). It is written on vellum, 27-28 cm. x 27-28 cm. There are three columns and 40-44 lines per column. The ink used is brown.

The writing is in capital letters (called uncial script) without spaces between words and is arranged in three columns on the page. Like other early manuscripts, its text is somewhat shorter than the later manuscripts and less harmonious in parallel passages of the Synoptic Gospels. The Old Testament quotations are indicated. It has peculiar chapter divisions in the Gospels; double chapter division in Acts; brief subscription for each of the Pauline Epistles. It is usually assumed as the best representative of the ancient “Alexandrian” form of the New Testament text.

The codex is the work of two scribes, who are frequently called as A and B. One scribe worked on the Old Testament and another on the New Testament. A corrector went through the manuscript, probably soon after its writing. Then a second corrector worked on the manuscript much later (tenth or eleventh century) and traced over the faded letters with fresh ink omitting letters and words he considered to be wrong. He also added accent and breathing marks. Punctuation is very rare and apostrophe occasionally used. The manuscript contains mysterious double dots (German “umlauts”) in the margin of the New Testament, which seem to indicate positions of textual variants. The date of these is disputed among scholars. Some scholars think Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus were among the 50 copies that Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to have made. However, others have argued that Constantine’s manuscripts were Byzantine, which would rule out that possibility.

Codex Sinaiticus

In 1844 The German Biblical scholar Konstantin von Tischendorf discovered 43 leaves of a fourth-century Greek manuscript of the Old Testament in a wastebasket in Saint Catherine’s Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai in Egypt. He returned in 1859 to find another fourth-century Greek manuscript that contained the only complete New Testament in uncial now called Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph, the first letter in the Hebrew Alphabet). The text of Sinaiticus was taken from St. Catherine’s monastery to the Russian Tsar by Constantin von Tischendorf and never returned. However, the Tsar sent 9000 Rubles to the monastery as compensation. The Codex was then purchased by the British Library in 1933 from the Soviet Union for £100,000. It is now in the British Museum in its manuscript department. In May 1975 during restoration work, the monks of St. Catherine’s monastery at Sinai discovered a room under the St.

George chapel which contained many parchment fragments. Among these fragments, thirteen missing pages from the Sinaiticus were found.

The text of Sinaiticus (written in four columns to the page) contains an unusually high number of readings which have clearly arisen by transcriptional error probably by careless omissions. Aside from these, however, the text closely resembles that of Codex Vaticanus and so the discovery of Sinaiticus indicated that the origin of these codices was the same. Sinaiticus has both the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament contains Four Gospels, Acts, Catholic Epistles and Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews), Apocalypse, the Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermas. Total number of leaves is 346.5 of which 199 are of the Old Testament (including the apocryphal books) and 147.5 leaves in the New Testament part (including Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermas). The words are written continuously without separation. Accents and breathing are absent. Written on vellum, 38.1 cm. x 33.7-35.6 cm. There are four columns and 48 lines per column. The ink is pale brown.

Unfortunately, so much of the Old Testament has been lost in this codex. The parts which survive include fragments of Gen. xxiii., xxiv. and of Num. v., vi., vii.; 1 Chron. ix.27-xix.1-7; 2 Esdras (i.e., canonical Ezra-Nehemiah) ix.9 to end; Esther, Tobit, Judith, 1 Macc., 4 Macc., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lament.i.1-ii.20, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum to Malachi, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Job.

The codex is probably the work of three scribes, who are frequently called as A, B and D. A wrote the entire New Testament with the exception of six whole leaves and a small part of another leaf, which were copied by D apparently. It appears that nine correctors, ranging in date from the fourth century to the twelfth century, have made corrections in the manuscripts.

Matthew 16:2 f. is omitted, Mark ends at 16:8 (Mark 16:9-20 mentions the resurrection and ascension of Jesus), Luke 22:43 f. was marked as fake by the first corrector, but these signs were canceled by the third corrector. John 5:4 and the Pericope de adultera are omitted. The doxology of Romans comes after 16:23, verse 24 being omitted and Hebrews follow immediately after II Thessalonians.

The text of Sinaiticus is often defective, omitting a large number of texts. However, it may be possible to use a manuscript with discernment, making allowances for its characteristic errors. Most of the omissions in Codex Sinaiticus have occurred by reason of a common mistake of copyists because of a similar ending, which the scribe of Sinaiticus was especially prone to make. These omissions are readily recognized. The

following passages are examples where the italicized words are omitted in Sinaiticus.

1 Cor. 13:1-2. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing.

Here the scribe had copied the verse up to the end of the first “*and have not charity,*” but when he looked up to his example again to continue copying, his eye fell upon the second occurrence of the phrase, from which he continued, omitting all of those words between the two occurrences of the phrase.

1 Cor. 15:25-27. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet.

This is a more complicated example. Here it is not immediately clear what has happened. But when it is known that in some early manuscripts the order of clauses is as shown below, once again we see that the scribe’s eye has jumped from the first occurrence of a phrase to the second occurrence:

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. For he hath put all things under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Other omissions are taken more seriously, however, especially when they are confirmed by Codex Vaticanus and other manuscripts of better quality. Sinaiticus is also regarded more highly as a good example in the case of substitutions and additions. The scribe of Sinaiticus was not suggested to making erratic substitutions and additions, but deliberate additions or omissions to reinforce their doctrine.

Other “inspired” modification of the Church to Codex Sinaiticus and our modern Bibles are:

- In Matthew 5:22, the words “*without cause*” are missing in both the codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.
- The words of Matthew 6:13 “*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.*” Do not exist in these two most ancient manuscripts as well as many others. The parallel passages in Luke are also defective.
- The original text of Matthew 8:2 as found in Codex Sinaiticus tells us that a leper asked Jesus to heal him and Jesus “angrily put forth [his] hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.” In our modern Bibles, the word “angrily” is strangely absent.

- Matthew 17:21 is missing in Codex Sinaiticus.
- Matthew 21:7 in our modern Bibles reads “*And [the disciples] brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set [Jesus] thereon.*” In the original manuscripts, this verse read “*and they set [Jesus] upon them,*” However, the picture of Jesus being placed upon two animals at the same time and being asked to ride them at once was objectionable to some, so this verse was changed to “*and they set [Jesus] upon him*” (which “him”?). Soon after, the English translation completely avoided this problem by translating it as “thereon.”
- Matthew 27:35 in our modern Bibles contains the words “*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*” This passage, once again, is not found according to Rev. Merrill in any Biblical uncial manuscript dating before the ninth century.
- In our modern Bibles, Mark 1:1 reads “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;*” however, in this most ancient of all Christian manuscripts, this verse only reads “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ*”. Strangely, the very words which are most grating to the Quran, “the Son of God,” are completely missing. Isn’t that interesting?
- In Mark 6:11, our modern Bibles contain the words “*Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.*” However, these words are not to be found in either of these two most ancient of Christian Biblical manuscripts, having been introduced into the text centuries later.
- In Mark chapter 9, the words “*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*” are again missing.
- The words of Jesus in Luke 9:55-56 are missing.
- Luke 22:44 in Codex Sinaiticus and our modern Bibles claim that an angel appeared before Jesus, strengthening him. In Codex Vaticanus, this angel is strangely absent. If Jesus was the “Son of God” then obviously it would be highly inappropriate for him to need an angel to strengthen him. This verse, then, must have been a scribal mistake. Right?
- The alleged words of Jesus on the cross “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34) were originally present in the Codex Sinaiticus but was later erased from the text by another editor. Bearing in mind how the Church regarded and treated the Jews in the Middle Ages, can we think of any reason why this verse

might have stood in the way of official Church policy and their “inquisitions”?

- John 5:4 is missing from Codex Sinaiticus.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 originally read *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: which was manifest in the flesh..”* This was then later ever so subtly changed to *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh....”* Thus, the doctrine of the “incarnation” was born.

Codex Alexandrinus

Codex Alexandrinus received its name from its earliest known location was the Egyptian city of Alexandria. It is believed to be from the fifth century. When Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Alexandria, was transferred in 1621 to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, he is believed to have brought the codex with him. Later he sent it as a present to King James I of England (the same James who commissioned the King James Version) who died before the gift was presented. In 1627 King Charles I accepted it in his stead. It is now in the British Museum in its manuscript department and is on exhibition there. The text is written in capitals (called uncial script) and arranged in two columns on the page. Like the Codex Sinaiticus, it contained originally the whole Greek Bible, with the addition of the two Epistles of Clement of Rome, which in very early days ranked almost with the inspired books; and, in addition, the table of contents shows that it originally included the Psalms of Solomon, the title of which, however, is so separated from the rest of the books as to indicate that they were regarded as standing on a different footing.

It does not include Matthew 1:1 through 25:6, Luke 22:43, John 7:53 through 8:11 and 2 Corinthians 4:13 through 12:6. Hebrews follow immediately after II Thessalonians. At the end some early Christian writings were added that had been used in teaching: the first Epistle of Clement and the second Epistle of Clement up to 12:4.

Total number of leaves is 773, out of which 143 belong to the New Testament. The words are written continuously without separation. Accents are absent and breathing is rare. The Old Testament quotations are indicated. It is written on vellum, 32.1 cm. x 26.4 cm. There are two columns and 46-52 lines to the column. The ink is brown.

It is believed that the codex is the work of five scribes, who are designated by the Roman numerals. The Old Testament was copied by two hands (I and II) and the New Testament by three (III, IV and V). III wrote Matthew, Mark and I Corinthians 10:8 - Philemon 25; IV copied

Luke, John, Acts, the Catholic Epistles and Romans 1:1 - I Corinthians 10:8; and V wrote the Apocalypse.

The scribes' errors and their corrections are obvious. Sometimes the words first written have been erased and the correct reading written above them. In other instances, some words had been written twice over by mistake. Also, a considerable space is left blank, as the facsimile shows. As regards the quality of the text preserved in this Codex, it must be admitted that it does not stand quite as high as the above two codices. Different parts of the New Testament have evidently been copied from different originals.

Based upon critical examinations of ancient manuscripts by Christian scholars, the following facts are concluded:

1. The ancient manuscripts are not necessarily carefully written.
2. The ancient manuscripts extant are not necessarily copied from oldest manuscript master.
3. The ancient manuscripts were subject to the greatest corruption in history.
4. The ancient manuscripts are in perpetual disagreement with each other.

One would really wonder about handling God's inspired words. On the other hand, the Quran was collected under strict rules that required each verse to be accepted only if it was presented at least in two manuscripts and should conform to the memorized version of the commission that was responsible for collecting the Quran. A parallel to this conscientious performance does not exist in the case of any other scripture in the history of the world.

Vulgate

During the fourth and fifth centuries, efforts were made to replace the old Latin versions with more standardized and widely accepted translations. Missionaries perhaps translated pieces of the Bible into Latin. Pope Damasus I in 382 commissioned St. Jerome to generate a Latin Bible using many individual efforts. This Bible, known as the Vulgate, (Latin *vulgata*, "popular edition") aroused deep opposition. As is usually the case, the new version slowly and painfully replaced the old versions.

English Translations

Christianity reached England with a Latin Bible. There was a need to offer an English Bible for both the clergy and the laymen. Between

the seventh and fourteenth centuries, parts of the Bible were roughly translated into English as an aid to the clergy. Interest in translation from Latin to English grew rapidly in the fourteenth century and in 1382 the first complete English Bible appeared in manuscript. It was the work of the English scholar John Wycliffe, whose goal was to give the Bible to the people.

In 1525 the English scholar William Tyndale translated the New Testament from the Greek text. It was printed in Germany and smuggled into England. Tyndale's translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew text was only partly completed. His simple writing and popular expression established a style in English translation that dominated future versions.

In 1535 the English scholar Miles Coverdale published an English translation based on German and Latin versions in addition to Tyndale's. This was not only the first complete English Bible to appear in printed form, but unlike its predecessors, it was an approved version by the Canterbury Convocation. Later, Oliver Cromwell nominated Coverdale to produce a new Bible, which appeared in six editions between 1539 and 1568. This Bible was called the Great Bible, which was primarily a scholarly Bible. The next important version was produced in Geneva in 1560 by English Protestants in exile and was called the Geneva Bible. This Bible contained several innovations including the division of chapters into numbered verses. The final revision of the Great Bible, in 1568, by scholars and bishops of the Anglican Church was known as the Bishops' Bible. This Bible was designed to replace the Great Bible with a translation for the laymen.

The King James Version and Its Revisions

In 1604 King James I commissioned a new revision of the English Bible; it was completed in 1611. Following Tyndale primarily, this Authorized Version, also known as the King James Version, was widely acclaimed for its beauty and simplicity of style. In the years that followed, the Authorized Version underwent several revisions, the most notable being the English Revised Version (1881-85), the American Standard Version (1901) and the revision of the American Standard Version undertaken by the International Council of Religious Education, representing 40 Protestant denominations in the US and Canada. This Revised Standard Version (RSV) appeared between 1946 and 1952. Widely accepted by Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians, it provided the basis for the first accepted English Bible. In the Preface of the RSV, 1971, the following is written:

*“The King James Version **has grave defects**. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of Biblical studies and the discovery of many manuscripts more ancient than those upon which the King James Version was based, made it manifest, that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for the revision of the English translation.” The preface continued to refer to the unhappy experience with unauthorized publications, “which tampered with the text of the English Revised Version, in the supposed interest of the American public.”*

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989) eliminated much obsolete and ambiguous usage. The New King James Bible, with contemporary American vocabulary, was published in 1982. The Holy Bible, Easy-to-Read version, in 1987 and 1989, was adapted from the existing text by the World Bible Translation Center to represent present day English.

The Roman Catholic Versions

Roman Catholics in English-speaking countries commonly used the Douay or Douay-Rheims Bible, completed between 1582 and 1609, until the eighteenth century, when the English bishop Richard Challoner considerably revised it. The Douay Bible was a translation from the Latin Vulgate, primarily the work of two English exiles in France, William Allen (1532-1594) and Gregory Martin (1540? -1582). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Roman Catholics replaced the Douay and Challoner Bibles with other translations. In the United States, one of the most widely used is the New American Bible of 1970. It is the first complete Bible to be translated from Hebrew and Greek by American Roman Catholics.

The Roman Catholic Version, RCV, is the oldest version that one can buy today. Despite its antiquity, the whole Protestant world condemns the RCV, because it contains seven extra books, which they refer to as the Apocrypha. Notwithstanding the terrible warning contained in the Apocalypse, which is the last book in the RCV (renamed as “Revelation” by the Protestant), it is “revealed”:

“If any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

In spite of the above warning, the Protestants have eliminated or the Catholics have added seven whole books from their “Word of God”. These books are: Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 Machabees and 2 Machabees.

THE GOSPELS

The four Gospels are the heart of the New Testament. The first three Gospels are called synoptic because they generally correspond to each other. Yet, the origin of these Gospels is the greatest mystery of Christianity. There are so many mysteries relating to the Gospels. Who did actually write them? When and where were they written? These Gospels are full of contradictions. Apologists through complex and elusive interpretation might handle some contradictions. Others are shy of explanation or outright unacceptable.

The careful reader who is interested in reading the titles of each chapter in the Bible may ask why the titles of all four Gospels have the word “according to”, like the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Why “*according to*”? Why did the authors not identify themselves first? In the Gospel according to Matthew 9:9:

“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew”

Why did Matthew not say, “he saw me” instead of “he saw a man, named Matthew”?

In John 21:24 *“This is the disciple which testify of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.”*

Who are “we”? And why did John talk about himself as third person “his”? And why in the following verse, he referred to himself as “I”? Was verse 21:24 written by someone else and verse 21:25 written by John?

Gospel According to Matthew

Matthew was one of the apostles of Jesus, although not a distinguished one. According to tradition, he was the author of the first Gospel and therefore one of the four evangelists. However, little is known about Matthew. The first three Gospels state that he was a tax collector who would have been a man of some education, skilled in arithmetic and able to speak both Aramaic and Greek. Some scholars suggest that he left for Ethiopia to preach Christianity where he died there in 63 or 70 AD.

There are evidence to indicate that this Gospel was written for the Jews, because the Gospel includes many references to Jewish scripture. The Gospel was written in Hebrew, then an unknown person translated it to Greek and the original Hebrew manuscript has perished. This raises a serious question about the knowledge and intention of the translator. Was he knowledgeable enough in the two languages? What was his background? Was he a Jew or a Gentile? Did he try to push certain concepts in the Gospel? Early Christian writers suggested that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Palestine; others favored the city of Antioch in Syria. The date of writing, as frequently suggested, was around the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, perhaps from 65 to 80 AD. The date of writing the original manuscripts is unknown. Why did Matthew wait 40 years after Jesus to write his Gospel? Was it really written by Matthew or someone from the second generation, perhaps one of his students? The author of Matthew used Mark and “Q” as his two major sources.

Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Jews. Jesus states that he did not come to destroy the Law of Moses, but to fulfill (5:17). Also, Jesus commands his disciples to preach “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6). The influence of this Gospel on Christianity has been authoritarian ever since its writing. This is because the Gospel was used in the formulation of doctrine and the divine nature of Jesus, an importance shared only by the Gospel of John.

Matthew includes some exclusive stories: the visit of the wise men from the East (2:1); the travel of Jesus’ family to Egypt to escape the slaughter of male children by Herod the Great; and their return from Egypt after Herod’s death. The death of Jesus’ betrayer, Judas Iscariot (27:3-10), the dream of Pontius Pilate’s wife (27:19), Pilate’s washing his hands of liability for Jesus’ death (27:24-25), the earthquake following Jesus’ death (27:51-53), the guard at the tomb (27:62-66), the earthquake at the time of Jesus’ resurrection (28:2-4) and the appearances of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (28:9-10) and to his disciples in Galilee (28:16-20). Matthew (1:18-2:23) shows similarities between Moses and Jesus to appeal to the Jews. Both were hidden from an evil king that massacred children and both lived in Egypt during their childhood.

Many scholars regard Matthew as a writer with wild imagination. He includes stories in his Gospel that are unbelievable. An example of his outrageous imagination is the description of the events relating to the crucifixion of Jesus. The whole country became dark for three hours, the temple was torn into two pieces, the tears started at the top and tore all the way to the bottom, an earthquake happened and many dead people

were resurrected and went to Jerusalem and were seen by many (27:51-53). This is a big story. It should have been reported in the other Gospels. Did these stories convert a large number of people to Christianity? These stories have no correspondence in the other three Gospels.

The most debatable story in the Gospel of Matthew concerns Jonas' sign (12:38:40). When the Pharisees ask Jesus for a proof, Jesus replies that the son of man will give the miracle that happened to Jonas. Luke has the same story, but Mark is in contradiction with Matthew and Luke with regards to the sign of Jonas.

Matthew reports the saying of Jesus on the Cross: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?*" This means My God, my God, why did you abandon me? (Matthew 27:46), which is identical to Mark 15:34.

The conclusion is that the author of this Gospel is unknown, the place of writing this Gospel is unknown, the time of writing this Gospel is unknown and the Gospel contains stories that contradict other Gospels. Yet the Church wants us to believe that the Almighty inspired the whole Bible, word for word.

Gospel According to Mark

The Gospel begins with "The Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." The Easy to Read Bible has a footnote stating that some Greek copies omit the "Son of God" from this verse. Taking into consideration that "the son of god" is the most important statement in Christianity, how can it be added or omitted from the Gospel of Mark? Did Mark or did he not write this statement? Is it possible that the statement "the son of god", in this verse is a Hebrew expression that meant intimacy with God? There are many references in the Old Testament about prophets being called Son of God.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. In the third century the Christian historian Eusebius of Caesarea, relates this Gospel to Mark, using a statement from an earlier writer named Papias (60? -125?). Papias suggested that Mark was John Mark, cousin of Barnabas, mentioned in Acts 15:37-39, in several letters of Paul, (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24) and in 1 Peter 5:13. It is extremely difficult to confirm that Mark was actually John Mark. Some Christian scholars think that an unknown Christian named Mark wrote this Gospel.

In chapter 13, Mark refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, which makes the writing of this Gospel to be around 70 AD. Clement of Alexandria stated that Rome was the place of writing, while other scholars suggested that it might have been written in Galilee or Syria.

This Gospel does not include any information about Jesus' childhood. It starts with his baptism by John the Baptist. The story goes on until his arrest, crucifixion and burial. Mark (8:11-13) is in contradiction with Matthew and Luke with regards to the sign of Jonas. In Mark, Jesus says that there will be no sign without any exception. Mark states that during crucifixion at noon the whole land became dark (15:33). Mark reports the saying of Jesus on the Cross as follows:

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?" (Mark 15:34), which is identical to Matthew 27:46.

There are two versions for ending of this Gospel. Most of the Greek manuscripts have the "long ending," closing at 16:20. The second version with the "short ending" extends only through 16:8. Most scholars believe that the short version is the correct one. Verses 16:9-20 are not included in the two oldest manuscripts of the Gospels, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. There was a sudden and improper ending of the Gospel of Mark. Verses 16:9-20 are added from the Gospel of Luke to have a reasonable ending! What a blunt admission is provided for us here? Human manipulation of the texts of the holy inspired Scriptures is just outrageous!

The conclusion is that the author of this Gospel is unknown, the place of writing this Gospel is unknown, the time of writing this Gospel is unknown and the Gospel contains stories that contradict other Gospels. Yet the Church wants us to believe that the Almighty inspired the whole Bible, word for word.

Gospel According to Luke

Christian tradition suggests that this Gospel is attributed to "*Luke, the beloved physician*" (Colossians 4:14), who is one of the "fellow laborer" (Philemon 1:24) mentioned by Paul. Also, the Acts of the Apostles is credited to Luke. Most Christian scholars accept Luke's authorship of both works. Some scholars suggest that Luke was one of Paul's disciples. Others doubt that Luke and Paul were closely associated during Paul's missionary work, because of contradiction between Paul's letters and the stories of Paul in Acts.

Many scholars suggest that this Gospel was written for the Gentiles, while others imply that it was written for the Greeks or the Egyptians. Most scholars agree that the writing of this Gospel is from 70 to 80 AD. Other possible dates might be 53, or 63, or 65, or the end of the first century. It is also unknown whether the Gospel was written in Rome, Asia Minor, or Greece.

This Gospel is an expanded version of the Gospel of Mark. Most scholars agree that Luke used the source “Q” as well as an oral tradition, sometimes known as “L” collected by or known only to Luke. Luke has some exclusive stories that include the annunciation (1:26-38); the visit of Mary, the mother of Jesus, to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist (1:39-56); the birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80); Jesus’ circumcision and presentation in the Temple (2:21-40); Jesus’ appearance in the Temple at 12 years of age (2:41-52); Jesus’ last words to his disciples (22:21-38), his words on the way to the cross (23:28-31), the words of the two crucified criminals (23:39-43), the appearances of the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus and in Jerusalem (24:13-49) and Jesus’ ascension (24:50-53).

Luke introduces a genealogy of Jesus that is different from that of Matthew. Luke locates the place of Jesus’ Great Sermon on a flat place (6:17), while Mark states a hilltop (6:20-49). Luke attributed different last words of Jesus on the cross from those of Matthew or Mark (23:46).

The conclusion is that the author of this Gospel is unknown, the place of writing this Gospel is unknown, the time of writing this Gospel is unknown and the Gospel contains stories that contradict other Gospels. Yet the Church wants us to believe that the Almighty inspired the whole Bible, word for word.

Gospel According to John

The Gospel according to John is another story. The author explains his reason of writing this Gospel, 20:30-31: he states many miracles of Jesus for the reader to believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. John did not introduce the trinity, but confirms the “*duality of God*.” Both father and son are gods. This Gospel was not included in the acceptable documents of the Fathers of the Church in the second and third century.

Scholars suggest that this Gospel is written in the latter part of the second century, possibly in the ancient Greek city of Ephesus. There are many serious questions about this Gospel. Why did the author of this Gospel choose completely different direction from the synoptic Gospels? Why did he emphasize the divinity of Jesus? It is a fact that this Gospel was written after the synoptic Gospels. This indicates that many Christians did not believe in the divinity of Jesus, before writing this Gospel. Some scholars suggest that bishops that believed in the divinity of Jesus asked the author of John to write a Gospel that states clearly that Jesus is divine. Other suggests that the author was a philosophy student in Alexandria, who had been asked to write a Gospel that brings Greek philosophy and Christianity closer together. We may never know the truth about this

Gospel, but the fact is this is very different from the rest of the New Testament.

The author establishes from the start that he follows the Greek philosophy and the concept of the Logos (1:1-18). Jesus Christ is the incarnation of “the Word” who has a pre-existent life before his mother and anyone else for that matter. Jesus’ death is the return of the incarnate Son to the Father. The Gospel tells a story of a woman caught in adultery (7:53-8:11). The Easy to Read Bible has a footnote stating that this incident is not included in the best Greek copies. Again, the question is: why then were these words added?

To establish that Jesus is the Logos, the author states many miracles: the changing of water into wine for the wedding at Cana (2:1-11); the healing of an official’s son (4:46-54); the healing of a man who had been sick for 38 years (5:1-9); the feeding of about 5000 men (6:1-15), the only miracle recorded in each of the four Gospels; the healing of a man who had been blind from birth (9:1-7); and the raising of Jesus’ friend Lazarus from the dead (11:1-46); Jesus walking on the sea (6:16-21); his death (19:30) and appearances as the risen Christ (20:1-29).

The conclusion is that the author of this Gospel is unknown, the place of writing this Gospel is unknown, the time of writing this Gospel is unknown. The Gospel focuses on the duality rather than the oneness of God and the Gospel follows the Greek polytheistic philosophy to introduce a monotheistic religion. Yet the Church wants us to believe that the Almighty inspires the whole Bible, word for word.

OTHER GOSPELS

The Gospel of Jesus

Prophets of great missions, like Jesus, always have a revelation from God. And their followers usually keep this revelation. That happened with the Books of Moses. If Jesus did not have a Gospel, can we extend the argument of J. B. Phillips, mentioned above, that Jesus, God forbid, could not handle both his Light and writing or dictating a Gospel! This is what some scholars may conclude regarding the nonexistence of the Gospel of Jesus. However, there are evidence from the Bible that Jesus had a Gospel:

- *“Jesus went everywhere in the country of Galilee. Jesus taught in the synagogues and preached the Good News about the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 4:23).*

- *“After this, John was put into prison. Jesus went into Galilee and preached the Good News from God, Jesus said, “The right time is now here. The kingdom of God is near. Change your hearts and lives and believe the Good News” (Mark 1:14-15).*
- *“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his son” (Romans 1:9).* It is interesting to note that *“of his son”* was changed to the easy phrase *“about his son”* in the Easy-to-Read version. And what a difference between of and about! This is a clear evidence of what changing the original texts is all about. This is a translation from English to English in a few decades. Imagine what could happen to the translation of Aramaic narratives to Greek text to classical English to Modern English to Easy-To- Read English in two thousand years!

The Good News is the Gospel. There is no doubt that the Good News that Jesus was preaching is not one of the known four Gospels. It is also illogical to assume that Jesus was preaching the Bible according to Luke or John. And the above statements of Jesus clearly mean that Jesus was preaching *“his own Gospel,”* and not a Gospel *“according to Jesus.”* What is interesting is that Paul mentioned the Gospel of Jesus and he did not refer to any of the four other Gospels, because these Gospels were written after Paul. It is obvious that Jesus had a Gospel and now that Gospel is not known to anyone. This, of course, raises some serious questions:

- Is the Gospel of Jesus the original text that he preached and everyone else used according to his perception and motive?
- Is “Q” the Gospel of Jesus?
- Where is this Gospel?
- Who destroyed that Gospel and why?

Mental Hospitals and clinics frequently encounter someone claiming to be Jesus Christ. Also, in the West, people claim that they are the promised Messiah and they get believers and in most cases the story ends in a tragedy of killing of believers and their alleged Messiah. Sometimes I wonder when the real Jesus comes, looking for his Gospel, how is the world going to receive him? Will he recognize any book in the New Testament? Is he going to be a subject for the psychoanalysts and the TV talk shows? How will the Churches receive him? Will Jesus agree with TV Evangelists that he has the same substance as that of God? What would he say about their wealth, their singing and screaming and their collecting money from old people to build their own mansions? Will the Churches reject the message of the real Jesus and go back to the Gospels

according to the Evangelists? Will the Christians reject him as the Jews rejected him before? Most likely he would be captured and accused of being a terrorist. This is an idea for a successful Hollywood movie.

The Gospel of Barnabas

Barnabas was one of the members of the early Christian church in Jerusalem and introduced in the New Testament as the “son of consolation” (Acts 4:36). A Levite and a native of Cyprus, Barnabas is credited for having founded the Cypriot church. He was a successful preacher with a charismatic personality. Anyone tormented by the clash of creeds found comfort and peace in his company. His eminence as a man, who had been close to Jesus, had made him a prominent member of the small group of disciples in Jerusalem who had gathered together after Jesus. They observed the Law of the Prophets: Jesus has come, “*not to destroy but to fulfill*”, (Matthew 5:17). They continued to live as Jews and practiced what Jesus had taught them. The disciples never regarded Christianity as a new religion. They were devout and practicing Jews and they were distinguished from their neighbors only by accepting the message of Jesus. In the beginning they did not organize themselves as a separate sect and did not have a synagogue of their own. There was nothing in the message of Jesus, as understood by them, to require a break with Judaism. However, they incurred the hostility of the vested interests among the Jewish Rabbis. The conflict started by the Rabbis because they felt that the Christians would undermine their authority and power.

Barnabas introduced Saul of Tarsus, later St. Paul, to the other apostles in Jerusalem. But the disciples “*were all afraid of Paul and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles,*” (Act 9:26-27). Barnabas accompanied Paul to Antioch, Cyprus and Asia Minor. At the council held in Jerusalem, Barnabas agreed with Paul’s views that the church had a mission for the Gentiles. In Lystra, Paul was said to have performed spiritual healing, so the people coined the terms “Jupiter” for Barnabas and “Mercurius” for Paul, (Acts 14:12). In the Roman State religion, Jupiter was the supreme god and Mercury was a god that served as a messenger to other gods and was himself the god of commerce, travel and thievery. He and Paul later separated, however, when Barnabas insisted that his cousin Mark, who had deserted them on a previous journey, should accompany them again. Barnabas and Mark together continued missionary work in Cyprus (Acts 15:39).

The writings attributed to Barnabas have been the source of dispute among biblical scholars. The early Christian writer Tertullian assigned to him the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in accordance with

second century church tradition. The apocryphal Acts of Barnabas, a work of late date, recounted his missionary tours and his death by martyrdom in Cyprus. The existing Epistle of Barnabas, found in a New Testament manuscript (part of the Codex Sinaiticus), is morally instructive work.

Some biblical scholars believe that the Gospel of Barnabas was accepted as a canonical Gospel in the churches of Alexandria until 325 AD. Irenaeus (130-200) wrote a work against paganism known as "Against the Heresies." He had quoted extensively from the Gospel of Barnabas in support of his views. This proves that the Gospel of Barnabas was in circulation in the first and second centuries of Christianity. In 325 AD, the Nicene Council was held, where it was ordered that all original Gospels in Hebrew script should be destroyed. A decree was issued that anyone in possession of these Gospels would be executed. In 383, the Pope secured a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas and kept it in his private library. In the fourth year of the emperor Zeno (478 AD), the remains of Barnabas were discovered and there was found, on his chest, a copy of the Gospel written with his own hand, (Acia Sanctorum Boland Junii Tom II, pages 422 and 450, Antwerp 1698.) The Vulgate Bible appears to include some sayings from this Gospel. Pope Sixtus (1585-1590) had a friend called Fra Marino. He found the Gospel of Barnabas in the private library of the Pope. Fra Marino was interested in the Gospel because he had read the writings of Irenaeus where Barnabas had been respectfully quoted many times. This Italian manuscript passed through many hands until it came to the possession of Cramer, a Councilor of the King of Prussia. In 1713 Cramer gave it to Prince Eugene in Savoy. In 1738 along with the library of the prince, the Gospel found its way to Vienna, where it now exists. An English translation of this Gospel exists in USA and Europe.

Some Christian Scholars claim that this Gospel has Arabic comments and was written originally in Arabic. Some even claim that it has an Islamic origin, or was used by Muhammad in writing the Quran. All historical accounts establish that Muhammad was unlettered; that is to say that he could not read or write. After Islam, there were debates between Muslims and Christians and no Muslim ever referred to that Gospel. Therefore, this Gospel was not known in Islamic history. Unless some scholars claim that Islamic history was corrupted and the usage of this Gospel was concealed! Anyone who studies Islamic history will immediately know that this is one of the many stereotype claims against Islam.

The Gospel of Barnabas differs from the Biblical Gospels in the following basics of the Christian religion:

- Jesus is not the Son of God. He was a great prophet.
- The sacrifice that Abraham offered to God was Ismael and not Isaac.

- The Gospel made clear prophecy about the coming of Muhammad.
- Jesus was not crucified. The one that was crucified in Jesus' place was Judas by another miracle of God.

Gospel of Thomas

Thomas was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Although much has been written about his life, biblical accounts refer to him three times only in the Gospel of John. The first reference (John 11:15-16) implies Thomas' devotion to Jesus; when Jesus set out for Judea, where Jews have threatened to stone him, Thomas suggests, "*Let us also go, that we may die with him.*" The second reference (John 14:1-7) occurs at the Last Supper, during which Jesus says, "And you know the way where I am going." Thomas asks, "... *how can we know the way?*" Jesus responds, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*" In John (20:19-29), Thomas, absent when Jesus first appears to the apostles after the Resurrection, doubts the others' account of the event. When Jesus appears again and invites Thomas to touch his wounds, the apostle exclaims, "*My Lord and my God!*" Thus Thomas was the first to explicitly recognize Christ's divinity. The phrase "*doubting Thomas*" stems from this account.

The Gospel of Thomas was recovered from Naj Hammadi, Egypt. This compilation, written in Coptic, has been translated and published. Major scholarly attention has been focused on the Gospel of Thomas, which suggests that 114 of Jesus' sayings were delivered privately to Thomas. This Gospel was accepted until late in the second century and rejected at the first ecumenical council of Church.

SOURCES OF THE GOSPELS

According to the commentators of the Ecumenical translation of the Bible, the Gospels appeared to be "disjointed", with a plan that lacks continuity "*with seemingly insuperable contradictions*". It is important to refer to their authority because the consequences of their evaluation of this subject are extremely serious. It is also important to examine the religious history of the time when the Gospels were written. This should cast some light on the development of Christianity to a state that Jesus himself would condemn.

The Fathers of the Church approached the problem of sources in a very simplistic way. In the early centuries of Christianity, the only source available was the Gospel of Matthew, the first complete manuscript. The problem of sources only concerned Mark and Luke, because John

constituted a completely separate case. St. Augustine claimed that Matthew had inspired Mark, who appeared second in the order of the Bible. He further considered that Luke, who came third, had used data from both.

The experts in critical examinations at this period were able to estimate the degree of corroboration between the Gospels and find a large number of verses that are common to two or three synoptic. Today, the commentators of the Ecumenical translation of the Bible provide the following figures (Bucaille, 1989. p. 87):

- Verses common to all three synoptic 330
- Verses common to Mark and Matthew 178
- Verses common to Mark and Luke 100
- Verses common to Matthew and Luke 230

The verses unique to each of the first three Gospels are as follows: Matthew 330, Mark 53 and Luke 500. The fact that each Evangelist has his own exclusive stories raises serious Questions. Why did each of the Evangelists not know about important events that were supposed to be public knowledge? Or did the Evangelists know those events and decided not to include them in their Gospels? It is hard to believe that the Evangelists did not know those stories. And if this is the case, why did they decide not to include those stories?

For eighteen centuries, no new issues were being raised on the sources of the Gospels. Every Christian was accepting the tradition of the authenticity and the idea of the divine inspiration of the Gospels. It was not until modern times that it was realized that each Evangelist compiled his own specific writings guided by his own personal view. Great weight was attached to actual collection of material of the narratives. Each Gospel came from oral traditions of the communities on one hand and from a common written Aramaic source that has not been discovered on the other hand. This written source could have formed from one source, or have been composed from many fragments of different traditions used by each Evangelist to compile his own Gospel.

The Two Sources Theory

Intensive studies in the nineteenth century have led to theories that seem reasonable. The first of these theories is the Two Sources Theory presented by Holtzmann in 1863. According to this theory, Q and Mark are the common sources of Matthew and Luke. Q is short for the German word “Quelle” that means “source.” Mark may have inspired Matthew

and Luke on one hand and by “Q” which has since been lost. Matthew and Luke each had, as well, his own source. Scholars’ criticism of this theory is based on the following points:

1. Mark’s work, used by both Matthew and Luke, was probably not the author’s Gospel, but based upon an earlier version.
2. The Two Sources Theory does not lay enough emphasis on the oral tradition. This appeared to be of major importance, because it alone preserved Jesus’ words and the description of his mission for thirty or forty years until the first Gospel was compiled. During that time, each of the Evangelists was the spokesman of the Christian community that supplied him with the oral tradition.

The Four Sources Theory

The latest studies in biblical criticism of the sources of the Gospels have clearly shown an even more complicated compilation process of the Gospels. A book by Benoit and Boismard, both professors at the Biblical School at Jerusalem, called “Synopsis of the Four Gospels,” 1972-1973, stresses the evolution of the Gospels in stages parallel to the evolution of tradition. Benoit presents introduction to Boismard’s part of the book in the following terms:

“The wording and form of description that result from a long evolution of tradition are not as authentic as in the original. Some readers of this book (The New Testament) will perhaps be surprised or embarrassed to learn that certain of Jesus’ sayings, parables, or predictions of his destiny were not expressed in the way we read them today, but were altered and adapted by those who transmitted them to us. This may come as a source of amazement and even scandal to those not used to this kind of historical investigation.”

The alterations and adaptations to the Gospels made by those who transmitted them to us were done in a way that Boismard explains by a highly complex diagram. It is a development of the Two Sources Theory and is a product of examination and comparison of the Gospels that is impossible to summarize here. Those readers who are interested in obtaining further details should consult the original work in that book.

Four basic documents: **A, B, C and Q** represent the original sources of the Gospel (Bucaille, 1989, p. 88-89):

1. Document A comes from a Judeo-Christian source. Matthew and Mark were inspired by it.

2. Document B is a reinterpretation of document A, for use of Churches in originally pagan communities. All Evangelists were inspired by it with the exception of Matthew.
3. Document C inspired Mark, Luke and John.
4. Document Q constitutes the majority of sources common to Matthew and Luke. It is the common document in the Two Sources Theory, referred to earlier.

None of these basic documents led to the production of the Gospels that we know today. Between them and the final version lay intermediate versions: intermediate Matthew, intermediate Mark, intermediate Luke and intermediate John. These four intermediate documents were to lead to the final versions of the four Gospels. These four basic documents A, B, C and Q of the New Testament are similar to the four basic documents of the Old Testament J, E, P and D.

The results of this scriptural research are extremely important. They show how the texts of the Gospels “*not only have a history, but also a pre-history*,” to use Boismard’s expression. This means that before the appearance of the final versions, they underwent alterations and adaptations at the intermediate document level. Thus, it is now possible to explain, for example, how a well-known story from Jesus’ life, such as the miracle of catching the fish, is shown in Luke to be an event that happened during his life and in John to be one of his appearances after resurrection.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above is that when we read the Gospels, we can no longer be at all certain that we are reading Jesus’ words or learning about his life. Benoit attempted to comfort the readers of the Gospels: “If the reader is obliged in more than one case to give up the notion of hearing Jesus’ voice directly, he still hears the voice of the Church and he relies upon it as the divinely appointed interpreter of the Master who long ago spoke to us on earth and who now speaks to us in his glory.”

How can anyone reconcile this scholarly statement of the adulteration of the Gospels with the phrase used in the dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation by the Second Vatican Council assuring us to the contrary, i.e. the faithful transmission of Jesus’ words:

“These four Gospels, which it (the Church) unhesitatingly confirms are historically authentic, faithfully transmit what Jesus, Son of God, actually did and taught during his life among men for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up into the heaven.”

It is quite clear that the work of the Biblical School of Jerusalem flatly contradicts the Council's declaration.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

I was talking to a Christian friend about the authenticity of the Bible. A few days later, he gave me a book from his pastor and told me that if I read this book, I would understand and believe in the authenticity of the Bible. The book is called "Evidence That Demands a Verdict" and was written by McDowell in 1972. The book deals with "Apologetics" which is a branch of theology that provides a defense for belief in God through a presentation of evidence that answer criticism against the Christian doctrine. The author, like all apologists, presented tremendous evidence about confirmation of the Bible by history as well as archaeology. The book emphasized the moral values that Jesus preached. The author also addressed many of the prophecies in the Old Testament and showed that these prophecies actually happened.

No single monotheist dares to say that the Old Testament or the New Testament should in any way be disregarded as a whole. No one should disagree about the effectiveness of the sayings of Jesus and Moses regarding the well being of humanity. However, a witness in a court of law is usually asked to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Do the Christian apologists and the Sunday preachers really believe in this witness swearing in the courts? They preach half the truth and prefer to keep their congregation in the dark about the other half. No Christian preacher in a Sunday class or on TV addresses the many conflicts in the Bible. And even if he does, he is going to approach any contradiction very casually. The preacher may even use the approach of Origen and St. Augustine and explain contradictions between the biblical texts as a divine will to teach a point of a deeper meaning that lies beyond human comprehension!

Each of the four Gospels includes a large number of descriptions relating events that may be unique to a single Gospel, or common to some or all of them. Common stories that contradict each other represent a serious question about the authenticity of the Bible, especially if one holds the notion that whole Bible is divinely inspired. Also, when events are unique to one Gospel, they too raise serious problems. Thus in the case of an event of considerable importance, it should be surprising to find the event mentioned by only one Evangelist: Jesus' Ascension into heaven on the day of resurrection, for example. Elsewhere, numerous

events are differently described - sometimes very differently indeed - by two or more Evangelists.

Christians are often astonished at the existence of such contradictions between the Gospels - if they ever discover them. This is because it has been repeatedly said in tones of the greatest assurance that their authors were the eyewitnesses of the events described! If there are few contradictions in the New Testament, one might attempt to find a reasonable interpretation, or blame it on our human limitation. But if the contradictions are so many and they exist in serious events, then this is another story. One might, in this case, question any event in the New Testament that does not conform to the previous religious history.

Some of the following contradictions were presented in the above sections. However, in the following section an attempt is made to list some of the contradictions in details, for the reader to appreciate the seriousness of the problem and how can anyone explain all these conflicts. One Christian Apologists suggests a common answer for all the contradictions in the Bible. He says, "We know every apparent contradiction in the Bible. They happen because different authors receive different divine inspiration." Now, which divine inspiration do we believe? This explanation is almost as comical, or sad, as the fact that he believes that.

The Genealogies of Jesus

The French surgeon Maurice Bucaille (1989) in one complete section comprising 10 pages in his book "*The Bible, The Quran, and Science*" has treated this subject. Also, the Egyptian scholar Abu Zahra, in his book "*Lectures in Christianity*" devoted a good portion to this subject. The following is an attempt to summarize their findings:

The Gospel (like the Quran) describes the biological origin of Jesus. The creation of Jesus occurred in circumstances beyond human comprehension. Mary was a Virgin mother. Jesus is a biological miracle from God the Almighty. The two genealogies presented in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke give rise to serious problems in authenticity. These problems are a source of great embarrassment to Christian commentators, because they refuse to see in them what is obviously the product of human imagination or the lack of serious recording of the Bible. This is a case of inspiration by imagination. The following shows some of the differences in Jesus' genealogy according to Matthew 1:6-16 and according to Luke 3:23-31.

- In Matthew, Joseph was the son of Jacob; in Luke, Joseph was the son of Heli.
- In Matthew, Salatheil was the son of Jechonias; in Luke, Salatheil was the son of Neri.
- In Matthew, Abiud was the son of Zorobabel; in Luke, Rhesa was the son of Zorobabel.
- In Matthew, Jesus descended from Solomon son of David; in Luke, Jesus descended from Nathan son of David.
- In Matthew, 27 names are mentioned between David and Jesus; in Luke, 42 names are mentioned between David and Jesus.

Christian apologetics explain, for example, the discrepancy about Joseph' *father as Jacob was his father and Heli was his "father in law."* This indicates that the western expression "father in law" was known in the Aramaic language! Other apologetics defend both Matthew and Luke as historians, authentically reporting two different family histories and that was not their problem if the family histories were not consistent!

The Last Words of Jesus

The last words of Jesus on the cross come as a big embarrassment to Christian scholars. First, there are four different versions in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These verses are part of a Christian doctrine of divine inspiration. If God had inspired these four writers, why did God inspire them to record different words? These verses are not just different words, but totally different concepts.

The following are the "*last words*" of Jesus:

- In Matthew 27:46 Jesus' last words were "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?" My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (Mark 15:34) though it is Elohi instead of Eli
- In Luke 23:46 Jesus cried: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."
- In John 19:30, Jesus tasted the vinegar. Then he said, "It is finished." Jesus bowed his head and died.

If God inspired the Evangelists and if they considered Jesus the Son of God, then how could there be any discrepancy about the last words of God or the Son of God on Earth? How can these verses be part of a supposed "divine inspiration"? No Answer. One Christian Scholar has a simplistic answer: Jesus said all of the above! Then why none of "divine inspirations" stated all of the above? It seems that the reasonable

statement should be the one that Jesus said in his own Aramaic language. Besides those words were reported in two Gospels, Matthew and Mark. But this statement raises more serious questions.

The last words of Jesus according to Matthew and Mark represent an eternal mystery for Christianity. Why did Jesus think that God abandoned him? It is hard to believe that Jesus said that God abandoned him. There are three possibilities:

- **He said that.** Then, why did the Son of God think that his father abandoned him? Jesus told his disciples that he would die and rise from the dead in three days. He knew that he would die and be resurrected, so how can that be called abandonment? If he is the Son of God that came to save humanity with his blood, so how can that can be called abandonment? If he knew his mission in life, so how can that be called abandonment? This statement simply contradicts the entire New Testament. Many Christian scholars have the same trouble justifying this statement.
- **He did not say that.** This means that Matthew and Mark were not accurate and God did not inspire the Gospels, because God would not allow any inaccuracies.
- **The man on the cross was not Jesus!** This may seem at first sight that it is an unreasonable idea. But if we know that the same sentence, word for word, exists in the songs of David, Psalm 22.1, one may be tempted to suggest that the man on the Cross was a Jew asking God for help from his Old Testament.

The Gospel of Barnabas gives the only reasonable explanation. The man on the cross was not Jesus. He was Judas. Barnabas reported that before the alleged arrest of Jesus, God commanded the Angels to take Jesus out of this world, Barnabas 215. Then God acted miraculously that Judas was so changed in speech and in face to be like Jesus that the apostles believed him to be Jesus, Barnabas 216. When Judas was taken to the cross, he did nothing else but cried out “God, why hast thou forsaken me, seeing that the malefactor hath escaped and I die unjustly?” Barnabas 217. The first sentence is a prayer of the Jews from Psalm 22:1, so Judas was praying to God from the Old Testament. The guardian angels of Mary ascended to the third heaven, where Jesus was in the company of Angels and told him that his mother was weeping. Jesus prayed to God to come down to Earth to see his mother and his disciples. Then God commanded the angels to bear Jesus into his mother’s house and they kept watching over him for three days. After the third day, Jesus was carried up into heaven.

The Sign of Jonas

One of the most debatable stories in the Gospel of Matthew concerns Jonas' sign:

"Then certain of the scribes and the Pharisees answer, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no signs be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew, 12:38:40).

"and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet" (Luke 11:29).

Mark is in contradiction with Matthew and Luke with regards to the sign of Jonas:

"And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall be no sign be given unto this generation, And he left them" (Mark, 8:11-13).

Matthew and Luke are in agreement and Mark is in contradiction with Matthew and Luke. Those verses refer to the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus says in both versions that this generation seeks a sign to believe. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus adds that there will no sign but the sign of Jonas. In Mark, Jesus says that there will be no sign without any exception. This is really outrageous. Did Jesus say the sign of Jonas or not? Can any apologist claim that Jesus said that and did not say that at the same time?!

Which version is right? Can God inspire right and wrong versions?

Is Jesus God?

- In John 10:30, Jesus said, *"I and my father are one."*
- In John 14:28, Jesus said, *"I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."*

In the first verse John records that Jesus equated himself with God, his father. In the second verse John states that Jesus said that his father

(God) is greater than he. Athanasius adopted the first verse and extended it to mean that God and Jesus are made of the same substance. Arius embraced the second verse. They had a heated argument in the start of the fourth Century, that lead to the first council of church.

Which version is right? Can God inspire right and wrong versions?

The Death of Judas

- In Matthew 27:5 Judas hanged himself.
- In Acts 1:18, Luke wrote that Judas fell on his head, his body broke open and all his intestines poured out.

Which one of these stories was inspired and which one was not? The best explanation that any Christian has come up with is this: Judas hung himself and was hung for days and became swollen and bloated so that when they cut him down he burst open! Sometimes the explanation is almost as humorous as the fact that people actually believe the story in the first place.

When was Jesus crucified?

- In Mark 15:25, *“And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.”*
- In John 19:14-16 *“And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he (Pilate) saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him over therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.”*

The third hour of the day was 9 am and the sixth hour was noon. This is even spelled out in the NRSV Bible that gives the times and not the hour.

Jesus' Apostles

- In Matthew 10:2-4, *“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.”*
- In Luke 6:13-16, *“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named*

apostles: Simon, (whom he named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.”

The first list includes Lebbaeus Thaddaeus and only one Judas and the second list has two Judases.

Do you believe that Matthew and Luke do not know the twelve Apostles? What would they do if the number of the Apostles were 24!

Matthew or Levi

- *“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, follow me. And he arose, and followed him” (Matthew 9:9).*
- *“And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him” (Mark 2:14).*
- *“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said unto him, follow me” (Luke 5:27).*

Jesus was walking and he saw a tax collector, whose name could be Matthew or Levi!

Is it the Gospel according to Matthew or according to Levi?

The Arrest of Jesus

- In Matthew 26:47-50, Judas planned to do something to show the people, who came to arrest Jesus, which man was Jesus. Judas said *“The man I kiss is Jesus. Arrest him.”*
- In John 18:1-8, Judas led a group of soldiers to the garden. Judas also brought some guards from the leading priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus knew everything that would happen to him. Jesus went out and asked, *“Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said, “I am he”*

Which one of these stories was inspired and which one was not? Can we gain any reasonable answer from the apologetics?

The Gentile woman

- In Matthew 15:21, a Canaanite woman asked Jesus to help her daughter who had a demon inside her.

- In Mark 7:26, the woman was not a Jew. She was Greek, born in Phoenicia, an area in Syria.

Was this woman Canaanite or Phoenician?

Does it make a difference? Yes it does, if both sources claim to be inspired by God.

The Last Supper

- John places the Last Supper *“before the Passover celebration.”*
- All other three Gospels place the Last Supper during the celebration.

Does it make a difference? Yes it does, if both sources claim to be inspired by God.

What did Jesus drink on the cross?

- “*They gave him (Jesus) vinegar to drink, mingled with gall*” (Matthew 27:34).
- “*And they gave him (Jesus) to drink, wine mingled with myrrh*” (Mark 15:23).

This is two different authors account of the same event, Jesus on the cross. The first is Matthew saying that they gave Jesus to drink vinegar (old wine) mixed with gall, which is a product that comes from the oak tree. It is used in inks and medicines.

The second verse is from Mark and it says wine mixed with myrrh, which is a gum resin used in the making of incense. Mark clearly wrote his gospel first and Matthew must have not been clear on what Mark meant.

The High Priests

The High Priests condemned Jesus because he had “blasphemed” God for they found no other reason. The High Priests asked whether he was Christ, the Son of God:

- The answer according to Matthew (26:64): *“Thou hast said.”*
- The answer according to Mark (14:62): *“I am.”*
- The answer according to Luke (22:70): *“Ye say that I am.”*
- John gives more detailed information. Jesus defended himself before the high priests: *“I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.”* (John 18:20)

The contradictions of the four evangelists are understandable. None of them were present at the trial; they are merely reporting rumors.

Who carried Jesus' cross?

- *“And they compel one Simon a Cyrennian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus to bear his cross” (Mark 15:21).*
- *“Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha” (John 19:16-17).*

In Mark's version, the soldiers forced Simon to carry the cross. In John's version, Jesus carried his own cross. So, who is right? Neither of the authors of these tales can say for sure because they were not there. Half the truth Christian preachers publicize the story of John because it is more dramatic.

The resurrection

The four Gospels have different accounts about the resurrection

- Matthew makes the whole scene very dramatic (28:1-9). Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James went to the tomb, which was closed. At that time there was a strong earthquake. An angel of the Lord came from the sky, his face like lightening and his robe as white as snow, moved the stone, sat on it and spoke to the women. He showed them the place where Jesus' body was and said that he had risen and that they were to inform the disciples quickly. The fact that they also met Jesus on the way is no longer connected to the visit to the tomb.
- Mark (16:1-8) says that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices to anoint Jesus. On the way they were wondering how they would move the stone from the tomb, when they saw that it was already opened and that a young man in a long white garment sat inside. He told them not to be afraid, for Jesus, whom they sought, had risen from the dead. They were to tell the disciples. But the women fled in panic; *“neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid”*, King James Version. “Neither” implies two women, but Mark stated the names of three women!
- Luke (24:1-6) only mentions “women” (not mentioned by name), who went to the open tomb and found it empty. While they stood there sadly, two men in *“shining garments”* said to them: *“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”*

- John (20:1-2) describes things differently. According to him, only Mary Magdalene went to the grave early on the first day of the week and found the stone already removed. In a panic, she ran to Simon Peter and the other apostles, telling them that “they” had taken Jesus away to an unknown place.

One really wonders why the countless collaborators of the Bible had not taken some care to synchronize this central event of resurrection and check their references. The “original texts of God’s word” did not contain a unified story about this major event and the simple Bible reader has the right to ask: What did really happen?

The apostles’ reaction to the phenomenal events is also most remarkable. They did not believe a word of the story told by the women, who were the two Marys and Joanna: “And their words seemed to them idle tales and they believed them not.” (Luke 24:11). John (20:9) even affirms: “For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” This is quite incomprehensible. Throughout their four Gospels, the evangelists reported Jesus’ statement that he would die and rise again, yet at the end they knew nothing about it?

Jesus’ Ascent

The account of Jesus’ ascent into heaven is also contradictory:

- According to Matthew (28:16-17), Jesus had summoned the disciples to a mountain near Galilee for an appearance. When they saw him, they worshipped him, *“but some doubted.”* Matthew has nothing further to say about the ascent into heaven.
- Mark (16:19) has one sentence to cover this important event: *“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”* It is as simple as that.
- Luke (24:50-51) makes Jesus himself lead the disciples *“out as far as Bethany.”* While he was blessing them, *“he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”*
- John (21) has nothing to say about the ascension into heaven!

The most important event in Jesus’ life, as recorded by “God’s word,” was undoubtedly the resurrection and the ascent into heaven. The evangelists reported very many unimportant details that one cannot understand why they did not describe the central event on which the Christian doctrine is based in a colorful and genuinely inspired language. If Jesus had ascended into heaven in full view of everyone, or at least in the circle of his disciples, the news would have spread through the streets of Jerusalem like a forest fire on the very first day. The people had taken

a great interest in the trial and the crucifixion, but not a single Roman or Jewish historian noted down a single word about these Earth shaking events. The evangelists show only the most basic knowledge of them and they could not have been eyewitnesses, because of their contradictory reports about these major events.

Did Paul's traveling companions see and hear correctly?

- *“And the men which journeyed with him [Paul] stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man” (Acts 9:7).*
- *“And they that were with me [Paul] saw indeed the light and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me” (Acts 22:9).*

The author of the Gospel of Luke contradicts himself! This first verse is Luke relating the story of Paul's encounter with the spirit of Jesus that caused his conversion. The second is Paul relating this story to some men that had been beating him. The first says the men heard a voice but saw no man, while the second says that they saw a light but did not hear a voice.

Theological Contradiction – Paul versus Jesus

- *“He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness” (Mark 3:29).*
- *“And by him that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39).*

This first verse is Jesus speaking to his disciples. He is basically saying that the one thing that cannot be forgiven is blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, not the Father or the Son. He continues by saying that they run the risk of eternal damnation.

The second verse is from Acts and is written by the same author who wrote the Gospel of Luke. It is Paul addressing the congregation at Antioch. Paul is saying that through belief in Jesus the Christ, all things are forgivable. No exception is made. Was Paul not aware of Jesus' teachings? This is a blatant contradiction to Jesus' teaching. This is just one situation when Paul is taking charge of the theology of Christianity.

PAUL AND THE JUDEO-CHRISTIANITY

All historians agree that the existing Christian theology is based on the perception of Paul and not on the true message of Jesus. Paul is called the greatest missionary of Christianity and its first theologian. Yet all Christian preachers attribute Christianity to both Jesus and Paul. It is interesting to note that President Thomas Jefferson in a letter to William Short, April,

13, 1820, stated "*Of this band of dupes and impostors, Paul was the great corruptor of the doctrines of Jesus*" (Jefferson, 1829, p. 321).

Paul: Evangelist to the Gentiles

In the late 1900s, major attention in the history of Christianity was focused on Paul. This was due to a strong critical examination of his views on Judaism and the Mosaic Law. His position regarding the Law changed completely after his conversion. The book of Acts and Paul's Epistles have been used as a source of understanding Paul's early life, conversion and approach to theology. However, there are problems in reconciling the accounts in Acts with those in Epistles. Gal. 1:15 suggests that, immediately before his conversion and for three years afterwards, Paul lived in Arabia and Damascus. Acts seems to suggest that he lived in Jerusalem (7:58-8:3; 9:1-2; 22:3). Similarly, while Paul's letters mention two visits to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18; 2:1) and that he hoped to make a third (Rom. 15:25; 1 Cor. 16:4), Acts makes obvious references to five visits (9:26-28; 11:27-30; 15:1-4; 18:22; 21:17-19). Attempts to reconcile these contradictions were extremely difficult; so many scholars accepted their discrepancy and used Acts and the Epistles separately without trying to confuse the public.

Paul was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia (in present day Turkey) in 4 AD. He became a convert to Christianity after experiencing a vision of Jesus during a journey from Jerusalem to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19, 22:5-16, 26:12-18) about 33-35 AD. It is important to remember the above contradiction relating to his companions during Paul's vision. After 14 quiet years, Paul began to write his Epistles that took him through Syria, Galatia, Asia Minor and Rome. Some scholars argue that Paul spent those missing 14 years in Macedonia, Greece. This is probably true if one assumes that he was testing and adjusting his method to present the new religion to Pagans. Though Paul was in Jerusalem at the same time as Jesus, it is doubtful that the two men ever met. His zeal for Mosaic Law led him to persecute the Christian church. First he thought of the church to be a Jewish sect that was untrue to the Law and should therefore be destroyed (Gal. 1:13). Acts 7:54-60 portrays him as a supportive witness to the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem after riots heated by his Jewish opponents and was eventually sent to Rome to stand trial. It is unclear how that trial ended, or if he ever left Rome. Eventually, in 64 he was executed near Rome.

Paul established his credibility by maintaining that Jesus spoke to him after he was raised to Heaven. Paul perceived this revelation to mark the end of all religions and thus of all religious distinctions. He

consistently spoke of God's "call" to him. God has called people and is continuing to call people into the Christian community. Paul recognized Peter's effort to introduce Christianity to the Jews, but he was convinced that Christianity was God's call to the entire world. Although scholars do not fully understand Paul's motive for this effort, it is certain that he attempted to bring together the churches of his Gentile mission with the Jewish Christians in Palestine.

The New Testament contains 13 letters bearing Paul's name as author and seven of these were almost certainly written by Paul himself: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians and Philemon. Christian scholars debate the authenticity of the rest of the letters. The seven letters, attributed to Paul, in which he occasionally speaks of his personal experience and his work, are the major sources of knowledge about the course of his life. Most scholars concentrate on them and consult the Acts of the Apostles as an additional source.

The letters of Paul reveal that his missionary itinerary was focused on three major objectives:

- The expansion of Christian missionary to the Gentiles in areas not approached by other Christian evangelists—hence his plan to go as far west as Spain, (Romans 1:14; 5:24, 28).
- The concern of a preacher to revisit his own congregations as problems arose. This was demonstrated by his several visits to Corinth.
- His constant determination to collect money from his largely rich Gentile churches and to deliver the money himself to Jesus' Apostles in Jerusalem.

Without a doubt, Paul had remarkable qualities that made him the top evangelist in the history of Christianity:

- He was very active in traveling and propagating his version of Christianity to the Gentiles.
- He had an extraordinary capability for adapting himself to the situation of his audience.
- He was more effective in writing than in speaking.
- He knew very well how to package the new religion and presented it in an acceptable form to the Gentiles.

After knowing that about Paul, it is no wonder that very many "successful" TV evangelists are adopting Paul's approach in addressing the Christian public. TV evangelists receive calls from God and they continually talk about those divine calls. These God's calls range from

requesting money, to God's revelation to the evangelist of his forgiveness if the evangelist committed a major sin.

The Pauline and Judeo-Christianity

In the early stages of Christianity, there were two versions of Christianity: one presented by James, a relative of Jesus and the rest of the apostles as a mission to the Jews. Paul introduced the second version as a religion for Gentiles. Barnabas introduced Paul, to the other apostles in Jerusalem. But the disciples "were all afraid of Paul and believed not that he was a disciple, but Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles", (Act 9:26-27). The apostles had doubtful feelings that Paul was not what he seemed to claim. Paul tried first to preach to the Jews, but he was unsuccessful as some of the Apostles. They understood that the Jesus' message was for "*the black sheep of Israel*," and Jesus came not to "*destroy but to fulfill*." And here was someone, that they did not trust, pushing to steal the show and expand the religion beyond its original boundaries. The apostles were trying to conserve the Jewish law, while Paul was exempting the Gentiles from this law. In Paul's view, it was very difficult, or even impossible to approach a Greek or Roman with a new religion and then, for example, ask the future convert, to be circumcised. Just imagine a thirty-year old Greek leaning towards Christianity and then someone tells him: by the way, you need to be circumcised; or if you commit adultery you are going to be stoned to death! What do you expect his reaction to be?

The author of 2 Peter speaks of difficulties in understanding Paul (2 Peter 3:16) and then he said that: "*as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*." Peter was referring to the teachings of Paul. What did Peter mean by that? How were the scriptures explained in a way that was hard to understand? Who was Peter referring to by untaught and unstable people? The Bible does not give any clues to these questions.

The small group of apostles formed a Jewish sect that remained faithful to the form of worship practiced in the temples. Some men went to Antioch in 49 AD and told the Gentiles "*Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*." (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas were against this teaching. When converts from paganism were presented to the apostles, a "special system" was offered to them in the council of Jerusalem in 49 AD that exempted them from circumcision and the Mosaic Law. This council was a meeting of Peter, Paul and the

leaders of Jerusalem's Christians. Many Judeo-Christians rejected this concession. This conservative group was separated from Paul. For Paul, the circumcision, Sabbath and rituals of worship practiced in the temple were old fashioned, even for the Jews. Christianity was to free itself from Judaism and open itself to the Gentiles. The head of the community at that time was James. James represented the Judeo-Christian camp, which consciously adhered to Judaism as opposed to the Pauline Christianity. Jesus' family and certainly the Virgin Mary too, had a very important role in supporting the Judeo-Christian church of Jerusalem.

It was not just in Jerusalem and Palestine that Judeo-Christianity predominated during the first hundred years of the church. The Judeo-Christian mission seemed to have developed everywhere before the Pauline mission. This is certainly the explanation of the fact that the letters of Paul had difficulties in understanding the new religion. The whole Syrian-Palestinian coast from Gaza to Antioch was Judeo-Christian as witnessed by the Acts and the writings of Clement. In Asia Minor, Paul's letters to the Galatians and Colossians indicated the existence of Judeo-Christians.

It is important to know these facts to understand the struggle between communities that ended up by shaping Christianity. The Gospels began to appear around 70 AD, the time where the two rival groups were engaged in a fierce struggle, with the Judeo-Christians winning this battle. Then the Jews revolted against Rome in 66 AD and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD the Pauline version won the victory after his death. From 70 AD to about 140 AD, the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John appeared. They did not constitute the first Christian documents: the letters of Paul dated well before them.

Paul is the most controversial person in Christianity. He was considered to be a traitor to Jesus' teachings by the family and apostles of Jesus. Paul created Christianity at the expense of those whom Jesus had gathered around him to spread his Gospel. He proved the authority of his mission by declaring Jesus, raised from the dead, had appeared to him on the road to Damascus. It is reasonable to state that Christianity would not be the same without Paul. It is almost certain that if this atmosphere of struggle between Christians had not existed, we would not have had the Bible that we know today. The Gospels started to appear at a time of fierce struggle and political upheaval, when Pauline Christianity won the battle of the Gentiles and created its own collection of documents. These texts constituted the "Canon" which condemned and excluded as heretical any other documents that were not following Paul's version of Christianity. The Judeo-Christians were cut off from the church that gradually freed

itself from Judaism and the Law. However, they existed in few numbers in the third and fourth centuries, especially in Palestine, Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia. They kept the original Christianity in their hearts and tried very hard to keep it alive. This was demonstrated by the efforts of Arius in Alexandria to revive Judeo-Christianity.

Paul's Theology

Paul created a theology that was never described by Jesus. He adapted his version of Christianity to the Gentiles, after unsuccessful attempts to join the Judeo-Christians. The fact that each of his letters were written to a specific church with a different approach indicates that he wanted to adjust his teachings to address that church's previous belief. The following is an attempt to summarize Paul's thought:

- **Jesus' Status:** Unlike the Fathers of the Church, Paul never called Jesus "God". He called him "the Son of God" in the Jewish sense; Adam, David and Israel were called sons of God. He never suggested that Jesus had been the incarnation of God. He only suggested that Jesus had the powers of God.
- **Rejection of the Jewish Law:** After the incident of Antioch in 49 AD, Paul rejected the Mosaic Law *"The service that brought death (the law) was written and engraven in stone"* (2 Cor. 3:7); *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law"* (Gal.3: 13).
- **Allegorical Interpretations:** Paul was emphatic that by getting the broken bread and wine, the Christian is sharing in the sacrificing of the son to the father in his broken body and shed blood.
- **The Cross:** According to Paul's ideology, the cross can be perceived to reveal God's great power, a power made perfect in weakness. God confirmed this power by raising Jesus from the dead, by sending the Holy Spirit and by establishing the church as the foundation of his New Kingdom.
- **Accepting Jesus:** Paul emphasized that Jesus died for our sins, (1 Cor. 15:3). The resurrection of Jesus established his victory over our sins. He rejected the prevailing Judeo-Christian emphasis on repentance and forgiveness of sins. Paul did not call upon his audiences to repent of any sin, but rather to accept Jesus and his crucifixion as the only way of salvation. The symbol of the cross was a victory over all sins and humans do not need to repent or ask God for forgiveness. Paul even rejected the call of John the Baptist to the Jews to repent, which Jesus did not object.

GNOSTICISM

The term Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* (“revealed knowledge”). Gnosticism competed with orthodox Christianity for the first 350 years of Christian history and affected tremendously its doctrine. They promised salvation through secret knowledge that they claimed was revealed to them alone. Scholars trace their origin back to such various sources as Jewish mysticism, Hellenistic mystery and Iranian cults and Babylonian and Egyptian mythology. Most Gnostic sects adhered to Christianity, but their beliefs sharply differed from those of the majority of Christians. Christian ideas were quickly incorporated into the Gnosticism sect. The most prominent Christian Gnostics were Valentinus and his disciple Ptolemaeus, who during the second century were influential in the Roman church. Valentinus accepted not only the four Gospels but also many additional traditions that included the Gospel of Thomas. Christian Gnostics showed that the traditional God of Judaism did not satisfy many of the new converts to Christianity. They did not experience the world as good world created by a merciful god. Until the discovery at Nag Hammadi in Egypt of key Coptic Gnostic documents in 1945, knowledge of Gnosticism depended on Christian sources, notably Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria.

Marcion (100-160) established a rival Christian sect in Rome about 140 (Chadwick, 1993b, p. 30). He listed contradictions between the Old and New Testaments and developed a sophisticated apologetic method for approaching the discrepancies in the Bible. He believed that unknown persons determined to keep Christianity Jewish had corrupted the Gospels. Marcion rejected the Old Testament and almost all of the New Testament, including the accounts of the incarnation and the resurrection. He based his teachings on ten of the Epistles of Paul and on an “altered version” of the Gospel of Luke. The existence of four versions of the Gospels was a troublesome mystery in itself. He believed in a dualistic interpretation of God, whereby God is divided into the just God of Law, who was the Creator of the Old Testament and the good God, the infinitely superior deity revealed by Jesus Christ. The popularity of his teachings showed that he had voiced a common anxiety due to public confusion. He had put his finger on something important in the Christian experience by rejecting the Jewish One God and introducing, instead, a dualistic God.

Much of early Christian doctrine was formulated in reaction to this movement. Marcion represented a formidable challenge to the Church. His exclusion of many of the apostolic writings provided a strong motive

to the church's need to classify which books did or did not rank as authoritative documents. In later Christian debate, the formation of the Biblical canon became a sensitive issue: were the books admitted to the Church's canon because they were authentic? Or did the Church actively created the canon in response to Marcion's "inspired" text? Christian historians believe that both questions have to receive affirmative answer. The criterion for admission of accepted books in the New Testament was governed by the Christian belief of the Fathers of the Church during the second and the third centuries.

By the third century Gnosticism began to yield to orthodox Christian opposition and persecution. Partly in reaction to the Gnostic heresy, the church strengthened its organization by centralizing authority in the office of bishop, which made its effort to suppress the poorly organized Gnostics movement. Furthermore, as orthodox Christian theology and philosophy developed, the primarily mythological Gnostic teachings began to appear weird and crude. Christians defended their identification of the God of the New Testament with the God of Judaism and their belief that the New Testament is the only true "revealed knowledge." By the end of the third century many Gnostics were converted to orthodox beliefs. Gnosticism as a separate movement vanished.

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A father of the Church is a name given by the Christian Church to the writers who established the Christian doctrine. The writings of the Fathers consolidated Christian doctrine as found in the Bible, especially the Gospels, the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and decisions of Councils of Church. They provided an authoritative body of Christian teaching to the peoples of the Roman Empire. They also introduced ambiguous concepts and interpretations that had not been stated by Jesus himself. The Fathers of the Church consist of four Western Fathers, including Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Pope Gregory I and Jerome and four Eastern Fathers, including Saints Athanasius, Basil, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus. The earlier Eastern Fathers, including Clement of Alexandria, St. Justin Martyr and Origen, were strongly influenced by Greek philosophy. The Western Fathers, however, including Tertullian and Saints Gregory I and Jerome, generally avoided the mixing of pagan and Christian theology. In the east, Clement and Origen preached a peaceful joyous return to God, but in the western Church a more frightening God demanded shocking death of his son as a condition of salvation.

It is important to know that when the Fathers of the Church were teaching Christianity, there was no official doctrine. No one knew for sure if Jesus was human, God, or the Son of God. No one knew for sure how a human being had been divine. No one knew for sure if God is one, two, or three. During that time Christianity was so vague to the extent that the preachers themselves were struggling to understand it. They were attempting to develop a Christian doctrine that can be reconciled with Jewish concepts and Greek philosophy. They had to do that to attract many Jewish and pagan converts to Christianity. All previous efforts to incorporate the Greek and the Roman cultures with the Judeo-Christians had provoked fierce resistance. The Jews fought placing of a statue of Zeus in the Temple. The Jews perceived the Roman Empire and the pagan society as intolerant and anti-Semitic. Educated Greeks and Romans thought of Judaism as a strange cult with no sacrifices except in Jerusalem, with weird food law excluding pork, with circumcision and a distinctive calendar. The acceptance of the Gentile Christians without a requirement to observe the Mosaic Law seemed to the rabbis as excessive liberalism.

But persecution mainly came upon the Christians from the Roman government. Nero at Rome set the precedent in 64 when Paul was executed. Provincial governors soon followed Nero. The mere profession of Christianity was considered a crime. The Roman government ordered burning of all Christian texts. A Christian defendant could be set free by offering incense on a pagan altar, to refuse it was to suffer imprisonment, torture, being thrown to wild beast, or in the case of Roman citizen, being beheaded. When the Romans executed Christians, they were accused of atheism because their concept of divinity seriously offended the Roman tradition. Christianity seemed to the pagans as a barbarian creed that ignored the achievement of the civilized Romans. The persecution of Christians and burning their texts were on and off until the beginning of the fourth century. It was in the middle of this theological confusion, persecution and burning of Christian texts that the doctrine of Christianity was established.

The Fathers of the Church attempted to answer the following questions:

- What is Jesus?
- Does Jesus have one or two natures?
- Does Jesus have one or two wills?
- Is the Son co-eternal with God or not?
- What is the relation of Christ to God the father?
- How could a human being incarnate the Logos?
- What exactly did it mean that Jesus was a divine?

- How could an omnipotent God have suffered in Jesus?
- Is Jesus made of same or similar substance as that of God?
- Did the Lord, to whom and through whom Christians pray, pray?
- Was the Logos the same as such Biblical terms as Word or Wisdom?
- What is the relation between the Logos and the concept of one God?
- How can God be the father, son and the holy spirit and yet still be one?
- How could Christians believe that Jesus was divine and in the same time believe in one God?

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (100-165) was a philosopher, theologian and one of the earliest apologists of the Christian church. He sought to reconcile Christian doctrine and pagan culture (Chadwick, 1993b, p. 52). He was born in Nabulus, West Bank in Palestine. His parents were pagans. As a young man Justin devoted himself to the study of Greek philosophy, notably the writings of Plato and the Stoic philosophers. However, he had clearly failed to understand what was involved in the Greek philosophy. He lacked the diligence and intelligence for philosophy. An elderly Christian converted him to Christianity. Justin moved on to Rome where he offered lectures in his own school on the Christian philosophy. He strove by his teachings and writings to bring others to the truths he had discovered. Justin was beheaded during the reign of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius because he refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Justin was included in the martyrology of the Roman Catholic Church in the ninth century.

The books that are credited to him with certainty are the two Apologies for the Christians, which consist of a defense of Christians against charges of atheism and rebellion in the Roman state and the Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, which professes to be the record of an actual discussion at Ephesus. He maintained that the God of Plato is the same God of the Christians. Both Greek philosophers and Jewish prophets had prophesied the coming of Jesus. Abraham and Socrates were Christians before Christ! He also claimed that Jesus was the incarnation of the Logos, or the divine Word and Reason. Justin maintained the distinction of the Father as God transcendent from the Son as God. Like the Stoic philosophers, he believed that the logos had been active in the world since its beginning. One can easily see his ideas at the first verses of the Gospel of John. Justin probably knew the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He affected the thinking process of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons.

Justin accepted the Apocalypse of John as inspired book and interpreted it to mean that Jesus would return to rebuild Jerusalem and reign for a thousand years. This was based on the Babylonian mythology of the concept of millennial periods of the seven planets. Justin understood Psalm 90:4 “For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past” to provide interpretation of the seven days of creation with the Sabbath as a divine day of rest. Irenaeus developed this notion further to suggest that the world history will last for six thousand years, followed by a seventh millennium of reign under Jesus. Very few Fathers of the Church accepted this version, but this notion persisted in the west.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria (150? -215?), was a Greek theologian and an early Father of the Church, (Chadwick, 1993b, p. 58). He was probably born in Athens and was educated at the catechetical school in Alexandria. Sometime after Clement’s conversion from paganism, he was ordained a presbyter. In about 190 he became the head of the catechetical school, which became famous under his leadership. During the persecution of the Christians, Clement moved from Alexandria to Caesarea. He was sometimes considered a saint; his name appeared in early Christian martyrology. Many scholars believe Clement to have been the founder of the Alexandrine school of theology. According to Clement’s system of logic, the thought and will of God warns, educates and perfects the true Christian. This process takes place in three stages, described in A Hortatory Address to the Greeks, The Tutor and Miscellanies, Clement’s major works. The first work is a defense of the faith; the second contains instructions in manners and morals; and the third is a discussion of various points of doctrinal theology. Clement had no doubt that Yahweh and the gods of the Greek philosophers were one and the same. Yet, Clement believed that Jesus was God, the living God that suffered and is worshipped. If Christians imitated Jesus, they too would become deified.

Clement’s doctrine became fundamental to the Christian concept of God. Yet, his theology left many crucial unanswered questions about the relationship between God and Jesus. Later an unknown Christian suggested that the biblical terms: Father, Son and the Spirit could be compared to the masks worn by an actor to assume another role to make their message audible. At that time, it was clearly difficult to find a way of adapting the Christian theology that Jesus had been divine with the equally strong belief that God is one.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus (Greek, “Peacemaker”) (130-202) was an early Father of the Church (Chadwick, 1993b, p. 34). He was born in Asia Minor. There, as a child, he heard the preaching of St. Polycarp the disciple of St. John. In 177 Irenaeus was appointed bishop of Lyons. He converted many pagans and was an ardent opponent of Gnosticism. About 180 he wrote a work against the Gnostics, known as *Against the Heresies*, which has contributed to the knowledge of Gnosticism. Irenaeus taught a similar doctrine like Clement that Jesus had been the incarnate Logos, the divine reason. Both Irenaeus and Clement were adapting the Jewish God to concepts that were accepted by pagan converts of that time and culture. Justin’s language about the distinction of the Father as God transcendent from the Son as God, which Irenaeus had made his own, precipitated sharp debate in Rome. In combating Gnostic dualism, orthodox writers had insisted that there is one Supreme God. Irenaeus skillfully vindicated the four Gospels on numerological ideas. For example, four was a sacred number that corresponded to the four winds, or the four faces of the cherubim in Ezekiel. He defended the Gospel of John, to whom he also ascribed the Revelation.

Irenaeus declares that Christians believe “in one God the father Almighty, maker of the heaven and earth and the seas and all that is therein and in one Christ Jesus the son of God, who was made in flesh for our salvation and in the Holy spirit who through the prophets preached the dispensations and the comings and the virgin birth and the passion and the rising from the dead and the assumption into heaven in his flesh of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ”

Tertullian

Tertullian (160? -220?) is the first important Christian writer in Latin, whose work is remarkable for its vigor, candid sarcasm, intolerant and skillfulness (Chadwick, 1993b, p. 33). He was born in Carthage. His training was in law and practiced his profession in Rome. He became a convert to the Christian faith while still in Rome. In 197 he returned to Carthage, where he became a presbyter of the church. In 207 he became the leader of the Montanists. Montanus who was seized by the Spirit and together with two women delivered religious utterances to which other Christians objected formed this sect. The Montanists, increasingly in conflict with church authorities, were finally declared heretical.

Tertullian would rank among the great Fathers of the Church if he had not embraced the Montanist heresy. He profoundly influenced all Christian theologians of the West. The Roman Catholic Church accepts many of his works as orthodox. After espousing Montanist doctrines, he was a severe critic of orthodox Christians.

Tertullian reveals a profound knowledge of Greek and Latin literature, both pagan and Christian. He was the first writer in Latin to formulate Christian theological concepts. Using Greek mythology and the legal vocabulary of Rome he coined the terminology that was to dominate the future of Christianity, such as the nature of the Trinity “three persons in one substance”, or in Christ “two substances or natures in one person”. Tertullian enjoyed paradox. He believed that a human mind could not invent the divine doctrine of Christianity. The crucifying of the Son of God sounds ridiculous and scandalous: “I believe because it is outrageous.” Moreover, Tertullian had castigated women as evil temptresses and an eternal danger to mankind.

Origen

Origen (185-254) was a famous Christian writer, teacher and theologian (Chadwick, 1993b, p. 60). He was born in Alexandria, Egypt. When Clement left Alexandria to become Bishop in Caesarea, Origen, his student, assumed his position when he was twenty years old. His father died a martyr's death and Origen tried to join him, believing that martyrdom was the way to heaven. Origen taught for about 28 years, lecturing Christians and pagans. He composed his major dogmatic treatises there and began his many critical works. During the persecutions of the Christians in 250 AD under Emperor Decius, Origen was imprisoned and tortured. Released in 251, but weakened by injuries, he died about 254, probably in Tyre.

Origen stands as a giant among biblical scholar of the early church. His accomplishments in the critical examination of the text of the Old Testament were outstanding. He discovered discrepancies between the Septuagint and a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. For example, the History of Susanna did not exist in the Hebrew text of the book of Daniel. The Synagogue suppressed this story, because it was critical to the Jewish elders. Origen believed that the story could have been added by the translators, but that did not prove that there was no Hebrew original.

He was a voluminous writer whose works include letters, treatises in dogmatic and practical theology, apologetics, exegeses and textual criticism. In addition, Origen is regarded as the father of the symbolic method of scriptural interpretation. He taught the principle of the threefold division of the person into body, spirit and soul, which was then a common

concept. He was a Platonist and endeavored to combine Greek philosophy and the Christian religion. He developed the idea of Christ as the Logos, or Incarnate Word, who is with the Father from eternity, but he taught also that the Father is greater than Son in power and dignity. Some of Origen's contemporaries accused him of failing to understand the language about the pre-existence of the Word. Paul never mentioned anything like that. Others regarded Origen as a heretic who had corrupted Christianity with the poison of Greek culture. Origen adjusted his Platonic philosophy to Semitic scriptures by developing a figurative way of understanding the Bible. For example, the virgin birth of Jesus in the womb of Mary was not to be understood literally but as the birth of the divine wisdom in the soul. Origen's view of Jesus did not conform totally to the later Christian theology. For example, he did not believe that humans had been saved by the death of Christ.

Athanasius

Born in Alexandria, (328 - 373), Egypt, Athanasius received a classical education before entering the famous theological school in his native city (Chadwick, 1993a, p. 134). He was ordained a deacon as a young man and served as secretary to the bishop of Alexandria. It was then that he began to take a prominent position in the intense theological struggle that ended in the Council of Nicaea in 325. At Nicaea, Athanasius opposed Arius (256-336), the Alexandrine priest who advanced the doctrine known as Arianism. Athanasius was by far the most formidable antagonist encountered by Arianism. Athanasius formulated a doctrine, according to which the Son of God is of the same essence, or substance, as the Father. Arius, on the other hand, maintained that the Son was of an inferior substance from that of the Father and that Jesus was merely a creature that was more perfect than any other creature. After the creed was signed, it was clear that crucial terms of the creed were not understood.

Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria around 328. During the Arian argument, politics mixed with theology and each side struggled to win the approval of the Roman emperor Constantine I. Athanasius used his powerful skills of argument to impose his theology on the bishops with the support of the atheist emperor. Later, Athanasius was exiled five times. He spent the rest of his life quietly at his post in Alexandria. The theological battle was practically over and the victory rested with the cause of Nicene orthodoxy. Athanasius was a rich writer, especially in his attack on Arianism; *Discourses Against the Arians*, *History of the Arians*, *Apology Against the Arians* and *On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod*.

THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS OF CHURCH

The word Ecumenical means the whole Catholic Church. The arguments of Fathers of the Church lead to confusing the average Christians about the relationship of the Father with the Son. A fierce theological passion occurred in the Churches of Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa complained that he could not obtain a straight answer to a simple question “If you ask someone to give you change, he philosophizes about the begotten and the unbegotten. If you say to an attendant: Is my bath ready, he will tell you that the Son was made out of nothing.” Buying bread from a bakery turns to a heated argument about whether or not the Father is greater than the Son. These kinds of Byzantine arguments were heating up everywhere and on all levels of intellect. Is the Son of the same substance as the Father, or is it a similar substance? Does Jesus have one or two natures? Is the Son co-eternal with God or not? What is the relation of Christ to God the father? In what sense can God be the father, son and the holy spirit and yet still be one? How can there be a God with true unity combined with true diversity? During that time, no one can possibly prove anything definitively one way or another. The whole Byzantine Empire transformed into scholarly theologians! It is interesting to note that in the present day Egypt, the expression Byzantine argument means a useless argument in which each opposing party could never prove their point of views!

At the middle of the third century, political crises, inflation, civil war, drastic trade recession and barbarian invasions almost brought the collapse of the Roman Empire. In 284, the emperor Diocletian took power with the army’s support. For the first nineteen years of his reign, persecution of the Church was not supported and the Church prospered in numbers. But the infiltration of Christianity in high places was strong, mainly through the governor’s wives. Diocletian died in 306 and the army chose his son Constantine as his successor. Constantine’s mother may have had Christian sympathies.

The average Christian may not know that councils of senior pastors established the Christian doctrine. Those pastors were arguing about theological subjects that Jesus himself did not introduce. A prerequisite for the appointment of an official in the councils was to have “charisma” which means that he was filled with the Holy Ghost. So when councils with famous members met, the Holy Ghost was among them, omnipotent and active!

The assembly of the first seven Ecumenical Councils of the early Christian world would establish the standards of the doctrine and hierarchy of the new religion. Usually pastors that represented the opposition to the final agreement of the council were fired or transferred to smaller churches. It is worthwhile to pause and take a look at how the Councils came into being and what decisions were made by them - presumably for all eternity. It is also important to examine the political background that surrounded the decision making process that changed Christianity forever.

1. First Council in Nicaea - 325

The first Ecumenical Council took place in Nicaea (Chadwick, 1993a, p. 125). Constantine sought to exploit the rapidly expanding religion, with its great potential, to strengthen the Roman Empire. Constantine was persuaded that the disunity of the church was destabilizing the empire. In 324 he felt sure that soon he would go to the Holy Land to see the sacred sites and to be baptized in Jordan. But his plan was abruptly aborted. He found the Greek churches in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor boiling with controversy about the nature of Jesus. The intense theological emotion was started in Alexandria by the charismatic presbyter Arius, who had a soft and impressive voice. He issued a challenge to his bishop Alexander, that the latter found impossible to ignore and even more difficult to argue: how could Jesus have been God of the same substance like God the father? Arius argued that it was blasphemous to think that Jesus was divine by nature. Jesus had specifically said that the father was greater than he. Alexander and his assistant Athanasius immediately realized the theological problem. Arius was asking vital questions about the nature of Jesus and his relationship to God. Arius followed the concept of the divine trinity as Origen had taught. It was not easy to endorse that the son and the father as being identical or of one substance without fairly complicated clarifications. Origen had felt the difficulty himself. He avoided the problem by saying that Jesus' relation to God is a characteristic of divine life. Arius reasoned that Jesus, who was physically born of Mary, grew in wisdom "Logos", suffered failure and death must be less than the unbegotten, deathless and eternal father. He believed that God is beyond Jesus and that Jesus coming on Earth was by the will of God and not by the will of Jesus. Arius therefore clashed with a principle strongly stated by Irenaeus: *"Through God alone can God be known."*

Arius was not an idiot; he received the support from scholarly and politically powerful bishops. He knew the scriptures well and produced many texts to support his claim that Jesus, the Word, could only be a creature like us. The Logos had been the instrument used by God to bring all creatures into existence. The Word or the Logos had to be entirely different from God. He believed that Jesus had lived a perfect life; he had obeyed God even unto his death on the cross, notwithstanding the last words of Jesus on the cross according to Matthew. He contended that humans by imitating Jesus, the perfect creature, they too would be perfect creatures of God. Alexander and Athanasius harassed Arius. They had a different view regarding the weakness of humanity. Athanasius saw the need for God Himself to descend on earth and be crucified to save humanity because God alone is the Perfect Being. So a domestic dispute in Alexandria became a wide crisis in the Byzantine Empire!

When Constantine selected and brought together 318 bishops for the Council, it was a military and political decision (Hill, 2007, p.62). He needed the support of the new religion in his battles. He claimed that he saw a vision of the Cross in the middle of the sun, his god before converting to Christianity in his last day. Even the bishops had no illusion about that, for not only did the Emperor preside over the Council, he also proclaimed that his will was a divine law. The senior pastors accepted him as a “Universal Bishop” even though he was not baptized and they let him take part in votes on church doctrine. Constantine was completely ignorant of Jesus’ teachings. He was a follower of the solar monotheism of Mithras (the ancient Iranian god of light), who was portrayed on coins as the “invincible sun”. When Constantine gave his name to the old Greek commercial city of Byzantium and made Constantinople in 330, five years after the Council, the capital of the Roman Empire, he had a mighty column erected for the ceremonial opening with the Emperor and the “*invincible sun god*” on the top of it.

When the bishops gathered to resolve the crisis, very few bishops shared Athanasius’ view of Christ. Most held position between Arius and Athanasius. Nevertheless, Athanasius used his powerful skills of argument to impose his theology on the bishops with the support of the atheist emperor. Only Arius and two companions refused to sign this creed. The creed stated, “*the Creator; God the father; and the Redeemer; Son of God, were of the same nature, and that Jesus is the only begotten of the father.*” This absolutely vital Christian law became the church’s canon by imperial decree. That is how Jesus

became identical with God. With this as a foundation, the bishops took Pauline Christianity to another level.

After the council, the bishops went on teaching the new creed and the Arian crisis continued for another sixty years. Arius and his followers fought back and managed to regain imperial favor. Athanasius was exiled about five times. It was still very difficult to explain this creed because it was not in the scriptures and had pagan association. To an outsider or to an average Christian, these theological arguments seemed a waste of time: no one can possibly prove anything definitively one way or another and the dispute simply proved to be divisive. No one disagreed about the special place that Christ holds, but the question remained in very many minds: What is Jesus Christ? Pauline Christianity had always been an inconsistent faith. Now at the first council, the church had added another paradox of incarnation, despite its apparent incompatibility with monotheism.

The atheist Constantine did the church another enormous favor. He was led by “*divine inspiration*” to discover the grave of Jesus, who had just become of the same substance of God. However, in spite of his spiritual inspiration and moral Christian values, Constantine did not stop murdering his close relatives during the same year: his son, his wife whom he had plunged into boiling water and his father in law whom he forced to commit suicide. This is the image of the emperor and the Universal Bishop who managed the Nicene Creed and who, when the council was over, told the Christians that the agreement was “*the decision of God.*”

2. First Council of Constantinople - 381

The first council in Nicaea provided the duality of God, while the second Ecumenical council **extended the duality to the trinity**. The emperor Theodosius I (347-395), who was appreciated when he made the Christian doctrine as the state religion, convened the second council at Constantinople (Chadwick, 1993a, p. 150). The church gave him the name “the Great”. This Roman emperor was an oppressor of the poor. He overwhelmed the people with intolerable taxes. With his full imperial power, he prevented anyone to give refuge to his oppressed people. If they did so, he had all the inhabitants of the offending village slaughtered. In the year 390, he had seven thousand rebellious citizens murdered in a frightful blood bath; at the same time the “Halleluiah” came to be used in the Christian churches.

In this council, the dogma of the trinity of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost was introduced and agreed upon as the church doctrine. Theodosius instructed the recognition of the “Nicene Creed,” and the Council extended the worshipping to the Holy Ghost beside the Father and the Son. Also, the council declared the Holy Ghost to be made of the same substance of God. Today the church still feeds on this dogma of trinity that was added under Theodosius the Great.

3. Council of Ephesus - 431

During this second phase of the next four councils, the center of interest shifted from the trinity to the identity of Christ. If Christ is truly God, then in what sense is he also human? And if at the same time God and man are the same, how can he be one? To answer these difficult questions, the Virgin Mary had to be brought in the picture. Notice the step by step formulation of the Christian doctrine that was never mentioned in the scriptures, even though their authenticity is highly questionable.

The East Roman emperor Theodosius II (408-450) and the West Roman emperor Valentinian III (425-455) convened this third Ecumenical Council. These two emperors were not really interested in religion or complicated theology. They were young and fun loving. Theodosius II devoted himself wholly to his hobbies and tyrannically levied taxes on his subjects to pay for his extravagant way of life. It is no wonder that Theodosius was completely under the influence of his power hungry elder sister Pulcheria (399-453). For some time she acted as a regent for her brother and publicized herself as a virgin. After her brother’s death, she had his rival murdered. As for the West Roman Empire, Valentinian III was controlled by his mother and he ultimately was assassinated.

This council declared that the Virgin Mary is “God’s bearer” or “Mother of God.” The council stated that what Mary bore, was not a human closely united with God, but a single and undivided entity who is God and man at the same time. One attendant who expressed reservation on the title “God’s bearer” was condemned for making a big deal of contrast between Jesus the God and Jesus the man. The council of Ephesus led to a lasting division between the East and the West. The Christians in east Syria and Mesopotamia, living mainly in the Persian Empire and outside the Byzantine borders, felt unable to accept that definition of Mary. While in the West, it was believed that the Church of the East divided Christ into two different entities.

4. Council in Chalcedon - 451

Unable to obtain a fair hearing at the third council, the Christians from Antioch were, to some extent, reinstated at the fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon. This council was formally convened by the Byzantine emperor Marcianus (396-457), but in reality it was run by the virgin Pulcheria, who had married Marcianus after the death of her brother Theodosius. She knew far better than the bishops what she wanted. She convened the council against the will of the various churches and she held the deliberations firmly in her hand.

Pope Leo I initiated the dogmatic formula that Jesus had two natures. The council proclaimed the doctrine that divine and human nature are inseparably united in the person Jesus. This was an attempt to compromise and strike a balance between the Alexandrine and Antiochene approaches, allowing for both the diversity and the unity within the incarnate Christ. However, in Alexandria they felt that Antioch had imposed their approach on them and this further increased the division between the churches. They were willing to say that Christ is “*from two natures*” but not that he is “*in two natures*.” This double nature still persists as the Chalcedon creed. The council also entrusted the preservation of the unity of the doctrine to the Pope, who would intervene when he saw fit. This is how the religious dominance of Rome started. Today the Vatican people must still be grateful to Pulcheria for pushing through the council of Chalcedon.

5. Second Council in Constantinople - 553

The East Roman emperor Justinian I (483-565) staged this council. The bishops of this council had virtually nothing major to do. Anything that Justinian had in mind had been achieved long before by imperial decrees and laws. It is not without irony that this assembly is described in the theological literature as the “*council of acclamation*.” Justinian summoned Pope Vigilius (537-555) who was later quoted by opponents of Papal infallibility to prove their case. Vigilius and the bishops submitted themselves to the powerful political interest of the emperor, who found his place in history books because of his savage laws against heretics. Therefore, a heretic was defined as anyone who denied the Christian doctrine and was subject to savage punishment, or death. An army of Roman officials tracked down dissenters, rounding them up in droves and forcing them to accept the Christian baptism on Justinian’s orders. The third council proclaimed that “*God was born*” and this council stated

that “*God died*” and the lord was “*crucified in flesh*.” This council also condemned the critical examination of the Bible by Origen for his deviations as unorthodox. When the council took this decision, persecution was not confined to Origen’s numerous followers; it also included many others who were not following all the decrees of the councils.

6. **Third Council of Constantinople - 680-81**

The saga of the dual nature of Jesus continued in this council. The council researched the question that if Jesus had *two natures*; did he have *one or two wills*? If Jesus was genuinely human, then he must have possessed authentic human freedom. The fourth council gave Jesus two natures and the sixth council gave him two wills; a divine will as well as a human will. This was a compromise between two opposing parties. Both parties agreed that Christ was truly divine as well as truly human. It was ironic that in the two centuries following the fourth council a lasting agreement between the two sides proved impossible.

7. **Second Council of Nicaea - 787**

The next stage of the Christian era of the seventh council was another controversy about icons. By icons is meant an image, visual representation, or a statue of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Angels and saints. It may take the form of a painted panel of wood, but could be a mosaic on the church’s wall, a portrait in metal, or a statue, although statues were extremely rare in the East Christian art. The first attack on the use of icons lasted from 726 until 780. This conflict, as usual, needed imperial politics and the Empress Irene brought it to an end. Therefore the council convened by the Empress and stated that it was theologically correct to depict Jesus, Mary and the saints as icons. In 843, Empress Theodora ordered the restoration of the holy icons. It is interesting that the imperial champions of icon adoration should both have been women, who happened to like art. This seventh council finally transformed the monotheistic religion of Jesus Christ to a polytheistic and pagan religion.

It is important to know the history of the evolution of Christian doctrines that was developed by humans and not by Jesus. Humans developed serious and complex fundamental Christian concepts. If these concepts were true, they should have been spelled out plainly by Jesus in the clearest way. They should not have been left to human interpretations of the Fathers of the Church or the Ecumenical Councils of Church. The job of the messenger of God is to deliver

clearly the message of God and live as a role model of the teachings of the religion. This is what Moses, Jesus and Muhammad did. The messages of Moses and Jesus were blurred and smeared by tribal feud and outrageous incorrect interpretations. On the other hand, Muhammad kept the message of God faithfully and steadfastly.

Consequently, it is important to remember the story of the people of Noah and how the devil convinced them to commemorate the righteous people by making pictures of them. The next step was to persuade the people to make statues for those righteous people. The last step was to worship the statues and that was when God sent Noah to them. These stories of the past, we see in churches today. And there is no difference between a Christian church and a Buddhist or Hindu temple; they all have statues that people worship. Christians, in churches, are presented by the pure moral teachings of Jesus Christ, Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him, mixed with polytheism and paganism. The memories of moral values affect anyone and make them feel good, while the Emperors and Empresses smile from beyond!

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SECTS

In the early Christianity, there were 80 sects that were considered heretical by the Fathers of the Church. In the present time, Christian sects exist under different names. The most divisive religion occurring in the world today is within the Christian “religion” itself. Groups which self-identify as part of Christianity or the true Christians include (but are not limited to): African Independent Churches, Aglipayan Church, Amish, Anabaptists, Anglicans, Armenian Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Baptists, Calvinism, Catholics, Christadelphians, Christian Science, the Community of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Coptic Christians, Eastern Orthodox churches, Ethiopian Orthodox, Evangelicals, Jehovah Witnesses, the Local Church, Lutherans, Maronites, Mennonites, Methodists, Nestorians, the New Apostolic Church, Pentecostals, Plymouth Brethren, Presbyterians, the Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventists, Shakers, Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, the International Church of Christ, Uniate churches, Unitarianism, United Church of Christ, the Unity Church, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and others. These groups exhibit varying degrees of doctrinal similarity and cooperation. However, there are often striking and divisively opposed arguments concerning particular doctrines of faith

The various Christian sects, movements and groups that exist today are primarily the result of the disagreement over decrees of early Ecumenical Councils of Church, the great schism in the eleventh century over the Papal authority and Protestant Reformation. Other significant events in the world, such as slavery, Pentecostalism and the “Jesus movement”, were marked by a resurgence of the Christian faith due to cultural issues. Some groups and cults simply rose up as a result of misguided teaching and/or corrupt intentions. Some different denominations, movements, groups and cults within the so-called Christian church, claim to possess the “Fullness of the Faith” and exclude the others as heretics.

The first major difference between the Eastern and Western Churches was due to cultural and linguistic divisions between the Roman and Byzantine Empires. It was difficult to transmit theological writings between the West that spoke Latin and the East that spoke Koine Greek. The first significant division in the history of Christianity came from the Assyrian Church of the East during the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Assyrian Church felt unable to accept the definition of Mary as the *Theotokos* (“God-bearer”, “Mother of God”). During the Council in Chalcedon in 451 the Church of Alexandria felt that Antioch had imposed their approach over the two natures of Jesus on them and this further increased the division between the churches. The great schism in the eleventh century over the Papal authority divided the Church between Eastern and Western Churches when the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope excommunicated each other. During the Sixteenth Century, there existed another major split with the advent of Protestants with their movement of reforming the Catholic Church.

In the present time, Christianity is divided into three major branches.

1. **Roman Catholicism** represents the continuation of the historical organized church as it developed over the centuries and is headed by the Pope. Distinctive beliefs of Catholics include the doctrines of Transubstantiation and Purgatory and distinctive practices include devotion to the saints and Mary and use of the rosary. Mary is considered to have original sin, remained free of sin throughout her life, is “Mother of God” and the new Eve. Catholic practices include recognition of baptism, communion, Sunday Mass and the saints and veneration of relics and sacred sites associated with holy figures. The Roman Catholic Bible includes apocrypha. Salvation is received at baptism and may be lost by mortal sin and regained by penance. Those who have never heard of Christ may be saved. The

Catholic Church considers itself as the sole Church of Christ which in the Creed they profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Those who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.

2. **Eastern Orthodoxy** (which includes the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches and several others) differs from Catholicism in its refusal of allegiance to the Pope, its emphasis on the use of icons in worship and the date it celebrates Easter. Other cultural, political and religious differences exist as well. Eastern Orthodoxy holds many practices in common with Catholicism, but is especially distinguished by the central role of icons (ornate images of Christ and the saints believed to provide a connection to the spiritual world). Christ was born with two perfect natures, the divine and human, as God-man. The Orthodox Church believes that it is the true keeper of the truths of the Undivided Church, without omissions or additions. Orthodox do not seek to proselytize non-Orthodox Christians, but Orthodox who join a different Christian church are apostates. The majority of Orthodox scholars would accept inclusivism. This view holds firmly to the centrality of Christ, yet acknowledges that salvation can be found outside Christianity
3. **Protestantism** arose in the 16th century during the Reformation. Protestants do not acknowledge the authority of the Pope, reject many traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church and emphasize the importance of reading the Bible and the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Those who have never heard of Christ may be saved. Protestantism encompasses numerous denominational groups, including Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Pentecostals and Evangelicals. Baptists, Episcopalians and Evangelicals are very active missionaries and believe that their Churches are committed to the proclamation of the good news of the Gospel to the whole creation and make disciples of all nations.

It is beyond the scope of this book to fully describe major divisions in conservative Protestantism, but the following definitions from an article by Harvey Cox for *The Atlantic Monthly* (Nov. 1995) are useful:

“Born-again” is the broadest category. It includes the 39 percent of the American population who claim they have had a personal experience of Christ. Their political ideas span the spectrum and Jimmy Carter is not the only born-again political liberal.

“Evangelical” describes a theological position, one recognizing not only the need for such a personal experience with God but also the unique religious authority of Scripture and an obligation to share one’s faith with others. Billy Graham is the paradigmatic evangelical.

“Fundamentalists” though they share many of the evangelicals’ beliefs, also fiercely insist on the “verbal inerrancy” of the Bible and this has led them into noisy conflicts over creation and evolution. William Jennings Bryan, who defended a literal reading of Genesis at the famous Scopes “monkey trial” in 1925, was a classic fundamentalist.

“Pentecostals” by far the fastest-growing wing of Christianity today, share most evangelical beliefs, but for them all theology is secondary. What is most important is an immediate encounter with the Holy Spirit in a style of worship that is exuberant and even ecstatic. Aimee Semple McPherson was the first Pentecostal preacher to achieve celebrity status in America.

“Charismatics” (the word’s root means “gift of grace”) are people who practice a Pentecostal form of worship but remain in their own Catholic or Protestant churches



5

Islam and Christianity



In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

34. Such is ‘Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary). (It is) a statement of truth, about which they doubt (or dispute).

35. It befits not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son [this refers to the slander of Christians against Allah, by saying that ‘Iesa (Jesus) is the son of Allah]. Glorified (and Exalted be He above all that they associate with Him). When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, “Be!” and it is.

36. [‘Iesa (Jesus) said]: “And verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him (Alone). That is the Straight Path. (Allah’s Religion of Islamic Monotheism which He did ordain for all of His Prophets).” [Tafsir At-Tabari]

(Quran 19: 34-36)



The confusion in the doctrines of Christianity started by a mathematical error! Jesus is called the Word of God. In John 1:1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* Now the mathematical equation goes like this:

1. Jesus = The Word
2. The Word = God
3. Therefore Jesus = God!

If you replace the Word (Logos) with Jesus, the above verses read as follows:

“In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God.”

The basic flaw in the above equation is that the first verse is misunderstood; as for the second verse, no one really knows where it came from; and the third verse is meaningless without using the Greek philosophy. It is no wonder that the Gospel of John is completely different from the synoptic Gospels. Once a person accepts the divinity of Jesus besides God, belief in the divinity of the Holy Ghost too is not a problem, since the majority of Christians do not know exactly what it is. However, the Bible tells stories about people who were filled with the Holy Ghost:

“For he (Barnabas) was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith” (Acts 11:24).

“And so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey” (Acts 5:32).

“And he (John the Baptist) shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15).

See further Acts 6:5; II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 1:14; I Cor. 2:16; Luke 1:41. If we use correct mathematics for the above verse in Acts 11:24, as follows:

Full of the Holy Ghost and of Faith

The Holy Ghost = Faith

It is clear from the above equation and the many verses of the Bible, that the Holy Ghost may simply mean faith. It may also mean the Angel that God sends to strengthen human faith, just like the one that was sent to Jesus during his crucifixion. *“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him,”* (Luke 22:43). It does not mean that complex concept of a physical Holy Ghost made of the same essence of God to assemble the tri-theistic form of God. The Holy Ghost filled the hearts of Barnabas, John the Baptist even in his mother’s womb, or anyone who obeys God. Religious people sometimes experience spiritual feeling of faith that fills up the hearts and may send shivers through the whole body, which indicates that at this moment they are very close to God.

Christianity is a very complicated religion that certainly did not follow the previous messages of God, delivered by hundreds of prophets before Jesus. But the Christian apologists have answers to all questions regarding their doctrines. Sometimes those answers just do not make any

sense. For example, why did not God reveal before Jesus that he is actually one with three different persons? One apologist claims that humanity was not ready for that language of one god with different personalities. The example that he gives to clarify this point is that his son used to call the lid of a can of coke door when he was a child. When his son grew up, he knew that it is the lid that opens the coke! Similarly, God was one; and when humanity grew up, God revealed that he is still one but with three personalities! The conclusion is that you do not really ask any question about Christianity because the more you ask, the more confused you will be. Just accept Jesus and your sins are forgiven and you are guaranteed paradise! And by the way, keep silent about what Matthew said in 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* A Muslim, by definition, is the one who does to the Will of God. It is certain that without the backing of the atheist imperial power of the Roman Empire Christianity would not have succeeded.

THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY

According to the first two Ecumenical Councils of Church, God is three gods merged into one God. This one God is called the Trinity. This name of God does not exist anywhere in the New Testament! Also Jesus never mentioned the trinity and certainly did not explain it in the clearest way. However, to say that God is three, in Christianity, is a blasphemy of the highest order. All three parts of the Trinity are "coequal" "co-eternal" and "of the same substance." In other words, while the Father, Son and Holy Ghost sustain distinct relationships to one another, they share the same divine nature. For this reason, this doctrine as described is an "eternal mystery" because it was a human's fabrication. Unlike the "Byzantine monotheism" of Christianity that allows for a plurality within the divine essence, Islam and Judaism condemn such a pluralistic concept of God.

There are over 200 verses in the Bible that proclaim the unity of God, the Only Creator and the only Savior. The following verses are just samples:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is One LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

"For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior" (Isaiah 43:3).

"I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside me there is no god" (Isaiah 44:6).

I have capitalized the letters in the above “First” and “Last,” because these are attributes of God in Islam. Every time I hear these Names, I become overwhelmed with the concept that God is the First, nothing was before Him and the Last, nothing comes after Him. Human mind just can’t comprehend this concept of First and Last. This shows the limited capability of the human mind.

“And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandment is, Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is One LORD” (Mark 12:29).

“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me” (John 12:44-45).

“and that there is none other God but one” (I Corinthians 8:4).

“One God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” (I Timothy 2:5).

With all the adaptations, adulterations and translations of the Old and the New Testament, the above verses are still there for anyone to recognize the Oneness of God. However, there are references in the New Testament to the trinity, in the First Epistle of John 5:7-8.

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three are one.”

The above verses exist only in the authorized King James Version and form the strongest evidence for the doctrine of trinity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the King James Version has grave defects. Now this part, *“the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”* has been removed in the Revised Standard Version of 1952 and 1971 and many other Bibles. In the New Revised Standard, 1989, those same verses read as follows: *“There are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree.”* The differences between these recognized Bibles represent a theological crisis. The average Christian, as well as many Christian preachers and ministers may not be aware of the removal of the strongest verses advocating the trinity from their Bible! Any one should ask himself why these verses of the King James Version were deleted from later versions of the New Testament and how they were introduced in the first place! I would encourage the reader

to search for those verses in different versions of the Bible. As a matter of fact, reading the same verses from different versions of the Bible can be a very confusing and frustrating experience.

In Matthew 28:19 there is a reference to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, without stating that they are one. This statement has nothing to do with trinity. In John 14:11, it states that Jesus said, *"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me."* And in John 17:21 *"They (the disciples) all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."* It is clear from the first verse that God and Jesus are one, but also in the second verse that the disciples are one in God and in Jesus. Now if Jesus is God because Jesus is in God, why are not the disciples being recognized as gods, as they all are one in Jesus and in God? If God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost form the trinity, then with the 12 disciples included, should they form One God with fifteen beings and not three? Moreover in Revelation 4:5, John mentions the seven Spirits of God. Each Holy Ghost or Spirit is a God. It follows that the trinity includes God, Jesus, 12 disciples and 7 Spirits of God. Therefore the trinity should be 21 and not three!

Some Christian apologists advocate that God shows us trinity everywhere:

- Time is divided into past, present and future and they are all time.
- Matter is divided into gas, liquid and solid and they are all matter.
- Coordinate is divided into X, Y and Z and they are all coordinates.

Anyone can assemble an argument for duality such as day and night, positive and negative, good and evil, etc. Anyone can assemble an argument from the very many natural facts to strengthen his claim. The Pyramid of Giza was exhausted in numbers to prove that it is a cosmic structure. So where does this leave us? Should we believe in duality, trinity, 15, or other numbers based upon these rationales? Should we ignore the strong argument in the Old and New Testament and in Islam about the Unity of God and follow human assumptions mixed with Greek philosophy?

When Jesus said in John 14:9 *"... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"* does this statement mean that someone can actually see God? Of course not. Jesus said in John 4:24 that God is Spirit and in John 5:37 *"ye have neither heard his voice at anytime, nor seen his shape."* Now, if God is Spirit according to John and Jesus is of the same substance as God according to Athanasius, then the substance of both God and Jesus is Spirit. It follows that humans should not be able to see Jesus, because he is spirit!

We now know how the Gospels were assembled and how the Ecumenical councils formulated the main doctrine of Christianity. The effect of the Romans on Christianity was enormous. The Sabbath was shifted to Sunday. December 25, which was the birthday of their sun god Mithra was made Jesus' birthday. The decoration of the Christmas tree with silver and gold was adopted in spite of its forbidding in Jeremiah 10:2-5. The Roman Julian calendar made the Christian calendar.

The Quran affirms that Jesus is the Word of God, which is simply "*Be and it is.*" as in Surah 19, Ayah 35. This is the simple meaning of the Word of God. It is not the Logos of the Greek philosophy. It is the literal Word as John describes it in the start of his Gospel. It is the Word of God that created Jesus just like Adam. God created Adam without a father or a mother. Jesus was created without a father. An Islamic scholar stated that the four alternatives of human creation are as follows:

- God created Adam without male or female.
- God created female from male (Eve from Adam)
- God created humans from male and female (like all of us)
- To show us his total power of creation, he created male from female (Jesus from Mary)

The Holy Ghost is the most confusing member of the trinity. It was declared god in the second Ecumenical Council of Church in 381 AD. The Holy Ghost is presented on different occasions as a dove (Luke 3:22); strong wind or flames of fire (Acts 2:2-4); and the breath of Jesus on his followers (John 20:22). In ancient India, a dove was considered the symbol of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God. In ancient Rome a dove or pigeon was the symbol of the female procreative energy and frequently a legendary spirit. The Christian Holy Ghost was given by the Father and the Son to do God's work among people. Jesus referred to this trinity when he commanded his apostles to go everywhere and persuade men to become his disciples and baptize believers "*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Matthew 28:19). However, in this verse, Jesus did not state that these three entities are one. This is only the wishful thinking of the apologists, which usually attaches a complex explanation to any simple verse. In the miraculous birth of Jesus, Matthew (1:18) stated that Mary was pregnant by the power of the Holy Ghost. Luke (1:26-37) stated that God sent the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary and that the Holy Ghost would come to her. What is then the Holy Ghost? The Quran declares the Holy Spirit as the Angel Gabriel that was sent to all prophets. Therefore:

God is God.
 Jesus is a Prophet.
 The Holy Ghost is the Angel Gabriel.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SON OF GOD

Muslims take a strong exception to the Christian belief that *“Jesus is the only begotten son.”* The word *“only begotten”* exists only in the Gospel according to John, only in the King James Version (1:14, 1:18, 3:16, 3:18). Interestingly enough, this word *“only begotten”* does not exist in the Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard, or the World English Bible. Consequently, the two basic principles of Christianity, trinity and son of god, exist only in Gospel according to John and in First Epistle of John, only in the King James Version, a version that was described as *having grave defects*. The average Christian should have the right to ask why was the basics of my Christian faith deleted from later versions of the Bible and what happened to my faith? These are very serious and crucial questions. We all know by now that the writing of John is completely different from the synoptic Gospels. Again the question is why this word, that is extremely important, was deleted from later Bibles? But this is what Christians are made to believe in the churches without any references to the authenticity of the Gospels or to the different versions of the Bible. However, Christians also know that God has many sons according to the Bible:

“That the sons of God saw the daughters of men” (Genesis 6:2).

“Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Exodus 4:22).

“Ye are the children of God” (Deuteronomy 14:1).

“The Lord hath said unto me, (David) Thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee” (Psalms 2:7).

“for I (God) am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born” (Jeremiah 31:9).

“which (Adam) was the Son of God” (Luke 3:38).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

It is quite clear from the above verses that many righteous people were called sons of God. Israel and Ephraim were God’s firstborn. David and Jesus were called begotten sons of God. So what does that mean? It is a metaphorical, not literal, descriptive term that is commonly used by the Jews to indicate closeness and affection to God. The authors of the New Testament used the same title of the Son of God to indicate closeness

to God. The apostles and Paul were Jews using Jewish terms. Jesus also said, *“God is not only his father, but also your father”* (Matthew 5:45 & 48). This metaphorical term is quite obvious in II Cor. 6:18 *“And will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* Christians agree with that, but emphasize that Jesus was an exception based upon only the Gospel according to John only in the King James Version. God created Adam. But both Adam and Jesus had no fathers. As a matter of fact, creating Jesus was simpler, in a human sense, than creating Adam, because Adam had no father or mother, while Jesus had a mother. God created every living creature. He is the Lord, Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer of all. Metaphorically speaking therefore God is the father of all.

In the Hebrews 7:3 there is a dramatic story about *Melchisedec*:

“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, or end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”

Melchisedec was the king of Salem and a priest of God. He met and blessed Abraham, Genesis 14:17-24. According to the above verse he is eternal, with no beginning or end, with no father or mother. He was in a position to bless Abraham. He was made like the Son of God. What more can you ask for a God? According to the Christian logic in the Bible, Melchisedec should be the Son of God or even god himself. He is more unique than Jesus or Abraham or Adam. None of these prophets are eternal. Why is Melchisedec very much unknown to the Christians? A person with his credential should be more famous than Jesus! Some may argue about the verse “like unto the son of God” that he is like but not actually the Son of God. In this case, who would confirm that the word “like” was not added to the text and who would confirm the authenticity of this whole part of the Hebrews, or who was the real author of this part? As usual this story is completely changed in other versions of the Bible. For example “without mother” is changed to “his mother was unknown”! Jesus called himself son of man and refused to be called Son of God:

“And the devils also came, out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God” (Luke 4:41).

It is clear here that the devils attempted to call Jesus as Son of God, but he refused that title, as the devils knew Jesus was the Christ. Jesus even refused to be called *“the Christ of God”* and called himself the son of man, (Luke 9:20-22).

Jesus was the expected Messiah and a prophet. Humans escalated and promoted him from a teacher to a prophet to the Son of God and finally to God himself.

Teacher:

“The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God...” (John 3:2).

Prophet:

“And the multitude said, this is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” (Matthew 21:11).

“That a great prophet is risen among us” (Luke 7:16).

“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a great prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19).

“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world” (John 6:14).

“Many of the people therefore, when they heard his saying, said, of truth this is the prophet” (John 7:40).

“Nevertheless I (Jesus) must walk to day, and tomorrow, and the [day] following: for it cannot be that a Prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” (Luke 13:33).

Son of God:

“And straightway he (Paul) preached Christ in the synagogues, that he (Jesus) is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

God:

John declared Jesus as God at the start of his Gospel.

The following verses describe the human Jesus in his own words:

Jesus’ Words:

“My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me” (John 7:16).

“The word which ye hear is not mine but the Father’s which sent me” (John 14:24).

Jesus’ Will:

“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Jesus' Power:

"I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

"The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16).

"But to sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Matthew 20:23).

Jesus' Knowledge:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32).

Jesus' Status:

"Not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"And Jesus said to him, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God'" (Mark 10:18).

"And I seek not mine own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth" (John 8:50).

Many Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God and God. From the above verses, it is clear that Jesus denied being God or the Son of God. It now leaves the Christians who believe that Jesus is God to provide just one single verse in the Bible where Jesus says, "I am God." God in the Old Testament declared, "I am God" over 200 times.

It is obvious that Jesus called himself son of man; the people called him teacher and prophet; the devils called him Son of God; Paul called him son of God in the Jewish sense; and John called him God using the Greek philosophy. In Matthew 10:24, Jesus, after calling himself as the son of man, he continued to claim the highest honor of being the servant of God:

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."

Who was Jesus?

Jesus, son of Mary, was a mighty prophet and servant of God.

THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN AND ATONEMENT

In Christian theology, every human is born sinful. The origin of this concept has been attributed to Adam who disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit. Consequently, Adam's sin is transmitted by heredity to the entire human race. The Old Testament says nothing about the transmission of hereditary sin to everyone. Also, the term original sin is not found in the Bible. Paul suggested that humans are sinners. He said in Acts 13:39 that we can have forgiveness from our sins through Jesus, that the Law of Moses could not free us from our sins and every person who believes in Jesus is free from all his sins. In Acts 13:23, Paul proclaimed Jesus, not God, as the savior. And again keep silent about what Matthew said in 7:21. With these teachings of Paul, Christians can commit all sorts of sins, from adultery, homosexuality, using drugs, to killing. In one moment the Christian is a born again by accepting Jesus as a savior and then and only then can all his sins be forgiven. This was in contradiction with the teachings of John the Baptist, who was carrying the message of repentance to God, as this is the only way to human salvation. In a difficult and vague passage, Paul hinted about the original sin. When Adam sinned; *"sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned."* Roman (5:12). In the Gospel of Luke 11:13, Jesus was teaching about prayer, he says, *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children."* Tertullian coined the phrase original sin based upon the above verses of Paul and Luke. Then St. Augustine (354 - 430) took this idea from Tertullian and developed it further.

The church accepted this doctrine of Atonement and original sin four centuries after Jesus. It contradicts the Bible itself as in Deuteronomy 24:16: *"The father shall not put to death for the children, neither the children be put to death for their father: every man shall be put to death for his own sin."* In Jeremiah 31:30: *"... But everyone shall die for his own iniquity..."* In Ezekiel 18:20: *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die, the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."* In Matthew 7:1-2: *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."* In I Cor. 3:8: *"...and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."* To prove that children are born without sin, Jesus asked not to let children suffer, (Matthew 19:14): *"But Jesus said,*

suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

In the Middle Age, Aquinas, whose teachings became the essence of the official doctrine of the Roman Church, stated that the sin was in Adam. He insisted that the loss of the original righteousness was an ultimate grace from God and not a part of man's created nature. This concept seems so vague. Most justice systems of the free world assume that a suspect is innocent until proven guilty. But this doctrine assumes that humans are guilty. Does this mean, God forbid, that human systems have more justice than the Creator of Justice Himself?

In Hebrews 1:3, it states that the death of Son of God, who is made of the same substance as that of God, had purged our sins. But that death was a death of a real man. How, then, did the substance of God die? Christian scholars take great pain in explaining this intellectual puzzle, which only adds to the confusion of anyone. Religion is supposed to be simple, not only understood by the scholars but also by the average person or even the unlettered. How can anyone have faith in this doctrine that contradicts the Bible and is illogical? Faith should be accompanied by common sense. So, was Jesus crucified to save us from our original sin and while being crucified asked God why did He abandon him?

This looks like a present day marketing ploy of shocking someone and then saving him by selling him a “*cure-all*.” The Church tells you that you are condemned to hell, not because of what you did. Then the only way to save yourself is to accept a story about Jesus' death on the cross. It is agreed upon that no one saw the process of resurrection. They found the sepulcher where Jesus was laid down empty and came to the conclusion that he was resurrected because the disciples and other witnesses saw him alive after the supposed crucifixion. The Gospels alleged that Jesus should suffer and that he was going to Jerusalem to die and on the third day he would come back. But the Gospels did not say plainly that Jesus' suffering had been to save us from the sin of Adam!

Oh God!

Here is another idea for the Hollywood sequel movies “*Oh God!*”:

The movie starts with an old man, a father of very many sons and daughters. All of his sons and daughters are committing all kinds of sins from paganism to adultery. All are sinners, except one son who is truly righteous among all his brothers and sisters. The father is very troubled with the behavior of the sinners. He thinks about a way to convince the sinners to follow his righteous son. Finally, he comes up with a brilliant

idea. Some of his evil sons should kill their righteous brother to save all sinners!

What would you say about this father?

Islam has taken a unique position on this whole issue, a position that is not shared by any other religion. The Quran states that Adam and Eve were directed by God to reside in the Garden of Eden and enjoy its produce as they pleased, assured of bountiful supplies and comfort. But they were warned not to approach a particular tree so that they would not run into harm and injustice to themselves. This was a lesson from God to teach humanity limits and boundaries. Then Satan intrigued them to temptation and caused them to lose their joyful state. They were expelled from the Garden and brought down to earth to live, die and rise up on the Day of Judgment. Having realized what they have done, they felt shame, guilt and remorse. They prayed for God's mercy and were forgiven by the Most Merciful. They committed a sin, repented and were forgiven. This is the whole idea. People commit sins and they repent to God and He will forgive them. On the other hand, Satan did not repent out of arrogance. The original sin was committed by Satan, who was arrogant and refused to obey God and refused to repent. It is that simple.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE RESURRECTION

The four Gospels do not agree on many details of the crucifixion and the resurrection. As was proved before, the contradictions in the New Testament are a fact of life. Thus attempting to produce a credible story on the many events in the New Testament is extremely difficult or even impossible. However this is an attempt to construct a reasonable story.

On the cross, Jesus asked God for help: *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."* (Matthew 27:46). To believe that Jesus said that is to discredit his whole mission. Prophet Abraham, when God asked him to sacrifice his son, a request that is as painful as sacrificing himself, did not say, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."* In Luke 22:42, Jesus said: *"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."* (This cup is the cup of death). Most likely, Jesus' prayer not to die on the cross was accepted by God, according to Luke, Hebrews and James. Then how could he still die on the cross? *"And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him,"* (Luke 22:43). This Angel assured him that God would not leave him helpless. In Hebrews 5:7, *"Who in the days of his flesh, when he (Jesus) had offered up prayers and supplications with*

strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” Jesus prayers were heard, which means answered in a positive way by God as in James 5:16 “...*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” Jesus himself said, Matthew 7:7-10, “*Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.*” After the alleged crucifixion, his legs were not broken by the Roman soldiers, (John 19:32-33) “*Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.*” Can we rely on the soldiers for pronouncing the death, or did they want to save Jesus as they found him innocent? Thus there is a strong probability that Jesus did not die on the cross.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign of his true mission, he answered: “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the son of man be there three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matthew 12:40). As was mentioned before, Luke has the same story, but Mark contradicts with Matthew and Luke with regards to the sign of Jonas.

God Almighty commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, (the capital of Assyria, a city of a hundred thousand people) and to warn them to repent and quit the evil things people were doing there, or the Lord will destroy them. Jonah felt desperate, fearing that the materialistic Ninevites will not listen to him. So, instead of going to Nineveh, he attempted to run away from the Lord. He went to Joppa at the Mediterranean Sea and set sail for a faraway city. At sea there was a terrible storm and, according to superstition of the mariners, whosoever runs away from his master creates such turmoil at sea. An inquiry began and Jonah realized that he was the guilty party, that as a prophet of God he had to obey his Master. Jonah reasoned that it was better for him to be thrown overboard and thus avert a disaster. Jonah said, “*Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.*” (Jonah 1:12). Therefore Jonah was thrown into the sea alive.

Now the storm subsides and a fish came and swallowed Jonah. From the fish’s belly, he asked God, the Only One that can save him, for help. On the third day, the fish threw him up onto the seashore and Jonah, was alive. Not surprisingly that Jesus chose the sign “miracle” of Jonah as his only miracle. When a man is expected to die and he does not die, then it is a miracle. Jonah is expected to die, but he did not die. Jesus too, after

the ordeal that he supposedly went through, ought to have died. If he died, it would not be the miracle of Jonah that Jesus had prophesized. But if he lived, as he had himself foretold in Matthew and Luke, then it would be a miracle. Jesus, like Jonah, had the same miracle during the story of crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus, like Jonah, prayed to God for help and God accepted their prayers.

But Christianity is a big business. Preachers and TV evangelists are very well educated in the Bible, as well as public speaking, psychology and marketing. The first rule of business and marketing is: when you have a hot item, capitalize on it! The dramatization of the crucifixion and resurrection sell very well by Christian preachers. Also, it is not easy for the average Christians to agree that Jesus was alive after the crucifixion, because their salvation depends on it. When Christians are confronted with the above argument, they change the emphasis on the time factor of the three days and the three nights. They say that it was that time factor that Jesus was prophesying about and not whether he would be dead or alive. The word “three” is repeated four times in Matthew 12:40.

Christians everywhere celebrate Good Friday. They say it is because Christ died for their sins on that day. All Christian sects and denominations are almost all in agreement that Jesus was supposed to have been in the tomb on the night of Friday. He was still supposed to be in the tomb on the day of Saturday. And he was still supposed to be in the tomb on the night of Saturday. But on Sunday morning, when Mary Magdalene visited the tomb, she found the tomb empty. None of the 27 Books of the New Testament record the time of his exit from the tomb. Not a single writer of the 27 books was an eyewitness to this alleged resurrection. And the only one who could have told us about his resurrection was silent. It is possible that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, (John 18:38-39) had taken their Master soon after dark that very Friday evening to a friendly place for rest and recuperation. Could it be that these two apostles and the others were referring to someone that looked like Jesus. In II Cor. 11:14, Paul says: *“And no marvel: for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (messenger of God).”*

Now if it was the time factor that Jesus was trying to emphasize in the prophecy, then this time does not add up to three nights and three days. The maximum that Jesus could have stayed in the tomb was two nights and one day. Therefore, the Christians have two problems arising from one prophecy:

1. The Christians allege that Jesus was unlike Jonah. Jonah was alive for three days and three nights, whereas Jesus was dead in the tomb.

2. Jesus said that he would be in the tomb for three days and three nights, whereas the Christians say that he was in the tomb for only one day and two nights.

Now, whom do we believe, Jesus or the Christians? To solve this dilemma, one Christian scholar suggested that it was actually Good Wednesday not Friday, by counting backwards from the time he was discovered on Sunday morning (the first day of the week). When this scholar was asked: Who deceived over a billion Christians for two thousand years by making them celebrate Good Friday? His answer was: *"The devil!"* If the devil can succeed in confusing the Christians for two thousand years in the most strong aspect of faith, how much easier it would be for the devil to mislead them in other aspects of faith?

After the alleged resurrection, Jesus himself stated that he did not die on the cross. Early Sunday morning Mary Magdalene went to the sepulcher, which was empty. Why did she go there? *"To anoint him"*, Mark 16:1. Anoint means to rub, or to massage bodies with spices. Do Jews massage dead bodies after three days? The answer is "No." It would, however, make sense if she were looking for a live wounded person. Mary was about the only person besides Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who had given the final rites to the body of Jesus. She saw someone standing who looked like a gardener. She recognized him after conversation to be Jesus and wanted to touch him. Jesus said (John 20:17): *"Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father."* Why did Jesus not want her to touch him? Was it because his fresh wounds still hurt him? If he did not yet ascend to his Father, does this mean that he is still alive, not dead yet? This is the strongest proof admitted by the only reliable witness, by Jesus himself.

Jesus was not a spirit after resurrection. It was Jesus himself in flesh and blood. Jesus convinced the disciples by letting them touch his hands and feet, that he was the same person. As they could not believe him yet, he asked for meat to show them that he still ate like any living person: *"And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them."* (Luke 24:42-43)

To believe in his death on the cross is to totally discredit his prophethood. In Deuteronomy 13:5 *"And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death."* The Jews maintain their belief in having killed Jesus on the cross and consequently portrayed him to be a false prophet. Christians believe in the crucifixion necessary for their salvation and redemption of sin and therefore have to accept the accursedness of Jesus, too. This Christian belief is against the sayings of Jesus (Matthew

9:13): *“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice...”* Also in Matthew 12:7, he said: *“...I will have mercy, and not sacrifice...”*

It was Paul who taught the resurrection (Acts 17:18): *“... And some (Jews) said, What will this babbler say? Other some, he (Paul) seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.”* Paul, who never saw Jesus, also admitted that the resurrection was his gospel (II Timothy 2:8): *“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.”* As for Mark (16:19), when he mentioned that Jesus rose up to heaven and sat on the right hand of God, it was already mentioned that Mark 16:9-20, were expunged from certain Bibles and it was originally added to fill in the spaces.

The Holy Quran states that Jesus did not die on the cross:

“That they (Jews) said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah”; - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them” (Surah 4, Ayah 157).

The big business of Christian churches would never admit that there is a slight chance that Jesus never died on the cross. Preachers want people to attend churches, tell them that they are sinners and Jesus died for their sins and then get their donations. Bumper stickers are everywhere proclaiming that *“Jesus loves me”, “Jesus died for me”, “Jesus blood saved me.”* It makes those people feel good and feel special that someone as great as Jesus died for them. The churches know the power of this concept and they would not give it up.

Most of the Christian doctrines were initially very simple. But somehow, Christian scholars take a simple event or a simple verse and add mountains of complexity and confusion just to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.

JESUS CHRIST (PBUH)

Muslims believe that Jesus was one of the mightiest messengers of Allah; that he was the Christ, that he was born miraculously - without male intervention; that he gave life to the dead with God's permission, that he healed those born blind and with leprosy with God's permission and that he did not die on the cross. In fact no Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus! Yet many Christians have no basic concept of Islam.

Many are skeptical because they have been so brain washed for centuries. In the present time, when one listens to some of the TV Evangelists and reads the New Testament one gets completely different sides of Jesus. Those Evangelists are experts in presenting half the truth about both Jesus and Muhammad. They stress only one side in the most forceful and persuasive way. They raise the slogan “believe in Jesus.” But one should have the right to ask, which Jesus?

- The one who said “*love your enemies*”, Luke 6:27 or the one that said “*But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence*”, Luke 19:27.
- The one who said “*Be merciful just as your father is merciful*”, Luke 6:36, or the one who said “*he did not come to give peace on earth, but rather division*”, Luke 12:51.
- The one who said “*honor your father and mother*”, Matthew 15:4, or the one who called his mother “*Woman*”, John 2:4?
- The one who said “*if someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him*”, Matthew 5:39, or the one who went to the temple and drove people out and overturned the tables, Matthew 21:12?
- The one who said have “*peace with one another*”, Mark 9:50 or the one who said he “*did not come to bring peace but a sword*”, Matthew 10:34?
- The one who said “*forgive, and you will be forgiven*”, Luke 6:37, or the one who said “*if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you*”, Matthew 18:8?
- The one who said “*bless them that curse you*”, Matthew 5:44, or the one who said “*he who curses father or mother, let him be put to death*”, Matthew 15:4?

As a Muslim, I understand both sides, because Jesus, like Muhammad, was both merciful when mercy was required and powerful when power was required. God himself has both heavens and hellfire. Yet half the truth Evangelists never failed to present only the merciful side of Jesus and only the powerful side of Muhammad.

The word Christ is derived from the Hebrew and Arabic words “*Messiah*.” In Arabic the root word “*masaha*” means to rub, to massage, or to anoint. Priests and kings were anointed when being consecrated to their offices. But in its translated Greek form “*Christ*”, it seems unique: befitting Jesus only. The Messiah in Hebrew means anointed. The Greek word for anointed is “*christos*.” Just delete the “os” from christos and change the little “c” to a capital “C” and you get Christ. So Christ means

anointed and anointed means appointed in religious connotations. Jesus was appointed (anointed) at his baptism by John the Baptist as a God's Messenger. Every prophet of God is so appointed or anointed. The Bible is so abundant with the anointed ones. Not only were prophets, priests and kings anointed (christos-ed) but horns, cherubs and lamp-posts also:

"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed as a pillar" (Genesis 31:13).

"If the priests that is anointed do sin..." (Leviticus 4:3).

"And Moses...anointed the tabernacle and all things that was therein..." (Leviticus 8:10).

"...the Lord shall... exalt the horn of his anointed..." (1 Samuel 2:10).

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed to Cyrus..." (Isaiah 45:1).

"Thou art the anointed cherub..." (Ezekiel 28:14).

Christians do not know that every time a Muslim speaks the name of Jesus, he must add these words of respect: peace be upon him, (Pbuh). Christians do not know that the Holy Quran has titles of three chapters related to Jesus:

1. Surah 3: The family of Imran (of Mary). Ayat 31 to 53 describe the miracles related to Jesus' birth and his ministry.
2. Surah 5: The Table. Ayah 109 to 120 describes the miracles of Jesus.
3. Surah 19: Mary, Ayah 16-40 detail the birth of Jesus and how Mary was slandered by her people, but Jesus confronted them while he was a baby!

As a matter of fact, the Quran lists many of the miracles in the bible that Jesus performed, with the permission of God and more! Also in the Quran, Jesus is mentioned by name in twenty five places with respect as a messenger of God:

"We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the holy spirit." (Surah 2, Ayah 87).

"O Mary, Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him: his name will be Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. Held in honor in this world and in the hereafter; and (of the company of) those who are nearest to God" (Surah 3, Ayah 45).

"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, And his word which He bestowed on Mary, And a spirit proceeding from Him: So believe in Allah and His

messengers. Say not three; desist. It will be better for you. For Allah is one God, Glory be to Him. (Far exalted is He) above having a son..." (Surah 4, Ayah 171).

So Jesus is spoken of in the Quran as "*the word of God*", as "*the spirit from God*", as "*the sign of God*", as the "*Messiah*" and numerous other titles of honor spread over fifteen chapters. But the Christians read into these words, a meaning which they do not carry. They equate the word "Christ" with the concept of God incarnate and the Word of God to be God. The miraculous birth of Jesus does not make him a God or the son of God. No! Says the Holy Quran:

"The similitude of Jesus before Allah is that of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him: Be And he was" (Surah 3, Ayah 59).

This is the Word of God: "*Be And he was.*" The logic is that, if being born without male parent entitles Jesus to being equated with God, then, Adam and Melchisedec would have a greater right to such an honor and this no Christian would readily concede. Thus, Muslims reject this Christian doctrine that exists only in writing of John and only in the King James Version.

The Holy Quran refers to Jesus as "Eesa" and this name is used more times than any other title. So his proper name is "Eesa" in Arabic, or "Esau" in Hebrew; classical "Jeheshua", which the Christians of the west latinized as Jesus. Recall that the letter "Y" was changed to "J"

The above verses from the Quran stress the attributes of Jesus as follows:

- That he was the son of a woman, Mary and therefore a man.
- That he was a messenger, a man with a mission from Allah and therefore entitled to honor.
- That he was a word bestowed on Mary, for he was created by Allah's word: "Be" and he was.
- That he was a spirit proceeding from Allah, but not Allah.

Therefore, Islam rejects the doctrines of the trinity and the son of god, for Allah is independent of all needs and has no need for a son to manage His affairs. The Gospel of John and the Fathers of the Church put a great deal of emphasis on describing Jesus as the "Word of God". They extended the simple concept of all creations as a word of God: "be and it will be", to the complex concept of Greek philosophy of the word "Logos." Adam was created by the "Word of God." The whole universe was created by the "Word of God." So why single out Jesus as the "Word

of God” and extend its true literal meaning to a pagan concept based upon ancient philosophy and beyond the realm of God?

Also the simple concept of the “Spirit of God” was extended to another complex concept. The Islamic concept about “Spirit from God” is simply a spirit proceeded from God and not literally the “Spirit of God.” And we all know what a difference it makes if we choose the wrong preposition.

Moreover, the simple concept of describing Jesus as “Sign of God” is quite obvious. His birth and his death were miracles with the permission of God; he performed many miracles, like many other prophets, with the permission of God, his second coming will be another miracle with the permission of God. Why is it so difficult to accept that Allah showed miracles or signs to humanity? As was mentioned before, anyone who does not believe in miracles, can go to Mecca in Saudi Arabia and examine the physical miracle of the well of Zamzam that has been pumping pure water for thousands of years with no sign of drying up. Or anyone can read the Quran and see the real spiritual and scientific miracles in this Book. It is not a coincidence that the only two miracles that exist on this Earth belong to Islam, while all the miracles that Jesus or Moses performed are only recorded in the Holy Books.

Surah Maryam (Mary)

There is a chapter in the Quran, named Surah Maryam, “*Mary’s Chapter*.” Chapter number 19 named in honor of Mary the mother of Jesus. Such an honor is not found in the Bible. Out of the 66 books of the Protestants or the 73 books of the Roman Catholics, not one is named after Mary or Jesus. Mary is chosen in the Quran as having an esteemed position above all the women of the world:

“Behold the angels said: O Mary! Allah Hath chosen thee and purified thee - chosen thee above the women of all nations” (Surah 3, Ayah 42).

This is the position of Mary in Islam. If Muhammad were the author of the Quran, then he would not have failed to include with Maryam, the mother of Jesus, his own mother, or his own wife, or his own daughter. This is one of the proofs that the Quran is not his own work. Keeping in mind that he was, in fact not learned, i.e. unlettered.

The story of Mary is spread into many chapters in the Quran. Mary’s mother, Hannah, was barren. She poured out her heart to God: If only God would grant her a son, she would surely dedicate such a son for the

service of God in the temple. God granted her prayer, not a son but instead delivered a daughter called Mary. She was disappointed, because in no way is the female like the male, for what she had in mind. She had made a vow to God. She waited for Mary to grow up to fend for herself. When the time came, Hannah took her daughter to the temple, to hand her over for temple services. Every priest was clamoring to be the godfather of this child. They cast lots with arrows for her to see who would achieve this honor. Eventually she fell in the lots of Zakariya, the father of John the Baptist (Prophet Yahya in Quran), but not without a dispute. Every time Zakariya visited Mary to check on her needs, he found her surrounded by light and food. When he asked Mary where does she get this food, she answered from Allah. This inspired Zakariya to ask God for a son knowing that his wife was barren. So God granted him John the Baptist. Mary's mother asked for a son, but Allah gave her much more. He gave her a daughter and then made this daughter the holiest woman ever. Such generosity from the Almighty!

The first section of Surah Maryam tells the story of Zakariya and the birth of John the Baptist. The Islamic name for John is "*Yahya*" which suggests life. The Hebrew form is "Johanan" which means "Jehovah has been Gracious." The Quran says that Allah, for the first time, named his prophet a name that never existed before, John.

The second section of Surah Maryam, Surah 19, Ayah 16 to 40, tells the story of the birth of Jesus:

16. *Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.*
17. *She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.*
18. *She said: "I seek refuge from thee to ((Allah)) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah."*
19. *He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son."*
20. *She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"*
21. *He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': It is a matter (so) decreed."*
22. *So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.*
23. *And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): "Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"*

24. *But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;*
25. *"And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee.*
26. *"So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to ((Allah)) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into not talk with any human being'"*
27. *At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: "O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!*
28. *"O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!"*
29. *But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?"*
30. *He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet;*
31. *"And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live;*
32. *"(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable;*
33. *"So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)"!*
34. *Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.*
35. *It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be", and it is.*
36. *Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight.*
37. *But the sects differ among themselves: and woe to the unbelievers because of the (coming) Judgment of a Momentous Day!*
38. *How plainly will they see and hear, the Day that they will appear before Us! but the unjust today are in error manifest!*
39. *But warn them of the Day of Distress, when the matter will be determined: for (behold,) they are negligent and they do not believe!*
40. *It is We Who will inherit the earth, and all beings thereon: to Us will they all be returned.*

The above verses represent the personal side of the experiences of the worshippers of Allah in relation to their families or environment. But where did Muhammad get this knowledge? He was unlettered, He did not

know how to read or write. He was made by God Almighty to tell this story in such details that was not mentioned in the Bible. In this story, the accusation of Muhammad of plagiarizing the Quran from the Jews and Christian collapses, because he was unlettered and because this story is not in the Bible. Knowing fully that the whole Quran is the authentic Word of God, we will nevertheless agree, for the sake of argument, with the critics of Islam for a moment that he wrote it. With any reason we can proceed that Muhammad was an Arab addressing Arabs in Arabic. Whether those critics agreed with him or not, he told them in the most sublime form - words that offended the hearts and minds of his Arab listeners that Mary the mother of Jesus - A JEWESS - was chosen above all the women of all nations. For everyone his own mother, wife, or daughter would come before other women. Why then would the prophet of Islam honor a woman from the opposition? The only reasonable answer is that he had no choice. It was revealed to him like that and he could not change it.

The Bible says the first miracle of Jesus, occurred when he was over thirty years old. In John 2:1-10, this miracle when Jesus turned water into wine in a wedding. Jesus made this potent wine that the men have "*well drunk*." This was not grape juice. It was the same wine that, according to the Bible, enabled the daughters of Lot to seduce their father, Genesis 19:32-33. It was the same wine that the Christian is advised to avoid in Ephesians 5:18 "*And be not drunk with wine.*" The Quran does not mention this alleged miracle to Jesus.

On the other hand, in Islam, Jesus' first miracle occurred when he was a baby. He spoke as an infant. He talked to defend his mother from any devious judgment from her people. Now ask yourself, which version of the first miracle would you choose for Jesus? The Islamic version or the Biblical version? The Christian could read in the Quran everything he wanted to know about Jesus, but in the most noble, elevated and sublime language. A Christian or a Muslim, when reading the above story in the Quran, could not help being moved by it. I personally saw Muslim adults crying in humility when reading or listening to this miraculous story of the birth of Jesus.

Therefore, the Quran tells us the following:

- That Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virtuous woman and honored above the women of all nations.
- That the Quran was God's own Revelation to mankind.
- That Jesus was the "Word of God." "Be: And he was."

- That Jesus was the Christ that the Jews were waiting for.
- That God empowers Jesus to perform miracles even in his infancy.
- That Jesus was born miraculously, without any male intervention.
- That God gave him Revelation.
- That Jesus was very kind to his mother.
- That Jesus gave life to the dead by God's permission and that he healed those born blind and with leprosy by God's permission.

The Holy Quran has something definite to say about every deviation of Christianity. The Quran exonerates Jesus from all the false charges of his enemies as well as the misplaced passion of his followers. His enemies allege that he blasphemed against God by claiming divinity. His followers claim that he did declare his divinity, but that was not blasphemy because he was God. This is what the Jews and Christians say about Jesus. The Quran calls the Jews and Christians: "*People of the book.*" This is a very respected title that they are addressed as in the Quran. The Quran asks both the Jews and Christians to say only the truth of Allah. Muslims are commanded to invite People of the Book to a common platform that we worship none but God. Because none but God is worthy of worship, not because "*the Lord is a jealous Lord,*" Genesis 20:5. But because he is our Lord and Cherisher, our Sustainer and Evolver, worthy of all praise, prayer and devotion. Thus the Quran gives the Jews and the Christians the following proposition:

"Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; That we associate no partners with Him; That we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah. If they turn back, say ye: Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's Will)" (Surah 3, Ayah 64).

Many Christian Converts to Islam state they took their first step to conversion after reading their Bible *a little bit carefully*, not just listening to their priests or preachers and then take a bumper sticker that says "*Jesus loves me.*"!!



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- Christian Aid Appeal Annual Report and Information Pack.
- Christian Aid Report on Nigeria.
- Christian Aid Report on Uzbekistan.
- Methodologies in missionary work to Muslim countries.
- World Vision Annual Report.
- The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, or Vatican II.

WEBSITES

Quran websites:

- http://www.usislam.org/books/free_islamic_books.htm Read and download Qu/ran in many languages.

[http: / / www. qurancourses. com/](http://www.qurancourses.com/) Learning of Quran and Hadith is the foremost duty of every Muslim.
[http: / / www. searchtruth. com/ list. php](http://www.searchtruth.com/list.php) Read and listen to The Quran in many languages

<http://www.reciter.org/>Welcome to the Electronic Reciter version 2.0. Click on the English, French, or Arabic text in the box below to select the interface language and launch the program:

<http://quran.muslim-web.com/>

<http://www.alketab.com/default.asp> The Holly Quran Website - 26 translations

<http://www.tvquran.com/>Quran on TV from Palestine

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<http://www.quranexplorer.com/quran/>

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<http://www.quran.org.uk/> Holy Quran Resources on the Internet in 24 languages.

<http://www.quranchart.com/> By Imam Ahmad AlArafi, Medina research Institute.

General Islamic Websites

<http://www.usislam.org/>A comprehensive Dawah and educational Website in 57 languages.

<http://www.rasoulallah.net/v2/index.aspx?lang=en> The Messenger of Allah: Arabic French German Spanish Italian Russian Hebrew Chinese

<http://www.elsharawy.com/>Arabic Website of Sheikh Elsharawy

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<http://isna.net/> Islamic Society of North America

<http://www.icna.com/main.shtml> Islamic Circle of North America

<http://www.islamiska.org/>Swedish, Danish, English, Arabic.

<http://www.msa-natl.org/> Muslim Student Association national site in USA.

<http://www.islamhelpline.com/> Islam help Line

<http://www.prophetstory.com/> Arabic Stories of the Prophets

http://www.islamstory.com/article.php?cat_id=108 Islamic History - Arabic - <http://shareah.com/> Arabic

www.uga.edu/islam Islam and Islamic Studies Resources From University of Georgia Encyclopedia of Muslim Family Arabic

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Bible Study

Search engine of different versions of the Bible. Read Carefully and you will know Islam is the Truth.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com>

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<http://www.usislam.org/ccomparative/comparative.htm> Comparative Religions

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www.jews-for-allah.org Jews.

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<http://www.islamtomorrow.net/> Christian Bishop & Preacher & German Diplomat & Cat Stevens & others.

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<http://www.darul-arqam.org.sg/> Darul Arqam Singapore Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore.

<http://www.islaminfo.com/> Islamic Information and Dawah Centre International.

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<http://www.answering-christianity.com> Islamic answer to Christian Doctrines

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<http://www.islamfortoday.com/> A guide to the religion of Islam by an Irish Catholic convert to Islam

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<http://www.usislam.org/converts/converts.htm> **Priests, Rabbis and missionaries**, Famous Converts To Islam, Videos

<http://www.muslimconverts.com/> How to convert to Islam and Issues facing Converts

<http://www.jewstoislam.com/> Jewish converts to Islam from Rabbis to monotheism.

<http://convertstoislam.org/> Multi-National Muslim Committee, Christians.

<http://www.thetruereligion.org/converts.htm> Christian priests and missionaries and many others who have discovered the one true religion.

<http://www.latinmuslims.com/> Latin American Muslim Unity (LAMU)

<http://www.islamtomorrow.net/> Christian Bishop & Preacher & German Diplomat & Cat Stevens & others.

<http://www.welcome-back.org/> Welcome Back to Islam

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Agora/4229/ind.html> Hindus learn Islam.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jewstoislam/> Jewish Converts to Islam Support Group.

<http://www.why-christians-convert-to-islam.com/> A very good web site by brother Frank, who is a new convert to Islam.

<http://www.turntoislam.com/> Turn to Islam. A lot of documentaries, videos, links and articles about Islam and Muslims.

Scientific Miracles in Quran

<http://www.usislam.org/90scien.htm> The Scientific Miracle

<http://www.miraclesofthequran.com/index2.html> Modern Science
Reveals New Miracles of the Qur'an

<http://www.scienceinquran.com> Scientific accuracy of the Qur'an.

<http://www.bensys.mcmail.com/Islam.htm> Many scientific discoveries.

<http://www.it-is-truth.org/Index.shtml> Scientific accuracy of the Qur'an.

<http://www.harunyahya.com/> Many scientific and Islamic books by
Harun Yahya.

<http://www.55a.net/> , The Quran Miracles Encyclopedia web Site

<http://www.elnaggarzr.com/> Dr. Zahlool Al-Najjar Website. Library of
Scientific Knowledge.

<http://www.quran-m.com/> The Quran Miracle Encyclopedia.



Glossary

Allah: The name of God of all Muslims and Christians in the Middle East.

Avatar: In Hindu myth, the descent of a god to earth in human form. More generally used of a person who is believed to embody or incarnate the divine.

Axial Age: The term used by historians to denote the period 800-200 BC, a time of transition during which the world major religions emerged in the world.

Ayah: (plural Ayat) (Arabic) Sign, parable. In the Quran, the manifestations of God in the world, or one verse in the Quran.

Brahman: (Hindi) The Hindu term for the sacred power that sustains all existing things; the inner meaning of existence.

Buddha: (Hindi) the enlightened one. The title applies to the numerous persons who have attained nirvana (q.v.) but it is often used of Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism.

Dogma: (Greek) used by the Greek Christians to describe the hidden, secret traditions of the Church, which could only be understood mystically and expressed symbolically. In the west, dogma has come to mean a body of opinion, categorically and authoritatively stated.

El: The high God of Canaan who seems also to have been the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Gentile: (Hebrew) One who is not Jewish.

Goy: (plural goyim) (Hebrew) Non-Jews or Gentiles.

Islam: (Arabic) Surrendering to the Will of God.

Logos: cosmic reason, used in ancient Greek philosophy, as the divine source of order and intelligibility.

Monotheism: the belief that the universe is created and governed by one God.

Nirvana: (Hindi) literally “cooling off” or “going out” like a flame; extinction. Term used by Buddhists to denote the ultimate reality, the goal and the fulfillment of human life and the end of pain. It is impossible to define in rational terms but belongs to a different order of experience.

Nous: mind or reason, used in ancient Greek philosophy, as the principle of divine reason.

Surah: (Arabic) a chapter in the Quran.

Yahweh: the name of the God of Israel. Yahweh may originally have been the god of another people and adopted by the Israelites.




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