



**JESUS CHRIST**

**OR**

**MOHAMMED?**

The Bible  
or  
the Koran?



**F.S. Coplestone**

**CHRISTIAN FOCUS**





Copyright © Jem C. Trehern 2000

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 1 85792 588 2

First published in 2000  
and reprinted in 2001, 2002 and 2006

by

Christian Focus Publications  
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,  
IV20 1TW, Great Britain.

[www.christianfocus.com](http://www.christianfocus.com)

Cover design by Danie Van Straaten

Printed and bound by  
Norhaven A/S Paperback, Denmark

This small book has been edited and expanded with the desire to  
reach others with the love of Christ.



# 1

## Understanding the Test of True Religion

There are many religions that claim to be the one and only true religion. Since this is the case, there needs to be a test of Divine truth to which the claims of all religions can be submitted. Logic states that it can only be God who supplies this test. God is our creator, and has made us with the ability to acquire knowledge and communicate with one another. Since God is so far above us (being the one who made the universe), knowledge of Him can only come through His own revelation of Himself. It is from this revelation that we must find the test of all true religion.

### *The Test of True Religion*

The most important test of true religion is the Law of God that says: 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength,' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Deut. 6:5; 10:12, 19; 11:1; 13:3; 30:16; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37, 39).



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

God has said that perfect obedience to this Law of Love is the necessary condition to receiving eternal life: 'Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD' (Lev. 18:5).

We also find that God has pronounced His curse on all who break this Law. This is necessary and shows how right and perfect He is. It reveals God's hostility to the rebellion of disobedience. Rebellion reveals that we believe that we can live our lives as we please. However, the evil in our world reveals that we fail to even live by our own standards, let alone God's. Due to sin, we are under the condemnation of the Holy One whose ways are far above our own. 'Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out' (Deut. 27:26).

As sinners, it is impossible for us to obtain (or even help to obtain) eternal life by our own good works. We are imperfect and can never pay a perfect price, no matter how hard we work. Our best is still not good enough, and is tainted by sin. We cannot escape from being under the condemnation of a Holy God. Therefore, if we are to meet the demands of his law, we need to be totally dependent on Him. We are not capable of living by His rule of love, on which our thinking and behaviour is to be based. Neither can we pay the penalty for our wrongdoing. Yet there is hope.



## UNDERSTANDING THE TEST OF TRUE RELIGION

### *The Law of Love Reveals that God is Love*

Human laws are undeniable evidence of both the existence and character of human lawgivers. The types of laws they give tell us something about the lawgiver. For example, someone who makes harsh and legalistic rulings is often harsh and legalistic by nature. From this we can see that, in a much greater way, God's Law of Love is the undeniable evidence of both the existence and character of God. Only a God who is Love by nature could require everyone to love Him and their fellow man.

The nature of love is to give out of oneself for others – to meet the needs of a loved one with the best of our ability, regardless of cost. This Law of Love assures us that God wants to meet the need of every sinner, because He loves us (whilst hating our sin). It is impossible for a holy and perfect God to command everyone to love Him, unless He Himself loves everyone. If God did not love everyone He would be a hypocrite, since God would have asked us to do something He had no intention of doing Himself. God is perfect and holy, and His Law of Love reveals that He is not like this.

Since God is Love (1 John 4:8), and loves everyone, He must have provided salvation for every sinner who takes up his offer of life. Love does not forsake a loved one. And so we see that God's Law of Love is a prophecy of the good news (gospel) of God's redemption (buying back those in slavery) for the human race.



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

The one and only true religion will be the one that reveals and proclaims that God has provided full redemption (paid the full price) for sinners. This comes about by His grace (undeserved favour) alone.

If God had deliberately made some people with no ability to love Him, then their not loving Him could not be called sin. Scripture informs us that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23), and that 'Everyone who sins breaks the law' (1 John 3:4). Therefore it is everyone's responsibility to keep the Law of Love.

Scriptures and experience show that all enjoy the blessings of providence as gifts of grace, not through their own merit:



'The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made' (Ps. 145:9).



To say that the Lord is good and merciful to all, but does not love all is to say that goodness and mercy are not attributes of His love. Attributes are qualities of nature or substance, and do not stand separately on their own.

Continuing to look at love, one realises that love's greatest revelation lies in its greatest possible sacrifice, for all sacrifice is personal. What was necessary for our salvation was God's judgement on sin and the execution of the curse of the Law to come about in a way that would not condemn us. This was achieved by Jesus' perfect obedience





## UNDERSTANDING THE TEST OF TRUE RELIGION

to God's will. Jesus became the sin-bearer for us. God could make no greater revelation of His love to sinners than the sacrifice of His eternal Son.

### *The Law of Love Refutes the Unitarian Doctrine of God*

The doctrine of God in both Judaism and the Koran is Unitarian. However, the Law of Love proves that there is a plurality of Persons within the Unity of the Godhead. This must be so because love must have an object, since it is a relationship between a lover and a loved one. Therefore, eternal love is an eternal relationship in God. For this reason some Moslems deny that Allah loves.

The eternal object of God's love cannot be outside the Godhead, because this would mean that God is wholly dependent upon some other eternal Being for the object and reciprocation of His love. God, then being dependent on something outside of Himself, would no longer be self-sufficient or independent. Also, if there were two beings, then neither would be almighty. Neither would have any control over the other and there would be no 'moral absolute'. From this we see how the Unitarian doctrine of God makes God dependent upon His creation for the object and reciprocation of His love, and denies that God is love *by nature*. It would mean that God's love is not eternal, it no longer being something that speaks to us of the very essence of God. Instead,



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

it would be potential, and not necessary to God's Being.

Our idea of love is formed from the relationships around us, and our ability to love is often dependent on others returning our love. This is not the case with God. He is an infinitely perfect Being who is love by nature, this being the very essence of His Being. This is why scripture tells us that 'God is Love' (1 John 4:8) and does not say 'Love is God.' God does not love us because of what we can do for Him in the way of good works. Neither did God create us to make up for any lack within Himself. God is eternal love within His own Being. He created a world and placed man within creation so that mankind could benefit from His love. He does not need us; is not dependent on our world in any way, and loves us because He simply chooses to love. We have been created by God to benefit from His love.

Most human beings can love a small baby, which can do little more than lie in our arms. God's love is far greater than this, for no effect (my loving a child) is greater than the cause (He giving me the ability to love in the first place).

From all that we have said so far, we see that the concept of God as an independent self-sufficient Being is far greater than that of a God who is dependent upon His own creation for the object and reciprocation of His love.

Dr Hutton in *Theological Essays* says that his





## UNDERSTANDING THE TEST OF TRUE RELIGION

conversion from Unitarianism to belief in God as triune, (as revealed in the Bible), came about when he saw that, in God, love must be eternal. Since love is eternal it obviously speaks of the existence of eternal relationships within the Godhead.

### *The Law of Love Provides Evidence of Supernatural Revelation*

The Law of Love is completely beyond the power and ability of any sinner to keep. It is so contrary to human nature, that we can be certain that it did not originate with man, because obedience to it requires sinless perfection. Apart from this, it is not possible for someone to have forged a Law of Love. Forgers (creators of false information) forge documents that are for self-gain, they are not in the least concerned with love, either to God or to their fellow man.

The Law of Love speaks of the inner motives of heart and mind, and goes far beyond outward actions, which can be deceptive. God requires love to Him as the supreme motive behind all our actions and as the inspiration of all our thoughts and words. Whatever is not motivated by love to Him is sin – it breaks the first and greatest commandment of His Law. Understanding this, and knowing God's demands, effectively removes all claims to self-righteousness, and reliance on any form of good works for salvation. After all, Jesus taught that God's Law can be broken inwardly, even when there is the outward appearance of



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

keeping it. What might appear and feel good to us can be an abomination in the sight of God.

‘You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight’ (Luke 16:15).

Perfect obedience to God’s Law of Love is the only means of justification before God.

It is the only condition whereby we can receive eternal life. If God did not judge sin, then He would sacrifice any claim to being righteous, yet it was impossible for any man to keep His law since no sinner can offer sinless perfection. If there were to be a Saviour for mankind the Saviour would have to be a sinless representative. His righteousness would then be that of perfect obedience to the Law of Love and could be credited to mankind. However, since the wrath of God is infinite (boundless/ incalculable), this Saviour would also need to be Deity incarnate. After all, only a Divine being could offer anything acceptable enough to deliver sinners from judgement and, in doing so, obtain forgiveness of sins for them. The union of Deity with His humanity made it possible for all that Jesus achieved (paying for our sins) to be passed on to all who accept His saving work.

I once read a story where a judge had to pass sentence on a friend who had committed a crime. Those who heard about the forthcoming case



## UNDERSTANDING THE TEST OF TRUE RELIGION

were divided into two camps. On the one side there were those who thought the judge would be a good judge and stick to the rules in passing sentence. But they were aware that this would mean that he was not a very good friend. Others thought that the judge would let his friend off without having to pay a penalty. Yet they realised that, in being a good friend, he was not a good judge. When the case came to court, both groups found that they were wrong.

After hearing the case, the judge stood up and fined his friend the maximum penalty for committing the crime. He then took off his robes, walked down to his friend and took out his chequebook in order to pay the fine himself. He was both a good judge and a good friend.

In Jesus Christ we have a Saviour who shows us that God is both righteous and merciful.

### *Representation and Imputation*

*(To 'impute' means to 'reckon to one' and, in scripture, refers to the righteousness of Christ being imputed (reckoned) to us.)*

The fact that God is Love (as the Law of Love reveals) proves that suffering and death have no place in His universe, apart from sin. Yet infants, who have no personal sin, are still subject to suffering and death even before birth. How is this so?

Adam and Eve were the first of our species of being, therefore, when sin entered their lives it



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

would affect all offspring as well. Every human being is born 'diseased', and with the potential for sin within him, including babies. Although they have broken no moral law, the disease of sin has been passed to them. Their bodies are no longer capable of living forever and death can ensue at any time. When full judgement comes from God it will not arise because of Adam's sins, but because of our own sins, committed because we are part of Adam's 'fallen' race. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Sinners cannot obtain perfect human righteousness. Therefore it was necessary for a sinless representative to come as a man, live a life of perfect obedience to the Law, and then have His righteousness imputed to all related to Him. This relationship is established through faith alone, with no personal merit involved.

### *Substitutionary and Non-Substitutionary Representation*

*(When one man pays another man's fine in a law court, he is said to have represented him substitutionally.)*

It was necessary that the Divine side of the Redeemer's work should be substitutionary in order to save us from bearing the wrath of God by ourselves. Yet it was also necessary that the human side of the Redeemer's work (obtaining eternal life by obedience to the law of love) should be non-substitutionary. The purpose of Christ's obedience was to obtain eternal life as a free gift





## UNDERSTANDING THE TEST OF TRUE RELIGION

of God's grace. We could then live a life of love by His power.

Those who are redeemed are then called to love as they have been loved. Their good works do not maintain salvation – since every sin has been paid for – yet the works reveal the wonderful love that has been received through salvation.

*The Necessity of Restitution to Redemption  
(Restitution speaks of the act of restoring to the rightful owner something that has been lost or stolen, whilst Redemption means 'to deliver from', and refers, in the Bible, to the believer having been delivered from sin.)*

Man's disobedience has robbed God of honour and glory which obedience would have brought to Him. Therefore the Divine plan of redemption (delivering man from sin) needs to restore to God all the honour and glory lost through man breaking the Law of Love. If this were not so then God would be the eternal loser (as a result of man's sin), which is impossible. In light of this, the one true religion, (based only on supernatural revelation), needs to reveal that the Divine plan of salvation has restored to God all honour and glory lost through man's sin. Any doctrine of salvation that fails to do this cannot be true.

In order to be able to love, one has to have freedom of choice since you cannot force a person to love you. God created us to benefit from His love, and in giving us freedom of choice allows



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

the possibility of evil. God's permission of evil has caused great loss to Him, and great misery and sorrow and spiritual loss for the human race. It can only be justified if God overrules it to secure greater glory to His Name. It secures, but only for those who believe in Him, greater blessing for those who previously suffered misery, sorrow and spiritual loss. Therefore the one true religion must also reveal the way in which God has overruled evil, securing greater honour and glory to His name than if He had never permitted it to exist in His Universe at all.

### *The First Announcements Concerning the Law of Love*

The Law of Love was given to our first parents at their creation to reveal to them the nature of God and His will for their lives (1 John 3:11, 12). God's command, which warned them not to take anything from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16, 17), was given to test their love for God. This was because there is no virtue in untested obedience. Only by overcoming the temptation to disobedience could innocence (a negative quality) develop into righteousness (a positive quality) which is an active, thinking and deliberate conforming to God's standard.

Our first parents were created in the image of God as moral beings, in contrast to the animal creation (Gen. 1:26). They also had the capacity to become the image of God as righteous beings



## UNDERSTANDING THE TEST OF TRUE RELIGION

by victory over temptation. Disobedience made them sinful by nature, whilst obedience would have made them righteous by nature, and secured them eternal life, which would also have been transmitted to their descendants.

Paul tells us that the Law was given for life (Rom. 7:10). Due to the corruption of human nature it became impossible for men and women to gain eternal life by their own obedience to God's law. Instead, they were now brought under condemnation from which only God could deliver them.

The purpose in giving the Law to the nation of Israel through Moses at Sinai (Exod. 20:1-17) was to teach them that they could not bring about their own deliverance. This would help prepare them to receive God's plan of salvation by grace (undeserved favour) through faith in the Redeemer whom God would send. As we have already stated, God's own Law of Love assured them that He would provide for sinners.

### *The Redemption of Creation*

Redemption would be incomplete unless it included the whole terrestrial creation involved in the consequences of man's sin. The creation (being subject to the curse, due to man's sin) is, through God's saving work, that of 'groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Rom. 8:22).



## JESUS CHRIST OR MOHAMMED?

### *The Need for Preparatory Revelation*

The Law of Love, (revealing God as love), assures us that God would provide information of His intention to redeem man, right at the beginning of man's experience as a sinner. Man would know about the promised Redeemer and the way in which the Redeemer would accomplish His work of Redemption. This is so that mankind could exercise faith in Him and receive the benefits of that Redemption even before it occurred.

Therefore, another hallmark of the one true religion will be that God's purpose to redeem mankind would be known from the beginning. Along with this would be known something of the Person of the Redeemer and the way in which He would accomplish Redemption.

