



Introduction¹

Whilst seeking the truth, the honest investigator wants facts and this short work is intended for the sincere few who seek to know the original belief of the people that followed the teachings of Jesus, *peace be upon him*.

Before Nicea should not be viewed as 'Muslim propaganda' or bias, rather as an honest look at the evidence that qualified scholars have provided. This work also wants to move away from relying on the bible and blindly quoting from it in order to prove the true teachings of Jesus. Even though there is obviously some truth in the gospels, it is not the pure *Injeel* that is mentioned in the Qur'aan as being given to Jesus.

In assessing the comparisons between early Christianity and Islam, the facts have been made accessible to the reader and presented in a manner that does not wish to antagonize. It is for the readers to make up their own minds and come to a conclusion about the evidence presented.

Conducted over the last three hundred years, such research is not a new phenomena. John Toland for example had

¹ This book, *Before Nicea*, originally completed in 1998 by Paul Addae and Tim Bowes (Abdul-Haq and Abdur-Rahmaan), has been revised for the *Da'wah* section at www.salafimanhaj.com

written his book *The Nazarenes* in 1718 wherein he had already noticed the similar beliefs and practices of the early followers of Jesus and Muslims. Furthermore, John Biddle wrote *The True Opinion Concerning the Holy Trinity (Twelve Arguments)* in 1653, Joseph Priestly wrote eight books including *A General History of the Church*, published in 1802 and *A History of the Corruption of Christianity*, published in 1871. A.C. MacGiffert wrote *A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* published in 1897, *The Apostles Creed* published in 1902 and *The God of the Early Christians* in 1924.

The discovery of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the earliest almost complete manuscript (fourth century), brought with it more evidence for scholars to utilize. Using both these older sources and the recent research based upon the discoveries of early Christian manuscripts the reader will be supplied with that which is accepted as sound.

During conversations whilst compiling this work, it was noted that many evangelical Christians would argue that the Christian scholars quoted in this work for example are ‘*not really Christian.*’ One of the ‘*Hyde Park Speakers Corner Christian Fellowship*’² even went so far as to say that there is not a single theologian who could be called a Christian, because he felt that theology is an enemy of Christianity. It is certainly true that most theologians do not understand the Bible to be ‘divine revelation,’ rather a combination of inspiration, commentary and interpretation. In many cases,

²This is a well known and peculiar group that comprises a broad range of fundamentalist Christian evangelists of the London area who are active in propagating evangelical Christianity at London’s Hyde Park Speaker’s Corner.

these theologians will say that it was Jesus himself who was the ‘divine revelation’ and will feel perfectly free to reject the idea that the Bible is unadulterated.

Therefore, it is understandable that Christians who believe in the Bible as an uncorrupted whole, become hostile to such scholars. Nevertheless, Christian evangelical disapproval of theologians is quite contradictory and unreasonable.

Contradictory, because it was on the grounds of theology that ‘Christian’ doctrine grew and unreasonable, as most Christians would be grateful that theology ‘explained’ for them many aspects of their belief.

Most of the scholars whom we have quoted are, to the best of our knowledge, practicing Christians. For example James Dunn’s book *Christology in the Making* is illustrative of this fact. While he says at one point that **“there is no real evidence in the earliest Jesus tradition of what could fairly be called a consciousness of divinity,”** (page 60), he makes no attempt to apologize for his conviction in Trinitarian Christianity. It is simply the fact that he is a Christian. Likewise, the New Testament scholar, the late Michael Ramsey, was an Archbishop in the Anglican church. We are fully aware that some of the writers whom we have quoted from are Christians so people should accept their dedicated research.

We note also Heikki Räisänen, a Christian interested in Christian-Muslim dialogue, who writes **“Today it is clear to New testament scholarship that there is hardly anything in the New Testament even remotely like the doctrine of the Trinity. This realization may in itself be a fresh starting point for a dialogue.”**³

We are not going to judge whether they are *really* Christian or not, nor should an unqualified and emotional evangelical Christian make such judgements. We have put this booklet together simply as a basis of research for the sincere investigator.

Most of the writing of these historians, researchers and scholars is well referenced and we have been careful, when quoting from more controversial sources, to ensure that they have given references as evidence of authenticity.

For example, we discovered in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, by Lincoln, Baigent and Leigh (1982), a reference to a text in the *Nag Hammadi Scrolls*. While it is obvious that their book is overflowing with unacceptable conjecture, it was possible to make further investigations to discover that the text in question within the *Nag Hammadi Scrolls* does indeed exist.

³Heikki Räisänen, *The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an*, 1980, p.127

There are a number of sources which we have used whose books contain subjective and objective opinions. In such cases we have largely ignored their conjecture and theories and have only quoted from that which may be called established fact. For example, we have made reference to *The Five Gospels* (1993) by the ‘Jesus Seminar.’ While the main body of their work is concerned with demythologizing the gospels and using a consensus of ‘opinion’ to determine the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus, which may be unacceptable, we have quoted from their book that which is attested to by historical evidence.

More importantly, Allaah mentions in the Qur’aan

*They follow only conjecture and what their souls desire –
even though there has already come down to them
guidance from their Lord
{an-Najm (53): 23}*

In some cases, the sources that we have used may be unsympathetic towards Islam, but what is most striking is to discover that parallels do exist between the early Christianity of these studies and Islam. Often this appears to be unapparent to the writers, but on occasions, some are quite ready to admit this parallel. For example, Hans Küng et al write that the, **“traditional and historical parallels between Judaic-Christianity and Islam are inescapable.”**⁴

⁴*Christianity and the World Religions – Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism & Buddhism*, 1986, p. 124

Hans-Joachim Schoeps⁵ comes to a similar conclusion as does Professor Eisenman. Indeed, as we stated earlier, the knowledge of the similarities between early Christianity and Islam has been studied thoroughly.

Writers such as Francis David (1510-1579), Michael Servetus (1511-1553), Adam Neuser (circa 1570) and John Toland (in 1718) were describing such parallels several hundred years ago!⁶

Obviously we are writing as Muslims, but we have tried our best not to present the wrong information. Having gone through the process of ‘coming to Islam’ ourselves, we understand the difficulties in knowing exactly *who* is telling the truth. When speaking with Christians prior to beginning this compilation of quotations, we were interested that few were aware of the historical material about the early followers of Jesus, as studies by many scholars, historians and theologians, and the origins and development of Christianity.

We have therefore sifted through the speculation of many books and articles about early Christianity, to present the reader with factual evidence, as it stands in light of Islam. Thus we invite the reader to sincerely reflect and by the will of Allaah, they will come to understand and *Inshaa’Allaah* know the truth.

⁵*Theology and History in Jewish Christianity*, 1949, p. 342

⁶See Adrian Reland, *Treatises Concerning the Mahametons*, (18th century), pp. 215-22; also W.C Garnett, *Francis David – Founder of Unitarianism* (1914); R.H. Bainton, *The Hunted Heretic* (1953); D.B. Parke, *The Epic of Unitarainism* (1957), pp. 5-6